Isaiah 52 - 53 • The Suffering Servant

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Isaiah chapter 52, beginning at verse 1, starts this way. *"Awake, awake, put on your strength, O Zion; put on your beautiful garments, O Jerusalem, the holy city; for there shall no more come into you the uncircumcised and the unclean." (ESV)*

Now, obviously, the Lord is speaking prophetically here about a time after Jesus establishes His kingdom during the millennial reign in Jerusalem but you need to understand something about the prophecies that we're going to be looking at tonight, particularly in this chapter.

The Lord is going to speak to the nation of Israel about their return from their exile in Babylon, which remember at the time of Isaiah hasn't happened yet. But God is speaking of it prophetically; speaking of it before it's going to happen. And He is using…, and what we often see in the Bible is that the Lord will use a particular event in their near history as a prefiguration or a type if you will, of a greater and more distant fulfillment and that's really a lot about, you're going to be seeing.

Again this first verse promising that no more shall come into the holy city, "*the uncircumcised and the unclean,"* well, that still hasn't happened, that still hasn't come to pass. We know that is going to come to pass during the Millennial Kingdom. But what the Lord is using in the short term, which is the regathering of the nation of Israel to their homeland after their 70 year exile in Babylon, He is using that to speak of a larger fulfillment that is yet to be realized.

But now as we get into verse 2 and 3, we're going to bring this back to a little bit more, the exile and the people of Israel coming back to the land. He says, *"[2] Shake yourself from the dust and arise; be seated, O Jerusalem; loose the bonds from your neck, O captive daughter of Zion. [3] For thus says the LORD: "You were sold for nothing, and you shall be redeemed without money.""*

I want you to stop for just a moment. Notice here that the Lord calls upon the people of Israel to rise and to shake themselves, to shake literally the dust of their captivity away. They are to loose the bonds from their neck and recognize that God has set them free. And once again, this is speaking of their return to the land after 70 years of captivity in Babylon.

But, wouldn't you think to yourself that after 70 years of captivity in Babylon, you wouldn't even have to tell the nation of Israel, you need to arise and shake off your bonds. Wouldn't you think they would just be ready?

Well, the point is, sometimes we become accustomed to captivity and that may sound like a strange thing. But freedom can actually be an unfamiliar dynamic in our lives when we have walked in captivity for a long period of time and the transition to actually thinking like a free person when you've been a slave for a long time, when you've been captive for a long time, is very dramatic.

And I run into this today, particularly with new believers, but not always just with new believers, sometimes with seasoned believers. When a person comes to Christ and receives Him as their Savior, the Bible tells us that we are set free from all the things that enslaved us, particularly the dominion of the flesh to control our lives.

Jesus sets us free to live our life following Him, but because we occasionally fall into sin, and that happens, and this is particularly distressing for new believers. They come to Jesus, they sense a kind of a freedom that they've been given, but then after their honeymoon period with the Lord kind of wanes, they find themselves sometimes falling into some of those habitual sinful patterns of the flesh and they begin to doubt that the freedom is very real.

I've had people talk to me about that many times. Pastor, I'm beginning to wonder if really I've truly been set free? Well, why do you say that? Well, because I've fallen back into these areas of sin like I used to live before I knew the Lord.

Well, believe it or not, the New Testament addresses this issue and the apostle Paul masterfully writes about this whole dynamic of what it is to be enslaved, to be set free, and why, in the Book of Romans. I want to put some passages up on the screen for you, starting off from Romans chapter 6 verses 1 and 4. Check this out, Paul begins by saying,

Romans 6:1-4 (ESV)

What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin that grace may abound? By no means! How can we who died to sin still live in it? Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life.

What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin that grace may abound? (he says, no) *By no means! How can we who died to sin still live in it? Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized* (or if you will, immersed) *into Christ Jesus were* (immersed or) *baptized into his death? We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life.*

But then he goes on in verses 6 and 7, and then 11 and he says,

Romans 6:6-7, 11

We know that our old self was crucified with him in order that the body of sin might be brought to nothing, so that we would no longer be enslaved to sin. For one who has died has been set free from sin. So you also must consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus.

