Perseverance of the Servant, Isaiah 53 verses 7-9

By Charles Feinberg

This is study for the perseverance of the servant Isaiah 53:7 to 9, the gem of Old Testament prophecy by Dr. Charles Lee Feinberg, dean emeritus professor of Old Testament at Talbot Theological Seminary in La Mirada California. We now come to Isaiah 53, the gem of Old Testament prophecy. We entitle this study the perseverance or the patience the perseverance of the servant. It's found in Isaiah 53 verses 7 to 9, what we call the fourth strophe fee or the fourth stanza of this marvelous, marvelous hymn on the work of the Lord Jesus Christ on Calvary.

Let's notice how these three verses read. He was oppressed, yet when he was afflicted he opened not his mouth. As a lamb that is led to the slaughter and as a sheep that before its shearsers is done. So he opened not his mouth. By oppression and judgment. He was taken away. And as for his generation who among them considered that he was cut off out of the land of the living for the transgression of my people to whom the stroke was due. And they made his grave with the wicked and with a rich man in his death. Although he had done no violence, neither was any deceived in his mouth. What a remarkable description of the perseverance of the servant in Isaiah 53 verses 7 to 9 this fifth study. We can all agree with the statement that's been made years ago that all the references in the New Testament to the Lamb of God, for instance John 1:29 and John 1:36. John 1:29 reads, "Behold the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world." Lamb of God was the favorite designation of the Apostle John for our Lord Jesus. Notice how many times he uses it in the Book of Revelation.

All the references in the new testament to the Lamb of God with which the corresponding allusion to the Passover are interwoven. All those references spring from this passage in the Book of Isaiah. All the utterances it's been said in the New Testament regarding the Lamb of God are derived from this prophecy in which the dumb type of the Passover now finds an eloquent tongue. The chief truth in this portion, in this strophy is the voluntary submission of the servant. Remember we did divide all five strophies into sort of a pentateuchal framework and this would answer to numbers, the trials of Earth and the testing's of the desert way.

The chief truth, voluntary submission, willing surrender, patient enduring of all by the servant. In verse 7, we have the gentleness and the silence of the sufferer. The verb, the first verb that is to catch our eye is the word oppressed. The original word means cruelly, tyrannically use. There was the exaction of the fullest penalty possible. Notice, Isaiah 50 verses 5 to 7, "The Lord God hath open mine ear and I was not rebellious neither turned away backward." Well it, just from a human standpoint he would have a lot of reason to do that when he had found out from
the father and known it from all eternity as well that he was to suffer such excruciating pain for the sins of all the world. He says he's open mind here is God's instructing him yet once more in his prophetic ministry. And I wasn't rebellious neither turned away backward. How do you know that he submitted fully? The next verse tells us. "I gave my back to the smiter's and that was not just some play thing. Smitten with the awful tones that they had in those days. My cheeks to them that plucked off the hair, oh the agony of it. The tremendous excruciating pain of it, he says, "I gave my cheeks to them the plucked off the hair and almost unbelievably there was not only shame but spitting. I hid not my face from shame and spitting." Why could he do all of it? Because the Lord God will help me, therefore have I not been confounded. Therefore have I set my face like a flint? You remember Luke 9. He said, "His face steadfastly to Jerusalem so much so that those of Samaria said if you had a little mind to do that we'd only want to receive you into our area. I set my face like a flint and I know that I shall not be put to shame." And Luke 9:51, I quoted first Peter 2:23. He was oppressed. He was tyrannically, cruelly, mercilessly used. There was a exaction of the full penalty, he took the full brunt of it into that blessed, blessed heart and breast of his. And when he was such hit when he was afflicted he opened not his mouth. That's stated twice in this verse so we must know that it has emphatic value. He opens not his mouth and that the end, so he opened not his mouth, twice and the verse.

Read the Gospel records and you will see how silent he was before the Jewish ruler. [Inaudible], Pilate, silent before him. Herod, he was silent. He only answered to the Sanhedrin when silence would have belied his claims. He only answered Pilate when his kingship was questioned in John 18. Herod received no answer at all to any of his questions. You see his reason for speaking was for witness only, not for complaint, not for a tirade. The whole thought is patient endurance rather than absolute silence.

