

# The Beauty and Glory of Christ



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Edited by  
Joel R. Beeke



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*The Beauty and Glory of Christ*

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With heartfelt appreciation for

**Henk Kleyn**

lover of Christ, His beauty and glory;  
loved for his large servant-heart by all the faculty, staff, and students  
of Puritan Reformed Theological Seminary; and  
the most loyal and best Director of Admissions and Registrar  
a seminary could wish for



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## Preface

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At Puritan Reformed Theological Seminary, the beauty and glory of Christ evokes our strongest emotions and deepest convictions. By the Spirit's grace, we longed to have the mind and soul of each attendee of our 2010 conference—including ourselves—saturated with this glorious theme. For Christ is the hope of our glory and the glory of our hope.

I am convinced that to be truly evangelical, one must embrace doctrinally and experientially the Reformation's major tenets: *sola gratia*, *sola fide*, *solus Christus*, *sola scriptura*, and *solus Deo Gloria*. Is not our salvation based on Scripture alone, through Christ alone, received by faith alone, worked by grace alone, to the glory of God alone? At the heart of these stalwart truths is *solus Christus* (Christ alone). "Christ alone" is our life and salvation, our beauty and glory. Christ Jesus is the beautiful, glorious Savior and Lord, whose "legs are as pillars of marble" (Song 5:15), for He is strong and steadfast and is "altogether lovely" (v. 16). As Thomas Brooks said, "Christ is lovely, Christ is very lovely, Christ is most lovely, Christ is always lovely, Christ is altogether lovely."<sup>1</sup> Brooks also said, "Christ is the most sparkling diamond in the ring of glory."<sup>2</sup>

Many people from all over North America made the journey to Grand Rapids to be nourished by God's Word. The conference exceeded our expectations. The messages delivered by various men of God were a spiritual feast. As they led us into the green pastures of God's Word, they set before us the unsearchable riches of the Lord

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1. "Heaven on Earth," in *The Complete Works of Thomas Brooks*, ed. Alexander B. Grosart (Edinburgh: James Nichol, 1866), 2:476.

2. Brooks, "The Unsearchable Riches of Christ," in *Works*, 3:57n3.

Jesus Christ. In expounding the written Word of God, they displayed the beauty and glory of the Living Word—the Son of the Father’s good pleasure and His unspeakable gift to us.

On Thursday, August 26, David Murray preached on the prophecy of Isaiah, showing us the beauty and glory of the Father’s Servant. The Scottish minister David Carmichael took us to the Gospels to show us Christ as the “Master of Storms,” then later presented Jesus as the “Master of Stress” during His inexpressible suffering prior to and on the cross. Another minister from Scotland, Iain Campbell, spoke about the beauty and glory of Christ as displayed in the Song of Solomon. I offered some insights of the great Puritan theologian, Thomas Goodwin, regarding the beautiful heart of Christ, who ministers to His church as her exalted Mediator at the Father’s right hand.

On Friday, Richard Phillips spoke about the preciousness of Christ as the incarnate Word of God. Jerry Bilkes then gave us helpful insights on Christ’s parables. Al Martin proclaimed the beauty and glory of Christ in His death and resurrection. James Grier concluded the day by giving us a glimpse into the throne room of heaven, where we beheld the beautiful Lamb of God, to whom has been given all power in heaven and on earth.

On Saturday, Ray Pennings talked about our obligation to display the beauty and glory of Christ by living Christ-centered lives. James Grier ended the conference by drawing attention to the triumphant Christ and stirring us to say with the church of all ages, “Come, Lord Jesus, come quickly!”

Seminar addresses were also delivered by William VanDoodewaard on “Christology in Marrow Theology,” Richard Phillips on “Glorying in the Imputed Righteousness of Christ,” and Ray Pennings on “Christology: Calvin, Kuyper, and Politics.”

The conference affirmed that our beautiful and glorious Christ is the Father’s unspeakable gift to us. We are grateful to Chris Hanna and the staff of PRTS for organizing this conference, which proved to be one of the best I have ever attended. If you weren’t able to join us, you can do so now belatedly through the pages of this book. In editing this volume, which is primarily designed for educated laypeople and ministers, I have let the speakers decide to what degree to retain the spoken style in their respective chapters, which explains why

some chapters are a bit more formal than others. Generally speaking, the seminar papers are written in a slightly more academic style.