We know that our old self was crucified with him in order that the body of sin might be brought to nothing, so that we would no longer be enslaved to sin. For one who has died has been set free from sin. So you also must consider (that means believe in your hearts that) *yourselves* (you are) *dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus.*

Now these are couple of interesting passages from Romans, but it's dealing with the same issue that God is speaking to the Israelites about as they get ready to leave their bondage in the Babylonian Persian Empire. And He says, shake loose your bonds, shake the dust off you, get up and be free and God is saying the same thing to Christians.

And yet we have a hard time believing it. Why? Because we've lived in captivity for so long, I've always been a captive. And if you came to Christ later in life, you have maybe decades of history of living in captivity. And now somebody comes along and tells you're free, how does a free person even think?

Can you imagine what it was like back when Abraham Lincoln signed the emancipation of slaves? Can you imagine what that was like for somebody who is 70, 80 years old and had lived in the life of slavery all their lives. And suddenly somebody walks up to him and says, hey, by the way, the President signed your freedom, you are now free, you're no longer a slave. And they're like, what? I've always been a slave, I've never been anything other than a slave and now you're telling me I'm free? I don't know what to do, I don't know how to act, I don't know how to live, I don't know how to think. How does a free person think? Paul explains in that passage in Romans how a free person thinks.

He thinks with an understanding that through Jesus, I have been crucified to the old man, the old flesh, the old dominion that once held sway over my life, and I've been set free to now walk in that freedom. The problem with Christians who struggle in areas of habitual sin is that we're just not believing truly with faith that we are set free.

Can we put that last slide back up again just for a moment? The last verse that you're seeing there is verse 11 from Romans 6, where Paul says,

Romans 6:6-7, 11

We know that our old self was crucified with him in order that the body of sin might be brought to nothing, so that we would no longer be enslaved to sin. For one who has died has been set free from sin. So you also must consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus.

That word consider is also translated, reckon in some of the Bible translations, but it just means believe, it means believe. So what's the answer? When somebody comes to me and says, I just, I don't know what the problem is. I know that it says in the Bible, Jesus has set me free, but I'm beginning to doubt that I've been set free, what's the answer?

The answer isn't trying harder, the answer isn't pulling yourself up by your bootstraps, gritting your teeth, making a fist, and saying, I will overcome sin, that's not the answer.

The answer is putting your faith in Jesus Christ and in His finished work on the cross and knowing, as Paul says here in Romans, that when you came to Christ, you were crucified with Him. And that means you literally shared His death. Because you see, once you die, the flesh no longer has hold, right?

So, it's a faith issue. We think that faith is just what saves us and then we stop there. I was saved by grace through faith, thank you Jesus but now I got to work hard to be a good Christian. No, that's not the way it goes. I was saved by grace through faith, and through faith I conquer sin, through faith I stand in the victory, right? The victory of Jesus Christ over my flesh.

Paul says there in that passage of Romans, don't you know you're dead and you've been brought back to life? You died with Christ. He raised you up now to live a new life, freed from the fetters of the dominion of the flesh. Well, Pastor, then why do I keep sinning? Habit? Desire? It's not because you have to, it's because you choose to. That's kind of the sad thing about Christians, we've

been set free from the flesh, so why do we go back and sin? Because we want to, I choose to.

Here's the crazy thing about freedom. When you're free, if you're not, if you're not free completely, to sin, to go back and choose to sin, then you're not really truly free. I mean, freedom has to be total and Jesus tells us that him whom the Son sets free is free indeed, right? (John 8:36) That means completely free.

Well, that means you're free to go back and sin if you want to. Just like somebody who was raised in slavery, they can go back to the slave quarters. They can put on the same chains they had the day before they were proclaimed free, they can go back and live like a slave if they choose to. Hey, they're free to do that, I don't know why you'd want to.

But sometimes we do it because it's all we know and that's kind of what the Lord is saying here to the people of Israel. So shake off the dust, you guys, I know it's been 70 years, but I've set you free.

He goes on, verse 4, *"For thus says the LORD God: "My people went down at the first into Egypt to sojourn there, ..."* Now He's kind of going back and He's like telling, going back, telling the story. They went to Egypt and they sojourn there. 400 years they were there before God called Moses to bring them out of that slavery into the land of promise, but then they sinned.

