**THE EXPOSITION OF HOLY SCRIPTURE BY ALEXANDER MACLAREN**

**ISAIAH-061. THE SERVANY'S WORDS TO THE WEARY by ALEXANDER MACLAREN**

*"The Lord God hath given me the tongue of them that are taught, that I should know how to sustain with words him that is weary; he wakeneth morning by morning, he wakeneth mine ear to hear as they that are taught."*

*Isaiah 50:4*

In chapter 49:1-6, the beginning of the continuous section of which these verses are part, a transition is made from Israel as collectively the ideal servant of the Lord, to a personal Servant, whose office it is to bring Jacob again to Him. We see the ideal in the very act of passing to its highest form, and that in which it is finally fulfilled in history, namely, by the person Jesus. That Jesus was Thy Holy Servant was the earliest gospel preached by Peter and John before people and rulers. It is not the most vital conception of our Lord's nature and work. The prophet does not here pierce to the core, as in his fifty-third chapter with its vision of the Suffering Servant, but this is prelude to that, and the office assigned here to the Servant cannot be fully discharged without that ascribed to Him there, as the prophet begins to discern almost immediately. The text gives us a striking view of the purpose of Messiah's mission and of His training and preparation for it.

**I. The purpose of Christ's mission.**

There is a remarkable contrast between the stately prelude to the section of the prophecy in chapter 49., and the ideal in this text. There the Servant calls the isles and the distant peoples to listen, and declares that His mouth is like a sharp sword; here all that is keen and smiting in His word has softened into gentle whispers of comfort to sustain the weary.

A mission addressed to the weary is addressed to every man, for who is not weighed upon with sore distress, or loaded with the burden and the weight of tasks beyond his power or distasteful to his inclinations, or monotonous to nausea, or prolonged to exhaustion, or toiled at with little hope and less interest? Who is not weary of himself and of his load? What but universal weariness does the universal secret desire for rest betray? We are all pilgrims weary of time, and some of us are weary of even prosperity, and some of us are worn out with work, and some of us buffeted to all but exhaustion by sorrow, and all of us long for rest, though many of us do not know where to look for it.

Jesus may have had this word in mind, when He called to Him all them that labour and are heavy laden. At all events, the prophet's ideal and the evangelists story accurately correspond. Christ's words have other characteristics, but are eminently words that sustain the weary and comfort the down-hearted. Who can ever calculate the new strength poured by them into fainting hearts and languid hands, the all but dead hopes that they have reanimated, the sorrows they have comforted, the wounds they have stanched?

What a lesson here as to the noblest use of high endowments! What a contrast to the use that so many of those to whom God has given the tongue of them that are taught make of their great gifts! Literature yields but few examples of great writers who have faithfully employed their powers for that purpose, which seems so humble and is so lofty, the help of the weary, the comfort of the sad. Many pages in famous books would be cancelled if all that had been written without consideration for these classes were obliterated, as it will be one day.

But Christ not only speaks by outward words, but has other ways of lodging sustenance and comfort in souls than by vocables audible to the ear or visible to the eye on the page. The words that I speak unto you, they are spirit and they are life. He spoke by His deeds on earth, and in one and the same set of facts, He began to do and to teach, the doing being named first. He now speaketh from Heaven by many an inward whisper, by the communication of His own Spirit, on Whom this very office of ministering sustenance and comfort is laid, and whose very name of the Comforter means One who by his being with a man strengthens him.

**II. The training and preparation of the Messiah for His mission.**

The Messiah is here represented as having the tongue of them that are taught, and as having it, because morning by morning He has been wakened to hear God's lessons. He is thus God's scholar--a thought of which an unreflecting orthodoxy has been shy, but which it is necessary to admit unhesitatingly and ungrudgingly, if we would not reduce the manhood of Jesus to a mere phantasm. He Himself has said, As the Father taught Me, I speak these things. With emphatic repetition, He was continually making that assertion, as, for instance, I have not spoken of Myself, but the Father which sent Me, He gave Me a commandment what I should say, and what I should speak ... the things therefore which I speak, even as the Father hath said unto Me, so I speak.

The Gospels tell us of the prayers of Jesus, and of rare occasions in which a voice from heaven spoke to Him. But while these are palpable instances of His communion with God, and precious tokens of His true brotherhood with us in the indispensable characteristics of the life of faith, they are but the salient points on which the light falls, and behind them, all unknown by us, stretches an unbroken chain of like acts of fellowship. In that subordination as of a scholar to teacher, both His divine and His human nature concurred, the former in filial submission, the latter in continual, truly human derivation and reception. The man Jesus was taught and, like the boy Jesus, increased in wisdom.

But while He learned as truly as we learn from God, and exercised the same communion with the Father, the same submission to Him, which other men have to exercise, and called us brethren, saying, I will put my trust in Him, the difference in degree between His close fellowship with God the Father, and our broken and always partial fellowship, between His completeness of reception of God's words and our imperfect comprehension, between His perfect reproduction of the words He had heard and our faint, and often mistaken echo of them, is so immense as to amount to a difference in kind. His unity of will and being with the Father ensured that all His words were God's. Never man spake like this man. The man who speaks to us once for all God's words must be more than man. Other men, the highest, give us fragments of that mighty voice; Jesus speaks its whole message, and nothing but its message. Of that perfect reproduction He is calmly conscious, and claims to give it, in words which are at once lowly and instinct with more than human authority: All things that I have heard of My Father I have made known unto you. Who besides Him dare make such a claim? Who besides Him could make it without being met by incredulous scorn? His utterance of the Father's words was unmarred by defect on the one hand, and by additions on the other. It was like pure water which tastes of no soil. His soul was like an open vessel plunged in a stream, filled by the flow and giving forth again its whole contents.

That divine communication to Jesus was no mere impartation of abstractions or truths, still less of the poor words of man's speech, but was the flowing into His spirit of the living Father by whom He lived. And it was unbroken. Morning by morning it was going on. The line was continuous, whereas for the rest of us, at the best, it is a series of points more or less contiguous, but with dark spaces between. God giveth not the Spirit by measure unto Him.

So, then, let us hold fast by Him, the Son in whom God has spoken to us, and to all voices without and within that would woo us to listen, let us answer with the only wise answer: To whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life.