

9666U

SILVER STAR BIBLE SCHOOL - I998

YAHWEH IS MY STRENGTH AND MY SONG

BEHOLD, MY SERVANT

Speaker: Bro. Roger Lewis

Study #5 He Hath Borne our Griefs

Reading: Isaiah 52:13 to 53:6

Thank you brother chairman, and my dear brethren and sisters in our Lord Jesus Christ.

Well then, Isaiah 52 and verse 13 brings us, of course, to the last and the greatest of the servant songs. This is the 4th servant song and although Isaiah 53, of course, is famous amongst us, as perhaps the greatest prophecy in the Old Testament concerning the suffering Messiah, it does, in fact, form part of the 4th servant song that begins in the 52nd chapter and from the 13th verse. So the last three verses of the previous chapter, form part then of this story, this last song that we shall contemplate concerning the servant of God. God willing, we're going to look at this in the course of our study, today and tomorrow, and the two studies hopefully will give us time to examine the material there, in a little more detail.

Now, just some comments then on the song before we start. I want to talk to you about the style of this last song, because it's different to the others; there is something unique and special about this final servant song. There are several things which make it different from the others: the first is, the actual style of the language itself in the Hebrew. In the Hebrew language, the style of the earlier songs is very **flowing**, very **gentle**, we might actually illustrate that by going back to the first song. Remember the words of the first stanza or the first strophe of the first servant song! 'Behold, lo my servant, I will uphold him; my chosen, well pleased is my soul, I have set my spirit upon him; justice to the nations will he bring forth. He cries not nor speaks loud, or let's his voice be heard in the street; the reed that is broken he brakes not off; the wick that is fading he does not quench', there is almost a sense of rhythm ,isn't there? to these songs and it actually works like that in the Hebrew as well, there's something quite rhythmical and eloquent, lyrical about the earlier servant songs. But when we come to the last servant song and we actually look at the Hebrew, we'll find that the language is not flowing at all! it's broken, it's sobbing, it's wrenching; it darts from idea to idea, that the words themselves seem jumbled and confused. The very sound of the servant song in Hebrew, is the sound of lamentation and of cry, of bitterness; it's a different song altogether, even in the way its constructed in the Hebrew itself.

The second thing about this last song, is the use of very powerful and dramatic words. Whatever words are being used to describe the servant and his experiences in the first three songs, when we come to this fourth song, the Hebrew becomes far more powerful. Let me give you an illustration! in chapter 52 and verse 14, 'As many were astonished at thee'; now in the Hebrew that word which is 'shamem' means, not to be astonished, which by the way means 'astonishment' really, it's an old English form of 'astonishment', but the real meaning of the word is more powerful than that, it means this, it means 'to **stun**', to **devastate**', to **stupefy**', to '**amaze**' (8074), it's a very powerful word in the Hebrew and those sorts of words are scattered all the way through this last song. It's a song with this type of language, it's very strong language that is used. It's also as if we're being brought to the very extremity of the servant labours, as they are brought forward to a final conclusion, and we see the servant in his final end, and it's as if only powerful words are adequate to convey the depths to which the servant sinks in his despair and in his torment, and the final triumph that will emerge as the servant is miraculously revived and recovered by the intervention of his God. Powerful words scattered all the way through this last song.

The third thing that's interesting about this song, and surprisingly, this is most unusual in Hebrew, there is a certain degree of assonance; now assonance, of course, is a term we use for the fact that words rhyme with each other. Very common, isn't it? in English poetry but not common in Hebrew poetry. Hebrew poetry focuses on a rhyming of ideas, not of words, but here for some strange reason, in the Hebrew of the third servant song, we have a definite sense of rhyming sounds and particularly in verses 4 to 6, in the very heart of the 4th song. There is a reason why the words rhyme in the Hebrew because certain key words are set at the beginning and at the end of lines and they, as it were, call to each other, all the way through the text of this song, and particularly in those verses, verses 4 to 6. The personal pronouns that are used become the key to the rhyming sound that occurs. So when we actually look at this song, we'll find it's actually built around just a handful of key words. These are the key words of lamentation and of cry, here they are, these are the key words around which this song is built: **He, we; His, ours; See, hear; know, bear; sickness/many**. Just a handful of words, you see, and you see I think that's very true to the whole idea of sorrowful recollection; you know, when someone's being bereaved or someone's lamenting the tragedy of a great loss, often they don't have eloquence of words that uses a large vocabulary. They go back and back over the same things, over and over again as if the mind can't free itself from certain things that keep coming back, and back and back into the mind! So the same words keep recurring all the way through the lamentation; I think that's what this 4th song is like.

There's one other thing that makes this song unique and special. I'm going to show it to you, I hope you can see this, by actually running you by all the songs now. I just want you to see if you can notice what's different about the 4th song, just in terms of the visual appearance of the stanzas or the strophes themselves? So here we have the first servant song, Isaiah 42 verses 1 to 7 and you'll see that there are two strophes, and that the two strophes are pretty much of exactly similar lengths and size; there is a

sense of balance and proportion to the first servant song, do you notice that? Let's look at the second song then, we don't need to look at these in detail, it's only to give a brief visual appearance of the idea. So what about the second song? and you'll find, well it's exactly the same. There are 2 stanzas and each stanza is of, in fact, **equal length, the substance and the size of song 2 is virtually identical to the first servant song.** By the way, that's actually how it works out in the Hebrew as well. When we come to the third song which we looked at yesterday, we find exactly the same thing in chapter 50 verses 4 to 9. Again, two stanzas of equal length, the first three songs you could almost lay them over the top of one another and find they all look remarkably similar in terms of the degree of information and the length of the stanzas.