I heartily thank all the speakers for their diligent work on their excellent addresses. Taken together, these addresses provide an informative and heart-warming book about our precious Savior. It is our prayer that God will bless this volume to enhance your walk with Christ.

I thank Rebecca VanDoodewaard and Kate DeVries for their most helpful editorial assistance on the entire volume, Stan McKenzie for his meticulous proofreading, Gary and Linda den Hollander for their able typesetting and proofreading, Amy Zevenbergen for another great cover design, and Bartel Elshout for assisting with part of this preface. Thanks, too, to Lois Haley for transcribing two of the messages and to Phyllis TenElshof for assisting me in moving them from transcripts to manuscripts. I also thank my amazingly patient and dedicated wife, Mary, and my cherished children, Calvin, Esther, and Lydia, who without complaining allow me the extra time needed to work on producing sound literature like this book.

As I write, we are eagerly anticipating this year's conference—August 25–27, 2011, at the same site, the Prince Conference Center, Calvin College, in Grand Rapids, Michigan—on the beauty and glory of the Holy Spirit. The messages will address a variety of ways in which the Holy Spirit leads, guides, convicts, and comforts believers. Please join us. You'll be glad you did.

—Joel R. Beeke



A classical column with a Corinthian capital and a sunburst background. The column is fluted and stands on a base. The capital is decorated with acanthus leaves and scrolls. The sunburst background consists of numerous rays emanating from a central point behind the column's capital.

**CHRIST'S BEAUTY  
PROPHESED  
AND TYPIFIED**

**PART I**



# The Beauty of God's Servant

*David Murray*

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“In these passages we are not far from the highest New Testament Christology, such as that found in the fourth Gospel.”<sup>1</sup> Henri Blocher refers to the so-called servant songs—although there is no evidence they were ever sung—in Isaiah 42:1–9; 49:1–6; 50:4–9; and 52:13–53:12. Some have also argued for a fifth servant song in Isaiah 61:1–4. That would be a fitting climax to the series, as the speaker there has many parallels with the servant and Christ confirms its fulfillment in Him (Luke 4:16–21). However, that passage is more usually understood as Isaiah speaking autobiographically, although he does so in such a way that he prophetically foreshadows the person and work of Christ.

We shall survey these four passages and ask two questions about the servant of these songs: first, who is he? And second, what is he like? We shall answer these two questions under two subject headings: the identity of the servant and the beauty of the servant.

## **The Identity of the Servant**

The first question we must ask is, who is the servant? There are four main answers to our question:

- The servant is Israel.
- The servant is Isaiah.
- The servant is a second Moses.
- The servant is a prophecy of Jesus Christ.

Let us look at the strengths and weaknesses of each option.

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1. Henri Blocher, *Songs of the Servant* (Downers Grove, Ill.: IVP, 1975), 55.

*The Servant Is Israel*

Some say that the servant was the nation of Israel, which suffered on behalf of the Gentile nations. A refinement of this view is that it was the faithful remnant in Israel. Arguments in favor of this identification are:

1. Isaiah addresses and describes Israel as the Lord's servant throughout (cf. 41:8–9; 42:19; 43:10; 44:1–2, 21; 45:4; 48:20).
2. The second servant song calls the servant "Israel" (49:3).
3. Israel and the servant are described similarly:
  - "Whom I uphold" (41:10; 42:1)
  - "My chosen" (42:1; 43:20; 45:4)
  - "Formed you in the womb" (44:2, 24; 49:1)
  - "Named" (43:1; 49:1)
  - "A light to the nations" (49:6; 51:4).
4. Just as Ezekiel portrays Israel's history as a suffering, death, and resurrection (Ezek. 37), so Isaiah similarly portrays the servant in Isaiah 53:10ff. As the psalmist describes Israel as a sheep led to the slaughter (Ps. 44:22), so Isaiah describes the servant (Isa. 53:7).
5. Israel's "death" blessed the nations (Isa. 49:6) by the witness of faithful Israelites in exile (e.g., Daniel, Esther, Mordecai).

