

The Determination of a Devout Servant

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 07 April 2019

Preacher: Alistair Chalmers

[0 : 00] Thank you everyone and good morning. For those of you who don't know me, my name is Alistair. I have the privilege of being the Assistant Pastor here at Brunfield and really helpful if you keep that open in front of you this morning. But I'd like to start us off by asking a question.

Have you ever thought that you were determined to do something, determined about something, but then someone else showed up and they were far more determined than you were?

Have you ever been in that situation? So a few years ago, I did my first ever five-kilometer run. I was sitting at my desk one day in the previous church that I worked in and thought, I'll just do it. I'll just go for it.

And so I did and it took me 33 minutes for my first time. Now for those of you who know about running and jogging, that is atrocious. And so it's really slow and it shows how unfit I am.

And so I decided that I was going to get my time down. I was going to do better than 33 minutes. I thought I was dedicated. And so I was running and running and running regularly.

[1 : 02] And I managed to get it down to 27 minutes. I was very proud of myself. But then I looked at two of my friends who started running at the same time. And my determination was gone.

They managed to get down to 23 minutes for a 5K. So their determination to get fit, their determination to get a better time, made mine pale in comparison.

And what we're going to think about this morning is the determination of a devout servant from this passage in Isaiah. So in Isaiah this morning, we're looking at the third servant song.

And we see how this servant, this promised Messiah from the Old Testament, was so determined to accomplish God's will. And so devoted to God.

And spoiler alert, this servant is Jesus Christ. Who would walk the face of this earth just hundreds of years after God spoke this message to the people of Israel through his spokesman, Isaiah.

[2 : 03] And the cry of God in Isaiah chapter 1 through to chapter 38 is, Israel, turn to me. Do not turn to idols. Come back to me and repent.

The God who made you. The God who loves you. But Israel are absolute in their disobedience.

Isaiah is warning Israel of the future events that are coming their way.

They will be carried off into captivity in Babylon because of their rebellion and disobedience against God. So they are being warned that they will be slaves in a foreign land.

They will not be treated with kindness. They will not be rejoicing. But they will be crying out with the words from Isaiah 49 verse 14. If you look over the page, it says, The Lord has forsaken me.

The Lord has forgotten me. So when they look at the disaster in their lives, they will say again in chapter 49 verse 21, I was exiled and rejected.

[3 : 11] Who has brought these up? I was left alone. Do you feel the pain in those words? I was left alone. And it is into that mess that God speaks and his message is, Israel, wake up.

Listen to me. Ten times in this section from chapter 50 to 54, God says, listen to me. And listen to my servant. So God is calling them to listen.

But why should they listen to this servant? What's so different about this guy that they should listen to him? Well, the difference, as we will see this morning, is that this servant is determined in his devotion to God.

God tells us this by giving us three examples of who this servant is. God points out the character, the confidence, and the call of his servant.

And all of these things point to the fact that he is determined in his devotion to God. So this morning, we're going to be presented with who Jesus is, what he has done, and we will be challenged by his determination to follow God's will, and we will be challenged to ask ourselves the question, do we even have a shadow of the character, confidence, and call that Jesus had?

[4 : 32] My prayer is that as we look at Jesus and the determination of this devout servant, that we would be challenged, that we would be transformed to become better servants, with more determination to follow God and live for Jesus.

So the first thing that we see in these few verses in Isaiah is character, the character of God's servant in verses 4 to 6. So two character traits that we see in these verses are submission and obedience, that stem from Jesus' determination to act according to God's will.

Look with me at verse 4. The servant speaks the word of God as a well-instructed tongue. He is in such a close relationship with God that he knows his words, and his words sustain the weary. So those who are weak, those who are downcast, those who are mourning, will listen to the words of this servant and will be restored, will be built up, and will be encouraged.

Is this not an encouragement as we think about the person of Jesus Christ? When we are at our weakest, when we are at our wits' end, when we are a helpless case, we can turn to him and know that his words will not condemn us, but they will sustain us.

[6 : 03] They will not judge us, but they will build us up. But these are not the empty words of a self-help author or a well-known motivational speaker, but these are the words of a servant who is wholeheartedly dedicated to God, to God's people, and who is lovingly encouraging them and us with his words.

And in verse 5, we see the extent of Jesus' submission and obedience to God because unlike the nation of Israel, he hasn't rebelled. Verse 5, the servant says, I have not been rebellious. I have not turned away. So do you see what this would mean to the nation of Israel? They will be sitting in captivity in Babylon, distant from their land, cut off from the temple, surrounded by an army of pagan gods and false deities because of their rebellion and because of their rejection of God. And God provides them with a savior who is perfectly innocent, perfectly obedient to God's will and perfectly submissive to him. This servant is a fulfillment of Israel.