Now let's have a look at the 4th song and see if you can notice what happens here, because not only is it the longest, remarkably longer, but notice what happens to the stanzas, (actually having had a look at this, you might not notice it now, because some of these lines that I have here, unfortunately aren't true). So for example, this line here, 'For that which had never been told', it should be, 'them they see' and it should all be on that line, and unfortunately I've had to run the words onto the next line. Likewise, the words 'regard' and 'here' should really be out here. So let me see just what happens; so first we notice that these are the first two stanzas, you can see what I'm asking you to see from there, we might start to see it though in the next two stanzas which are Isaiah 53:4-6 and then 7-9, I wonder if you notice any difference there between the first two stanzas and those two? Lastly, we're going to come to the final stanza, each of which are only 3 verses each, yet look at the last stanza in verses 9-12. So what do we notice then about this final servant song? and the answer, b&s, is this, that what we find in this final song, is that the length of the stanzas, is actually changing all the way through the song itself. So the first strophe which is verses 13 to 15 of chapter 52 has 9 lines in the Hebrew; the second strophe which is verses 1 to 3 of Isaiah 53 has 10 lines in the Hebrew; the third strophe which is verses 4-6 of Isaiah 53 has 11 lines in the Hebrew; the fourth strophe which is verses 7 to 9 of Isaiah 53 has 13 lines in the Hebrew; and the fifth strophe which is verses 10 to 12 of Isaiah 53 has 14 lines in the Hebrew. So the length of each strophe or stanza in this final song is getting longer and longer and longer, as the work of the servant as it were, gathers momentum now, and sweeps irresistibly forward to its final triumphant conclusion, the very stanzas themselves get longer and longer as the work of the servant is now brought to its fulfilment and to its finality; there's something special about the way in which the very song itself has been written down in the Hebrew.

So here we are then, in Isaiah chapter 52 verse 13, and there we read these words in the opening verse of this song. 'Behold, my servant' now that's interesting, isn't it? behold, my servant, you see, wasn't that how the first servant song opened? Isaiah 42 verse 1, had started with exactly the same phrase, 'behold, my servant whom I uphold'; now again in the 4th song we're going to start with exactly the same expression, 'behold, my servant shall deal prudently', and so you see, what we're being told here is just as at the beginning of the servant songs, we're asked to step forward that we might contemplate the servant in the opening of his ministry, now we're invited by the prophet

that we might come back again, and that we might now contemplate the servant in the magnitude of his labours, as his ministry is brought to a climax. 'Behold, my servant' is the cry of the prophet and he invites us again to consider this man, as the story of the servant is wonderfully brought to a conclusion.

Concerning the servant he says, 'my servant shall deal **prudently**', now some of you might have an alternative reference in the margin which says the word means 'to prosper'; in fact, both of those are very good translations of the Hebrew word 'sakal' (7919) it actually means both of these ideas, it's a word that implies to '**act wisely or circumspectly**' , that's one side of the meaning of the word, but the other side is that as a result of acting with wisdom that the servant will **succeed** in his labours, there will be success! He will prosper in his endeavours because of the very wisdom of his ways. Both of those thoughts are implied in the words 'deal prudently'. You see, again b&s, I want to take you back to the moment of time, imagine that this is king Hezekiah now, he still lies on his bed, the sickness has not passed. The nation believes, with the Assyrian encamped outside the door, that all is lost, and that the king himself must have committed some grievous sin because he's obviously being smitten by God; and the prophet Isaiah stood up and said, 'Behold, my servant shall deal prudently, he shall prosper, he shall be extolled, and be very high'. You see, here was the promise or the prophecy that the king would recover from his sickness, I believe, that is the context of the words when they were first uttered. This is the promise by Isaiah the prophet that the king would arise from his bedchamber, that he would yet prosper and he would yet in fact, be exalted in a remarkable way. You see, this was a prophecy at the time, both to encourage the king and to encourage the nation itself.

So it would be, so it would come to pass! The verse says, 'he shall be **exalted and extolled and be very high**' and so we have a sense here, that although the previous songs have spoken of apparent failure, of physical indignity, of bitter opposition, what the prophet is obviously saying in this 13th verse, is that whatever you might think about the servant, says Isaiah, I assure you, I promise you that it is not the last of him. So you think the king is finished, so you think the king lies upon his deathbed, well, I assure you that the king shall be exalted and extolled and become very high; and so the promise of Isaiah the prophet was that this was not the end of the servant, but rather the beginning of a triumphant conclusion, that what appeared to be the servant's misfortune that he was enduring, was going to be seen to be finally resulting in an amazing and in a staggering success. He invited the nation again, to contemplate the servant of God!

