

Isaiah 50:4-11 (NKJV)

⁴ "**The Lord GOD** has given Me The tongue of the learned, That I should know how to speak a word in season to *him who is* weary. He awakens Me morning by morning, He awakens My ear To hear as the learned.

⁵ **The Lord GOD** has opened My ear; And I was not rebellious, Nor did I turn away.

⁶ I gave My back to those who struck *Me*, And My cheeks to those who plucked out the beard; I did not hide My face from shame and spitting.

⁷ "For **the Lord GOD** will help Me; Therefore I will not be disgraced; Therefore I have set My face like a flint, And I know that I will not be ashamed.

⁸ *He is* near who justifies Me; Who will contend with Me? Let us stand together. Who *is* My adversary? Let him come near Me.

⁹ Surely **the Lord GOD** will help Me; Who *is* he *who* will condemn Me? Indeed they will all grow old like a garment; The moth will eat them up.

¹⁰ "Who among you fears the LORD? Who obeys the voice of His Servant? Who walks in darkness And has no light? Let him trust in the name of the LORD And rely upon his God.

¹¹ Look, all you who kindle a fire, Who encircle *yourselves* with sparks: Walk in the light of your fire and in the sparks you have kindled-- This you shall have from My hand: You shall lie down in torment.

This morning we are looking at the third "Servant Song" in the book of Isaiah. This is good because we know right off who this is talking about. It is talking about Christ. Notice the mentions of **the Lord God** in vs 4,5,7 and 9? This will be important as we go further in our text.

Now how can we best approach this text?

As I studied it, it seemed to me that we should not miss these elements.

First this passage gives us valuable insights into what was going through our Lord's mind as He ministered on earth. So we learn insights into Christ's character. That is valuable in itself. Knowing Christ better is always a good thing for someone who loves Christ.

Second Christ serves as an example for how we are supposed to approach **our lives**. We are going to learn by example how we should face the same things He faced. We learn how **we should think** by looking at **what He thinks**.

And **third** we are given instructions as to how we should respond to Christ. We are given Godly directions for facing some of the more difficult situations. But before we start all that, let's look at the four instances of The Lord God in our text. Let's call it the **Son's theology of the Father**

4 "**The Lord GOD has given Me The tongue of the learned**

5 **The Lord GOD has opened My ear**

7 "**For the Lord GOD will help Me**

9 **Surely the Lord GOD will help Me**

This is how Jesus regarded His Father. We can assume that no one knew the Father like the Son. They are one. So we can rest assured that the Servant knew what He was talking about. So what can we learn here?

The Father gave the Son **the tongue of the learned**. God gave the Son the wisdom He needed to minister to fellow human beings.

The Lord God has opened My ear. The Father gave the Son **the ability to hear His voice clearly**.

And the Lord God will help Me. The Father **could be depended upon** to help the Son as needed.

I think the important part to gather here is that God did everything for Christ **that was necessary for Christ to carry out His mission** of grace here. We must orient to God as the initiating factor in the mission of Christ. We can never get the idea that God the Father wanted to kill us all but Christ stood up for us and chose to come rescue us. No. It was nothing like that. God had this plan **from the beginning of time** to send His son for our rescue. It was **always** His intention and He was always pushing forward in its progress.

Our **Father God** loves us. It is not only Christ who loves us. The Father also loves us and initiated our salvation through His Son.

We see the dependence that the Son had on His Father. And we see the credit that the Son gives to His Father. Jesus truly was our example to follow. He really did need to **face life** like **we** must face life. He was more like us in some ways than we easily imagine. If **Christ** could live by faith in His Father, **we** can live by faith in Christ. He showed us how it is done.

4 "**The Lord GOD has given Me The tongue of the learned, That I should know how to speak a word in season to *him who is* weary. He awakens Me morning by morning, He awakens My ear To hear as the learned.**

One of our biggest problems in life is that we, by our natures, have a hearing problem. But really, we can't even call it that. What we really have is a listening problem. The fact that our heads are full of Biblical knowledge tells us that we hear ok. But we are too often like our little kids were. We turn a deaf ear when mom or dad tells us something we don't want to hear. Do you know what I mean? Isn't amazing how fast we can teach children to not hear? They pick it up so very quickly. All we need to do is assume that **if they heard us** they would surely **do what they were told**. So when they ignore

what we say, we assume they must not have heard. And soon we will find they don't hear **anything** we say, because there is no consequence for ignoring us. Acting like they don't hear gets them off the hook. We too are experts at not listening even though we can hear. We can even convince ourselves that we truly are **ignorant**, when all the evidence says that we are just **stubborn**.

