

The Obedient Servant

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Portraits of Jesus in Isaiah

1. "Have I ceased to be Your God?"

A. This is the question that begins the introduction of the Lord's Servant.

1. Am I not still God?
2. We will have moments in our lives where we question God:
 - a. We may question God's love.
 - b. We may question God's fairness.
 - c. We may question God's existence.
3. Israel was lost in her sin.
 - a. She had been exiled and sent to a far-away land.
 - b. She was separated from the land, the temple, and the culture she loved.
 - c. Was God done with Her?

B. God had made a covenant with Israel.

1. They would be His chosen people.
2. Through them, the nations would be blessed.
3. Through them, the Messiah would be born.

C. But some among Israel were questioning.

1. If God loved me, then why this exile?
2. If God was going to bless the nations through us, then why this separation?

3. Many had believed that Israel was too far gone to be saved or redeemed.

D. Isaiah 50 begins with God challenging this line of thinking.

1. Just because things aren't going the way you wanted, it doesn't mean God has left you.

2. Just because you are experiencing the discipline of the Lord, it does not mean you are not loved.

3. **If HE is not God in your exile He will not be God in your Promised Land.**

2. The Lord asks Israel to show Him the proof of their separation.

A. "Where is your mother's certificate of divorce?"

1. According to Deuteronomy 24:1–4 a divorce could set in train a series of events making the reconstitution of the first marriage impossible. The absence of a *certificate*, however, would indicate that this process had not even been started and that, therefore, the door was open to a reconciliation.¹

2. But God hadn't divorced their ancestors.

a. God had not given up on Israel.

b. Though she was being punished for her sin, God still loved her.

c. What Israel did not know was that God was raising up the Servant, Jesus, who would experience the pain and separation of death in order to pay the price for sin.

d. **Israel's exile was not permanent because of the future coming of Jesus.**

B. "To whom did I sell you?"

1. God uses the second illustration to make His point.

¹ J. A. Motyer, [*The Prophecy of Isaiah: An Introduction & Commentary*](#) (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1996), 397.

2. In antiquity, children, spouses, and even yourself could be sold into slavery to pay for a debt.

- a. Did God do something wrong and, therefore, have to sell His people or nations into slavery?
- b. Absolutely not.
- c. God had done nothing wrong.
- d. God is not financially broke or destitute.
- e. If God has not sold his people to pay some debt, then that means He can rescue them any time.

3. Had God ever sold his people before?

a. The answer is a shocking yes.

b. **Judges 2:14 (NIV)**

¹⁴ In his anger against Israel the LORD gave them into the hands of raiders who plundered them. He sold them into the hands of their enemies all around, whom they were no longer able to resist.

Judges 3:8 (NIV)

⁸ The anger of the LORD burned against Israel so that he sold them into the hands of Cushan-Rishathaim king of Aram Naharaim, to whom the Israelites were subject for eight years.

Judges 4:2 (NIV)

² So the LORD sold them into the hands of Jabin king of Canaan, who reigned in Hazor. Sisera, the commander of his army, was based in Harosheth Haggoyim.

Judges 10:7 (NIV)

⁷ he became angry with them. He sold them into the hands of the Philistines and the Ammonites,

C. The imagery illustrates this:

1. God is in complete control.
2. He does not allow sin to go unpunished, even among those that He loves.
3. But Israel's discipline and exile were under the supervision and direction of the Almighty God.
4. Israel's past tribulations were God's just discipline of his children; they were not intended to destroy the relationship he had with his people. God wanted to humble them and bring them back to himself.²
5. And when the timing was right, He would deliver them.

3. Israel had ignored God's presence and call.

A. Verse 2 asks why no one was there when God came.

1. The root of Israel's punishment and exile was that they ignored God when He visited them.
2. Israel constantly ignored the ministry of God among them.
 - a. They persecuted God's prophets.
 - b. They worshipped other gods at every opportunity.
 - c. Their leadership was consistently evil.
3. The desire of God was to connect with His people.
 - a. He wanted His presence to be with them.
 - b. He wanted to talk to them and communicate His plans.
4. The voice is similar to a husband who has caught his wife in adultery (which is a major theme of the prophets).
 - a. When I came to see you, why didn't you come and greet me?
 - b. You didn't return my calls, who were you talking to?

² Gary Smith, [Isaiah 40-66](#), vol. 15B, The New American Commentary (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 2009), 376.

5. Then God asks, "Why did you reject me?"

- a. Did you think I wasn't strong enough to rescue you?
- b. Did you think I was too weak for you, too poor for you...
- c. Was I not enough for you?

B. God begins to declare His strength and power.

1. This God they rejected is the one who speaks and dries up seas and rivers.
2. This God who they thought couldn't rescue them is the one who has the power to make the night sky dark and rules the universes.
3. And this is the God who was preparing an obedient Servant to deliver them from their exile.
4. **Disobedient Israel was going to be rescued and redeemed by the Obedient Servant of the Almighty God.**

4. In the midst of Israel's sin, God announces her savior. (V.V 4, 5)

A. The relationship with the Servant is what God had desired of Israel.

1. The Servant has an educated tongue or manner of speech.
 - a. The Lord's Servant will be able to bring hope to the weary and sustain them with His words.
 - b. Israel was called to this.
 - c. She was to be the one who was to proclaim God's salvation and goodness to the nations.
 - d. She was designed to live a life of holiness among peoples of sin and show them the power of God to save and transform.
 - e. But she didn't and so the Lord raised up for this purpose a Holy and Obedient Servant.
2. God had desired to speak to Israel and instruct her.