And what happened after that? It says, and then *"...and the Assyrian oppressed them for nothing."* You'll remember that it was Assyria that came against Israel, the northern kingdom of Israel and conquered it.

And He says,*"5 Now therefore what have I here," declares the LORD, "seeing that my people are taken away for nothing?..."* Now, remember, they haven't been taken away yet when Isaiah is prophesying this. It hasn't happened yet, but they're going to be and God is speaking about it as if it's already happened. Because to Him, in eternity, He speaks of things tomorrow like they're today.

And He goes on to say, *"...Their rulers wail," declares the LORD, "and continually all the day my name is despised.""*

Why is the name of the Lord despised? Well, it's because the people of God are languishing in captivity and that doesn't look very good for God. Do you know that when we live in captivity, when we've been set free, we've been set free. And yet we're living in captivity, that doesn't look very good for God. I mean, you're not really reflecting the power and ability of God in your life, if you've

been set free from the dominion of your flesh, and yet you're a slave to it, you've gone back to live like a slave.

So, He's saying that my name is despised, but here now He goes on to talk about the fact that all this is going to change.

He says in verse 6, *"[5]…Therefore my people shall know my name. [6] Therefore in that day* (and He's talking about *that day*) *they shall know that it is I who speak; here I am."*

How are they going to know that? How are they going to know? Because Isaiah prophesied it, they're going to go back and they're going to read it when they get set free and they're going to go look at, God had this in his plan all along. And He says, they will know that I am He.

And then we come to a verse that many of us are somewhat familiar with. *"How beautiful* (verse 7) *upon the mountains are the feet of him who brings good news, who publishes peace, who brings good news of happiness, who publishes salvation, who says to Zion, "Your God reigns.""*

And what He's referring to here in verse 7 are those who are going to carry the good news to the people of Israel about their deliverance from their Babylonian captivity, that's what this verse is talking about. How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of those who declare to the nation of Israel, you are free and it's a publishing of God's deliverance.

Here's the deal though, the apostle Paul also used this passage when he spoke of those who proclaim the gospel of Jesus Christ, do you remember that? Also from the Book of Romans, let me put that also on the screen from chapter 10, beginning of verse 13.

Romans 10:13-15 (ESV)

For "everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved." How then will they call on him in whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in him of whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without someone preaching? And how are they to preach unless they are sent? As it is written, "How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the good news!"

For "everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved." (right? That's a quote from Joel chapter 2, but then he goes on and says)

How then will they call on him in whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in him of whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without someone preaching? And how are they to preach unless they are sent? As it is written, "How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the good news!"

And so there Paul makes a quotation here from Isaiah chapter 52 under the context of the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

Verse 8, *"The voice of your watchmen—they lift up their voice; together they sing for joy; for eye to eye they see the return of the LORD to Zion. [9] Break forth together into singing, you waste places of Jerusalem,* (meaning the ruins of Jerusalem) *for the LORD has comforted his people; he has redeemed Jerusalem.*

[10] The LORD has bared his holy arm (and that means He has revealed His strength) *before the eyes of all the nations, and all the ends of the earth shall see the salvation of our God.*

[11] Depart, depart, (now He's speaking to those who are leaving Babylon after that 70 years of exile) *go out from there; touch no unclean thing; go out from the midst of her; purify yourselves, you who bear the vessels of the LORD. [12] For you shall not go out in haste, and you shall not go in flight, for the LORD will go before you, and the God of Israel will be your rear guard."*

Boy, that's what I want. I want God to be in front of me and behind me all the time, right? I want Him to lead the way and I want Him to protect my backside, exactly and that's what the Lord promises here. And you'll notice that the Lord gives them kind of their marching orders, if you will.

Here's what His orders include. He's speaking to those who are carrying the holy vessels. Do you know that when they went back to rebuild the temple, when Cyrus gave the proclamation to go, for the Jews to go back and rebuild the temple, he basically went into the storehouse of Babylon. He was now the king of the Medo-Persian Empire, but they had conquered Babylon.

And He took the holy articles that had been removed from the temple by Nebuchadnezzar and he gave them to the Jews and said, here, go back and furnish the temple with these things that were taken by the Babylonians. Now God speaks to those who are going to carry those things, which would be the Levites.

