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Scripture

Isaiah 50:4-9a:

⁴The Lord GOD has given me
the tongue of a teacher,
that I may know how to sustain
the weary with a word.
Morning by morning he wakens—
wakens my ear
to listen as those who are taught.
⁵The Lord GOD has opened my ear,
and I was not rebellious,
I did not turn backward.
⁶I gave my back to those who struck me,
and my cheeks to those who pulled out the beard;
I did not hide my face
from insult and spitting.
⁷The Lord GOD helps me;
therefore I have not been disgraced;
therefore I have set my face like flint,
and I know that I shall not be put to shame;
⁸he who vindicates me is near.
Who will contend with me?
Let us stand up together.
Who are my adversaries?
Let them confront me.
⁹It is the Lord GOD who helps me;
who will declare me guilty?

Devotional

This passage of Scripture speaks of God's great power, available to all who call on His name, and also of the struggles His people inevitably face in this world. It is a word of power and a word of warning.

As we reflect on the meaning of Lent and look forward to the remembrance of Christ's death and resurrection, we are reminded that even Jesus, God Himself, did not shrink from suffering. Who are we to think that our lives will be free of hardship? And yet we know that we are equipped with the power of God—our vindication and worth does not come from any human, or anything within ourselves, but from God.

This doesn't mean we're free to do whatever we want. We are reminded in other parts of Scripture of the damage we do to others and ourselves through our sins; we are called to throw

off the things that entangle us and to live for God, joyously allowing God to transform us into who we are really meant to be.

Prayer

Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on us. Forgive us that we do not always see You, or ourselves, clearly, but look through our own perspectives of sin and self-advancement. Give us pure hearts to love You and serve You in power, knowing that nothing can take away the love You have freely offered to us through Your sacrifice. Waken our ears and quiet our spirits, so that we might listen to You in all that we do. Amen.