

Stricken, Smitten, and Afflicted

Isaiah 52:13-53:12

Sunday, March 17th, 2024

Pang Suk-fong, age 20, had her whole life ahead of her. As she walked down a Hong Kong street one day, no doubt her head was filled with questions and thoughts of the future. But a freak, tragic accident ended her life that very afternoon. A heavy bucket filled with paint fell from the window of a hotel under construction and killed her instantly.

If this young woman had known what was going to happen, what do you think she would have done? Probably walked down a different street, one with no construction hazards. Or if she'd looked up and saw that paint can dropping, she would have jumped out of the way. That's common sense. People have a great desire to preserve their own lives!

Consider, then, our Lord Jesus. He knew He was going to die. He knew He was going to be separated from His Father. He knew He would pay the penalty for the sins of the people He came to earth to save. But He didn't jump out of the way. He didn't choose a different road. He was totally obedient to the will of His Father.

This had been God's plan of redemption all along, and had been prophesied numerous times in Israel's history. Much of Isaiah's language is sacrificial. The Messiah will be like a sacrificial lamb or scapegoat, taking the punishment we deserved. Although He will pay the price for our wrongdoing, we won't understand. We will despise Him and continue to go astray.

In our long-lasting sermon series on the Old Testament book of Isaiah, we come at last to the 53rd chapter. Many theologians believe this chapter is the most important of the 1,189 chapters of the Bible. One of those theologians was the "Prince of Preachers" Charles Haddon Spurgeon. He wrote, "This is one of the chapters that lie at the very heart of the Scriptures. It is the very Holy of holies of Divine Writ. Let us, therefore, put off our shoes from our feet, for the place whereon we stand is specially holy ground. The 53rd of Isaiah is a Bible in miniature. It is the condensed essence of the gospel." (Spurgeon, quoted in MacArthur, *The Gospel According to God*, pg 21)

Isaiah wrote this majestic prophecy some 700 years before Christ. Most of the 80 references to Isaiah in the New Testament come from this chapter.

Isaiah 52:13-15:

13 - Behold, My Servant shall deal prudently (prosper);
He shall be exalted and extolled (lifted up) and be very high.

14 - Just as many were astonished at you,
so His visage (appearance) was marred more than any man,
and His form more than the sons of men;

15 - So shall He sprinkle many nations.
Kings shall shut their mouths at Him;
for what had not been told them they shall see,
And what they had not heard they shall consider.

Isaiah 53:1-12:

53 - Who has believed our report?
And to whom has the arm of the LORD been revealed?

2 - For He shall grow up before Him as a tender plant,
and as a root out of dry ground.
He has no (stately) form or comeliness (splendor);
and when we see Him,
there is no beauty that we should desire Him.

3 - He is despised and rejected by men (forsaken),
a Man of sorrows (pains) and acquainted with grief.
And we hid, as it were, *our* faces from Him;
He was despised, and we did not esteem Him.

4 - Surely He has borne our griefs
and carried our sorrows;
yet we esteemed (reckoned) Him stricken,
smitten (struck down) by God, and afflicted.

5 - But He *was* wounded (pierced through) for our transgressions,
He was bruised (crushed) for our iniquities;
the chastisement for our peace *was* upon Him,
and by His stripes (blows that cut in) we are healed.

6 - All we like sheep have gone astray;
we have turned, every one, to his own way;
and the LORD has laid on Him the iniquity of us all.

7 - He was oppressed and He was afflicted,
yet He opened not His mouth;
He was led as a lamb to the slaughter,
and as a sheep before its shearers is silent,
so He opened not His mouth.

8 - He was taken from prison (confinement) and from judgment,
and who will declare His generation?
For He was cut off from the land of the living;
for the transgressions of My people He was stricken.

9 - And (he) made His grave with the wicked—
but with the rich at His death,
because He had done no violence,
or *was any* deceit in His mouth.

10 - Yet it pleased the LORD to bruise (crush) Him;
He has put *Him* to grief.
When You make His soul an offering for sin,
He shall see *His* seed, He shall prolong *His* days,
and the pleasure of the LORD shall prosper in His hand.

11 - He shall see the labor of His soul, *and* be satisfied.
By His knowledge My righteous Servant shall justify many,
for He shall bear their iniquities.

12 - Therefore I will divide Him a portion with the great,
and He shall divide the spoil (plunder) with the strong,
because He poured out His soul unto death,
and He was numbered with the transgressors,
and He bore the sin of many,
and made intercession for the transgressors.”

Isaiah Chapter 53 is a panorama of Jesus' life from His incarnation to His death, resurrection, and exaltation by God. Jesus' rejection by the nation of Israel is explained, though not excused, by the fact that He was unremarkable in His physical appearance (**Isa 53:2**). The Messiah was "despised and rejected" rather than receiving the esteem He was due (**Isa 53:3**).

The 15 verses of today's passage are typically divided into 5 passages of 3 verses each - **12:13-15**, **53:1-3**; **53:4-6**; **53:7-9**, and **53:10-12**. I'm going to highlight a couple of the verses of the entire chapter that are especially poignant given their prophetic value and fulfillment.

1 - **Chapter 52, verse 14**. Upon first read of the gospel accounts and how they record Jesus' physical beatings and mockings, we may get an impression that it really wasn't that big of a deal. I'm going to refer only to one of the gospel's descriptions, though all 4 of them record physical punishments Jesus received.

