

COSTLY OBEDIENCE

Wednesday, November 29

Reading: Isaiah 50

Isaiah 50:6 *I offered My back to those who beat Me, My cheeks to those who pulled out My beard; I did not hide My face from mocking and spitting.*

Pierre Barlot was a gunner in the fort of Mont Valerin during the Prussian siege of Paris in 1870. One day his commander, General Noel, looked through his glasses at the Sevres Bridge. “Gunner,” he ordered, “do you see that little shanty in the thicket of shrubs to the left of the bridge. It is a nest of Prussians; I want you to shell them.”

Pierre turned pale as he sighted his cannon deliberately, carefully, and then fired it. “Well hit, my man!” the general declared. But he was surprised when he looked at Pierre to see a great tear running down the gunner’s cheek. “What’s the matter, man?” Pierre replied, “Pardon me, General. But that was my house – everything I had in the world.” His obedience had cost him dearly.¹

Obedience is not always easy. In the opening verses of Isaiah 50, God says it was Israel’s disobedience that had caused their separation from God. When things got rough, they turned away from Him to seek the help of heathen nations and their idols (50:1-3).

How different from the obedience of God’s Servant – the Messiah! He listened to the Father and taught to comfort the weary (50:4). This verse reminds us of Jesus’ words, “Come to Me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest” (Matthew 11:28-30). When He was abused, He did not turn away. He allowed His enemies to beat Him, pull out His beard, and spit in His face (50:5-6). Knowing the torture and death that lay ahead, Jesus “set His face to go to Jerusalem (50:7; Luke 9:51 NKJV). Nothing would stand in the way of His complete obedience to the Father (50:8-9).

The closing verses are a call to follow the Servant’s example (50:10-11). Jesus endured everything because He knew that His disgrace, shame, and death were not the final word. The Father would bring salvation and vindication because of His obedience. We too can know that our obedience, though despised by the world, will be rewarded by the Father. As the Apostle Paul reminds us: “If God is for us, who can be against us?” We are more than conquerors in Christ and nothing can separate us from the love of God (see Romans 8:31-39; see also 2 Timothy 4:7-8; James 1:12).

POINTS TO PONDER:

God never promised the Christian life would be easy. After predicting his own rejection, crucifixion, and resurrection, Jesus had these words for His disciples:

“Whoever wants to be My disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross daily and follow Me. For whoever wants to save their life will lose it, but whoever loses their life for Me will save it. What good is it for someone to gain the whole world, and yet lose or forfeit their very self? (Luke 9:23-25)

Obedience means following in the footsteps of our Savior. That will bring the hatred and persecution of the world. But after His complete obedience, Jesus was exalted and given the name above all names to which every knee will someday bow (Philippians 2:5-11). Our obedience today will lead to future glory for God’s name and His people (1 Peter 5:10).

¹ <https://www.ministry127.com/resources/illustration/the-cost-of-obedience>