

## ***Persevering Faith That Inherits God's Promises (Isa. 49:1-7)***

### **I. THE IMPORTANCE OF PERSEVERING IN OUR FAITH**

- A. We inherit God's promises by adding patience (perseverance) to our faith. The word patience speaks of being patient with failures of others or of persevering under pressure for a long time. The word about God's promises does not profit us unless we mix it with faith (Heb. 4:2).
- <sup>12</sup>***...that you do not become sluggish, but imitate those who through faith and patience [perseverance] inherit the promises. (Heb. 6:12)***
- <sup>2</sup>***For indeed the gospel was preached to us as well as to them; but the word [of promise] which they heard did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in those who heard it. (Heb. 4:2)***
- B. Paul prayed that we would imitate Jesus' *perseverance* in His faith and obedience (2 Thes. 3:5). As a man, Jesus endured the same resistance, pressures, and obstacles that we must endure.
- <sup>5</sup>***May the Lord direct your hearts into God's love and Christ's perseverance. (2 Thes. 3:5, NIV)***
- C. Jesus endured many things, including waiting on God's promises; difficult circumstances; and the loss of reputation, friends, money, opportunities, etc. (Heb. 2:17-18; 4:15; 5:8-9; 12:1-3).
- <sup>1</sup>***...let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, <sup>2</sup>looking unto Jesus...who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross... <sup>3</sup>For consider Him who endured such hostility from sinners...lest you become weary and discouraged in your souls. (Heb. 12:1-3)***
- D. ***Persevering faith***: "Running with endurance" involves *engaging our faith and being faithful* in the face of continued pressure (Rom. 5:3-4; 2 Tim. 3:10-11; Heb. 6:12). Perseverance includes being *diligent to believe God's word, seek His face, wait for His promises, serve in small things, and obey God under temptation*. We are called to walk in *persevering faith* in the face of delays, difficult circumstances, criticism, disappointing relationships, resistance from others, etc.
- E. Abraham believed God's promise for twenty-five years, even when it was impossible in the natural for the promise to be fulfilled (Rom. 4:19-21). When Abraham was 75 years old and Sarah was 65, he received the *promise* that he would have an heir (Gen. 12:4, 7). The promise was not fulfilled until Abraham was 100 and Sarah was 90 years old (Gen. 17:17).
- <sup>19</sup>***And not being weak in faith, he [Abraham] did not consider his own body, already dead (since he was about a hundred years old), and the deadness of Sarah's womb. <sup>20</sup>He did not waver at the promise of God through unbelief, but was strengthened in faith, giving glory to God, <sup>21</sup>and being fully convinced that what He had promised He was also able to perform. (Rom. 4:19-21)***
- F. Sometimes we may need to believe for decades for a promise that will require God's miraculous intervention. Joseph endured over ten years of severe trials waiting for God's promise to him.
- <sup>17</sup>***He [the Lord] sent a man before them [Israel]—Joseph—who was sold as a slave.***
- <sup>19</sup>***Until the time that his word came to pass, the word of the LORD tested him. (Ps. 105:17-19)***

## II. JESUS WAS STRATEGICALLY HIDDEN (ISA. 49)

- A. Isaiah reported on a dialogue between the Father and Son (Isa. 49:1-12). This conversation gives us insight into Jesus' perseverance in trusting God's promises to Him. Verses 1-4 focus on His "hiddenness" during His first coming; verses 5-12 describe His glory at His second coming.