The Bible is full, from start to finish, of the need of humans to hear from their God. Much of the communication of God is the speaking of words into people's ears. That has been the main means of God's ministry to mankind from the garden of Eden until now. We must add in reading and now media, but the process is one of taking in content and allowing it to change us. There are always **words** that need **understood, believed and obeyed**. That is the process God uses to save us and to sanctify us.

Well Christ was enabled to be an excellent minister. But look at the process. How could Christ **speak** so well? How could He be so learned? It all starts with hearing. Christ was the perfect listener. He was awakened morning by morning. It was in the **process** of daily life. His life **process** is described here as a continual progression of hearing from His Father. And every day He listened.

What do you think would happen if we actually awakened each day assuming that this day exists for us to hear from God? How would that change our view of that day if we really thought, you know what? God wants to communicate with me today. God wants to inform me today. God wants to teach me wisdom today. God wants to give me something for those who surround me today. Would that not drive us to read His word with a more urgent attitude? Would we not become more expectant when we go to the Word? God is always pleased with receptive listeners. We can **assume that** when we head to God's word.

I thought you might want to know this. We as elders have started a facebook page where we can hold each other accountable for being in the Word. This is one of the changes we have initiated to have our church be more pleasing to our Lord. We want to hear from God.

Now look at this. **That I should know how to speak a word in season to him who is weary**. Do you want to improve your ministry to others? Do you want to increase your effectiveness in ministering to those with pressing needs? Then you need to be hearing from God daily. You need to be learning what He says and listening to it, really listening. You need to be **taking in the word of God** and applying it, pondering over it, obeying it. That is how you have the proper content that you need in your day to day ministry to people.

Sin is wearing people out. People serving their idols that never deliver on their promises is wearing people out. People trying to please God without faith in Christ is wearing them out. They need a word from the Lord. Will we be the ones to give it?

⁵ **The Lord GOD has opened My ear; And I was not rebellious, Nor did I turn away.**

⁶ **I gave My back to those who struck Me, And My cheeks to those who plucked out the beard; I did not hide My face from shame and spitting.**

We all need to understand something. God's word asks us to do hard things. And Jesus never pussy footed around any of it. He told His followers that if they wanted to follow Him they needed to take up their crosses daily and do it. He made the cost **clear enough** and **severe enough** that the followers were encouraged to do the math ahead of time. They were challenged to count the cost because there surely would be one.

What is the cost that is in front of you today? What is the hard thing the word is telling you **you** must do? Maybe it is loving someone who is hard to love. Maybe it is saying no to our flesh in a way that is very hard for us to say no. Maybe it is to pray and wait for God to do something that no amount of your effort ever accomplishes. Maybe it is to bear with the grief of loss when all you want is to see that person again. Maybe it is to stand up to all of our compulsions and trained reactions when they **do not submit** to the Word of God. Maybe it is to make a stand for Christ that you know will cost you dearly in some way. Yes. The word tells us to do hard stuff. There is no denying that.

But tell me, do you think that it asks you to do anything harder than what Christ did for you? Look at 5 and 6. The Father gave His marching instructions to Christ. The context here is the trial before Christ's crucifixion. So we can get the idea the these verses are talking about the whole process of Christ's crucifixion. Look how Christ responded to His Father's commands. He says **I was not rebellious**. Nor did I turn away. What we see is that Christ said **yes** to His Father. And then He never changed His mind. He said yes to the course and He stuck to the course.

Suppose Christ had not chosen to die for us. Would we say, oh that was rebellious? No. We would say that was a very reasonable decision. I wouldn't die for us either. I would not submit to being treated like dirt by my creation. We would have seen **rejection of that path** as a **reasonable response**, even a smart response. But Christ defines it the way any determined rejection of God's word really is. Rebellion.