Then he says in the 14th verse, 'As many were astonished at thee; his visage was so marred more than any man, and his form more than the sons of men'. Now really these words in verse 14, have to be read with the words of verse 15, because there's a contrast being implied here, if we just read it through. 'As many were astonished at thee; his visage was so marred more than any man, and his form more than the sons of me: So shall he **sprinkle** many nations', so you see how the full force of the expression lies here! So that just as some were amazed at the sickness of the servant, so says the prophet, there will be many who will be startled when the servant arises to sprinkle

them with the blood of His covenant and with the benefit of His labours. The measure of our trials will be compensated by the measure of our exaltation, of course, is the principle of the verse, and so it was to be. The promise of the verse was that the nations themselves, the nations themselves would somehow remarkably see in this whole incident, the fact that the king had greatly recovered, not only from his sickness, but in that recovery there was going to be a great benefit to other people. Do you see what it says in verse 14, 'his visage was so marred more than any man, and his form more than the sons of men', the RSV says 'his appearance was so marred beyond human semblance', now we believe that in the case of Hezekiah, the reason for this marring was that he was smitten with leprosy, we're going to come to that a little later on in the verses that follow in Isaiah 53. We believe that the boil that was laid upon him in Isaiah 38, it was the botch of Egypt, described as such in Deuteronomy 28 verse 27, it's the same word as 'boil' in the Hebrew (7822) and Thirtle who was, of course, by the way, a Hebraist in Cambridge, says that the botch of Egypt was a severe form of elephantiasis, a form of leprosy, from whence there would be no recovery, and the effect of this leprous condition, we believe, upon the king was to mar his visage terribly. He would not be able to go out and to see the people, he would be left alone in his bed chamber as an unclean man, smitten in such a way that his very appearance was grossly disfigured.

Just as in Hezekiah, so that principle was to be outworked in the life of Christ. Because you see, you know in John 8 verse 57, you'll remember the episode where Jesus said to the Pharisees, 'before Abraham was, I am', and do you know what the Jews said in reply, they looked at Him, a man about 30 - 33 years of age, and they looked at Him and said, 'thou art not yet 50', you do think that was an indication, b&s, in John 8 verse 57 that the care and grief of His responsibilities had aged Jesus prematurely beyond His time? that they looked upon Him and thought they saw an older man, His visage was so marred? Well, certainly there would be an outworking of this principle, wouldn't there? in the life of Christ, as His own work of service came to an end. You see, Gethsemane left lines of anguish upon him, and a crimson brow, when the record says, 'that He sweat, as it were, great drops of blood', then there was the cruel treatment of the soldiers, the lashing of the scourge and finally the crown of thorns that was pressed down upon His forehead, to the royal character of God's servant, and all the world beheld a man whose visage was marred more than any man.

There's a principle here, isn't there? b&s, that the toll of service fell heavily upon the servant of God. Hezekiah in his own day as he suffered from the stroke of leprosy, and the Lord from the grief and the sorrow that lay upon Him, the burden of His enormous responsibilities to fulfil the will and the purpose of His Father. Yet verse 15 which is going to end this first section, this first strophe says, 'Nevertheless, just as those were astonished at the stricken condition of the servant, so in the future shall he sprinkle many nations; the kings shall shut their mouths at him, for that which has not been told them shall they see, and that which they have not heard shall they consider'. So they shut their mouths not only at the astonishment of the brutal treatment that the servant has endured, but more than match now, when the promise of the prophecy was, that

the servant would arise to sprinkle them with the benefits of His sacrifice. You remember, b&s, on more than one occasion in these studies, that we've referred to the fact, that Hezekiah was to become a light to the Gentiles. That was the promise of the first song, and of the second song, that Hezekiah would become a light to the nations, and here now it says that he shall sprinkle many nations, 'the kings shall shut their mouths at him'.

I'd like to take you back to 2 Chronicles 32, so you can actually see the outworking of this in the life of Hezekiah (we did say that we would do this, here it is) in 2 Chronicles 32, the remarkable way in which Hezekiah became a 'light to the nations', so we're told there these words in verse 22 to go in at, 'Thus Yahweh saved Hezekiah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem from the hand of Sennacherib the king of Assyria, and from the hand of all other, and guided them on every side. (now listen to this verse) 'And many brought gifts unto Yahweh to Jerusalem, and precious things to Hezekiah king of Judah, so that **he was magnified in the sight of all nations from thenceforth**'. "I will give thee for a light to the Gentiles; kings shall shut their mouths at him", was the promise of the last servant song. So it came to pass in a remarkable way, that the nations made obeisance to Hezekiah. Do you see what it says here in Isaiah 49 verse 7, 'Thus saith Yahweh the Redeemer of Israel and His holy One, to him whom man despiseth, to him whom the nation abhorreth to a servant of rulers, kings **shall see and arise**, and princes also shall worship because of Yahweh who is favourable, and the Holy One of Israel. He shall choose thee', and the nations round about were all going to receive benefit from the overthrow of the Assyrian host. They would all count the little kingdom of Judah as something special and they would all consider Hezekiah, good king Hezekiah of Judah as someone absolutely remarkable! In fact, do you see what it says in verse 31 of this chapter? 'Howbeit in the business of the ambassadors of the princes of Babylon, who sent unto him to inquire of the wonder that was done in the land', the miracle that was done in the land, and Judah became famous amongst the nations. Also Hezekiah became a light to the Gentiles, and the prophet's words in Isaiah 52 verse 15 came to pass! So shall he sprinkle many nations, the kings shall shut their mouths at him: for that which had not been told them shall they see; and that which they had not heard shall they consider'. So it's a remarkable lesson, isn't it? b&s, the way in which we have this primary outworking of the very spirit of that song there, in the life experiences of the king himself, and so it came to pass wonderfully, just as the prophet himself had prophesied concerning the servant of God.