Well why was he silent? There was a reason, there was a reason for all that he did, for all that he accomplished, for all that he had endured. Let's hear it. Why was our Lord Jesus so silent at the time of the trials? Well first of all, he knew the uselessness. He knew the futility of arguing with those who were bent on his destruction. You remember the times in the Gospel where we read how they lay in wait to find something to accuse him. Just the opposite of Anglo-Saxon, British, and American jurisprudence and legal procedure.

A man is considered with us to be innocent until it's proved, proved that he is guilty. And here they not only had been accusers, judge and jury and executioner all, they carried all out. He knew of the futility of arguing with those who were bent on his destruction. And then even more his rest and his trust his confidence were in God who is to vindicate him. You remember we just read that just a few moments ago because he says the Lord God will help me. And then when he was so discouraged in Isaiah 50, the Lord God's given me the tongue of them he said and all that
I may know him, how to sustain the one who was weary. Even more, you go on read how he says that he was cast down. Nevertheless, the Lord has helped me. He says, "I spent my strength for not, I as it were gave forth all I could, and how did they take it? Not at all." Remember that, that's in the same great prophet Isaiah.

What do we read here? That it was he who underwent all of this for you and for me. Yes, the Lord who formed him, the Lord who brought him from his mother's womb. He's made my mouth, this is Isaiah 49. Like a sharp sword in the shadow of his hand he hit me and made me a Polish shaft in his quiver and he kept me close. He said unto me, “Thou art my servant Israel.” He's seen here in a composite picture with Israel and whom I will be glorified. Now watch this, but I said this is an aspect that so few realize with regard to our Lord Jesus, it shows his absolute humanity, as well as absolute deity. He said, "I have labored in vain all for nothing. I've spent my strength for naught and vanity, it just amounts to nothing." Ah, but wait a moment. Yet surely the justice to me is with the Lord and my recompense with my God. That's what I'm speaking of now friends, his rest and his trust were in God who is going to vindicate him. Therefore he was silent, not only because of the uselessness of talking with those who are not of a mind to be reasonable not at all, but his rest. His confidence were in the Lord God who was going to bring forth his righteousness as the noonday sun, he was going to vindicate him. And then thirdly and hear it here at my dear friend. Why was he silent? Because he was conscious of the true reason for his suffering. What was that? Human, sin, and guilt. Our Lord Jesus knew full well the great law that underlay the Levitical system of sacrifices, the transferring of suffering from the guilty to the innocent that was seen multiplied times, myriads of times in the sacrifices. And so he opened not his mouth. Notice, he was as a lamb led to the slaughter, and then we read of a sheep before it shearsers is done. You have a lamb and sheep here and you had the sheep did we not in verse six. Oh, we like sheep have gone astray. Turned everyone to his own way. We are sheep.

He was as a sheep and this blessed, one as I've already indicated John 1:29 to 36 is the Lamb of God. What's the whole picture of the lamb? We talk about gentle as a lamb. We talk about it as an offensive as a lamb. The sense is a voluntary endurance like a sheep before her Shearers is dumb. She was submissive. Why is there a change of figure from the lamb to the sheep? A lamb was used for sacrifice, but only grow sheep could be shorn. Oh Jeremiah when he was opposed on every side realized the agony of being like a sheep among those who are bent to do him harm and only harm Jeremiah 11:19. Read the same picture in Psalm 38 verse 13 and 14, Psalm 39 verse 9 and then the New Testament fulfillment in that blessed one at the end of his earthly ministry.

Matthew 26 verse 63, Matthew 27 verses 12 to 14. Not only did men have their part in his death and God also, but he himself voluntarily submitted to the shame and sufferings. You'll
never get a true picture of the sufferings of our Lord Jesus and of the true meaning of the Cross unless you see he entered in in a marvelous way as in John 10, "No man taketh my life from you" and that's true. And a very definite sense as well. No man taketh my life from me, I lay it down of myself and I'm going to take it again. Think of this blessed one instead of the noisy protests of innocence, Pilate's office made him very familiar with that kind of activity. Instead of that, instead of all this shouting and vociferation than he was used to. Here they stood before him before Pilate, a man with a terrifying death of crucifixion threatening him yet he's calm and silent, that was just the opposite of what Pilate was. He, Jesus of Nazareth was calm and quiet. His very presence spoke with convincing eloquence and his lips at the same time uttered never a word. Behold the Man. Behold the Lamb of God. May we ever, seriously friend, may we ever fervently call down the benedictions of the living God upon that precious head of the Lamb of God.