<sup>1</sup>***"Listen, O coastlands, to Me [Jesus], and take heed, you peoples [nations] from afar! The LORD [the Father]...<sup>2</sup>has made My mouth like a sharp sword; in the shadow of His hand He has hidden Me, and made Me a polished shaft [arrow]; in His quiver He has hidden Me."*** (Isa. 49:1-2)

1. ***Listen***: One of Jesus' messages to the Gentile nations far away (in time and distance) was of His perseverance, as God "hid" Him during His earthly life and through church history.
  2. ***Mouth like a sharp sword***: God promised to use Jesus' words to shape and direct history.
  3. ***Hidden***: The Father's plan was that Jesus would come first in hiddenness (v. 2). The fullness of Jesus' glory, power, and promised destiny was veiled, or held back, until God's appointed time comes to reveal Him to all nations at His second coming.
- B. Jesus is the "ideal Israel" (v. 3), as seen throughout Isaiah 49, since He embodied all that God called Israel to be. Israel means *prince with God*, the name God gave to Jacob (Gen. 32:28).
- C. There are two views of Jesus' life—it is seen as *vanity* in man's eyes, yet *glorious* in God's eyes (v. 5). Men concluded that Jesus spent His strength in vain, because He did not achieve anything notable in their eyes. This passage does not describe Jesus' complaints, but His confidence in God's evaluation of His life. The phrase "yet surely" (v. 4) creates a contrast between His labor seeming to be in vain in the eyes of men and it being glorious in God's eyes (v. 5).
- <sup>4</sup>***"I [Jesus] said, 'I have labored in vain, I have spent My strength for nothing...yet surely My just reward is with the Lord...<sup>5</sup>For I shall be glorious in the eyes of the Lord.'" (Isa. 49:4-5)***
- D. Every believer must live in the tension of these two perspectives seen in Isaiah 49:4-5.
- E. Jesus' glorious calling was to bring Israel and all the nations to God and to rule all nations.
- <sup>5</sup>***"The Lord...formed Me from the womb to be His Servant, to bring Jacob [Israel] back to Him ...<sup>6</sup>He says, 'It is too small a thing that You should...restore...Israel; I will also give You as a light to the Gentiles, that You should be My salvation to the ends of the earth.'" (Isa. 49:5-6)***
- F. Jesus was a servant leader among the very people who despised and abhorred Him. Jesus was not offended by Israel's rejection. In the Millennium, the kings of the earth will "see" the truth about Jesus and will worship Him (Ps. 72:11; 102:15; 138:4; 148:11; Isa. 60:10-11; 62:2; Rev. 15:4).
- <sup>7</sup>***Thus says the LORD [the Father]...to Him [Jesus] whom man despises, to Him whom the nation [Israel] abhors, to the Servant of rulers: "Kings shall see and arise, princes also shall worship, because of the LORD [the Father] who is faithful...He has chosen You." (Isa. 49:7)***

### III. GOD PREPARES HIS SERVANTS AS HIS POLISHED ARROWS (ISA. 49:2)

- A. God makes His people His arrows that He uses strategically. Each one is uniquely prepared by God as an arrow aimed at a specific target. We must embrace the target God created us for. As arrows, we may have different targets in different seasons of our life. The shooting of the arrow is not only about platform ministry, but pertains to whatever assignment God gives us.
- <sup>2</sup>“In the shadow of His hand He has hidden Me, and made Me a polished shaft [arrow]; in His quiver He has hidden Me.” (Isa. 49:2)***
- B. ***Three parts of an arrow:*** The shaft, arrowhead, and feathers each have a specific purpose. Many spiritual truths are reflected in the process of preparing arrows. Every believer goes through each of the stages that the arrow goes through before they will hit the mark ordained by God. Pressure and time alone do not change us, but *making the right choices* in pressure results in change.
- C. ***Polished arrow:*** The polished arrow speaks of our character being prepared. The word *polish* means “to cleanse so as to make bright.” The shaft of an arrow starts as a piece of wood in the branch of a tree. The shaft undergoes several stages that include cutting, stripping, straightening, sanding, and polishing. A grueling process with many pressures is necessary for a branch to become a polished arrow. It is cut from a tree, and stripped of its leaves and bark. The wood is straightened by immersing it in hot water and applying pressure to it by placing pegs on each side of the shaft. A crooked shaft renders an arrow useless, because it cannot hit the target.
- D. ***Feathers:*** For an arrow to fly straight, it must have feathers. They give it direction and stability in flight. This speaks of our being grounded in the knowledge of the Word.
- E. ***Arrowhead:*** For an arrow to be effective, it has to have an arrowhead made of metal or rock. An arrowhead must be sharp to give the arrow penetrating power. An arrowhead is not a natural part of the arrow. This is a picture of the anointing of the Spirit on the Word as we speak or sing it.
- F. ***Sharpened:*** Arrowheads must be sharpened between battles. We must be filled with the Spirit anew for today's battles. The anointing we experienced for yesterday's battles must be renewed.
- G. ***Hidden by God:*** God hid Jesus in two ways—in His hand while making Him a polished arrow, and in His quiver when the polished arrow was ready to be shot. There are different stages of hiddenness in God's plan for our life. (See Terry Virgo for more on preparing arrows, etc.).
- H. ***Quiver:*** The quiver carries and protects the arrows. It looks like a dark, empty shaft unless we understand what it is in God's wisdom. The season of being hidden in the quiver can be the most difficult. It is a test of faith for God's servants who have already been polished by responding rightly to Him for years, and who have grown accustomed to being used by the Lord and to people relating to them based on their ministry position and anointing. They are ready to be shot.
- I. We must run with endurance without becoming *weary* (Heb. 12:3) or *sluggish* (Heb. 6:12)

