

Reading: Isaiah 52:13-53:12

Theme: Victory, glory and triumph!

It is Easter morning and we come to the last section of the 4th Servant song (53:10-12) which suitably ends on a note of victory, glory and triumph. This 4th Servant song began with a note of victory, glory and triumph (52:13), but from that glorious opening, the song was dark, sombre and awesome as it focuses on the sufferings and rejection of this Servant, upon the events of Good Friday, all He went through on the cross – suffering, death and burial.

Here in this final section, His suffering is not the main focus, as our attention is moved on to Easter Sunday and beyond. All the focus on His sufferings and death flow into, pour into this reservoir of victory, glory and triumph. These last 3 verses are full of hope and glory, are rich in glorious, profound themes and truths about the Lord Jesus. This final section draws us to the cross, all its horrors, but then it leads us into and lights up the crowning glory of the Servant with awesome splendour. Themes of suffering and glory are there, but the glory comes to our attention like the sun bursting out after a dark night, but going to midday brightness. Let's see 4 things:

1. The Cross is Followed by The Exaltation of Christ.

The Servant had suffered, had been rejected, despised, pierced, crushed, had our iniquities laid upon Him. He had been cut-off from the land of the living, been lonely, abandoned and set as nothing. Yet these verses present His glory and His exaltation. Now after all that He went through, we come to His triumph. One commentator (Leupold) heads these verses “*Amazingly successful in His life's work.*” Warren Wiersbe terms them “*Vindication: the satisfied Servant.*” In these verses, the cross is now presented from heaven's and God's point of view and not from the shame and

horror of the point of view of people. What did this mean to God the Father? It delighted Him and in heaven's reckoning it is a triumph and glory!

The Servant, after all He has gone through is said to see His offspring, seed, He will prosper, be satisfied, will justify many and take away, bear off their iniquities. This One although He would die, be cut-off from the land of the living - something remarkable would occur; He would prolong its days, here the phrase means "*live eternally*". Also, He would have seed, offspring and this shows He would have fruit from His sufferings; there would be Divine sons and daughters, many images of Christ and all would trace their life to His death and suffering. Because of this they would honour and glorify Him.

Yes, His life may have ended violently, but He would prolong His days - He would be raised from the dead never to die again; He would rise as conqueror and King of Kings. He would have a "family" and would be around to care for them, watch over them and they would be like Him- as they would show, represent Him here on earth.

This was God's will and pleasure. He would be successful in it. The pleasure, the will of the Lord would prosper in His hand, which means by His work and ministry. The success of the Church, of the Gospel, is not ultimately in our hands, **but in His** - I for one glad of that, because it means it is always in God's safe hands! We are to realise that even when God's greatest servants leave the scene of time, the work of the gospel will continue and will continue to do so in spite of opposition, hardship, persecution or the state of society. We need to pray for this work to be seen to prosper in our day and age and for the Lord to make bare His arm i.e. to do great things again.

The cross, all its shame and agony was taken by the Lord Jesus. How does the resurrected Saviour, now exulted on a high, see and view His sufferings? After the suffering, the travail of His soul He shall be satisfied. "*Suffering or travail*" indicates very hard and painful work, effort and pain. It is used of pain in childbirth. The cross was the Lord Jesus' labour, childbirth pains for His people and after it was over, He was satisfied. Oh, the great cost, the great work of the salvation of souls was done and He is satisfied, content that He accomplished all that wonderful work for the likes of you and me! He will be abundantly satisfied and delighted by what He sees as the work of God prospers, as souls throughout every age are saved. One day there will be a new heaven and a new earth where the Bride, the Church will be presented to Him spotless and without blemish. Most gloriously on that day He will say "*She was worth it!*" We will all be amazed that He valued us as worth it!

He is continuing to work on our behalf, to work in us and He views us with delight as His offspring. He ever lives so we can enjoy an ongoing relationship with Him. Yet, as great, as precious as that is now, one day we will be with Him in His very presence. As we think on that, we are to pause and consider Him now, for v12 shows us of His exaltation now. Paul in Philippians 2, wrote of Jesus' life, humiliation and suffering, but also His exaltation in 2:9-10 which corresponds with v12 here. Yes, the cross of Christ is followed by the eternal exaltation of Christ, but see:

2. The Cross is the Reason for the Exaltation of Christ.

This is true in its historical order - before being highly exalted He had to go through great humiliation, die and suffer on the cross to take our sin, its guilt and its punishment upon Him. Yet it is also true in terms of cause and effect. The crown, the glory, the

exaltation comes about because of the cross. We are to consider the cause and effect in v10 *“though the Lord makes His life a guilt offering... He will see...”* or in v11 *“After the suffering... be satisfied”*, again in v12 *“Therefore... because...”*

There is cause and effect here, suffering and glory, cross and crown, agony and exaltation. This helps us to grasp and understand the earlier mysteries - the blessed One being the suffering One; the lovely One being the despised and rejected One; the immortal One being the dying One. His suffering, His real, agonising suffering does not contradict or does not prevent His glory, but it prepares for secures, leads to His glory and exaltation.

We need to pause a moment and remind ourselves that Jesus had all glory and was exalted in heaven before all of this - before He ever came to earth. Yet that glory was veiled, hidden out of sight and deliberately concealed when He came to earth as a real man. He did not cling to hang onto that which is His right, but humbled Himself and became obedient unto death, even death on the cross - with all the horrors and agony that went along with it. In doing so He became an offering for our sin and guilt.

Because of that, He has been hyper exalted and is the Son of God, Son of man, our Saviour and Mediator, He is the peacemaker between God and man, man and God. He is given this by the Father as a recompense, an acceptance and declaration of all that He has done and accomplished - that it fulfils the Lord's will completely. Even though it was awesome, agonising, costly and painful; it has been done perfectly and He has been hyper exalted.