Objections to the view that Israel is the servant are the following:

1. The servant suffers and dies despite his sinlessness (50:5; 53:9), whereas Isaiah stresses that the people of Israel are sinners and suffer for their sin (40:2; 42:18–25; 43:22–28). Isaiah also describes the faithful remnant as sinners (43:22; 46:3; 48:1).
2. Although the servant figure is corporate Israel in other chapters of Isaiah, the chapters containing the servant songs all appear to be about an individual. That is how the Ethiopian eunuch understood the passage (Acts 8:34).
3. Isaiah 49:5–6 distinguishes Israel from the servant (see also 43:3; 53:8).
4. Whenever Isaiah speaks on behalf of the people of Israel, he uses "we," "our," "us," and usually introduces this very abruptly (1:9; 16:6; 42:24). In Isaiah 53:1ff, as Isaiah uses "we," "our," "us," without identifying the speakers, he speaks on behalf of Israel. Therefore, when Isaiah goes on to speak of the servant as a "he," it cannot be Israel.



5. Scripture portrays Israel as sheep going astray (Ps. 57:7–10; 119:176; Jer. 50:6), which is consistent with Isaiah 53:6.

6. Isaiah characterizes Israel as the blind and deaf servant (Isa. 42:19), but the servant of the servant songs is the perfect listener (Isa. 50:4).

### *The Servant Is Isaiah*

If the servant is not Israel, then perhaps it is Isaiah himself. The Ethiopian eunuch also mentioned this as a possibility. Arguments in favor of this are:

1. Isaiah 20:3 explicitly identifies Isaiah as “my servant.”

2. The servant of the servant songs speaks in the first person as “my...I...mine” (49:1).

3. The servant suffers physical affliction and rejection (42:4; 50:6–9; 53:3–12), just like Isaiah.

4. The servant has prophetic characteristics: he intercedes (53:12), teaches God's law (42:4; 49:2), and is endowed with the Holy Spirit (42:1).

Objections to the view that the servant is Isaiah are the following:

1. There are prophetic traits in the servant, but some things do not fit a prophetic identity. For example, the servant is commissioned to bring forth justice in the earth—a kingly function (42:1, 3). Also, a prophet can scarcely fit the victorious descriptions in Isaiah 52:13, 15; and 53:12.

2. There are first-person references (I, me, my) in songs two and three. However, in songs one and four, Isaiah speaks of the servant in the third person (him, he, his).

3. Isaiah keeps himself in the background throughout Isaiah, making his message prominent. He is the least biographical of the prophets.

Thus far, we have seen that the servant is not Israel (in whole or in part) or Isaiah. Other commentators have identified the servant as some historical or ideal priestly or royal figure like Ezra or Hezekiah. However, although the servant has some priestly and royal characteristics, he has other functions and characteristics that do not fit these roles. The servant's characteristics and functions are much wider than either of these two offices.

That leads some to see the servant as a “second Moses” (in fulfillment of Deut. 18:14ff), because although he was primarily a prophet, he also blends royal and priestly characteristics and functions. Let us next consider the evidence for that.

#### *The Servant Is a “Second Moses”*

Arguments in favor of this include the following:

1. Isaiah carries the “second-exodus” motif throughout the whole book, especially in chapters 40–55 with their repeated themes of redemption, recreation, theophany, pilgrimage, etc.

2. Some of the servant songs have very explicit “exodus” content.

3. Like Moses, the servant represents the people, mediates the covenant, delivers from bondage, intercedes for the people, is meek and gentle, and leads a model life.

4. Apart from David, Moses is the most frequently identified as the “servant.” Scripture calls him a servant forty times, “servant of Yahweh” eighteen times, and “servant of God” four times—a title given to no one else.

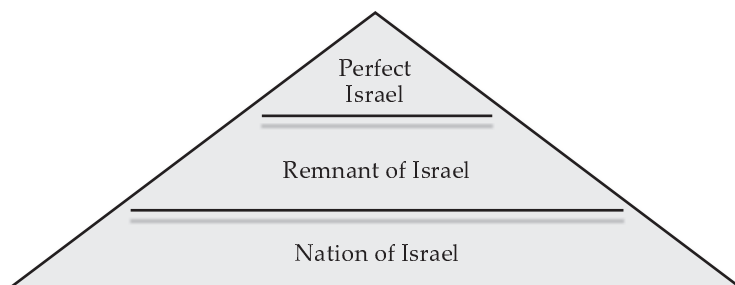
5. Later in Isaiah, there is an explicit cry for a second Moses to arise (Isa. 63:11–19).

