



Fire and Ice Sermon Series

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A Practical Exposition Upon The Fifty-Third Chapter Of Isaiah.

by Thomas Manton

THE SEVENTH VERSE.

He was oppressed, and he was afflicted; yet he opened not his mouth he is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he opened not his mouth.

THE main drift of the prophet in this chapter, as I have showed, is to remove the stone of stumbling and the rock of offence which lay in the way of the Jews because of Christ's meanness and sufferings. They looked for a Messiah to come fluttering with the pomp and royalty of an earthly prince; and therefore, when they found nothing but a mean outside, a despised branch, and a withered root in a dry ground, a man of no splendour, but of much sorrow, 'they did easily dash the foot of their faith, and split all their hopes upon this rock, as if there were nothing worthy of the arm of God to be found in Jesus. Against this scandal the prophet maketh many defences, and sheweth the several reasons why the excellency of Christ was to be hid under the veil of meanness and miseries; and therefore what a slender ground there was why it should be turned to the blemish and disrepute of Christ.

1. His first argument was, because it was for our good, and for our sakes that he did put on this disguise; and so being found in appearance like us, he might be taken in our stead: 'Surely he hath borne our griefs and carried our sorrows.' And what foul ingratitude were this, not to know a friend because he hath put on a disguise of meanness and misery for our sakes! Having fully traversed this argument in the fourth, fifth, and sixth verses, he proceeds to another, a second defence against the scandal, and that is—

2. The voluntariness and willingness of Christ to undergo these sufferings. He was not compelled to it unless by his own spirit. He might have come in the

lustre and glory of the Godhead. Or if not so, yet being a man, he might have hid himself secretly from the malice of his adversaries; or, when seized upon and taken, he might then have vouched his innocency, and have pleaded the matter with them; or have made a party among the people, and so, one way or another, rescued himself from the ignominy and bitterness of that death that he was to suffer. No, saith the prophet, here is nothing but patience and a willing subjection to his Father's design: 'He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth.' And, indeed, you had need observe these words, for they were the occasion of the eunuch's conversion; for he was reading this very place in Isaiah: Acts 8:32, 'And the place of the scripture which he read was this, He was led as a sheep to the slaughter, and like a lamb before the shearer, so opened he not his mouth: And God sent Philip to join with him. And usually such scriptures have been of greatest account that have proved effectual to the converting of a sinner; as that place in Rom. 13:11, 'And that knowing the time, that it is high time to awake out of sleep.; for now is our salvation nearer than when we believed.' This scripture was the occasion of Austin's conversion, as John chapter one was of Junius's conversion, and this of the eunuch's. God sendeth the same Spirit to speak to you as to Philip, and you are to hear with the same affection. These words are the second argument to take off the scandal of Christ's death and bitter sufferings. And it is taken from the willingness and ready patience wherewith he underwent those sufferings. I may observe in the verse two parts:—

1. The nature of the sufferings: *he was oppressed, and he was afflicted.*

2. The carriage of Christ under them: *he opened not his mouth;* which is amplified and illustrated by two similitudes, of a lamb going to the slaughter, and a sheep before her shearers.

The points hence may be many; but because the prophet doth so often double and redouble expressions about the sufferings of Christ, and I have spoken so much of almost every circumstance considerable in them already, I shall be enforced now and hereafter to touch only upon the main thing held forth in every verse. Notwithstanding, I shall endeavour to draw out the strength and sweetness of every phrase in the comment and explication. Briefly, then, to go over the parts.