He did what they could not. Israel sought after other gods. They searched for truth outside of God. They rejected him. But God's servant, the promised Messiah, would come, save the world, speaking God's word, and he will fulfill what Israel could not do.

[7 : 42] He is perfect. But how far does his submission and obedience go? To what extent is this servant really determined in his devotion to God?

Well, the answer is right there in verse 6. Let that sink in.

God's servant is so determined, so devoted to God that he willingly, willingly chose to suffer in accordance with God's will, God's good will, to save his people.

That means that he was ridiculed, he was in pain, and he died. This is a perfect description of what we will celebrate later on in our service as we take communion together.

how Jesus willingly went to the pain and torment of the cross in perfect obedience and submission to God. And do you see how this is exactly what Jesus did as he was surrounded by a garrison of Roman soldiers?

[9 : 00] Beaten and mocked, spat on, and a crown of thorns placed on his head. The all-powerful Son of God nailed to a tree. Willingly suffering so that a broken, fallen world, so that broken, fallen people like you and like me can be made right with God.

This is the ultimate determination and devotion. Jesus sits in the Garden of Gethsemane in Luke chapter 22 and it says that he is in agony as he prays.

His blood, his sweat is turned to blood and he knows that the cross is on the horizon. He knows that in just a few hours the people who previously followed him and loved him will be crying out for his death.

But what does he pray? Father, not my will but yours be done. Jesus' determination to accomplish God's will resulted in this perfect character of obedience and submission even to the point of being sentenced to death on the cross.

this is the servant. This is Jesus and his call to us this morning is the same as God's was to Isaiah. Wake up, Brunfield Evangelical Church and listen to me.

[10 : 25] If this is all true, if he willingly suffered for me and for you as the Bible says he did, why would we not listen to him?

Jesus willingly suffered for you and for me. His character is that of perfect submission and obedience to God's will which results in us being made right with God. There is no greater blessing in this world to be found.

Charles Spurgeon, a preacher from many years ago put it this way, Jesus has borne the death penalty on our behalf. Behold the wonder, there he hangs upon the cross.

This is the greatest sight you will ever see. Son of God and son of man, there he hangs bearing pains unutterable. The just for the unjust to bring us to God.

Oh the glory of that sight. So how should the character of Jesus, the perfect servant challenge us this morning?

[11 : 33] Well it makes us ask the question, does our character reflect even the faintest degree of submission and obedience to the will of God that Jesus had?

Even the faintest? seeing the perfect determination of Jesus to willingly suffer and take the punishment that we all deserve should make us listen to, submit to and obey him.

The second thing that we see in this passage about the determination of a devout servant is his confidence. In verses seven to nine, confidence. So twice in these three verses Jesus, the servant who's been described in this song says that the sovereign Lord helps him in verses seven and nine. So he has such a close relationship with God. He is so devoted to him that he knows without a shadow of a doubt that God is on his side.

That God is helping him. Even as he suffers and hangs on a cross he has confidence in God and God's plan. And his confidence leads him to say in verse seven, I will not be disgraced.

[12 : 51] Who will bring charges against me? And in verse eight, who is my accuser? Verse nine, who will condemn me? This is courtroom language.

Jesus will stand in a courtroom and people will bring accusation after accusation against him and yet he will be proven innocent. Everyone else will be proven wrong.

He is innocent and everyone will see that the great God of this world is on his side. But even though this servant knows that he's innocent, he will still be mocked, he will still be spat at, and he will still be killed, as we saw in verse six.

But verse seven says, because the sovereign Lord helps me, I will not be disgraced. therefore, have I set my face like flint, and I know I will not be put to shame.

So the servant's confidence in God leads to absolute determination. That's what it means when he says, I set my face like flint.

[14 : 03] Jesus' confidence in God is absolute and so he willingly walks to the cross in determination to accomplish the will of God. Jesus' confidence in God will not be shaken.

He will not be distracted, he will not be taken off course, but he is resolute in his confidence and determination. Earlier in the book of Isaiah, God has been calling Israel to trust in him when they face attacks from their enemies.

But they had no confidence in God. The servant fulfills what was lacking in them. The servant's confidence in God is just as strong as Israel's stubborn unwillingness to repent.

He has a supernatural confidence in God and is determined to accomplish his will. And is this not what we see in Jesus in Luke chapter 9 verse 51 where it says this, Jesus set his face to go to Jerusalem.