This is a helpful analogy, and insofar as Moses was a type of Christ, we would expect further prophecies to build on that, as Isaiah clearly does. However, the fact is that no one of Israel’s offices of prophet, priest, or king can completely fulfill this servant motif. Neither can David, Ezra, Moses, nor Isaiah nor any of the greatest personalities in Israel fill the servant’s shoes.

#### *The Servant Is the Lord Jesus Christ*

The servant is far greater than any of Israel’s individual offices or of any of Israel’s individual personalities. The servant is the fulfillment of Israel as a whole. He embodies and will fulfill everything that Israel was meant to be in the world. He is “ideal Israel” or “Israel fulfilled.” Isaiah sums it up this way: “And said unto me, Thou art my servant, O Israel, in whom I will be glorified” (Isa. 49:3).

By giving him the same designation as Israel (servant) and even mentioning him in the same breath as Israel, Isaiah says that the servant is everything that Israel should have been by calling. That led Franz Delitzsch to portray Isaiah’s servant theology as a pyramid.



Sometimes Isaiah's servant was Israel as a whole, represented by the pyramid's base. Other times Isaiah uses "servant" to refer to the purified remnant of Israel, the middle section. But in the servant songs, Isaiah's servant is the coming Savior—the apex—who is the embodiment of Israel.<sup>2</sup> Significantly, Isaiah does not use the plural term for servant until after Isaiah 53. From chapter 54 onwards, the plural "servants" occurs eleven times, referring to God's people, including foreigners. His servant work produces servants, not just from Israel but from all over the world.<sup>3</sup>

Isaiah predicted that God would raise up Cyrus, a pagan king, to deliver His people from Babylon. But Cyrus was not the only deliverer to come. Isaiah predicted an exodus, a redemption, and a deliverer far greater than Cyrus. Cyrus's servant role was introductory; he was but a prelude to *the* servant and his better exodus.

Isaiah is pointing us towards Jesus Christ, who came not to be served but to serve and to give His life a ransom for many (Mark 10:32–45). Jesus was the first to see that He was the servant, and He saw it early on (Luke 2:49; 3:22). These servant songs gave Jesus the blueprint for His mission. Shortly after Pentecost, Jesus is called the servant four times (Acts 3:13, 26; 4:27, 30). In fact, Blocher remarks that the servant motif was so prominent in the New Testament church that Christology was primarily paidology (servantology).<sup>4</sup>

2. Franz Delitzsch, *Commentary on Isaiah* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1982), 2:174ff.

3. The New Testament repeatedly identifies this Servant-Savior as Jesus Christ (Matt. 8:17; 16:21; 27:26, 29, 31, 38, 57–60; John 10:11, 29; 3:17; 12:38; 19:1, 7, 18, 38–41; Acts 2:23; 3:13; 8:32–33; 10:43; Rom. 4:25; 8:34; 10:15–16; 15:21; Eph. 3:4–5; Phil. 2:9; Heb. 5:8; 9:28; Rev. 14:5).

4. From *pais*, the Greek word for "servant." Blocher, *Songs of the Servant*, 11.

### The Beauty of the Servant

Having identified the servant as the coming Messiah, Jesus Christ, we shall now look at the beauty of the servant. What do we learn about Christ's beauty from these prophetic songs?

I will not take you on a verse-by-verse exegesis of these four songs. Rather, I will point to the highlights of Isaiah's descriptions and then show how the Lord Jesus Christ fulfilled them. As we proceed, you will notice that the songs follow the chronology of Christ's life.

#### *The Servant Enjoys Beautiful Relationships*

1. The Father/Son relationship: God the Father said of His Son, "Behold my servant" (Isa. 42:1). God called Adam to this role, but he disobeyed, rebelled, and failed. God called Israel to this role; Israel also disobeyed, rebelled, and failed. Nevertheless, here God predicts a servant who will succeed, a servant He will not be ashamed of, a servant He will call others to. When this servant appears, God will say to all, "Behold my servant," or "Would you look at that!"

God the Father will not only send His servant out on His own. He will also "uphold" Him, holding Him so firmly in His grip that nothing will defeat Him (42:1, 6). The Father's love for the servant is encapsulated in the Father's expression "my chosen." Hebrew culture viewed love as an act of the will, as a deliberate decision to bond with someone. It was not so much emotional but volitional. Love was not something you drifted into but a choice—"my chosen." This is underlined by the next phrase, "in whom my soul delighteth" (42:1). This is a highly unusual master/servant relationship.