We are very fortunate that Christ did not excuse His disobedience to what God has clearly said the way that **we so often excuse our disobedience**. We say yes, God said that. But my circumstances are exceptional. I cannot possibly do this hard thing that Christ asks me to do. I am just not wired that way. Everything inside me goes against it. I am just so weak in that area. No, I could not possibly obey such a hard thing. And Christ just says, I did what God said. Because if I did not do what God said I would have been rebellious. Now again we see prophesy about what Christ would face. And there would have been no way of knowing that Christ would actually fulfill this one day in the future. I doubt Isaiah understood this when he spoke it. Christ's abuse during his pretension of a trial is disclosed. This is what Christ was saying **yes** to. This is what He heard His Father say that He must do and He responded by agreeing to do it and then by doing it.

Oh that we would obey like our Master obeyed. Our histories are full of the disgrace and discomfort and the wasted time that comes from disobeying. We too should rely upon God's grace and power for obedience to Christ like Christ was obedient to His Father

What a Savior we have.

7 "For the Lord GOD will help Me; Therefore I will not be disgraced; Therefore I have set My face like a flint, And I know that I will not be ashamed.

Do you see the trust that Christ had in His Father. This is the brain fuel that it took for Christ to face the trial He was about to face. Look at the reliance He placed on His Father. Do you think this came easy for Him? If we are to believe that He was a lot like us, we must also believe that **obedience was hard for Him too**. We must believe that faithfully trusting His Father was no picnic when the road His father had chosen for Him was so very hard.

What trial are you facing? Do you really believe that the Lord God will help you? Do you depend on that one thing to be the thing that will get you through what you must face? Even when you cannot see **how you can make it**, you can not see **how you can win where you have always failed**, you cannot see **how you can be strong enough to do the thing that feels impossible to do**, can you **trust like Christ did that the Lord God will help you**? That is evidently how Christ made it through His trial. That is how we must get through it as well.

Have you ever considered that maybe you keep facing the same trial because you are still refusing to trust Christ for the help that is needed **to get through it**? Have you ever thought that maybe I can actually turn the corner on this monkey on my back if I will simply determine that I will do what Christ says

or die trying? I will go against everything I feel, every impulse I have, everything my seer says, and I will **trust that Christ wants to give me a victory here**. I am not saying that every trial we face is like that. But some are.

Notice the wording here. Christ set His **face like flint** to do the mission He had to do. Does that seem spiritual to you? Well if it doesn't, you have the wrong definition of what is spiritual. Sometimes we need to set our faces like flint to do the very hard thing we must do. If you think that spirituality is all "let go and let God", you haven't read what Christ did. We have a battle raging in us. There is nothing passive about fighting in that battle. It is an active struggle that we must be heavily engaged in. There is nothing unspiritual about giving every ounce of energy to winning the battle. Sometimes we have to do all kinds of things that take effort and determination to obey what Christ said to do. If Christ had to screw up his determination to accomplish what He had to do, we might also.

Now we cannot think that we do this all by **self** effort. That would be a mistake. We already saw that Christ knew and expected help from His father. He knew the success would come from His father. But it was His job to **express his faith in maximum effort**. There is a simple law exhibited in humans. **We always give the greatest effort and attention to the things that are most important to us**. That is just what we are like. Spirituality doesn't change that dynamic. It just changes the focus of our effort.

And look how Christ trusted His Father for a favorable outcome. He says

Therefore I will not be disgraced

I know that I will not be ashamed.

When we take the path of Christ, it will often look like we are disgraced and that we ought to be ashamed. Just think of all the abuse our sisters in Christ have suffered at the hands of their Muslim captors. It looks like have been disgraced and they should be ashamed. And in a human sense that is all true. They have been disgraced and they have suffered shame. Look at Christ's treatment. He was disgraced and he did suffer shameful treatment.

But look how it will end. Christ was glorified. Christ rose from the dead. Christ overcame every human barrier. God came through for Him. And in the end He will experience the praise of every believer throughout eternity. Those who follow Him will share in His glory. For a time we may have to suffer disgrace and shame, but it will never be permanent.

And look at the opposite. There are those who appear to have the world by the tale. Based on their life decisions they should be ashamed. They have disgraced themselves. But they still seem to have everything this life will

offer. But again, this is temporary. They will soon be in the grave. And that is where reality sets in.

