

Be Not Discouraged #1

Isa. 49:4 – “Then I said, I have laboured in vain, I have spent my strength for nought, and in vain: yet surely my judgment is with the LORD, and my work with my God.”

This verse is in the obvious context of a messianic prophecy. We might wonder at the sense of discouragement, since Jesus knew why he had come, and what would be necessary to fulfill the Father's will. Yet even with that knowledge, it was a temptation to discouragement that so many of his own people rejected him. 49:7 calls him God's "Holy One, to him whom man despiseth, to him whom the nation abhorreth, to a servant of rulers ..."

50:6 – "I gave my back to the smiters, and my cheeks to them that plucked off the hair: I hid not my face from shame and spitting."

53:3 – "He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief: and we hid as it were our faces from him; he was despised, and we esteemed him not. Surely he hath borne our sorrows: yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted."

Ps. 22:6-8 – "But I am a worm, and no man; a reproach of men, and despised of the people. All they that see me laugh me to scorn: they shoot out the lip, they shake the head, saying, He trusted on the LORD that he would deliver him: let him deliver him, seeing he delighted in him."

And so it turned out to be, not only in his sufferings during crucifixion, but also during his earthly ministry. He was without honour in his own country (Jn. 4:44), and not even his own (half-) brothers believed in him (Jn. 7:5). His people tried to stone him, and the elders of the people were constantly plotting to stop his mouth and ultimately to kill him. After his triumphant resurrection, his own people largely have rejected him, and even among professing Christians his person often seems to be held in low regard, as evidenced by their lukewarmness and disobedient lives. Lk. 6:46 – "And why call ye me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?"

Mt. 23:37 – "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killst the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not!"

Yet in all of this we have no doubt that he overcame those temptations to discouragement. In fact, this is included in what it meant to become a human and to be "tempted like as we are, yet without sin" (Heb. 4:15).

How did Christ overcome discouragement?

1. He recognized that the judgment of men meant nothing, that only God's approval mattered.

Isa. 49:4 – "... yet surely my judgment is with the LORD"

Jn. 8:28-29 – "... When ye have lifted up the Son of man, then shall ye know that I am he, and that I do nothing of myself; but as my Father hath taught me, I speak these things. And he that sent me is with me: the Father hath not left me alone; for I do always those things that please him."

2. He recognized that he had a work to do, a mission that must be accomplished, whether understood by men or not.

Isa. 49:4-5 – "...and my work with my God. And now, saith the LORD that formed me from the womb to be his servant, to bring Jacob again to him ..."

1 Tim. 1:15 – "... Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners ..."

3. He recognized that he must rely on the strength of God, not his own human strength.

Isa. 49:4-5 – "Then I said, I have laboured in vain, I have spent my strength for nought ... Though Israel be not gathered, yet shall I be glorious in the eyes of the LORD, and my God shall be my strength."

4. He recognized that he had a greater mission than just delivering the Jewish people, that the redemption he suffered to obtain was intended for all nations.

Isa. 49:6 – “And he said, It is a light thing that thou shouldest be my servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob, and to restore the preserved of Israel: I will also give thee for a light to the Gentiles, that thou mayest be my salvation unto the end of the earth.”

Jn. 3:17 – “For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved.”

To bring this about required his rejection by most Jews, at least for a time.

Ac. 13:46 – “Then Paul and Barnabas waxed bold, and said, It was necessary that the word of God should first have been spoken to you: but seeing ye put it from you, and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, lo, we turn to the Gentiles.”

Rom. 11:11 – “I say then, Have they stumbled that they should fall? God forbid: but rather through their fall salvation is come unto the Gentiles, for to provoke them to jealousy.”

5. He recognized that he would eventually enjoy a return to that glory which he had previously had with the Father in heaven.

Isa. 49:5 – “... Though Israel be not gathered, yet shall I be glorious in the eyes of the LORD ...”

Jn. 17:4-9 – “I have glorified thee on the earth: I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do. And now, O Father, glorify thou me with thine own self with the glory which I had with thee before the world was.”

6. By faith he saw the end result – a chosen people who would believe and be with him forever, beholding his glory.

Isa. 53:10 – “... when thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin, he shall see his seed, he shall prolong his days, and the pleasure of the LORD shall prosper in his hand.”

Jn. 14:2-3 – “... I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also.”

Jn. 17:20 – “Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word.”

He also knew that there would be an eventual resolution in the Millennium and eternity, and that his Lordship would be universally recognized..

Isa. 49:7 – “Thus saith the LORD, 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, princes also shall worship, because of the LORD that is faithful, and the Holy One of Israel, and he shall choose thee.”

Zech. 14:9 – “And the LORD shall be king over all the earth: in that day shall there be one LORD, and his name one.”

Zech. 14:16 – “And it shall come to pass, that every one that is left of all the nations which came against Jerusalem shall even go up from year to year to worship the King, the LORD of hosts, and to keep the feast of tabernacles.”

In the next lesson we will concentrate, not on Christ, but how this applies to ourselves – how we can overcome the discouragement that comes from apparent lack of success, or the disdain of others.

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