Now this is more than Jesus just looking towards a city. Because as Jesus sets his face towards Jerusalem, he is looking at and anticipating his own death.

[15 : 22] As he looks to Jerusalem, he knows that the cross is on the horizon. He knows that every step he takes is bringing him closer to agony. Doesn't that make us thankful?

for Jesus and his confidence in God. If Jesus wasn't confident in God and didn't set his face like Flint, he would never have willingly suffered in our place on the cross.

Forgiveness would not be made possible and we would still be in darkness. We would still be lost. So our response to this should be Jesus, thank you.

His confidence means that we can be forgiven. We rely solely on his death on the cross as he bore the wrath of God for the sins of this world.

Jesus did what we could never do. We could never even dream of doing. He lived the perfect sinless life. He was unfaltering in his confidence and determination and devotion to God.

[16 : 28] We should be thankful because Jesus did what I couldn't even dream of. But what if we don't have the same confidence? What if we struggle?

What if we're tired and weary? Well, Jesus doesn't condemn us when we fail. Look at verse four again. He knows the words that sustain the weary.

When we are weak, when we are broken, when our confidence and faith seems so fragile that they could break any second, Jesus speaks and he says, I am enough.

Think of the example of Jesus' disciple Peter in Luke chapter 22. Jesus told Peter that he would deny him three times and Peter, quite full of himself, said, Lord, I am ready to go with you to prison and to death.

But just a few hours later, Jesus was arrested, put on trial in the house of the high priest and Peter was watching this whole situation unfold, resting by a fire.

[17 : 39] Three times Peter denied any knowledge of who Jesus was. Three times he denied that he had spent time with Jesus.

And when the rooster crowed, Luke says that Jesus looked at him and he remembered and he ran away ashamed because Jesus was right. And so what would we expect of Peter now?

Should he be cut off for good because he was ashamed and feared for his own life? Would we expect Jesus to cast him off and never speak to him again because he didn't have the same confidence and determination to follow God's will?

When Jesus is raised from the dead and Peter understands fully without a shadow of a doubt who Jesus was, we see a whole new confidence in God. The man who previously cowered at the thought of being accused with Jesus, some 40 days later would stand before the people of Israel and the high court of the Jewish leaders and say, you crucified the Messiah, the one who would come to save you.

Peter's confidence was changed because he understood who Jesus was. Do you know who Jesus is this morning?

[19 : 06] This radical change of confidence and change in determination is only brought about when we grasp the fundamental truth that Jesus is our Savior and that he is determined in his devotion to God.

this change happened because Peter understood who Jesus was. He saw Jesus' sacrifice, the price that he paid and Peter said, I'm giving Jesus my everything.

That is the kind of confidence that I want and that is the kind of confidence that I pray that we all would have. Once we understand what Jesus did on the cross, how he reconciled us to God, once we grasp the greatness of that news, we will have a newfound confidence in God.

Are you confident this morning in your faith? Are you determined in your devotion to follow Jesus? If not, then look at Jesus' death on the cross and how he willingly walk to his death for you and for me.

And ask yourself the question, if he was willing to die in my place, shouldn't I at least consider who he is? Or if you are a Christian and you're struggling in your confidence, then remember the words of verse 4.

[20 : 36] Jesus doesn't stand there and tell you to do a better job. He doesn't cast you off, he doesn't think your efforts are worthless, but he knows the words that sustain the weary.

Turn to him in prayer. Call out for him to strengthen you. Ask for confidence and read his word because you will be built up, you will be encouraged, and you will be sustained.

The third thing that we see about the determination of a devout servant is his call. In verses 10 to 11, the call. So as the nation of Israel sit in captivity in Babylon for their rejection of God, the question that this servant asks in verse 10 is, who among you fears the Lord and obeys the word of his servant?

And the answer is absolutely nobody. That is precisely why they're in captivity in the first place. They did not fear and obey the Lord. Notice how fear, fearing the Lord and obeying his servant are synonymous.

The words of Jesus, God's servant, are the words of God. God and his servant are one and the same. So Jesus is being described as a servant here.

[22 : 02] Does that mean that he is inferior to God? Absolutely not. Jesus is a servant in the sense that he stoops down and steps into our world to take the punishment that we deserve according to the will of God.

Jesus is not inferior to God, but Jesus is God. He is one person of the Trinity. Verse 10 means that you cannot fear God and not obey Jesus.

You can't obey Jesus without fearing God. The two go hand in hand. The only way to be made right with God, the only way to be forgiven of our sin and rebellion against him, something that every

single one of us in this world is guilty of, is through Jesus.

