

Rejected of Men, Approved of God

Isa 49:4 Then I said, 'I have labored in vain, I have spent my strength for nothing and in vain; yet surely my just reward is with the Lord, and my work with my God.'

The Servant, whom we understand to be our Lord, the Christ, speaks here as one who is despondent for He tells us here that He has labored and spared no effort in His service to God and yet it appears that He has labored and spent His strength in vain for He says; *"I have labored in vain, I have spent my strength for nothing and in vain"*. At the same time it is important to note that this is not His final conclusion. If He would remain under this state of sorrow it would be to remain despondent and to sink into despair. But He goes on to say, "yet", or "but" and with this conjunction He calls attention to a contrary truth, a contrast to what might have been imagined. The importance here is that our Lord here conveys to us the thought that it is for the Lord (not ourselves) to decide what is approved unto God and what God would determine to be the sanction or approval of our labor for Him.

It is quite true, as we read in the Gospel of John, our Lord *"came into the world, and the world was made through Him, and the world did not know Him. He came to His own, and His own did not receive Him."* (John 1:10-12) Now, it is not that He did not fully reveal who He was, and why He had come into the world. That is, it was not His fault that He was rejected, rather we are to understand that the fault lies fully in the actions of sinful men. I have often heard it said that Jesus clearly failed because the angel that announced the birth of Christ announced "peace on earth" and since there has been no peace but wars and rumors of wars, Jesus failed. But Jesus did not come to bring peace amongst ungodly men, one with the other, a much greater and glorious peace, a peace whereby ungodly men who are at enmity with God may come to have peace with God, that is, that God's elect may no longer be children of wrath, but children of the Most High God.

Now there is a very important lesson for the church to learn here lest we become discouraged and are tempted to give in when it seems that the church labors to no avail, labors but sees little or no result. Let us consider then, The Servant's concern, and the Servant's purpose and then finally how unquestioning faith is the answer to despondency and despair.

A. Isaiah here brings forward a grievous complaint in the name of the Church, and as it were, it is made by the Head of the Church, our Lord Himself. – *"I have labored in vain, I have spent my strength for nothing and in vain"*

1. Christ here seems to be complaining with His church that it appears as if His labor has been in vain.
 - a. We know that He had desired to see the conversion of Jerusalem.
 - b. We hear it in his lament over Jerusalem

Matt 23:37-38 O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the one who kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to her! How often I wanted to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you were not willing!

2. We see Jesus the man of sorrows as He suffers God's wrath in our place

Ps 22:1-2 My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me? Why are You so far from helping Me and from the words of My groaning? O My God, I cry in the daytime, but You do not hear; and in the night season, and am not silent.

3. We see Jesus as a man of sorrows when He weeps over Jerusalem (cf. Lk 19:411)

"He saw the city and wept over it saying, If you had known, especially in this your day, the things that make for your peace! But now they are hidden from your eyes."

4. Our Lord is saying that His labors have been discouraging but He is not saying that His labors are fruitless or without effect
 - a. It is true Isaiah had just spoken of the power and efficacy of the Word which proceeded from the mouth of our Lord.
 - b. We read that His mouth has been made as a "sharp sword"
 - c. He had been faithful in His witness to the Jews, yet we know that His own rejected him
 - d. Is it that the Word of God is without power?

Rom 9:6-7 But it is not that the word of God has taken no effect. For they are not all Israel who are of Israel, nor are they all children because they are the seed of Abraham; but, "In Isaac your seed shall be called.

5. The Church must never consider her labor fruitless when men do not repent at the preaching of heavenly doctrine.
 - a. The prophet adds this that we may know that the fruit which God has purposed may not always be visible to the eyes of men;
 - b. The church must never question power of the truth of the word
 - c. Men may reject the Word, but God will cause His Word to prosper.

6. The Church must never consider the Word of God as powerless
 - a. It is the power of God unto salvation
 - b. It is sharper than any two edged sword, convincing, convicted and converting
 - c. It may not be popular to preach the Word and it may not draw large numbers, but it saves eternal souls
 - d. Many in the church today have forgotten this truth and have become discouraged and turned to gimmicks instead of the faithful preaching of the Word of God
7. The church that surrenders to this despondency will turn from the truth and turn to subjective feelings or experience rather than objective truth
 - a. Why we see self-centered rather than God-centered worship
 - b. A lack of proper appreciation for church history and the ancient creeds
 - c. An emphasis on pragmatism, that is, what works instead of what redeems and saves sinners
 - d. We see an anti-intellectual attitude and an openness to mere feelings, emotions and experience
- B. The Servant's purpose – Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners – “yet surely my just reward is with the Lord, and my work with my God.”
 1. It is true Jesus was a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief
 2. At the same time He was victorious in what He accomplished

*Isa 53:11 He shall see the labor of His soul, **and be satisfied**. By His knowledge **My righteous Servant shall justify many**, for He shall bear their iniquities.*

3. Yes, He was rejected, despised, buffeted and crucified
4. When Our Lord cried out, *But I am a worm, and no man; **a reproach of men, and despised by the people*** He is not questioning God in His wisdom, rather He is stating a fact and humbly submitting to His will
5. When we hear the opening words of Psalm 22, we need to ask this question?

Psa 22:1-2 My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me? Why are You so far from helping Me, and from the words of My groaning? O My God, I cry in the daytime, but You do not hear.

- a. Why would the Father forsake His Beloved Son?
- b. The only answer is because He loved us
6. Like the brothers of Joseph, they meant it for evil, but God meant it for the salvation of His people
7. Indeed the Good Shepherd will lay down His life for His sheep and will accomplish eternal salvation for God's chosen saints

CONCLUSION: Unquestioning faith is the answer to despondency and despair.

Do not think the promises of the Word of God are of no affect

It has accomplished that for which it is sent forth by God

Isa 55:11 So shall My word be that goes forth from My mouth; it shall not return to Me void, but it shall accomplish what I please, and it shall prosper in the thing for which I sent it.

Sometimes to the end of saving grace
Sometimes to damnation

Let this be said of His church
Disappointed but not discouraged
Disappointed but determined

Paul's message was also rejected by Jew and Gentile alike
Because of this Paul was put to death for his faithfulness to His Lord
But Paul was not discouraged but convinced that God's promises were faithful

2 Tim 4:6-8 "The time of my departure is at hand. I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. Finally, there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give to me on that Day, and not to me only but also to all who have loved His appearing.