The fulfillment of it was especially clear after Christ's baptism. As He came out of the water, God the Father effectively repeated Isaiah 42:1, filling Christ with His Spirit as Isaiah had promised in the same verse: "And Jesus, when he was baptized, went up straightway out of the water: and, lo, the heavens were opened unto him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove, and lighting upon him: and lo a voice from heaven, saying, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased" (Matt. 3:16–17). What a beautiful picture of intimate Trinitarian relationship—"Behold my servant!"

2. The Son/Father relationship: In the second song (49:1–6), the servant describes His experience of God, and especially His dependence upon Him. He speaks of His discouragement on a human level and of how He turned to His Father for support. “Then I said, I have laboured in vain, I have spent my strength for nought, and in vain: yet surely my judgment [personal vindication or work of restoring justice] is with the LORD, and my work with my God” (49:4). Many times throughout His life Christ expressed His dependence upon His Father in the midst of discouragement and setbacks (John 17). And, of course, at His greatest point of need, He committed His soul to His Father (Luke 23:46).

3. Covenant relationship: God established a covenant with Adam on behalf of the world, and then with Israel on behalf of the nations. Sadly, both of them broke relationship with God, proving unfaithful servants. But in the first servant song, God promises that He will give the servant “for a covenant of the people, for a light to the Gentiles” (42:6). Unlike Adam and Israel, this servant will become the covenant and keep the covenant, extending the covenant benefits beyond Israel to the whole world. Through the covenant of grace, sinners can enter into and enjoy a Father/son relationship with God.

#### *The Servant Possesses a Beautiful Character*

One of the servant's most prominent characteristics in the servant songs is His humble gentleness. This meekness is so appropriate for His servant role. Unlike the false prophets of Old Testament times, who were characterized by frenzied, hysterical, and self-promoting exhibitionism, “[the servant] shall not cry, nor lift up, nor cause his voice to be heard in the street” (Isa. 42:2). He will be quiet and modest; He will not be a publicity-seeker.

Neither would the servant follow the Cyrus pattern of deliverance through military might and power that crushed all before it. Rather, “a bruised reed shall he not break, and the smoking flax shall he not quench” (Isa. 42:3). How comforting this would be to broken, smoking Israel in Babylonian exile.

Isaiah also describes the servant as a tender shoot and a dry root (53:2). He is neither tall and handsome, nor strong and imposing. There is nothing attractive nor compelling about His appearance or

physique. It is as if the prophet says, “We look at Him, but there is nothing to look at.”

The whole picture is one of meekness. That does not, however, mean weakness. Though the servant will not break the bruised reed or extinguish the smoldering wick, He Himself will not be a smoldering wick or bruised reed (42:4). Weakness and fragility will not characterize Him. His light will not be extinguished. He beautifully merges gentleness and strength, meekness and courage.

As Matthew recognized, Jesus fit this description perfectly (Matt. 12:17–21). In fact, Jesus underlined how much He delighted in meekness (Matt. 11:29). He humbly refused publicity. He did not rant and rave. He sought out the weak and the discouraged and cherished the least signs of spiritual life. He tenderly healed the bruised reed and revived the smoldering wick.

#### *The Servant Performs a Beautiful Work*

1. Justice: A large part of the servant’s work is to bring justice—just order—both to the Gentiles and to all the earth (Isa. 42:1, 3, 4). Justice was not so much about punishment but about re-ordering what had been disordered, bringing structure where there had been chaos.

2. Teaching: When Cyrus, another of God’s servants, was on his way, the isles trembled in terror and dreaded his deeds (41:3–7). But with this servant, in contrast, the isles wait expectantly and hopefully. They look forward to this servant’s clear, incisive, and penetrating teaching (42:4). Rather than plunge nations into darkness, He will be a light to the Gentiles (42:6). Scripture repeatedly underlines the servant’s beautiful teaching and teachability (49:4–5).

3. Salvation: The servant will not only save from Babylon but also from sin. Isaiah describes something far greater than simply return from exile. It involves not just a return but a re-creation. It includes not merely Israel (49:3–4) but the Gentiles as well (49:6, 8). This servant will do much more than Moses ever did.