I read a blurb this week that said that Steven Hawking said that there is no God. I think of that placard we saw in a YFC movie or book years ago. It said God is Dead, signed Nietzsche. Then under it it said, Nietzsche is dead, signed God. This would say God doesn't exist- signed Hawking Hawking doesn't exist. Signed God. Oh it is also interesting to note that Mr. Hawking died before he had a chance to finish the book. That never happened to God. Christ had total confidence in His Father that His Father would come through completely and ultimately for Him. Do we have that kind of confidence in our God? Do we live facing no matter what cost we pay now, we will never be ashamed for having obeyed, no matter what it looks like in the short run. That is why it is never wise to envy the wicked. Everything they have is temporary.

⁸ He is near who justifies Me; Who will contend with Me? Let us stand together. Who is My adversary? Let him come near Me.

Here is more confidence expressed by our Lord in His Father. I think if I were to sum this verse up in a few words it would be "Bring it on". It was like Christ was saying to the devil, bring it on. I am ready for you because God is with me. I am ready to take you.

That is the kind of confidence we can have in our lord too. Greater is He who is in you than He who is in the world.

⁹ Surely the Lord GOD will help Me; Who is he who will condemn Me? Indeed they will all grow old like a garment; The moth will eat them up.

When we are dealing with something hard, when we are under stress, when we are really up against it, what do we usually repeat? We repeat the things we most need to know, the thing we are depending upon the most. Christ looks at what He is up against and repeats this truth. The Lord will help me. Maybe that is what we should put on our refrigerators this week. Surely the Lord God will help me.

If Jesus needed to depend upon this truth, how much more do **we** need it. Now look at Jesus's perspective on his enemies. Didn't he have powerful enemies? Herod, Pilate, The High Priest, the Sanhedrin, should that not have put fear in his heart. We would reason, look at the power to do harm that they had. Look at all the nasty things they could do to Him. If we had people like them against us, could we arrive at this same conclusion?

This is Jesus's perspective. They are as formidable as a garment that the moths have taken residence on. That is our world. That is president Trump and president Obama and president Bush and president Clinton and president Bush and president Reagan. Every one of them, like all residents of planet

earth have a terminal illness. Some are just closer to death than others. This is so very very hard for us to get into our heart of hearts. The understanding of the brevity of life has to be understood before we have any kind of wisdom. Our default setting is to treat this life like it is all there is. And one day a million years from now we will laugh at what idiots we once were. The things we feared. The things we prioritized. The pleasures we lived for. All of it will seem like the stupidest thing ever done by a human being. In the world of wool garments, the moth always wins. Faith does an amazingly unnatural thing. It lives for tomorrow instead of today. It lives for pleasure tomorrow instead of today. It only **fears** those things that will **deprive us of eternity**. It only **loves** those things that **will last forever**. It cheers for the moths. Death is seen from a different perspective. It is a **release** into what really matters, not an **end** to it.

¹⁰ **"Who among you fears the LORD? Who obeys the voice of His Servant? Who walks in darkness And has no light? Let him trust in the name of the LORD And rely upon his God.**

Now we move from the **servant** to the **people of God**. How are we to respond to such a wonderful Servant?

Look at the two descriptions of a follower. One **who fears** and one **who obeys**. If our idea of a Christian does not **include these things**, we need to go back to the Word. Some describe carnal Christians in such a way that the resurrection power of Christ has saved them from destruction but in some way cannot empower them to obey. There is no such animal in the Bible. There is no such Christian. There are **deceived people** who look like that. They **call** themselves Christians. But they are not. A believer fears the Lord. A believer has some fear of sinning. He knows it is a big deal. He knows it is not a state he can remain in. He has an awe of God. He has a worshipful attitude toward God.

And a follower obeys. If you do a word study in scripture on the word **love**, you will also be doing a word study on the word **obey**. They are inseparably linked in scripture. And Jesus did most of the linking. He didn't mince words. If you love me you will obey me. There were no exceptions. **Christians obey**. Never perfectly but increasing progressively. So these are the people Christ is addressing. Who of you are my followers? Now what comes next is odd. So we need to pay attention to it.

Who walks in darkness and has no light?

At this point we are tempted to say that Isaiah has changed his audience. He is addressing someone else now. But that is not the case. The context sticks to the same audience.

