

Thursday 23 April 2020

Is.44, 21: *"I formed you; you are my servant; O Israel, you will not be forgotten by me."*

Hebr.10, 35: *"Do not throw away your confidence, which has a great reward."*

What of the hour of suffering and death of the 'servant of God'? Is not the cross of Christ every bit the testimony that the one who hung there, having served God faithfully, was indeed forgotten by God? That every cross means that? Did not God's judgment which was there brought down on him with all the force of God's just anger and wrath show him to be God-forgotten?

Indeed, at the very time they who had hoped that Jesus was the one who was going to show what it means for Israel not to be forgotten by God understood the cross in that way. Obviously, he could not be the one to reveal what it is not to be forgotten by God – because this would not look like the cross! It would, and could, not be learned through suffering and death!

Yes, that is how the cross of Christ could have been understood, and is, I think, understood and taught to this day: Not to be forgotten by God cannot look like the cross, cannot look like that's exactly what appears to be happening! The cross is not fulfilment, just a digression.

But then happened the resurrection of Christ. And they who knew, who experienced it and were sent out to draw all people to the same knowledge through preaching, realised that the cross, far from undoing the promise of God, was its truth and was that in its highest form.

Because we are in Christ Jesus through faith, it is in suffering and in the weakness of bearing our own cross that we experience and learn by the power of the Spirit that we are not forgotten by God, nor ever shall be. Philosophy and human reason don't teach this. But the gospel of the cross and resurrection of Christ Jesus does.

And therefore, the danger of throwing away one's confidence arises most within a faith which holds that not being forgotten by God must mean an absence of suffering and that Christ bore not just his own cross but ours as well.