And He says now, come out from within Babylon, touch no unclean thing because you are carrying the holy vessels of the Lord. Don't take anything from Babylon with you, don't desire things from your captivity, but go, bear the vessels of the Lord. And then He promises that you're not going to go out in haste.

In other words, you're going to have time to put all this thing together and He says you're not going to go in flight. Do you know the Jews, they were going with the king's permission. The king told them, hey go, go back to your homeland and rebuild the temple. Okay, they don't have to worry, they don't have to hurry.

We can put this thing together and the Lord prophesies before it happens and says you will not leave in flight or in a hurry and they will be able to collect everything and God will be their protector. What a beautiful, beautiful, picture of the Lord's protection.

And then from verse 13 to the end of the chapter, the Lord speaks of Messiah clearly. And this is going to extend into chapter 53 as well but these last verses say, *"[13] Behold, my servant shall act wisely;* (and this is referring to Messiah, these are prophecies related to the coming, the first coming of Messiah) *he shall be high and lifted up, and shall be exalted.*

[14] As many were astonished at you—his appearance was so marred, beyond human semblance, and his form beyond that of the children of mankind—
[15] so shall he sprinkle many nations." And by the way, you guys probably know that, that word sprinkle is used many times throughout the Bible in connection with cleansing from sin.

In fact, it's even used in the New Testament, the writer of Hebrews makes reference to sprinkling the nations. So you'll notice that He says that He will sprinkle and this speaks of that cleansing.

He says, *"[15] ...Kings shall shut their mouths because of him, for that which has not been told them they see, and that which they have not heard they understand."* And so, this is a passage that now moves us into the Millennial Kingdom and His second coming and how kings will shut their mouths and will see the power of God.

Now, before we get into chapter 53, I want to just impress upon you how powerful this chapter in the Bible is. I've shared with some of you and I've shared it right from this pulpit that over the last few months, Sue and I kind of

got ahold of a YouTube channel where we were watching several of their videos. It's called, One for Israel, isn't that right, Sue? I think I got the name right and there are largely, there's several things they talk about, but largely they're testimonies on this channel of Jews who raised in a very Jewish family, but who somehow through the grace of God became aware and acquainted with the Gospel of, as they say, Yeshua, usually. Although some refer to the Greek name of Jesus.

But they talk about how they came to faith in Christ and it is incredible how many of them point to Isaiah chapter 53, it is just absolutely amazing. And the ones who do read Isaiah 53 before their conversion, they believe it's out of the New Testament. They'll actually read it and think, well, that's talking about Jesus. That must be in your Bible and then they're told, no, that's in your Hebrew Bible and they are absolutely blown away.

The reason I'm sharing this with you is I'm going to share a brief testimony from this YouTube channel with you before we get into Isaiah 53. The gentleman you're going to hear talk, very articulate, he talks about his own conversion to Christ after being raised in a Jewish home and he's going to make reference to Isaiah 53, and I want you to take note of it.

He's also going to do something else that many of them do and that is make reference to the very first few verses of Matthew chapter 1. Because most Jews, this is interesting, most Jews who are raised in a very strong Jewish family are brought up to believe that the New Testament has nothing to do with Jews. And that sounds crazy to you and I.

Most of the people in these testimonies grew up believing Jesus was Catholic, okay? They thought he was just a Catholic person, they had no idea. Because the only people they usually were raised around were Catholics and they figured, well, the Catholics have Jesus and we have the God of the Bible.

Well, to read Matthew chapter one that begins by saying, the genealogy of Jesus, the Son of David and then they begin to read all these Jewish names. Then they keep reading, they find out this happened in Israel, these are all Jews. This is a Jewish man, this is about Jewish things, this is about Jewish feasts. These are stories about the Jews, they are blown away, absolutely blown away. And you and I are well, duh, but it was kept from them. So, enjoy this.

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You've got to first shave your head, you dress all in black, you've got to wear a white robe, eat only kosher foods, you've got to become a vegetarian. You face Jerusalem, you've got to face India when you pray. You pray only in Hebrew and you grow a nice blue beard and if you do all of those outward cultural things, you'll discover the God of the universe.

And I'm thinking, this is crazy that someone thinks that they can force their culture on God and that God's going to be impressed by what you wear, what direction you face when you pray, what you eat, and all these sorts of things. It seemed to me that if there was a God out there who could be known, He should be able to be recognized, no matter where I face, no matter how I'm dressed because He's God.