How so? We know that believers are now walking in the light as Christ is in the light. The world will hate believers because they love darkness rather than light. So what is this talking about?

Do you remember when Christ was dying on the cross and He said to His Father, **“Why have you forsaken me?”** Might we call that darkness? Might we call what people go through when they are afflicted by a depression that falls upon them as in a dark place. Spurgeon had them from time to time. Lots of spiritual people have. How about those times when we simply cannot see any good in our situation. Maybe it is just severe physical suffering. The suffering seems pointless and needless. We cannot understand God’s purpose in any of it. Maybe we are dealing with an inner turmoil that will not seem to relent and we can see no way out. Doesn’t this seem dark? Wouldn’t you just long for some clear answer in that spot? Don’t you just want light? Don’t you just want the word of God to shine a light on your situation so you had some kind of clarity, some kind of guidance of what to do next?

I think that is what this verse is talking about. Christ cares about us in the darkness of life’s situation, in the shadow death.

So Christ says, “I pity you and you should pity yourself because there really is nothing you can do. Yep you are a victim. Sorry. Maybe it is time to mistrust God. Maybe it is a time to display your unfaithfulness to everyone who is watching you. Lose control. Voice all your doubts. Do what you feel like doing.”

No. That could never be.

Look what He says next.

Let him trust in the name of the LORD And rely upon his God.

Brothers and sisters, there is never a reason **big** enough or **good** enough to mistrust God. As brothers and sisters I think we need to **get rigid** on this point. Maybe we need to set our faces like flint. If we allow believers around us to **live in distrust of God**, we are **enabling them to live in disobedience**. How is that living in fear of God? How is that living in obedience of God? Do you know someone who is resistant to trusting in God, someone with an excuse for why they simply cannot trust in God? We cannot coexist with that. We must challenge that in the church and in ourselves wherever we find it. Remember, this was said to people who were experiencing darkness. This was addressing people who were not having a picnic of worldly goodness. This is God’s command to those feeling the darkness this world can put us in. This is addressing us in our worst experiences. We are called back to trust and faith in Jesus Christ. We are called back into a reliance the He will take care of us.

Are you experiencing a season of darkness? The scripture does not condemn you. It does not say your experience is the result of something wrong. Sometimes it is. Sometimes it isn't. But it does absolutely tell us **what we must do** when we are in that state. We must set our faith firmly on Christ, even when it might seem pointless to do so. We should never be rebuked for the darkness of our experience. But we should always be rebuked **for the faithlessness we portray**. We need to believe his promises, even when we wonder if we really care if they are true or not. We must believe God, trust God and rely upon God. He knows exactly what to say to those who are weary. There is hope. But it will require faith to believe it. The Lord will deliver on His promises. There is an absolute certainty that one day the situation will be better. We don't always know how long we will have to wait. But we know for certain it will happen.

Ok then. What if we will not trust in the Lord in our darkness?

11 Look, all you who kindle a fire, Who encircle yourselves with sparks: Walk in the light of your fire and in the sparks you have kindled-- This you shall have from My hand: You shall lie down in torment.

You know what this is? Light from self. These are fires we kindle instead of trusting and relying upon God. These are our methods of relieving the darkness.

Right now we all have two ways of dealing with the hard things in our lives. We can do it **God's way** or **our way**.

We can choose to escape them in the many means that are available to us. Maybe we medicate them or drown them in drink. Maybe we escape them with alternative experiences. Maybe we choose some sin that seems better than the pain we are in. Maybe we wallow in self pity. Maybe we rise up and take revenge. Maybe we passively stick it to the people who have hurt us. Oh, we have a million ways to take care of ourselves. And every one we have a reason for and an excuse for. But at the end of the day they are alternative fires, alternative lights.

Let's close with one of Mr. Ortland's observations.

Why listen to Christ when there are plausible, and certainly easier, ways to live? Some people sit through sermons, but are they listening? Their lives are not set apart from the convenient, soft ways of the world. Why? They don't feel in their hearts that Christ can be counted on when it matters. They are making their own way. But remember the drawback to that approach to life: "There is a way that seems right to a man, but its end is the way to death" ([Proverbs 16:25](#)).

Preaching the Word - Preaching the Word – Isaiah: God Saves Sinners.