- a. But from the very beginning, she rejected the Word of God.
- b. When Moses was up on the mountain receiving the Commandments, Israel was down below worshipping a golden calf and engaged in a wild orgy.
- c. This was not what God had created Israel for.
- d. He longed to speak to her, love her, and walk with her.
- e. But she scorned her Husband, and so God raised up a Servant.
- f. And to this Servant, He would awaken each day and speak to Him and teach Him and a Divine manner.
- g. When Jesus got away to pray by himself, He was experiencing what was prophesied here in Isaiah 50.

5. The Servant is Obedient even when it was painful. V.v 6

A. Isaiah 50 introduces the pain the Servant will undergo.

- 1. This pain and suffering are dealt with more fully in Isaiah 53.
- 2. That God allowed His Servant to experience great pain and suffering is one of the most challenging aspects of Christianity.

B. The Servant offered his back to those who beat him.

- 1. Notice two things:
 - a. First, the Servant "offered" his back.
 - b. This demonstrates His willingness to experience pain for a divine purpose.
 - c. And the assumption is that if the Servant had the power to willingly give of His back, that meant He also had the power not to.
 - d. When Jesus was beaten and flogged, He still had supernatural power.

e. He willingly gave of Himself to the Father's will and purpose.

f. **Jesus was not a victim but a Servant.**

g. Though many in the audience assumed Jesus was powerless, just like every other man flogged by the Romans, the words of Isaiah 50 ring out: Am I powerless?

2. Second, the Obedient Servant had his beard pulled.

a. This was a grave insult to a Hebrew man.

b. It wasn't enough for the powers of the world to inflict pain upon the Servant but they had to humiliate Him as well.

c. When we think upon the Roman soldiers and religious leaders mocking and torturing Jesus, we may ask who was responsible?

1. Did God make them do that to Jesus or did God merely foretell that this would happen?

2. I believe the latter.

3. God knew that the sinfulness and hatred of those involved that day would lead to Jesus being flogged and humiliated.

4. God and His Servant knew this would happen and Jesus willingly submitted himself to the hatred of the men who did this to Him.

6. When you know you are loved you can endure anything. V.v 7-9.

A. The Servant is extremely confident.

1. Even though He was beaten and humiliated, He has confidence.

2. He knows God intimately. He knows that God is near his side. He knows that God is the one who will vindicate him. God is not some name given to the abstract unmoved mover of philosophy or the lifeless and powerless idols of the

pagans. When God's Servants are in trouble, God is right there to "justify, declare just, acquit, vindicate me"³

B. The scene is a court scene, and the Servant does not fear the verdict because no evidence of wrongdoing can be presented.

1. **The pain is real but the accusations are false.**

- a. This is what the enemy of your does to you.
- b. He tells you that you are no good, forgotten, broken, and worthless.
- c. The pain Satan inflicts upon you is real, but the accusations he brings against you are false.

2. This is exactly what Jesus experienced before the Sanhedrin and the Crowds.

- a. Real pain, but false accusations.
- b. Jesus withstood the attacks of his enemies not because He was guilty but because He was obedient to the Father and His plans for redemption.

C. **Believers are not exempt from pain, suffering, and accusations.**

1. **Let us read Romans 8:18-39.**

2. Romans 8:31 doesn't say no one is against us, instead it echoes the words of the Servant that it doesn't matter who is against us because God will prove our accusers to be in the wrong.

- a. When God is for you, it doesn't matter who is against you.
- b. This is what God was declaring to Israel:

³ Gary Smith, [Isaiah 40-66](#), vol. 15B, The New American Commentary (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 2009), 383-384.

c. You may have all the powers of Babylon against you in your exile, but nothing will stop God from saving you when the time comes.

d. Romans 8 never declares you a pain-free life: It declares God's power over you and your circumstances.

e. NOTHING can separate you from the love of Christ.

Romans 8:35–39 (NIV)

³⁵ Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword? ³⁶ As it is written:

"For your sake we face death all day long;

we are considered as sheep to be slaughtered."

³⁷ No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. ³⁸ For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, ³⁹ neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

f. If exile could not separate God from the Israel He loved, nothing that has ever been created can separate you from the love of God.

3. Romans 8:37 says, "No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us."

a. What are these things?

b. Vs. 35 says "Affliction, distress, persecution, famine, nakedness, danger and sword".

c. Paul said we will rise above those things because of God's divine work.

d. You haven't conquered something you haven't battled.

e. If you are battling something in your life, then through Jesus, you have the opportunity to conquer it.

7. The Victory of the Servant means life to some and death to others.

A. Isaiah 50:10 speaks to those who do listen and fears the Lord.

1. Even though they may be in darkness, Jesus will bring them light.

2. There is hope for all, "All who call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved".

3. God implores us to trust in the name of the Lord and to lean on Him.

a. Let God bring you victory.

b. Let God sustain you with a Word when you are weary.

c. Let God be your confidence.

d. The victory of the Servant is not for you to go to heaven but for you to be brought back into relationship with God.

B. Verse 11 has echoes to those who arrested Jesus in the dark night of Gethsemane.

1. There they sought him out, by torch, to persecute and mock him.

2. Though they felt justified at the moment, the Court of Heaven finds all those who reject Christ guilty.

3. The result: To go to death in torment.

C. Remember that the Hebrew word for Justice also means Judgment.

1. What is Good News for one is death to another.

2. It all hinges upon what we do with God's Servant, Jesus.