If that was the astonishment in the days of Hezekiah, b&s, then how much greater will the astonishment be, when the Lord Himself returns as the servant of God! He will come to dispense healing blessings to the nations, by the way, one thing I forgot to mention, but here is an excellent thought for you in terms of a cross reference to 2 Chronicles, let's go back there, shall we? and come back to 2 Chronicles 32, and let me just point out one interesting word connection there, that I think clinches the primary fulfilment of these verses in the life of Hezekiah himself. Now you remember what the prophet had promised, Isaiah 52 verse 13, 'my servant shall deal prudently, he shall be exalted and extolled'. Now you see the word 'extolled' there, now when you come back

to 2 Chronicles 32 verse 23, that word 'extolled' the same Hebrew word is found in that verse, what word might that be, do you think? why it's the word 'magnified' (5375) and Hezekiah was extolled in the sight of all the nations, 'my servant shall be extolled', same Hebrew word; so you see, there was a definite outworking of these things in the life of the king, that, of course, even Hezekiah was to be but a foreshadowing of a far greater return to the servant of Israel, the servant of God, when Jesus Christ Himself returns and the kings and the princes shall again 'shut their mouths in astonishment'.

So what's the principle, do you think of these first 3 verses, the first strophe, the first stanza of this 4th song? Well, the principle is true for all God's servants, isn't it? not that we're going to be mad, in the way that Hezekiah was, but there'll be a lesson here that the principle of service in the truth will take its toll upon us. We ought not to be surprised if the service of the truth takes it toll upon us, that faithful service will entail in all of our lives, a measure of Christ's suffering. But the great promise of these first 3 verses is this, b&s, that the servant of God **will be there in the age to come**, that's the promise of these verses, isn't it? That whatever comes upon us in life as God's servants, we will be amongst those that will be there in the age to come! So the servant's work is to teach men the opposite of their impressions. What they thought was futile labour, will turn out finally to be a truth, that all service in the sight of God is fruitful, and shall finally lead to glory and to exaltation! What a marvellous lesson for us to learn, that all service in God's eyes is fruitful and shall finally lead to glory and to exaltation.

So chapter 53 verse 1 starts with these words, and now, of course, we're in the second strophe; and the second strophe is different to the first one, that's for sure! There's quite a different feeling here, in fact I think, the opening line of each stanza or strophe actually gives us the key to the whole of that section. The spirit of the next section is **the unbelief and the incredulity that accompanied the manifestation of God's servant**. 'Who hath believed our report? and to whom is the arm of Yahweh revealed?' By the way, most translations render the first phrase as follows, 'who hath believed what we have heard?' and of course, what we've heard is the life experiences of the servant. The report is of the servant but it's the report that we've heard; who hath believed this? and the answer is, in the context of Isaiah 53, **virtually nobody**; although they had heard of the remarkable life experiences of the servant, the state of the nation at this time, was that no body did believe the report concerning the servant. They had all heard the prophet saying, 'behold my servant', but who believed in Israel that the king would arise from his bed? few believed that Hezekiah would recover, it was a problem, b&s, that was yet to be resolved and outworked in the story of the servant.

Now when it says in verse 1, 'who hath believed our report', and to whom is the arm of the LORD revealed? how was that to be reported or revealed? and the answer is at the end of verse 15 of the previous verse, that the report of the servant was to be both **seen** and **heard**, that's how the report was to be revealed, it was to be both seen and heard, and this story was to be outworked, of course, in the very life of the servant itself. This was not a story as told by voice, but a story that was told by the life experiences

of the servant, they would both see and hear the report concerning the servant by contemplating his life. So with us also, the story of the report is to be manifested in our lives! Of course, the phrase the 'arm of Yahweh' in verse 1, well, the arm stands for the extension of a man's purpose or the extension of his power, doesn't it? and that's exactly what it is here, the servant is the extension of the Father's power and purpose in the earth. So despite that, says verse 1, there is this cry that the report and the revelation of God's purpose would meet, in fact, with terrible unbelief. If there was incredulity in Hezekiah's day, and if there was indifference in the Lord's day when the true servant was revealed, then we ought not to be surprised that if in our day and in our own life, as the servants of God, that we're met with a similar spirit. If many on both sides do not believe the report, do not believe in the servants of God, we ought not be surprised. If we experience that, b&s, because that was the experience of Hezekiah and even more so of the Lord Himself. The reason for this is because the servant is not understood, his work is not understood and because his work was not understood, it was not believed.