God in the flesh who is calling us to fear and obedience. But this is not the quivering kind of fear in the presence of a tyrannical ruler.

It doesn't mean that we are afraid of God because he is not a big man in the sky with a stick ready to strike anyone who disobeys him. But to fear God means to be in awe of him, to be reverent of who he is.

[23 : 22] Those who fear God trust him and have faith in him and obey him. Do you fear God? do you live according to his word and the teachings of Jesus?

If you don't, then let me be blunt with you this morning and tell you how the Bible explains your situation. Look at the second half of verse 10.

Let the one who walks in the dark who has no light trust in the name of the Lord and rely on their God. God. This passage says that if you are a Christian, if you do fear God and obey Jesus, then you are trusting and relying on God.

But if you don't, then you're in darkness. Now this might not sound too bad. The majority of people today aren't afraid of the dark, but the Bible uses light and darkness to describe a person's relationship with God.

God. If someone is right with God and they are living according to his will, they have been declared forgiven by Jesus, then they look forward to eternal peace in the presence of God.

[24 : 42] A place free from pain, a place free from sin, a place of perfect communion with our loving God. But for those who are in darkness, for those who are looking for light in all other places, as it says in verse 11, for those who are trying to make their own way to God, trying to be good enough, do and say the right things, then the result is very different.

The Bible says, if you do not fear the Lord and obey Jesus, then verse 11, you will lie down in torment. If you do not know Jesus, if you are not a Christian, this passage is a warning to you. It is Jesus calling you out of the darkness and into the light, out of your rebellion against him and into a right relationship with him.

Friends, this is the reality of eternal life. You either spend it in the presence of a loving God who willingly suffered in your place, or you spend it in an eternity cut off from God, a place of torment and eternal judgment, a place we call hell.

There is no middle ground. You choose to live for Jesus or you choose to reject him. And that is not a decision that we should take lightly. And that is what Jesus came into this world teaching.

[26 : 15] warning the people to repent and believe in him because the day is coming where time will run out. The determination of this devout servant was to come and proclaim this message so that people could be made right with God.

So that people would be saved from the judgmentless to come. This is what Jesus proclaimed. This is the message that we are to proclaim to the world.

God is telling Israel wake up listen to me. Jesus came and told people to repent and believe the gospel. Our message to the world is exactly the same.

Do not come to Brunfield Evangelical Church but come to Jesus Christ the Lord and Savior of this world. C.T. Studd a famous cricketer turned missionary to China said this.

Some want to live within the sound of a church bell but I want to run a rescue shop within the yard of hell. If we see how determined Jesus was to come and willingly suffer death on the cross for us, if we see how he constantly called people to be made right with God, friends, why aren't we doing the same?

[27 : 36] God's love. If we take Jesus seriously, if we take the call to repent seriously, if we take heaven and hell seriously, then we should take evangelism seriously.

Do we share the same call of Jesus? Do we stand on the road that leads to hell and beg people with everything we have to repent and be made right with God?

That is what Jesus did and that is what he is calling us to do. As I've studied this passage and the determination of Jesus this week, I have been challenged, convicted of my own comfortable Christianity and encouraged to be transformed more into his likeness.

As we draw to a close this morning, we have seen the determination of a devout servant, the one whose character is that of submission and obedience to the will of God to the point of death on a cross.

And that should challenge us to submit to and obey him. We've seen the confidence of Jesus who in absolute confidence and determination went to the cross, was mocked, beaten, spat on willingly, so that we can be made right with God.

[29 : 01] And in our times of weakness, in our times of doubt, we can be confident that his determination, that his confidence in God means that we too can be confident and that we can live devoted lives.

And we have seen the call of Jesus, the call for those who are in darkness to come into the light, those who are in rebellion to trust and rely on God.

God. Do you trust and rely on God? Are you calling people to do the same thing? Are we declaring the good news of Jesus so that the world can spend their eternal life in heaven instead of in hell?

This is the determination of a devout servant that should change our lives, that should make us love him and that should make us want to give him everything because he gave everything for us.

Let's pray together. Father, as we look at Isaiah, this passage of your son Jesus Christ, we realize how far we fall from your perfect standards.

[30 : 23] We realize how weak we are in our obedience and submission to you and we ask that you would forgive us. We ask that you would challenge us and that you would build us up, that you would encourage us to become more like your son Jesus Christ, that we would have just a sliver of the determination that he had to be devoted to you.

We ask this in his holy precious name. Amen. Amen. Amen. See you all.