1. As to what was done to Christ, or the nature of his sufferings 'He was oppressed, and he was afflicted.' There is a great deal of variety about the rendering of these words, because of the diversity of the Hebrew pointings. The vulgar readeth, *Oblatus quia ipse voluit* —he was offered because he would. Symmachus renders it, *He was brought, and he obeyed.* But these do not follow the best pointed Bibles, though they do not much vary from the sense intended in the

verse. Those come nearer that render, *He was punished and troubled*; for the first word signifieth, to exact a thing with rigour and molestation, and is applied to this case: as if a man should come and molest a surety for the debt of another for whom he is engaged. I find most of the best interpreters going this way; and Junius rendereth it, *exigitur poena*, our punishment is exacted of Christ: the creditor came upon him for our debt; as if the word did point to that great truth which is held forth in other places, that Christ died for us as our surety. And therefore he is called ‘the surety of a better testament,’ Heb. 7:22. Mat. 20:28, he is said ‘.to give his life, ***lutron anti pol lwn***, as a ransom for many.’ He laid down his life to set us free from the debt and engagement; so that they that are Christ’s need not fear that the debt will be required of them again: Luke 12:58, ‘Lest the judge deliver thee to the officer, and the officer cast thee into prison, where thou shalt remain till the uttermost price be paid.’ I say this is a very comfortable truth for God’s people, that the surety had paid the debt for them, so that they need not fear the officer or the prison; God hath exacted it of Christ. Or you may, if you will, read, as generally our translation, ‘He was oppressed,’ as the Seventy render both words by one, he was evilly dealt with and evilly entreated and so our translation maketh it to be read with an emphasis, ‘He was oppressed and afflicted;’ that is, it was such an affliction as did amount to an oppression, and yet he bore it patiently. ‘Oppression,’ saith Solomon, ‘maketh a wise man mad,’ Eccles. 7:7. A wise man, that is a man that hath the greatest command over himself. The heart stormeth and rageth when it meets with such usage as it did not expect, or hath not deserved. But Christ was oppressed and afflicted, and he opened not his mouth. And indeed the sufferings of Christ, in reference to man, do best of all come under the notion of oppression; for the other word ‘afflicted,’ it is well rendered, and therefore I will not criticise upon it.

2. How Christ bore it, or his carriage under it. It is given first in general: ‘He opened not his mouth;’ and then it is particularly amplified by two similitudes.

First, In the general: ‘He opened not his mouth.’ ‘This shows two things:—

1. The great patience of Christ. When all this was upon him, not an impatient word dropped from him, either against God or his enemies. And, indeed, you shall find in scripture that holy patience is many times expressed by holding our peace. Discontent easily breaketh out into daring and provoking language. The tongue and lips speak unadvisedly against God, therefore the bridling the tongue is a great sign of patience. Hence it is said, Lev. 10:3, that ‘Aaron held his peace’ when a remarkable judgment was upon him. Stormy hearts will soon boil over; but Aaron held his peace. I conceive it was not out of the greatness of

his sorrow—as, indeed, griefs are not always utterable—but out of the greatness of his patience. As David, Ps. 39:9, ‘I was dumb, and opened not my mouth, because thou didst it.’ He sweetly acquiesced in Providence. And so in the person of Christ, Ps. 38:13, he saith, ‘I as a deaf man heard not, and I was as a dumb man that openeth not his mouth;’ as if he had been either deaf or dumb, not sensible of the injury, nor willing to speak of it. Thus Christ suffered unjustly for our sake and in our stead, yet spoke not a word. This showed his great patience.

2. His great love to man, showed in his wonderful silence, even then when he might justly have spoken in his own defence, but would not seem to interrupt the design of God. It is witnessed in many places that Jesus held his peace when they asked him questions about his innocence, as I shall show you by and by out of several places. I conceive it hinteth that great silence that Christ manifested upon all his accusations.

But some may object, and say, How can this be, since Christ did sometimes open his mouth? Did not he say to the soldiers, ‘Are you come out against me as against a thief and a robber?’ And he said to Pilate, ‘Thou hast no power unless it be given from above.’ And he prayed for them, Luke 23:34, and rebuked him that smote with the sword, and forbade Peter to use it. How, then, doth this suit with these words, ‘He opened not his mouth’?

I answer—He never spoke to hinder our redemption, neither railingly nor revilingly; for so Peter explaineth it, I Peter 2:23, ‘Who, when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not, but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously.’ He used no threatening, no reviling—no, many times not a modest reply, when a man would think he might very well have made it. Thus you see the meaning of the phrase, ‘He opened not his mouth.’