Yet the second verse says, nevertheless, despite the fact that there was unbelief, despite the fact that so few accepted the report of the servant, verse 2 says, 'he shall grow up before Him as a tender plant, and as a root out of a dry ground'. Now these words are interesting! 'he shall grow up before Him as a tender plant', do you know that in the Hebrew there's a particular word that should be emphasized, now what word do you think should be emphasized? what word do you think should be emphasized in the Hebrew? now let me read it to you with the emphasis of the Hebrew and you'll see the point I think, of the section: 'for he shall grow up before **Him** as a tender plant', that's what the Hebrew says, and you see, I think that's a marvellous thing. Because to me, what that's saying, b&s, is that the Father Himself is intensely interested in the development of His servants. You know, the Lord Jesus Christ grew up in the obscurity of Nazareth, 'can any good thing come out of Nazareth?' a little wee town on a little prominence in the midst of Galilee known of few, and yet although the Lord grew up in the obscurity of Nazareth, the fact is, He grew up in the very centre of divine attention, did He not? because the Father's eyes were on that little city in Israel, at that time, as that tender plant grew up. This is the promise, you see, that Almighty God is interested in the development and in the growth of His servants, as He was in His own Son; the Father bestowed such care upon Him, says this verse, that He sprang up like a tender plant even in a desert, even in a dry place.

I think, by the way, there's a connection here again in thought with Hezekiah, because you see, Hezekiah sprang up out of the line of Ahaz; Hezekiah sprang to life in a nation who knew not their God, where the temple doors had been closed, where there were no songs of praise or worship being sung, where the offerings had ceased, where the Passover wasn't being held. Hezekiah came to a nation that did not know their God, he was like a tender plant growing up in a desert. If you read the record of Hezekiah and the story of his work alone in Israel, you'll find there was a great gulf between the king and the nation, it's as if he was in an arid wilderness all by himself, but the promise of the servant song, is that the tender plant grows up before **God Himself**, and God

delights in the development of His servants. He will do the same for us, b&s, as He did for His Son and as he did for Hezekiah, that the Father will show care and attention upon us, so that we might grow in His presence and in His sight! Isn't it a wonderful comfort, there? that's the promise, you see, that's given to the servant, He shall grow up before Him!

The verse goes on to say, 'He hath no form nor comeliness; and when we shall see Him, there is no beauty that we should desire Him'. Of course, that would be true in the days of Hezekiah, wouldn't it? as the king languished alone in his bedchamber, his face disfigured, his body covered with the botch of Egypt, the boil of imminent death lying upon him; there was no beauty or comeliness in king Hezekiah in that day. How do you think this outworked in the life of the Lord, b&s, as the Jerusalem bible says, 'without beauty, without majesty, no looks to attract our eyes'. I think, b&s, the way that I read that verse, and the way it seems to read to me is, I think we're being told that the Lord Jesus Christ, was not a person whose personal appearance excited attention; I don't know how you see Christ but to me, I think what we're being told here, is that he didn't stride around like a handsome warrior in Israel. There was no commanding aspect to His bearing like us all, He wasn't striking in His appearance, He wasn't that sort of man, was He? He was a man who drew people to Him but it wasn't the physical aspect of his frame or his countenance necessarily, His greatness was not in that which would attract the carnal mind or the admiring eye of the flesh. There was a spiritual aura to Christ which drew attention but I think in many other respects, He was probably an ordinary man, perhaps something about the eyes that was special, but not a commanding person.

As His ministry deepened and as the words of Christ became more lofty as a mysterious tone of suffering emerged in the teaching of Christ, the interest of the nation waned, until the point finally developed, where because they did not understand Him, they simply left Him and walked away, as Isaiah 53 verse 3 goes on to say, 'He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief', by the way, in the Hebrew those words, funny enough, I did say that the words in this song are powerful, didn't I? these two words are actually too powerful in the English for what the Hebrew really suggests. The Hebrew really of these two words, more literally translated simply that He was disesteemed and left alone. It's not saying that they despised Him in the sense that we would use it in the English, it's simply that they did not understand Him so they did not regard Him highly, nor did they follow Him; they just basically showed indifference to Him, they drifted away and they left Him by Himself.

Actually, I think there was a specific moment in the time of Christ, in the ministry of Christ that that was outworked; can you remember these words in John 6, just come and have a look at this for a moment, in John 6 I think there was a specific moment when He was despised and rejected of men occurred, where they simply walked away from the Lord and left Him alone, alone with His thoughts and alone with His service. Remember these words in John 6 verse 59 which says, 'These things said He in the synagogue, as He taught in Capernaum. Many therefore of His disciples, when they