- **Matthew 26:27** mentions Jesus being spit on and beaten, and being struck by the palms of the members of the Sanhedrin.
- **Matthew 27:26** instructs that Jesus was scourged (flogged).
- **Matthew 27:29 & 30** say the Roman soldiers twisted a crown of thorns upon Jesus' head. They spat on Him, and struck Him on the head with a reed. Ultimately, He was nailed to a cross, stabbed in the side with a spear, and the weight of His body on his lungs caused Him to be suffocated and He died.

Verse 14 describes Jesus' visage (His appearance) as being "marred more than any other man." He was literally "beaten to a pulp." **Verse 2 of Chapter 53** describes Him as having no form (dignity) or comeliness (majesty), and without beauty that we should be attracted to Him. Commentator John Oswalt writes, "The disfigurement of the Servant is utterly shocking. He hardly appears to be human. He is not the attractive figure that so many of the world's conquerors have been or pretended to be." (Oswalt, 583-84)

Jesus, the Messiah, described in the Old Testament as the Servant, endured numerous undeserved physical beatings and torture the week of His passion, though He was an innocent man.

2 - Verses 4-6 reveal why the Servant suffered.

4 - "Surely He has borne our griefs (sicknesses)
And carried our sorrows (pains);
Yet we esteemed (reckoned) Him stricken,
Smitten (struck down) by God, and afflicted.

5 - But He was wounded (pierced through) for our transgressions,
He was bruised (crushed) for our iniquities;
The chastisement for our peace *was* upon Him,
And by His stripes (blows that cut in) we are healed.

6 - All we like sheep have gone astray;
We have turned, every one, to his own way;
And the LORD has laid on Him the iniquity of us all."

Why did the Servant suffer?

*Was it for sins that I had done
He groaned upon the tree?*

Amazing pity, grace unknown
And love beyond degree."

Notice the pronouns in these three verses - *our* griefs, *our* sorrows, *we* esteemed (reckoned) Him stricken, *our* transgressions, *our* iniquities, chastisement of *our* peace, all *we like sheep*, *we* have turned away. Jesus was not suffering because God had inflicted deserved punishment on Him. **It is our suffering that He bore**, and it is for "our transgressions" and "our iniquities" that He suffered. The repetition of first-person plural hammers home that the Servant has suffered in "our" place. (Oswalt, 585)

"Stricken, smitten, and afflicted,
see Him dying on the tree!
'Tis the Christ by man rejected;
yes, my soul, 'tis He, 'tis He!
'Tis the long-expected Prophet,
David's Son, yet David's Lord;
by His Son God now has spoken;
'tis the true and faithful Word."

3 - saiah probably didn't understand all the details of the prophecies he recorded. That makes the accuracy of verses 7, 8, 9, 10, and 11 even more astonishing. Every major detail of Jesus' suffering is present: His silence in the face of His accusers, His death ("cut off") for the sins of others.

Let's look at a few of the prophecies from **Isaiah Chapter 53**.

- The Messiah will be a sacrifice for sin (**Isaiah 53:5-12**). Paul explained the fulfillment in **Romans 5:6-8**.

- Messiah will be silent before His accusers, 53:7, fulfilled in **Mark 15:4-5**.
- Messiah will be buried with the rich, 53:9, fulfilled in **Matthew 27:57-60**.
- Messiah will be counted among the criminals, 53:12, fulfilled in **Matthew 27:38**.
- There was a time when skeptics claimed that the prophecies in **Isaiah 53** were too detailed, too specific, too accurate to be mere coincidence. I agreed. But then the skeptics argued that the **ONLY** logical explanation was that Isaiah was written after the gospels and patterned the suffering Servant after what the gospels wrote about Jesus.

Then a Bedouin shepherd left his sheep and goats to look for a stray. He found a cave in a crevice among the limestone cliffs. He tossed a rock in. Instead of hearing a “thud” when it hit, he heard something break. With a cousin and a friend, he entered the cave and found clay jars holding the first of the Dead Sea Scrolls.

Prior to that day, the oldest known copy of Isaiah in the modern world was dated between 800 and 900 AD. The first handful of scrolls he brought out included a copy of Isaiah 900 - 1000 yrs older than previously found manuscripts. Pieces of that scroll have been carbon 14 dated four times. The latest of those dates, the latest, is a century before, not centuries after, Jesus lived.

Application Point - One of the best ways we can show our gratitude for the Servant is by dealing seriously with sin in our lives. The Bible urges us to confess our sins and enjoy God’s cleansing (**1 John 1:9**). Let’s neither ignore nor tolerate sins that Jesus paid so dearly to forgive.

Drawbridge Parable. A man had the duty to raise a drawbridge to allow the steamers to pass on the river below and to lower it again for trains to cross over on land. One day, this man's son visited him, desiring to watch his father at work. Quite curious, as most boys are, he peeked into a trapdoor that was always left open so his father could keep an eye on the great machinery that raised and lowered the bridge.

Suddenly, the boy lost his footing and tumbled into the gears. As the father tried to reach down and pull him out, he heard the whistle of an approaching train. He knew the train would be full of people and that it would be impossible to stop the fast-moving locomotive, therefore, the bridge must be lowered! A terrible dilemma confronted him: if he saved the people, his son would be crushed in the cogs. Frantically, he tried to free the boy, but to no avail.

Finally, the father put his hand to the lever that would start the machinery. He paused and then, with tears he pulled it. The giant gears began to work and the bridge clamped down just in time to save the train. The passengers, not knowing what the father had done, were laughing and making merry; yet the bridgekeeper had chosen to save their lives at the cost of his son's.