#### IV. FAITH AND PERSEVERANCE

- A. Perseverance includes bearing up under pressure and *finishing our work* instead of quitting. Finishing our work, or ministry assignments, speaks of persevering with faith and diligence in the face of smallness, weakness, and resistance. Jesus finished His assignment (Jn. 4:34; 5:36; 17:4; 19:30). Paul finished his (2 Tim. 4:7-8) and prayed for others to finish theirs (2 Thes. 1:11).  
***<sup>4</sup>“I have glorified You...I have finished the work which You have given Me to do.” (Jn. 17:4)***  
***<sup>24</sup>None of these things move me...so that I may finish my race with joy. (Acts 20:24)***  
***<sup>11</sup>We also pray always for you that our God would count you worthy of this calling, and fulfill all the good pleasure of His goodness and the work of faith with power. (2 Thes. 1:11)***
- B. Faith means believing that God is watching us, that He values the small things we do, and that He will reward us—partially in this age, and in fullness in the age to come.  
***<sup>6</sup>Without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him. (Heb. 11:6)***
- C. Jesus values small things and rewards us for them in the age to come (Mt. 25:21).  
***<sup>21</sup>“Well done, good and faithful servant; you were faithful over a few things, I will make you ruler over many things. Enter into the joy of your Lord.” (Mt. 25:21)***
- D. God carefully watches even our smallest works, because they demonstrate our love for Him.  
***<sup>10</sup>God is not unjust to forget your work...<sup>11</sup>And we desire that each one of you show the same diligence...until the end, <sup>12</sup>that you do not become sluggish, but...through faith and patience [perseverance] inherit the promises. (Heb. 6:10-12)***
- E. Scripture has many examples of God's servants experiencing seasons of hiddenness. Joseph, Moses, Joshua, David, Elijah, Elisha, Paul, and others walked through seasons of hiddenness. Paul went to prison twice after he was called as an apostle. David, Elijah, and Jeremiah had seasons of favor before the king and then experienced a season of persecution and hiddenness.
- F. Joseph was hidden under God's hand in two seasons of imprisonment (Gen. 37:36; 39:20). Joseph was promoted in both seasons and then lost favor (“a quiver season”). Then in one moment, God shot Joseph “like an arrow” by giving Pharaoh a dream and Joseph the interpretation (Gen. 40).

#### V. QUESTIONS FOR SMALL-GROUP DISCUSSION (FCF FRIENDSHIP GROUPS)

1. Identify one point that inspired or challenged you. Why? What will you do differently to apply it?
2. Identify one point that you want to impart to a younger believer. Why? How will you approach this?
3. Identify one point that you would like to gain more understanding of. How will you seek to gain it?