The Lord Jesus, after His 40 days of fasting at the start of His ministry, was offered great honour and glory by the devil in His

temptations and that glory would have excluded the cross, but Jesus deliberately chose the will of the Father and went willingly to Calvary. There He carried the all the shame the cross involved, He did so for the joy set before Him - to see us saved to the satisfaction of His holy delight and all the glory awaiting Him. Yes, the cross of Christ is the reason for the exaltation of Christ. Moving on we see:

3. The Cross is Central in The Work of God.

God has a plan and it was in place before God created anything. He wasn't caught wrongfooted when Adam and Eve fell into sin. Evil, sin, the devil will not ultimately conquer and win the day. The victory is to be God's and He will be seen to rule over all; be seen to be the God who sorted the mess out and central to that, pivotal and essential to that, is the Lord Jesus Christ - His person and work, especially all that He accomplished there on the cross. The Lord Jesus will have all the glory throughout ages to come. As He is exalted in heaven now, given a name above every other name and throughout eternity He will receive all the glory, praise, honour and the pre-eminence.

As the cross of Christ is the reason for His exaltation. It follows that the cross - the sufferings and death of Christ to take away the sin of people like us, needs to be ever kept before us. I do not mean as a wooden or tangible symbol, but I mean **all He accomplished in His sufferings**. The cross brings glory to Christ, it needs to be preached, taught to us all - even if we are Christians. We see the visible symbols (*which is all they remain*) of bread and wine which help us remember His sufferings in the Lord's Table. We are not take the bread and wine thoughtlessly, carelessly, but with reverence, awe, amazement and joy, so to remind ourselves the Son of God loved us and gave Himself for us. As we seriously

think on these things, God does a work of grace and encouragement in our lives.

The atoning, the propitiatory work of Christ on the cross (*which refers to Jesus taking our punishment in our place and so diverting God's wrath and punishment off us and onto Him*) is of vital importance. The devil will have it downplayed, would take people's focus off it, get it reduced in importance and would distort our understanding of it. In a cyclic manner - old false teachings are rehashed, jazzed up and the cross has its importance removed and so the glory of Christ is downplayed. People would sentimentalise, downplay, divert attention from the cross and other things become the focus of their glory, boasting and praise, while the cross of Christ is neglected! If the cross is not central in our lives, thoughts, hearts and worship, then we will not grow aright as Christians; will have no message to tell this world and souls will not be saved, for we will be preaching a false gospel by saying wrong things about the way of salvation accomplished by Jesus; the Church will have no clear message and will flounder; worst of all there will be no or little glory to the Lord Jesus and God.

The cross is to be boasted in (Galatians 6:14). The sufferings and death of the Lord Jesus captivates and is the theme of the redeemed, the angels, the beasts and elders in heaven (Revelation 5:9-14). The cross is to be our delight and contemplation here on earth, for it certainly will be the case in heaven. On it centres great and wondrous truths and we can spend a lifetime thinking on it and we will still find it fresh and amazing for all eternity!

It was the Lord's will, it pleased the Lord to bruise, to crush the Lord Jesus - His darling Son there on the cross. The cross is central in the work, plans and kingdom of God - always keep it central in

our hearts, lives and love. All we have and will ever have in terms of spiritual life and blessings, in both time and eternity, flow from the centrality of the accomplishments of the Lord Jesus on the cross. Pray that we would understand it better. Finally see:

4. The Cross Is the Pattern for Our Experience as Believers.

All our Saviour did on the cross is unrepeatable and unparalleled. He made complete atonement for us. Perhaps I need to ask the question if we know our sins have once and for all been forgiven? Yet He is also our example and our pattern. The Christian life is wonderful, amazing - as we know God's love, peace and help; know it increasing more in our lives. Yet at the same time we realise something of all the hardships, difficulties and opposition we will have on our way to heaven. It is not "*Come to Jesus and everything will be brilliant in your lives*". The Lord Jesus says to all His disciples "*Take up **your** cross and follow Me.*"

In Philippians 2 we see He was equal with God, yet He humbled Himself, became obedient to the cross. The same mind is to be in us as was in Him. In 1 Peter 2:21ff we are told we have Him as our example to follow. The cross is to shape our lives, attitudes and to do so even in especially hard times, so that we will follow Him and keep His commandments.

He may lead us in hard and confusing ways. It may be our cross will seem heavy, but it will be nothing compared to that which He carried for us. If our way is hard, confusing and it hurts, then realise He understands how we feel, for He knew worse than we ever will. He knows, in His love He knows this is a necessary path for you and me. Peter was told of this in John 21:18-19 as the Lord was going to lead him, even to his death, and would enable him to glorify Him in the way Peter would die.

Being cross carriers and sufferers is not easy and we may want to back off, be tempted to abandon it and save ourselves hardships and sufferings, but these are part of the Lord's way of bringing us to glory. We are told that the sufferings of this present world are not worth comparing to the glory that will be revealed in us (Romans 8:18). Will we view Him as worth it? I pray that we would do so as we consider the Saviour who bore **the Cross** and He may want us to bear little crosses as His redeemed ones, but His aim is to give us big GLORY.

Glory and suffering, suffering and glory are all intertwined in the life of the Lord Jesus here in this last Servant song. Yet they are also intertwined in our lives. That does not mean that we earn any merit or spiritual credit by our suffering, for all our salvation is only secured by His death and suffering. One day we will be safe and secure in heaven and be captivated by the one we once despised and rejected, but by God's grace we have come to know and love as our Saviour and God. Then at that time we will be lost in wonder love and praise for all that He suffered and accomplished on Calvary for us and that He rose again and is declared to be the Son of God with power.