Paul saw the servant songs fulfilled in the life and death of Jesus Christ (Isa. 49:8; 2 Cor. 6:2). What a servant Jesus is! He effects justice, He teaches, and He saves!

*The Servant Is Beautiful in Suffering*

At this point, we expect onward, upward, and forward in the servant's career. However, the third song plunges us into what has been called the Gethsemane of the servant (Isa. 50:4–9), leading us into the Golgotha of the servant in the fourth song (Isa. 53). There was a hint of this painful possibility in the second (Isa. 49:4), but in the third and fourth songs, suffering becomes an increasingly intense and integral part of the servant's experience. Isaiah 53, the Golgotha of the servant, is the longest of the four servant songs and the most frequently quoted Old Testament passage in the New Testament. As it is also the song with which we are most familiar, I will not spend so much time on it apart from noting, first, that the servant would embody, fulfill, and finish all the Levitical sacrifices; second, that the suffering inflicted on the servant by Israel would become Israel's salvation; and third, that His sufferings were substitutionary—not for Himself but for us. “He was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed” (v. 5).

That such an excellent servant should have to suffer is shocking, but what Isaiah especially brings into focus is the servant's confident faith, patient endurance, and uncomplaining submission in the face of this suffering (Isa. 50:7, 9, 10; 53:7). Not once does He reject this part of His work or complain that it is unfair. In fact, He asks His adversaries to bring their charges and face Him at the judgment seat (50:8, 9). He is sure that He will be completely vindicated despite all appearances to the contrary. “For the Lord GOD will help me; therefore shall I not be confounded: therefore have I set my face like a flint, and I know that I shall not be ashamed. He is near that justifieth me; who will contend with me? let us stand together: who is mine adversary? let him come near to me. Behold, the Lord GOD will help me; who is he that shall condemn me? lo, they all shall wax old as a garment; the moth shall eat them up” (Isa. 50:7–9).

Not only does Christ, who “set his face like a flint” (Luke 9:51), fulfill these words, but Blocher also points out how Paul applies them to God's people in Romans 8: “Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth. Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us”

(vv. 33–34).<sup>5</sup> Paul takes up the servant’s confident words and gives them to God’s people. Paul sees Christ’s people standing in the same position as Christ, enjoying the same assured vindication as Christ. For the Christian, that turns the ugliest suffering in the world into the most beautiful suffering imaginable.

*The Servant Accomplishes a Beautiful Victory*

Despite the depth of the servant’s suffering and humiliation, He will have the ultimate victory, as Isaiah emphasizes at the beginning and end of the fourth and final song (52:13–15; 53:10–12). The servant’s mission is not completed with death but with His resurrection. He shares the spoils of what His death achieved with “the many” (Eph. 4:11–13). Kings will stand in dumbstruck amazement at His accomplishment (52:15), and their servants shall fall before Him.

The last servant song takes us behind the scenes to see that whatever sufferings the servant passed through, the Lord was behind it all. Everything is grounded in God’s good pleasure. “Yet it pleased the LORD to bruise him; he hath put him to grief: when thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin, he shall see his seed, he shall prolong his days, and the pleasure of the LORD shall prosper in his hand” (53:12). It was the Lord’s good pleasure to see the servant humiliated. But it is now the Lord’s good pleasure to see Him exalted.

## Conclusion

Let me leave you with five practical conclusions:

- *Believe in the Servant.* The third servant song ends with a call to faith (Isa. 50:10). Your eternal destiny depends on your response to the servant.
- *Preach the Servant.* Philip’s preaching of Jesus from Isaiah 53 brought the first African disciple to Christ. The apostle Paul applies the fourth servant song as a warrant for evangelism of those who have “...not yet heard the gospel” (Rom. 10:16).
- *Imitate the Servant.* When faced with injustice and persecution, Peter sets forth Isaiah’s servant as the example to follow (1 Pet. 2:20–25).

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5. Blocher, *Songs of the Servant*, 52.



- *Be a Servant.* God calls us to serve this generation as Christ served His (Phil. 2:3–8). Paul's favorite self-description was "servant of Christ."
- *Praise the Servant.* The first two songs conclude with paeans of praise for the servant (42:10ff.; 49:13), as does the New Testament's "servant song" (Phil. 2:9–11). Let us pray for and strive to go forward praising this worthy Servant all our lifetime, and by grace, to all eternity.