Growing up, we always understood that we had our Bible and the Gentiles had their Bible in the New Testament and that they were two completely separate books. Because the only people I knew who were believers in Jesus were all people in our public school who were Italian Catholic, I imagined that Jesus was Italian.

And so the understanding that He's actually Jewish was a shock and then to hear that the New Testament was written by Jews, I couldn't believe it. My expectation was that the New Testament was like my grandparents had told me. It was a book on how to persecute the Jews and it's something you should stay away from.

Of course, when you're told you should stay away from something, curiosity gets the best of you, and you've got to see it. When I opened the New Testament, I was expecting to find a handbook on how to persecute the Jews. My grandparents had warned me that it was written by people who killed the Jews.

That's what I was expecting to see and yet when I'm opening it, I'm reading a story written by Jews about Jewish people. The New Testament was a fascinating book and so as I opened this book in the library, I kind of looked around, made sure that none of my friends had seen me taking a Christian Bible off the shelf, and I open it.

Here's the first sentence. It says, "This is the genealogy of Jesus the Messiah, the son of David, the son of Abraham." So three people are mentioned and they're all Jewish. I was very shocked and as I continued to read, I'm reading the story of a Jewish man who was born in a Jewish village, in a Jewish country, and one day walks into a synagogue and announces that He is a Messiah.

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The more I read the words of Jesus, the more I became attracted to Him. It was as beautiful as anything I had ever read in any other part of the Bible. As I came to faith that Yeshua, that Jesus was the Messiah, it was clear that was the most Jewish thing I could do. This is not a person who's a renegade to our people, this is the one who was promised in our Bible.

The 53rd chapter of Isaiah, it is astonishing. If you would just read that chapter, just without the Bible being around it, you would say, oh, this is some Christian Bible, this is Jesus. When you realize, though, that it's in the middle of our Bible, our Jewish Bible.

When I first came to faith, I dared not tell my father because this is a time period in the 1970s when there were lots of gurus and cults and he was very concerned about me getting involved in some crazy sect and going off someplace. So I waited for months and when I finally told him, he was very skeptical.

On his own then, he started to read about Jesus as well. About a year and a half later, I told him that the fellow who wrote one of the books that he had read, that this fellow was giving a lecture in the city of New York. And he agreed to come out to hear that person and one of the most amazing moments of my life was the speaker said, "Would everyone here who is a Jewish believer in Jesus, would you raise your hand?"

And I raised my hand, my father also raised his hand and I said, I looked over and I said, "Pop, he didn't say would all the Jews raise their hand, he said, would all the Jewish believers in Jesus raise their hand?" And my father looked over and he said, "yes I heard what he said."

The decision to come to faith in Jesus as the Messiah was not something that was a momentary lark, it wasn't something that was a passing fad and I could see changes in myself that I knew were not from within myself. I had kind of tapped in to a truth for our Jewish people that was very powerful.

Isn't that amazing? And that's just one of the many testimonies that are actually on that YouTube channel. I know, it'll bring a tear to your eye. Sue and I've watched these like during lunch and stuff and just really enjoyed so much of what they convey. So, I want to first read Isaiah 53 without stopping and just read through the chapter. And then we're going to go back and just talk a little bit about some of the things that we see there, okay.

So Isaiah chapter 53 says, *"Who has believed what he has heard from us? And to whom has the arm of the LORD been revealed? 2 For he grew up before him like a young plant, and like a root out of dry ground; he had no form or majesty that we should look at him, and no beauty that we should desire him.3 He was despised and rejected by men, a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief; and as one from whom men hide their faces he was despised, and we esteemed him not.*

4 Surely he has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows; yet we esteemed him stricken, smitten by God, and afflicted. 5 But he was pierced for our transgressions; he was crushed for our iniquities; upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace, and with his wounds 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; like a lamb that is led to the slaughter, and like a sheep that before its shearers is silent, so he opened not his mouth. 8 By oppression and judgment he was taken away; and as for his generation, who considered that he was cut off out of the land of the living, stricken for the transgression of my people? 9 And they made his grave with the wicked and with a rich man in his death, although he had done no violence, and there was no deceit in his mouth.