They tell us that on a little church in Germany there stood a stone lamb that had an interesting history attached to it. Some workmen were engaged on the roof of that building when one of them to the horror of the rest fell to the ground. His companions hurried down from the roof expecting to find him killed, or breathing his last. They were amazed to find him unharmed until they realized that there had been a lamb grazing just where he struck the ground. And since he fell on that lamb the little creature was crushed to death and the man himself escaped injury. That man who so delivered was so grateful for that wonderful deliverance that he had an image of the lamb carved in stone, placed on the building as a memorial. The Lamb had literally saved his life by dying in his place. My friend may the image of the blessed Lamb of God be ever civil engraven upon our hearts that we shall never, never swear from it, never forget it, never disregarded, never fail to give it its full value. He took God's crushing debt dealing blow for us. Nothing in time here it, nothing in time or in eternity can ever change the vast value and validity of that truth.

In verse 8, we come to the thoughtlessness of his generation, verse 8. In verse 7, it was the gentleness and silence of the suffer. Oh, how much we have to learn concerning him at Calvary. Verse 8, the thoughtlessness of his generation. The verbs here [inaudible] by oppression and oppression taken away, cut off out of the land of the living. The stroke that came upon him. The verbs in this sentence, in this verse speak of violence and suddenness and when it says by oppression and judgment it actually means by misjudgment, the forms of law are seen as twisted, all out of proportion to bring about flagrant injustice. The greatest travesty, unjust of all the ages, here unquestionably was the darkest judicial crime of all the centuries. Nothing in that day or since can possibly, in any way, soften the stark reality of it. He was taken away the thought in the originals that he was snatched away with no semblance of due deliberation or consideration.
They were in hurry. They wanted it all over with. They wanted to wash their hands of the affair of course. They also religious ones as they were quote unquote wanted to be Levitically clean in order to keep and celebrate the Passover. That evening when Christ the true Passover, First Corinthians 5:7 was sacrificed for them.

Notice he was cut off. That word means violent death in the prime of life, just as in Daniel 9:26 after a certain specified time [Hebrew] Messiah shall be cut off, violent death in the prime of life. That verb is used even to this day among Jews, even the unbelieving ones when they want to speak of a man being cut off early in his youth. They call it [Hebrew] which means cutting off by violence, as in this violent death. The thoughtlessness of his own generation made them shamefully ungrateful. To be thinkful is to be thankful that's why we say forget not. Bless the Lord oh my soul and all that is within me bless his holy name. Bless the Lord oh my soul and forget not to be forgetful is to be unthankful. To be thinkful is to be thankful.

It was the artist W.S. Burton who painted a picture of fine quality called the world's gratitude. It shows the sad questioning face of our Lord Jesus Christ. Recall how many pictures of Christ have you seen of him smiling. But here it shows the sad questioning face of Christ looking out from behind the bars of a prison. The world knows him by name of course but it refuses to submit to His will. So while that goes on its business and keeps him bard within a prison. The artist has succeeded in giving to the face of our Lord, an aspect of tender sorrow. There is a haunting look in the eyes which penetrate into the heart and challenge each passerby, each onlooker as though to ask in the words of lamentation 1:12, "Is it nothing to you all you that pass by?" See if there's any sorrow, like under the sorrow, but with the Lord hath affected me. And then notice 9, of course that passage in lamentations 1:12 was written under the direction of the Spirit of God by Jeremiah the prophet concerning the destruction of Jerusalem 586 B.C. My dear friends is all the more true of our Lord Jesus.

Now look at verse 9. And they made his, those who put him to death. They may grave with the wicked and with a rich man in his death. Although it done no violence, neither was any deceit in his mouth. Learned from that verse among many other things the absolute truthfulness and validity of even the most minute detail. Notice the grave was with the wicked, but the death, the death with a rich man. Our Lord allowed himself to be crucified between two thieves. But he was not put in the grave of a thief. He was put in that grave of a rich man. The disgrace of his death. His grave was made by way of intention with wicked crucified between two thieves. Has it never struck you friend that there's more than one day upon which those who are accused of capital crimes could be put to death. Those two on the right and left of our Lord Jesus at Calvary could have been crucified on another day. Ah but they wanted to show upon what level they placed him, how lowly they regarded him, how degraded they would make him. Crucified
between two thieves. The Talmud even places Jesus of Nazareth in the lowest regions with Titus and Balaam suffering the severest most degrading forms of punishment. But he was a rich man in his death.