had heard this, said, This is a hard saying; who can hear it?' As a result of that and the difficulty they had grasping the teaching of this One, verse 66 says, 'From that time many of His disciples went back, and walked no more with Him', you see, they simply left the Lord, didn't they? they walked away. Verse 66 of John 6, they went back and walked no more with Him! You see, I think what this servant song is saying when it says 'He was despised and rejected of men', is that the servant had to learn to endure loneliness as part of his work. It wasn't just a loneliness in that sense, because you see, some of the disciples stayed with Him, didn't they? but just let me read some words to you from the gospel of Mark (you don't need to turn these up) but they start in the reading that we had today from Mark 8, tell me what you think about these words, in terms of the loneliness of the servant of God! Verse 15, He said, 'Take heed, beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and the leaven of Herod; and they reasoned among themselves saying, it's because we have no bread. When Jesus knew it He said, why reason ye because you have no bread, perceive ye not yet, neither understand, have ye your heart yet hardened? having eyes see ye not? and having ears hear ye not? and do ye not remember?' and He began to teach them that the Son of man must suffer many things and be rejected of the elders and of the chief priest and the scribes and be killed and after three days rise again. He spake that saying openly and Peter took Him and began to rebuke Him and said, Be it far from thee, Lord, this shall not happen unto Thee. Chapter 9 verse 9, 'and as they came down from the mountain, He charged them that they should tell no man what things they had seen, till the Son of man was risen from the dead. They kept that saying with themselves questioning one with another, what the rising from the dead should mean? Verse 30, 'As they departed thence and passed through Galilee, He taught His disciples and said unto them, the Son of man is delivered into the hands of men and they shall kill Him, and after that He is killed, He shall rise again the third day; **but** they understood not that saying and were afraid to ask Him'. Do you see what we're saying, b&s? you see, even the disciples that travelled with Christ, even the followers that remained with Christ, didn't really know what He was saying, didn't know what He meant, didn't know what His mission was. **He was alone!** even with them, He was alone, and that's a principle that the servant of God learns in life, to endure loneliness as part of his ministry.

The song goes on to say in Isaiah 53 verse 3, 'And we hid as it were our faces from Him; He was despised, and we esteemed Him not', and so the prophet identifies himself, notice, with a nation that would reject their Messiah. Did you notice that? it says, '**we hid as it were** our faces from Him', so the prophet, as it were, includes himself in this lamenting cry for the nation that did not understand what their King was all about, and did not see His work as a servant, as it were, left Him alone in His grief, and hid their faces from Him. You see, this is the hidden psychological claim of contempt of others; it's a terrible thing to endure, b&s, is the principle of **contempt**, we hid as it were our faces from Him. You see, one of the basic hungers of the human personality is to be esteemed, to be wanted, to be needed, to be acknowledged, to be accepted! Don't we all need that, even in ecclesial life, to feel that we're part of the ecclesia? that we're wanted in the brotherhood? that we're esteemed by one another? We all have a hunger to feel that, not necessarily for the praise of men, but at least that

we're a part of the community and that we feel accepted and needed and loved. How agonizing to be starved of all of that, 'we hid as it were, our faces from Him', how would Christ feel, b&s, with that coming upon Him? given the acutely sensitive personality that our Lord would have had. These were dreadful burdens that the servant had to bear in the course of His labours.

Now in verses 4 to 6 we come to the heart of the song itself, to the very midst of this song. Now we break forth into the grief of the whole moment. Let's just have a look at that, shall we? on our translation here in terms of the middle of this song. Isaiah 53 verses 4 to 9 is what we're now looking at. See if you can see these personal pronouns crying to one another, across the lines of the text.

'Surely our aliments He bore, and our pains He did take for His burden;
But we, we accounted Him stricken, smitten of God and afflicted,
Yet He, He was pierced for crimes that were ours,
He was crushed for guilt that was ours,
The chastisement of our peace, was upon Him;
By His stripes, healing is ours!

Of us all, like to sheep went astray,
Every man to his way did turn;
And Yahweh made light upon Him,
The guilt of us all.

And you can see those pronouns as they're scattered through that section and they cry to one another. It's what causes the assonance, it's what causes the rhyming, the rhyming sounds in these verses. And you see, here now in the heart of the song, these personal pronouns come to the fore, as the astonishing realization dawns, that the servants suffering was actually **for others and not for Himself**. This is going to be the great thing that bursts forth in understanding upon the nation! This is the drama of the 4th servant song, is that the people, the nation, would finally realize with absolute astonishment, that all that they had seen in the servant of Yahweh, was **for them!** and this is how the Hebrew is written to stress that in verses 4 to 6, it's like this, b&s, this is the essence of these verses: you see, on the one side we've got these ideas:

He hath borne
He hath carried
He was wounded
He was bruised
He was chastised
He had stripes

and on the other side, calling out to those statements, on the other side of these verses, are the words:

our griefs
our sorrows
our transgressions
our iniquities
our peace
our healing

This is what the song is all about, you see. This is a nation that suddenly awakes to the realization, that everything that happened to **Him**, was actually for **them**!

Now I want to picture the scene for you, b&s, in the context again, in the life of Hezekiah. We want to try and see that primary fulfilment in the life of the king, because you see, if we can see the primary fulfilment, it gives us a better basis to make proper application in the life of Christ, and to establish the principle in our own lives. So you see, here's Hezekiah, smitten with leprosy, the botch of Egypt lying upon him, the loathsome disease all over his body, marred and disfigured more than any man. Not only is the king **alone** in his bedchamber, but the Assyrian lies encamped outside; how did the nation view their king at that precise moment? the answer is, verse 4, 'but surely we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted'. You notice that, **smitten of God**, you see, what the nation believed is that whatever suffering was coming upon king Hezekiah, was for his own sins and for his own fault. Now you see the word 'stricken' there in verse 4, that's the word translated over 50 times in Leviticus 13 and 14, concerning leprosy; it's used throughout the chapters on leprosy and how to deal with leprosy in the book of the Law. This is the word that's applied to the king, you see, the nation believed that he had been smitten by God with leprosy because of his own sins, that's how they saw him. It's the very word translated as the scourge of leprosy in the book of the Law, so as a result of this, the king was shunned and abhorred, he was considered to be under the divine sentence of punishment for his own sins.