Secondly, Now for the particular resemblance; as—

1. That he is brought as a lamb to the slaughter. The scripture often useth this similitude; for, indeed, it was not a casual similitude, but a standing type of Christ; as the lamb in the daily sacrifice, Exod. 29:38, which was offered to God daily, morning and evening, for pardon—we being only accepted through his mediation; and the Paschal lamb in the Lord’s Supper importeth Christ’s being offered to God, for Christ is called a lamb in scripture, I conceive, for three reasons.

[1.] As it is an emblem of innocence, meekness, and patience, as the lamb was to be without spot and blemish. Therefore, St Peter saith, 1 Peter 1:18, ‘We

are redeemed by the blood of Christ, as of a lamb without spot and blemish.’ A pure, harmless, undefiled lamb.

[2.] As it may import weakness and slenderness of appearance in the world. Christ is nothing in show, though mighty in power: Rev. 6:15, 16, ‘And the kings of the earth, and the great men, and the rich men, and the chief captains, and the mighty men, hid themselves in dens, and rocks, and mountains, and said to the mountains and rocks, Fall on us, and hide us from the face of him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb,’ that is, even from Christ. Christ in his weakest appearance was but as a lamb, yet such a lamb as at the last day will make the wolves to shake.

[3.] It noteth the meekness and sweetness of Christ, willingly yielding to be a sacrifice for us. Christ, when he cometh to judgment, is expressed in Hosea and other places to be as a lion; but when to save, then as a lamb. When he cometh to destroy men, he cometh as a lion; but when he cometh to destroy sins, he cometh as a lamb. Thus here, and John 1:29, ‘Behold the Lamb of God, that taketh away the sins of the world.’ This was the Lamb the prophet Isaiah foretold, and the sacrifices prefigured that Lamb, ‘the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world,’ Rev. 13:8. Well, then, you see the force of the expression here, that Christ went as sweetly and readily to the work of our redemption as an innocent lamb to the slaughter or shambles.

2. The next similitude is, ‘As a sheep before her shearers is dumb.’ Of all creatures the sheep is the most silent. Hogs whine and hout, but sheep are dumb before the shearer. Christ did not open his mouth, unless to pray, instruct, and reprove, as before mentioned. Many points might be observed, but I will sum up all in this one.

Doct. That Jesus Christ underwent cruel and bitter sufferings for us with a great deal of willing patience.

For this I take to be the intent of this verse, to show how ready Christ was to accomplish the office of the mediatorship: Rev. 1:5, he ‘loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood.’ For in all his conflicts with malicious accusations and opprobrious speeches, he would do no violence, nor express anything that might be an occasion to divert him from his purpose; but, as a lamb is brought to the slaughter, so he opened not his mouth. I shall prove the point:—

1. By some scriptures that assert it, and show the willingness of Christ: Phil. 2:8, ‘He humbled himself, and became obedient to death, even the death of the cross.’ With a great deal of willing patience he complied with the sorest

‘and most bruising act of the mediatorship. He was ‘obedient to death, eves the death of the cross.’ So it is said, Eph. 5:25, ‘Christ loved the church, and gave himself for it.’ And in other places: Heb. 10:7, with its parallel, Ps. 40:7,’ In the volume of thy book it is written of me, Lo, I come to do thy will, O God.’ Christ doth, as it were, exult in the command, and rejoice over the work of redemption: ‘Lo, I come to do thy will 1’

2. By several passages in the history of Christ’s life.

[1.] His longing for it before it came. When a man desireth a thing, he is impatient till he obtain his desire; every minute is tedious till he doth enjoy it: Luke 12:50, ‘I have a baptism to be baptized with, and how am I straitened till it be accomplished!’ That baptism was the laver of his own blood. Earnestness of expectation straiteneth joy, and a man cannot let out his spirit upon other things till he hath what he waiteth for. ‘How am I straitened!’ saith Christ. He consulted with himself, that thou, and I, and others, have souls to be saved, and therefore he would not do otherwise: Luke 20:15, ‘With desire have I desired to eat this passover with you before I suffer.’ The earnest and vigorous bent of his desire is shown in that expression, ‘With desire have I desired.’

