

## A Face Like Flint

Isaiah 50:4-9; Luke 9:51

April 5, 2020 Palm Sunday at the First Congregational Church of Marshalltown,  
Iowa

### Introduction

First, a little joke about being stubborn. It goes like this; Little Josh was brought to Dr Gill cause he hadn't eaten anything for days. Dr Gill offered him all the goodies he could think of. No luck. He tried a little scolding. It didn't work. A little pleading, to no avail. Finally he sat down, faced the boy, looked him in the eye. He said "Look young man, if you can be stubborn, so can I. You're not going anywhere till you eat something. You can have whatever you want, but only after you have eaten will you leave. " Josh just sat and glared for some time, then said "Ok. I'll eat but I have some conditions. First, I'll have exactly what I want and exactly how I want it and second you'll share with me." Dr Gill was ok with this. He asked the child what he'd like. "Worms!" said Josh. Dr Gill was horrified but didn't want to back out and seem like a loser. So, he ordered a plate of worms to be brought in. "Not that many, just one," yelled Josh as he saw the plate. So, everything other than one worm was removed. Josh then demanded that the single worm be cut into two and then Dr Gill eat half. Dr Gill went through the worst ordeal of his life, and after finishing barely managing to keep his cool said, "Ok, now eat!" Josh refused as he sobbed, "No way! You ate my half!"\*

### Sometimes stubbornness is a good thing

If the goal is a worthy one, being stubborn can be an asset, it can be even a sign of courage, especially when much is at stake. In the idiom of the Old and New Testament, "hardening you forehead" or "setting you face" refers to a stubborn determination to confront something or someone, or to get something done no matter what the cost.

### *To set the stage in Luke*

Chapter 9 of Luke's Gospel is filled with the marvelous and the ominous. He sends out the twelve on their first ministry trip without Him, then He feeds the 5,000, then Peter confesses that Jesus is the Christ. But then Jesus predicts His death and resurrection and tells His disciples that they must be prepared to take up their own crosses and follow Him. Then He is transfigured on the Mount, heals a boy miraculously and again predicts His death. It's in this context that Jesus steadfastly set His face to go to Jerusalem (9:51). Other translations are more colorful. They write that Jesus "set His face like flint" toward Jerusalem. The phrase has quite a history.

*To set the stage in Isaiah & Ezekiel*

A couple of examples are in Ezekiel, (3:8-9; 13:17-23) in which God tells the prophet to confront the sins of the people and prophesy against them. In a famous Messianic passage in Isaiah the Holy Spirit reveals the thoughts of the Messiah as He faces the cross. He knows what is before Him, all the hatred and assaults, but He sets His face like flint and all of this is in the background when Jesus, in Luke, set His face toward Jerusalem. He would not prophesy against sin, but He would deal with it once and for all.

Id like to mention a couple of applications

*focus on the goal*

First, you don't focus on the trial, but on what is beyond. That is counter intuitive and not natural. We all normally focus on the trouble or trial, but we do ourselves a favor if we follow the example of Jesus and recognize the trial before us but devote more of our mental energy on what is beyond the trouble. If you can make a goal after the trouble the main subject of your thinking, you do yourself a favor.

*Jesus, like the great prophets, determined to deal with sin once and for all.*

This is the main purpose of these passages. We know that the Lord knew that He would be facing great trials and death at the hand of evil men, but He didn't do that simply to give us an example. The Book of Hebrews tells us that Jesus despised the shame, and focused on the joy set before Him. I think there is a good argument that we are the joy that was set before Him. He went through all this for us, because we could not save ourselves from our sin. That same fierce hostility toward sin that led the prophets to speak ferociously to the ancients led Jesus through the assaults of evil men to the cross. In the cross the wrath of God and the mercy of God met, and we are the beneficiaries. He set His face like flint, and I am glad.

Conclusion

Sometimes, getting through a difficult time requires that we concentrate on the goal at the end and not on the trial at hand. Isaiah, the great prophet, centuries before His birth revealed what would go through the mind of Jesus as He faced betrayal and death at the cross. Jesus demonstrated that focus on the prize beyond the cross, and with a face like flint, dealt with the sins of the world to become the only savior humanity has.

\*<https://www.cybersalt.org/clean-jokes/worm-stubborn>