But an amazing thing happened! and this is what happened, b&s, or at least something like it. Now picture the scene! You see, the city's in darkness, the watchmen are upon the walls, the whole host of Sennacherib lies outside the walls, all hope to flee is lost, the city is in a desperate strait, the people are filled with dread, their confidence has evaporated. Now they've heard that the king himself is stricken with a malady from whence he will not recover. They esteem him to be the subject of divine judgment, all hope appears lost! Tomorrow, tomorrow Sennacherib will come! and Jerusalem will fall. But instead, what happened was this! that on the dawning of the new day, there was a sudden commotion, and a sudden shouting outside the walls; and the people come running from all parts, to hear the noise, to hear the shouting outside the walls. What has happened is that the scouts, the scouts of Jerusalem have been outside and they have looked upon the host of the Assyrian, and they have found something absolutely remarkable! What is this? and as the people all gather together, they hear the shouting, 'Yahweh hath done great things for us whereof we are glad'; because on rising in the morning, the watchmen have looked out upon the enemy and they have seen **no movement** in the host of the Assyrians, and where the scouts have gone out to check

on the host, what they found as that historical record tells us so dramatically, is **there they all were dead, corpses**, says the record, 185,000 men lying prostrate on the ground outside Jerusalem. All the scouts found, b&s, was **stillness** everywhere, the stillness of death everywhere. The whole host of sin lies dead! God Almighty had sent His blast upon the enemy.

So the scouts return and the gates are opened, and the city joyously welcomes the news and the whole crowd begin to sing and to praise and to surge their way through the city streets making their way to the palace of the king. Suddenly, they arrive at the palace itself, and the door opens and in the silence, the king steps forward to see his people, muffled in robes. Then he lifts his mantle and there's a shout and then a roar, 'the king is cured, no leprosy is upon him, what miracle is this? Yahweh hath indeed done great things for us, whereof we're glad. Isaiah was right! My servant shall deal prudently and shall be exalted and extolled and be very high'. How now do the people view their king? Deliverance has now come through him, and so now they begin to cry in the street itself, 'surely he hath borne our griefs, he was bruised for our iniquities, and with his stripes, we are healed', as the nation suddenly realized that it was the faithfulness of their king that saved them, on that dramatic day. Do you know, b&s, that's what the Jewish Talmud says; the Jewish Talmud says that Jerusalem was saved from the hand of the Assyrians by the righteousness of Hezekiah **alone**. That he was the saviour of the nation! That they all owed their deliverance to him on that day; do you see the word 'healed' (7495), by the way, at the end of verse 5, well that's the identical word found in the book of Leviticus for 'recovery' from leprosy. That's the word used for a person who has recovered from leprosy.

Now do you see what these verses, b&s, are now saying, verses 4 to 6? You see, this is the drama of the whole moment; you see, they had looked upon their king as a leper and now they understand that he has healed their leprosy! Shall I say that again? You need to capture that because this is the crucial idea, you see; **they had considered him to be a leper, but now they understand that he has healed their leprosy**. So you see, at the climax of this crisis, b&s, Hezekiah is depicted as bearing the sins of the nation in himself, a righteous man suffering from leprosy in illustration of the state of his nation. He had become in type, their sin bearer and their saviour.

Come and have a look at chapter 33 just for a moment, because although Isaiah 33 comes a little earlier in the text, it actually comes later in terms of meaning; this is a prophecy of the time after the Assyrian had gone, and the land was to be cleared from its enemies, and look what it says. See how this becomes the other side, as it were, of Isaiah 53. Verse 16, 'He shall dwell on high: his place of defence shall be the munitions of rocks: bread shall be given him; his waters shall be sure. Thine eyes shall see the king in his beauty': you see, Hezekiah has recovered from his sickness here, the malady has gone, remember Isaiah 53 said, 'there's no beauty that we should desire him', because he was disfigured more than any man, but here is the prophecy of a latter time when Zion has been redeemed and restored from the hand of the enemy and the whole nation would look upon the king cured and whole again; 'thine eyes shall see the

king in his beauty'. Verse 20, 'Look upon Zion, the city of our solemnities: thine eyes shall see Jerusalem a quiet habitation, a tabernacle that shall not be taken down; not one of the stakes thereof shall ever be removed, neither shall any of the cords thereof be broken. But there the glorious Yahweh will be unto us a place of broad rivers and streams', and now verse 24. 'And the inhabitant (singular) shall no longer say, I am sick: but the people (plural) shall be forgiven their iniquity'. The recovery of the king who would no longer need to say he was sick, would be the very signal for the forgiving of the iniquity of the nation as a whole; you see, the king had been their sin bearer and their saviour in type, and his recovery from sickness is the signal of their forgiveness from the leprosy of their sins and iniquities.