The word translated death here is in the plural as though he died many deaths in one. It's used of a violent death, the pain of which makes it like dying again and again. But notice the intervention of God. The rich man in his death. Josephus says, "Well said he that blasphemed God, let him be stoned, let him be stoned. And let him be hanged upon a tree all day and let him be buried in an ignominious and obscure manner. The word goes on, malefactors were either left unburied or disgraced by a promiscuous internment in an unclean place. That usage is explicitly asserted by Josephus and centuries later Maimonides, a great middle ages philosopher in the time of Richard the Third, The lionhearted, third crusade. Maimonides, the Jewish philosopher also is an authority that that's the way that disgraced malefactors were treated. It wasn't a barrier with a rich man who had died, but the grave intended for the body of a rich man when he did die. Matthew 27:57, Luke 23:53.

Never forget it friend, Christ was born of the virgin womb. He was buried in a virgin tomb. No further indignity was to be heaped upon him because he had done no violence. His humiliation, did you notice that in the Gospels of God's very particular about this. His humiliation did not extend beyond the time of his death. What would be the purpose of it? What would be the justice of it? No, when he had offered up his Spirit unto the Father. When he had completed the work of redemption, when he had drained the cup of death and of agony to the for God said that's enough, finished, no wicked hand will touch him, no more indignities, no more suffering. And why all of it? Because he had done no violence. No he wouldn't crush a bruise it. Read Isaiah 42. No violence, neither was any deceit in his mouth. His lips spoke only the highest truth.

Think of it. Why should a man, this one was more than a man, but why should any man suffer so agonizingly when all that was in his mouth was truth? No deceit in his mouth. That's the point of it. He couldn't be suffering for himself. Once he took all the suffering for our sin, there was no more need to suffer for something that might have been left out in him, he had no sin. Truly, marvelous is the perseverance of the servant. When the garden tomb in Jerusalem was discovered in 1885, I've seen it numbers of times and visited the Holy Land. Well when that garden too was discovered in 1885 the Godly general Gordon, British General, was convinced that that was the place where the body of Jesus had lain.

Now there's a traditional tomb, I've seen it numbers of times as well inside the wall of modern Jerusalem with a lot of ritual and the like, but no certainty attaches to that site. Where the garden tomb, hidden for centuries, was covered with rubbish, 20 feet high. Think of it. Well
when they first cleared that spot with great caution they gather all the dust, all the debris from within the tomb and they carefully shipped it to the Scientific Association of Great Britain. Every part of it was gone over mind, dutifully detailed and it was analyzed from every angle. My friend I'm here to tell you there were no traces of human remains. Now if that is the real tomb, we're not saying it is, but it has a good claim to it over any other. But if that's the real tomb of Christ we're not saying it with as much conviction as we can other things because that's not written in the word. But if that's the real tomb of Christ then Jesus was the first to be there, he was also the last. He did rise, thank God even as he said angel’s right.

Why seek you the living among the dead. He is not here, He is risen. You can't say that of Confucius or Mohammed or Buddha or Zoroaster or any of the heads of any of the cults or sects or ethnic religions anywhere in the world. The perseverance of the servant, may every heart, your heart to friend, be able to say by implicit, that’s genuine faith dear dying lamb as the hymn has it, dear dying lamb thy precious blood shall never lose its power till all the rents of Church of God be saved to sin no more.

Friend, it's not really an impertinence, it arises out of deep earnestness. I want to ask you have you ever realized that you are a sinner from Christ died? That your sins as well as mine and those of all the world were of the deepest dye? No launderer on earth could wash it out. Only Christ could die for us. And he did. He did it with the fullest of perfection and acceptance with God. Now, why don't you say, "Nothing in my hand that brings, simply to that cross I cling. Other refuge have I none, hangs my helpless soul on the. Lord, you can be my guarantee, my surety for time in eternity. I'm going to go to heaven, but through no worth of mine only through thine I receive it. Thank you. Thank the Lord." Do it now. May God grant it this very moment.