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Scripture

Isaiah 49:1-7

¹ Listen to me, O coastlands,
pay attention, you peoples from far away!
The LORD called me before I was born,
while I was in my mother's womb he named me.
² He made my mouth like a sharp sword,
in the shadow of his hand he hid me;
he made me a polished arrow,
in his quiver he hid me away.
³ And he said to me, "You are my servant,
Israel, in whom I will be glorified."
⁴ But I said, "I have labored in vain,
I have spent my strength for nothing and vanity;
yet surely my cause is with the LORD,
and my reward with my God."
⁵ And now the LORD says,
who formed me in the womb to be his servant,
to bring Jacob back to him,
and that Israel might be gathered to him,
for I am honored in the sight of the LORD,
and my God has become my strength—
⁶ he says,
"It is too light a thing that you should be my servant
to raise up the tribes of Jacob
and to restore the survivors of Israel;
I will give you as a light to the nations,
that my salvation may reach to the end of the earth."
⁷ Thus says the LORD,
the Redeemer of Israel and his Holy One,
to one deeply despised, abhorred by the nations,
the slave of rulers,
"Kings shall see and stand up,
princes, and they shall prostrate themselves,
because of the LORD, who is faithful,
the Holy One of Israel, who has chosen you."

Devotional

Here the Servant of the Lord speaks, recalling his service: his call to servanthood (vv. 1-3); his service in Israel (vv. 4-5); his call to minister not just to Israel but also to all the nations (v. 6); and, finally, his promised glorification (v. 7).

It's not clear who the Servant was intended to be, for he is never named, but Christians saw Jesus in the

Servant—for who else was called to suffer but ultimately be glorified, and who else was called to be “a light to the nations”?

Even in the darkest moments, when our work is “in vain” and “for nothing,” when we are “deeply despised,” when we suffer and are discouraged, let us remember that Jesus went through the same. Let us take comfort from His presence and solidarity in those times. Let us remember, as the Lord reminds the Servant here, God is our strength. For Jesus died, but He also rose again. Jesus suffered, but God worked through that suffering to bring about the salvation of the world. Hallelujah!

Prayer

God, we thank You for Your light, shining in the darkness of even the darkest night. You sit with us in that darkness, even when we cannot see Your light. Give us faith in Your strength rather than our own. Amen.