You see, the whole of this story , b&s, in Isaiah 53, the great servant song, is played out in the life of the king himself and the dramatic deliverance from the host of sin, on the day when Sennacherib's army lay dead by the blast of Almighty God, and the king was healed of his leprosy. Is the work of Christ any less dramatic than that of His forebearer? Is the nature of our Lord's recovery any less miraculous? Is the magnitude of His deliverance any smaller in its scope? Is our need any less compelling than they of Jerusalem, in that day? Is our transgression any less acute than theirs? You see, here is the mystery of the servant suffering finally resolved. This was not a man suffering purely for the sake of pain, but a man who suffered for the great deliverance and salvation of others! So you see, we've got a progression of thought here, as the servant is contemplated in these verses.

Firstly, His ministry was considered bewildering and strange, verse 2.

Then they considered it contemptible and futile, verse 3.

Then they accounted it as the servant's own punishment, verse 4.

Then they realized that his suffering was actually for them, verse 5.

Finally, they realized that his work has indeed brought a marvellous deliverance and salvation for them all, verse 6.

You know, b&s, I believe, that this particular song will be sung by Israel when they come back to the land of promise. I suppose we all picture it in different ways, but you see, I believe that this will be sung as a song of lamentation in front of Christ in Jerusalem. I also like to think that when Israel finally advances to the gates of the city, and the gates are opened, there will stand the Lord Jesus Christ, who is not only the King of Jerusalem, but the servant of Yahweh. On one hand of Him will be David the beloved, and on the other side will be Hezekiah, the suffering servant; and flanked by the two greatest kings of the past, the nation I think, will advance before the Lord Jesus Christ, and they will sing Isaiah 53, the 4th servant song, as a lamentation of grief before Him, with tears rolling down their faces. This is the lamentation of Zechariah 12, of a nation who have never understood who their Messiah is! Even to this very day,

b&s, they don't understand this song, do they? But they will in that day and there will be a glorious moment of forgiveness and reunion as they sing these words to their King, because they were written about a king in the first instance, and inspired by the life's experiences of our Lord Jesus Christ's kingly predecessor, good king Hezekiah of Judah, the servant of God.

Now I don't want you to think that these personal pronouns in these verses, imply the spirit of substitution. He for us! I don't think that substitution, of course, is being taught in this passage at all. What I do think is being taught is this, that when all others were powerless to effect their own redemption, God provided one who did it all for them; in the first instance it was Hezekiah, delivering the nation from Sennacherib. In the case of the Lord, the teaching of these verses, I believe, is that He was identified in every way with the difficulties and the weaknesses of the people He came to save. 'Surely He hath borne our griefs', He was a man identified, there was an intimate closeness between the servant and those that He came to minister among!

Now let me show you the spirit of this song then, in a New Testament passage. Now where shall we go for this? Well, how about Philippians 2 because this is clearly a reference to the servant songs, but I think that Philippians 2 is the passage that really summarizes the spirit of this first half of the last servant song (because remember, we've only got to the first half so far, there's more to come, there will be yet another passage from the New Testament that we shall see, takes up the spirit of this particular song). So here it is then, Philippians 2 and although I've started there at verse 5, I think very much that we should actually start from the 4th verse, because here's the lesson. 'Look not every man on his own (interests) as the Diaglott says, but every man on the interests of others'. You see, the Lord was sympathetic with the needs and the weaknesses of the people. He was made in the likeness of men, the likeness of sinful flesh that He might minister among them. Now verse 5 says, 'Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus'. So what was the mind of Christ that the apostle has in mind here, that he would encourage us to follow? Well, he says it's this, verse 6, 'Who being in the form of God, thought it not a thing to be grasped at, to be equal with God: But made Himself of no reputation, and took upon Him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men. And being found in fashion as a man, He humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross'. So you see, here's someone who had intense sympathy with those whom He came to minister among. 'Look not every man on his own interests, says verse 4, but on the interests of others'. Then, as a result of that labour of sympathy for others, that sympathetic ministration for the needs of others, well, says Philippians 2 verse 9, 'Wherefore God also hath highly exalted Him (tape stopped and then continued but words are missing) 'and extolled and be very high'.

You see, what I think really happens here, is that the apostle Paul has simply reversed the order of the teaching of the song. You see, what the song says is this, the song says, 'the servant shall be exalted and extolled and be very high', because he came to minister to the needs of others, and bore their griefs. Now what Paul does is he simply

reverses those two ideas around in Philippians 2 and says, because the Lord looked on the interests of others and in humility became sympathetic to minister to their needs, God will highly exalt Him. It's the same message, isn't it? it's just the other way around. But the crucial thing for us, of course, is the teaching of verse 5 here, isn't it? we're exhorted to show this very spirit of sympathetic ministration for others in our own lives also, if we will be the servants of God.

Exaltation will come, b&s, for those who have served in sympathy for the needs of others! That's the lesson, isn't it? Exaltation will come for those who have served in sympathy for the needs of others!

It must have been a remarkable day, mustn't it? b&s, on the day that the nation of Israel finally appreciated what Hezekiah had done for them, and that they owed their very deliverance on that day to the righteous king, who suffered alone in his bedchamber, whom they had shunned and abhorred. But he ministered to their needs although they never knew! In the words of a hymn, b&s,

Then let each esteem his brother,
Better than himself to be,
And let each prefer another,
Full of love, from envy free.
Happy are we, happy are we,
When in this we all agree.