[2.] In not preventing it when he knew it. Many are cast unawares upon danger, but Christ knew it, and foretold it before he came to suffer: Luke 18:32, ‘Behold we go up to Jerusalem, and all things that are written by the prophets concerning the Son of man shall be accomplished: that he shall be delivered to the Gentiles, and shall be mocked, and spitefully entreated, and spitted on.’ He knew which way the divine decrees and predictions ran, yet he went to Jerusalem. He could have kept himself safe from danger, yet he offered himself to it. It was in his power to have commanded twelve legions of angels, but the scripture saith it must be so. He could have kept himself and his disciples safe too, for he had power enough John 10:17,18, ‘I lay down my life, no man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself: I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again.’ Unless he had been pleased to lay it down, no man could have taken it from him. Voluntarily he submitted to it. Creatures do things out of necessity, because they cannot do otherwise, but Christ might have prevented it, for he knew it before: John 18:4, ‘Therefore Jesus, knowing all things that should come upon him, went forth and saith unto them, Whom seek ye?’

[3] His cheerful casting himself upon it: John 14:31, ‘Arise, let us go hence.’ Presently, upon the end of that sermon, Christ went into the garden, where he is taken. So he saith to Judas, John 13:27, ‘What thou doest do

quickly.’ Not to encourage him to the evil in his treasonable fact, but to show how willing he was to undertake our redemption.

[4.] In submitting to his Father’s will in his highest agonies and conflicts: Luke 22, ‘Not my will, but thine be done.’ Here was no murmuring, but a sweet submission and acquiescence at the appointment of God. Many may seem to submit to God till they come to be pinched with the soreness of the trial. It is then you may discern and try your readiness in submitting to God’s will.

15.] By his silence. When he heard the false witnesses, he held his peace and answered nothing, Mark 14:61; so Mat. 27:13, ‘Then saith Pilate unto him, hearest thou how many things they witness against thee? and he answered him never a word;’ so Mark 15:5, ‘But Jesus yet answered nothing, so that Pilate marvelled and he questioned him in many words, but he answered him nothing.’ Christ holdeth his peace, that we might speak and have boldness with the Father, and taketh the accusation patiently, that he might break it off from us. His not answering was to show our guilt; and yet he carried it so that nothing could be clearly proved to impeach his own innocency: Mat. 26:62,63, ‘And Jesus held his peace, and the high priest arose and said unto him, Answerest thou nothing? ‘Not as if his silence did (as it doth in others) come from suppressed anger, or scornful stubbornness, but patience and meekness: ‘He opened not his mouth.’ Not a malicious taunt, or proud reproach, nor angry threatenings; nothing but silence, nothing but what argued oppressed innocence.

[6] By forbidding all violence that might seem to hinder this intention: Mat. 26:52, ‘Then said Jesus unto him, Put up again thy sword into its place.’ If he opened his mouth, it was to forbid violence, and to pray for his persecutors: Luke 22:51, ‘And he touched his ear, and healed him.’ Every one of these things sheweth a sweet submission, and readiness, and willingness in Christ to suffer for us.

Now the reasons why it must be so are these:—

1. That he might be fit for the Mediatorship, that all things might come freely and sweetly to you from his Father. He offered himself willingly, that thou mayest have mercies willingly. All wicked men’s blessings seem to be extorted from Providence; they have them, as it were, *invito Deo* (reluctantly from God): Hosea 13:11, ‘I gave thee a king in mine anger.’ So the murmuring Israelites had quails in anger: Ps. 78:31. Now Christ went willingly, that his own people might have everything from the heart of God as well as his hand: Jer. 32:41, ‘I will rejoice over them to do them good.’ One of the conditions, as divines observe, how it may stand with the justice of God to punish the innocent for the nocent, is, if he be willing; for God could not have extorted our

debt of Christ, unless he had been willing. When Paul would take Onesimus his debt upon himself, Philemon might justly require it of him: Philem. 18,19, 'If Onesimus hath wronged thee aught, put it upon my account, and I will repay it' It would not stand with God's justice to force the obligation upon Christ, but Christ voluntarily engageth himself; if these souls owe thee aught, put it on my account—I will repay it. There was not only an ordination of God the Father, but a voluntary susception and undertaking of. God the Son; he cheerfully and willingly submitted to have sin translated upon him, and to be liable by engagement; put that on my account, and I will repay it.