10 Yet it was the will of the LORD to crush him; he has put him to grief; when his soul makes an offering for guilt, he shall see his offspring; he shall prolong his days; the will of the LORD shall prosper in his hand. 11 Out of the anguish of his soul he shall see and be satisfied; by his knowledge shall the righteous one, my servant, make many to be accounted righteous, and he shall bear their iniquities. 12 Therefore I will divide him a portion with the many, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong, because he poured out his soul to death and was numbered with the transgressors; yet he bore the sin of many, and makes intercession for the transgressors."

Isaiah 53, what an amazing, an amazing chapter. But it begins with a question and that question is, *"Who has believed."* And then the follow up question is, *"to whom has the arm of the Lord been revealed?"* Well, we know who it's been revealed to the Jews. The Jews were given the revelation of the power of God, they were given the prophecies related to the coming of Messiah.

But the Lord speaks in this very first verse about the unbelief that would take place when Jesus comes the first time and by the way, this was written 700 years before Christ was born upon the earth.

In verse 2, we're told that *"he grew up before him like a young plant, and like a root out of dry ground."* And that dry ground speaks of the spiritual barrenness and dryness of Israel at that time.

Remember that Jesus came after 400 years of silence, there's 400 years between the Old Testament and the New Testament. We call it the Intertestamental Period. But it was a time when prophecy was not going forth until the coming of John the Baptist. And then, of course, Jesus after that, but it was a very spiritually dry ground that Jesus sprang up through.

He goes on to say that, *"he had no form or majesty that we should look at him, and"* desire Him in any way. Isn't that interesting? If I was God, I think I'd probably make myself dashing. And if I'm God and I'm going to come to earth, I'd probably make myself look the best I could.

But He didn't because He didn't want anything to be attractive on a physical level. He wanted people to be attracted to the message, to the understanding of the good news that He came to bring, and the declarations that He came to bring verbally. And the miracles that He came to perform, that their eyes might be open, not because of physical reasons.

Remember the son of David, Absalom? Kind of the opposite of Jesus, but here was a man who was dropped dead, just beautiful. I mean, he was a handsome specimen of a man turned out to be a snake in the grass. But he had the looks and because he had those looks, people were drawn to him because we're drawn to pretty people, to beautiful people.

But I think it's just fascinating that God did not send His Son in that sort of a picture. I heard somebody once, a pastor was talking about this verse and some woman came up to him afterwards and said, I disagree with you that He wasn't good looking. I've got a picture of him on my wall, and He looks pretty darn good. That's what we want to see, isn't it? We want to paint pictures that make him look like He's just this great specimen of manhood or something like that.

Did you notice that also Isaiah mentioned that the Messiah would have *"no form or majesty"* about Him. And that, of course, speaks of His humble birth. He was born in a cave, He was born around animals. His first bed was a feeding trough for animals. There was no majesty that attended, no pomp and circumstance, no blowing of great trumpets.

In verse 3 we're told that, *"He was despised and rejected by men."* Now we hear basically the response of Israel toward their Messiah, it is encompassed in

this verse. We're told that the Messiah would be *"acquainted with grief."* Grief would be no stranger to this man. And He was to them *"as one from whom men hide their faces"* despised, not esteemed.

And then we're told in verse 4 that, but *"Surely he has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows;"* even though we thought, He was "*smitten by God,"* He was afflicted by God.

When somebody died on a cross, to die on a tree, it even said in the Old Testament, cursed is anyone who is hung on a tree. You ever read that in the Old Testament? Cursed is anyone hung on a tree. (Deuteronomy 21:23) We'll say, well, that can't apply to Jesus.

Oh, yes, it can, He was cursed for you, He bore your curse. But you see, to the Jews, they couldn't understand that because you see His name Messiah means, the anointed one. But yet being crucified on a cross, which to them was the same as being hung on a tree, He was also the cursed one. So for the Jews, that was an oxymoron. How can He be the anointed one and the cursed one at the same time? No, He's up on that cross because He's being afflicted by God, He deserves what He's getting.

