



EXPOSITION

Monthly e-Bulletin from Virginia Beach Theological Seminary



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From My Window

Booker T. Washington tells a story in his autobiography, *Up From Slavery*, which highlights grace. He writes that it was common for young slaves to be issued new shirts made of flax. Washington likens putting on this shirt for the first time to “a hundred pin points” making contact with his flesh. He said, “I had no choice, I had to wear the flax shirt or none.” He recalls on several occasions his older brother John “performed one of the most generous acts that I ever heard of . . . he generously agreed to put [my new flax shirt] on in my stead and wear it for several days, till it was ‘broken in.’” As I read this story, I cannot help but think of Hebrews 2:14 where Christ “took on flesh and blood” to be made like the sons of men, “that through death he might destroy the one who has the power of death, that is, the devil.” What a cost! What grace! How I praise our Lord for “putting on flesh!”



Dr. Davey at Sam Bereza's Installation Service

Alumni In Ministry Spotlight

God has wonderfully blessed Samuel and Sarah Bereza's journey since Samuel graduated from VBTS in 2010 with his Master of Divinity. They spent nearly five years in Lancaster, PA where Sam served as an Assistant Pastor. While in PA, the Lord grew their family from 3 to 4 with the sweet addition of a second son. Just 10 days ago, on Sunday, June 5th, Samuel was installed as the senior pastor at Open Door Bible Church in Middletown, PA. As Samuel begins his new ministry, he humbly says, “By God's providence we hope to faithfully serve the people at ODBC with a Text-driven, grace-centered, and gospel-focused perspective.” Samuel desires what he calls, “a real-life ministry application,” and it is evident that God has begun doing this at ODBC!

During his hiking trip in Nepal last month, VBTS Board member Gary Bryant planted a VBTS prayer flag at the base of Mt. Everest.





Truth for the Agora: “He will startle the nations” Isaiah 52:15

*Behold, my servant will prosper. He will be high and lifted up and greatly exalted. Just as many were astonished at you – his appearance was distorted more than any man, and his form more than the sons of men. Thus, **he will startle the nations**; kings will shut their mouths in amazement on account of him; for what had not been told to them, they will see; and what they had not heard, they will understand. Isaiah 52:13-15*

What is so interesting to me about these three verses is how Isaiah radically and cleverly uses them to introduce his celebrated “gospel poem” in Chapter 53. Motyer (p. 424) notes that Isaiah begins his prodigious poem with an enigma – a paradox of sorts: how can such an exalted one (v 13), experience such inhumane suffering (v 14), and then reap such universal recognition (v 15)? This enigma is ultimately answered in the later four stanzas of the poem. For now, however, let’s explore these opening words of Isaiah.

First, Isaiah makes clear at the beginning of his poem that this Servant of Yahweh will prosper. When this verb “will prosper” is used in the non-wisdom literature of the OT (Smith 2:435), the verb identifies one’s personal success (i.e., Joshua in Josh 1:8; David in 1 Sam 18:5; and Hezekiah in 2 Ki 18:7). What is noteworthy is how Isaiah follows up this verb with the Hebrew verbs “be high and lifted up.” These two verbs are uniquely used in combination in Isaiah’s writings as Yahweh descriptors (Oswalt, 2:378). For example, in 6:1, Isaiah saw the Lord “high and lifted up.” It is clear that the Servant in 52:13 is more than a man or a prophet; he is of divine character worthy of praise and exaltation.

Second, Isaiah descriptively paints the picture of this “exalted one” as being mutilated beyond recognition. Oswalt (2:379) determines that the “basic thrust” of this inhumane picture is clear: “the nations will be shocked to speechlessness by what they see.” This disfigurement of the Servant is not explained until the later stanzas of the poem, but the graphic display leaves the reader shocked and desiring to know why this unspeakable harm has occurred to such an exalted Servant.

Third, the effect Isaiah seeks to produce in his opening stanza finds purpose with the words, “*he will startle the nations.*” Though some translators prefer “sprinkle” to emphasize the spiritual effect of the Servant upon the nations, it seems linguistically consistent to translate the verb with “startle” paralleling Isaiah’s idea of “astonishment.” The Servant’s suffering captures the world by complete surprise. As the poem will unfold, the enigma of the disfigurement and exaltation finds its resolution in the Servant’s substitutionary death and resurrection. It is this single fact, which will primarily “startle the nations.” The complete poem will introduce the nations to the Servant’s voluntary offering of himself in death *on their behalf* so that “many will be made righteous.”

Finally, these first words of Isaiah’s poem are employed in the NT by the Apostle Paul as the theological basis for his ministry to the nations. He writes in Romans 15:20-21 that he desired to preach the gospel to people who have yet to know of Jesus. To affirm his global ambition as being God’s plan, he quotes from Isaiah 52:15! For Paul, Jesus is the Servant who “startles the nations” bringing them eternal life through his substitutionary suffering, death, and resurrection.