2. That he might set off the worth of his love to us. Willingness and freeness commendeth a kindness, extorted courtesies lose their value. Therefore it is said, 'He loved us, and gave himself for us.' We see among men it would be ill taken to do a thing grudgingly. Decius rode cheerfully into the gulf for the good of his country; nay, in some men it is a kind of corruption to be over-forward with their favours: Prov. 17:18, 'A man void of understanding striketh hands, and becometh surety in the presence of his friend;' that is, before his friend desires and seeks for it. Many men, rather than lose the praise of their kindness, undo themselves, their stock being, soon spent. It is folly to be over-lavish and easy in such kindnesses. Therefore much more now would Christ commend his love to us: this ocean and overflowing of comforts being in Christ, it was the commendation of his love; he strikes hands and becometh surety before he is asked; it is the enhancement of Christ's love, and therefore he willingly submitted to it.

But you will object, How did Christ do it willingly? did not he pray that the cup might pass from him? and did he not fear and stagger at it? Heb. 5:7, 'Who in the days of his flesh, when he had offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears, unto him that was able to save him from death, and was heard in that he feared.'

I answer—1. Briefly, Christ's prayers are rather for our example and comfort, and that he might leave us a pattern where to go, and to whom to apply ourselves in all our straits, than to declare his willingness to decline this hot service: he would be tempted in all things like us, except sin, Heb. 4:15, that he might be 'touched with the feeling of every infirmity.' He would be touched with such a conflict as came nearest to a sin of infirmity, but without sin. Jesus did it that we might know ourselves in the like case, when we struggle with the sense of guilt and the apprehension of divine wrath.

2. To show himself truly man. Christ prayed against the cup, 'Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass.' He doth not contend with instruments, but beseeches God. Christ's prayers against the cup were as the prayers of a private

man; and so Christ would show all the passions of our nature; for if he had not prayed that the cup might pass, he must have put off all natural affections, because Christ, as a private person, looked upon it as a mere suffering, it being the nature and duty of man to decline all those things that are grievous and painful to him; and Christ having the same love, and hatred, and fear that we have, as a private person, he would manifest it at this time.

3. As a common and public person, namely, as our Mediator and surety, so he was extremely willing and desirous to do this great office of love for us. For so it followeth, he sweetly submitted to his Father's will: 'Father, not my will, but thine be done: Not my will as a private person, but thy will, which is more to a public person, let that be done; it was not in reference to the work, but how he should go through with it.

2dly, For his fears: these were not a shrinking from the work, but only a natural consternation and retirement of the spirits upon so ghastly an apprehension as he then had of his Father's wrath against him for our sins. When the cold hands of death were put into his bosom to pluck out his heart, no wonder if there were a struggling; it is natural to be moved with things that are nigh. These fears were a part of the fire in which this sacrifice was to be burnt and offered to God. No wonder, therefore, if the Spirit of the Godhead did freely give 'up the manhood to be scorched with these fears: Mark 14:38, 'The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak.' The willing spirit giveth up the flesh to this weakness.

3dly, For his tears: they were such an eruption and overflow of his love; a part of that deluge by which he would drown the world of sin and wickedness.

Divers inferences may be drawn from hence.

Use 1. Is consolation, and that more generally. Here is comfort for believers, for your faith to feed upon. You may be sure that God accepted Christ for you, for he willingly offered himself to be a sacrifice for you. He went as a lamb to the slaughter, and this lamb taketh away the sins of the world. You have it twice proclaimed from heaven that God was well pleased with Christ—at his baptism and at his transfiguration: Mat. 3:17; and Mat. 17:5, 'This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.' God is pleased in Christ with you. Your willing sacrifices are acceptable to the Lord; God had no respect to Cain and his offering, because it was offered with a grudging mind. The Lord loveth a cheerful giver. Christ gave himself cheerfully and willingly for you; therefore the Lord loveth him, and loveth you for his sake. Among the heathens, a sacrifice that came unwillingly to the altar was thought ominous, as when the beast did show much reluctance, or did roar, or bleat much. O Christians! your sacrifice

came willingly; he was not haled to the altar with rigour, but he went as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep that before her shearers is dumb. Go and urge it to God; willing sacrifices are pleasing to him; Jesus Christ did not offer himself with a grudging mind.

2. More particularly, there is comfort against sad thoughts about sin. The great aggravation upon which the soul doth so bitterly reflect is the willingness of it; and, indeed, here lieth much of the evil of sin. It was that which heightened Ephraim's guilt, that he willingly walked after the commandment, Hosea 5:11; that is, so readily complied with Jeroboam's calves; and, indeed, the foulness of the fact is not so much to be gathered from the grossness of the acts of it, as from the propension, and inclination, and disposition of the heart towards it, and the fulness of the will to it, a deliberate ready—giving ourselves to it. Wilfulness in sin maketh the heart very sad when it cometh to see it. But, blessed be God, here is an answer to it—you have a willing Saviour. Though there be in you much reluctancy against God's will, and much readiness to offend, yet you could not be so ready to sin as Christ was willing to die for you: 'With desire have I desired to eat this passover.' How earnest was he to show his love! Have you felt the rage of lust in your bosoms? Christ felt the rage of love. He was straitened till he were baptized with blood for your sakes. This is the true reflection upon Christ, when we see enough in him to stop the mouth of conscience 'Who shall condemn? it is Christ that justifieth.'

Use 2. Is exhortation to bless and praise God. This was the endearment of his love, the willingness of it. Oh, how much are we indebted to him! The very argument that faith useth in the heart is the willingness of Christ to serve us in this business: Gal. 2:20, 'I live by the faith of the Son of God, who hath loved me, and gave himself for me.'

Use 3. Is instruction. It giveth out divers lessons, for Christ's life is a praxis of divinity, and the rules of religion exemplified.

1. To show us how we should give up ourselves to the service of Christ, how we should come with the sacrifice of ourselves and duties with a ready and cheerful heart. When you feel any reluctancy and regret of spirit, oh, remember Christ offered himself willingly. The Socinians would make Christ's sufferings to serve for some other use, only to be exemplary; but certainly they were not only to leave us an example: 1 Peter 2:21, 'Christ suffered for us, leaving us an example that we should follow his steps;' but he died in our room and stead, and for our sakes. And therefore we should give up ourselves to him. The scripture speaketh often of the free-will offering of the saints: Ps. 119:108, 'Accept, I beseech thee, the free-will offering of my mouth, O Lord;' Ps.

110:3, 'They shall be a willing people in the day of thy power.' Bernard saith, Lord, I will willingly sacrifice myself to thee, because thou wert willingly sacrificed for me. Christ was sacrificed willingly, not for his own gain but your benefit; and will you not give up yourselves to God, when it is better you should be given to him than left to yourselves?

2. It sheweth us what we should do in all our straits, wants, and calamities that befall us. The saints are as lambs in the midst of wolves, Luke 10:3: show yourselves lambs in suffering, as well as like lambs in danger, not like swine that whine and yell. You should not open your mouth against God. Do not please your own carnal mind by murmuring, but rather resign up yourselves to God's disposal; this is somewhat hard to do. The saints have been troubled with carnal reasonings, as Job, and David, and Jeremiah, and Habakkuk; but learn of a higher instance, Jesus Christ, who, though innocent, did not murmur under his sufferings, but bore all with a ready and willing patience. Oh, therefore yield up yourselves to God with great patience, both in life and death.

3. It teacheth us not to use reviling and threatenings words to men. You may be wronged, so was Christ; he was more innocent than you can be, for it is impossible but something of the flesh will discover itself in us; but what a sad thing is it to see the people of God bring a railing accusation against others! Consider, Christ opened not his mouth, but went as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep that before her shearers is dumb.

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