But in verse 5, Isaiah cries out saying, no, "*But he was pierced for our transgressions"* and isn't that interesting that the word pierced there in the Hebrew means, pierced through, literally pierced through. What's interesting about that is that the Jewish form of execution at that time and even during the time of Jesus was not crucifixion, it was stoning. They would execute someone with stones.

It was the Romans who came up with the idea of crucifixion and it hadn't been invented 700 years before the birth of Christ. And yet here, specifically, we see these words that *"he was pierced for our transgressions; ...crushed for our iniquities. Upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace."* Isn't it wonderful to have peace with God, I hope you have peace with God.

I find that there's a distressing number of Christians who don't, but the reason they don't is because they've been caught. They've usually been caught in some kind of sin or activity or something, and the enemy has gotten into their brain, and he is the accuser of the brethren, and their peace is gone. But people, if we would but remember that Jesus bore our penalty entirely, completely, perfectly on the cross to the point where he paid in full our debt. We will have that peace restored if we simply put our faith in the finished work of Jesus on the cross, that's where that peace comes from.

It's in faith, it's not in being a perfect specimen of a Christian. I think some Christians think they have to live some certain level of perfection or sinlessness before they can really, truly have peace. But that's not where peace comes from. Peace comes from knowing of what Jesus did for me is done.

And then this last statement of verse 5, which is interesting, and it says, *"and with his wounds we are healed."* And what a beautiful statement that is, *"with his wounds we are healed.* I wish there wasn't so much controversy over that verse and the controversy exists because there are many Christians who believe that the word healed here refers to physical healing. And so their conclusion is that when Jesus died on the cross, He purchased for us our physical healing.

In other words, they believe it is a guarantee of the covenant. In other words, it is a covenant promise that God would always give us physical healing. I don't know if you've ever had anybody pray for you and actually quote that verse while they're praying, just lifting you and I've had it happen. I've had people pray for me and quote that verse and I never correct them as much as I may want to. I just let it go but the only time that frankly this passage is quoted in the New Testament in the sense of that healing aspect is in Peter. Let me show it to you on the screen. It's from 1 Peter chapter 2, verse 24.

1 Peter 2:24 (ESV)

He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, that we might die to sin and live to righteousness. By his wounds you have been healed.

That's obviously the quote there at the very end from Isaiah 53 and the context is clearly spiritual healing, clearly, okay, and you need to know that. Now, I will tell you there is one other reference to a portion of this verse in Matthew's Gospel account that does refer to physical healing, but let me show you how. It's from Matthew chapter 8 and it goes like this.

Matthew 8:16-17 (ESV)

That evening they brought to him many who were oppressed by demons, and he cast out the spirits with a word and healed all who were sick. This was to fulfill what was spoken by the prophet Isaiah: "He took our illnesses and bore our diseases."

That evening they brought to him many who were oppressed by demons, and he cast out the spirits with a word and healed all who were sick. (and then Matthew says this) *This was to fulfill what was spoken by the prophet Isaiah: "He took our illnesses and bore our diseases."*

So Matthew does relate it to physical healing. However, he says that the healing ministry of Jesus during His earthly ministry was fulfilled, was a fulfillment of that prophecy in Isaiah.

Those are the only 2 references to that in the New Testament and there is no other reference in the New Testament that corroborates, frankly, the idea that the covenant that Jesus purchased for us on the cross includes the promise of physical healing. I'm telling you that at the same time, while I would like to tell you the contrary.

I would absolutely love to stand here and say to you, physical healing is an absolute promise of the covenant, I would love to. I don't like being sick or having physical issues any more than you do, in fact, I hate it. I hate the fact that as we get older, our bodies break down and deteriorate and catch all kinds of diseases, I hate it. And I would love to tell you that's not our destiny by a covenant promise but I can't do that, I can't do it because I don't see it in the Word.

Now, am I telling you that I don't believe that the healing exists in the body of Christ? No, I'm not saying that, I'm not saying that God won't and doesn't heal from time to time. I have personally witnessed healings and it is glorious. All I'm saying to you is that it's not a guarantee of the covenant, right?

And the other reason I believe that is because when the apostle Paul talks about the blessings of the covenant in the Book of Ephesians, he refers to our blessings as spiritual blessings. We have been given every spiritual blessing in Christ Jesus and I've said to you many times from this pulpit, ours is not a physical covenant, it is a spiritual covenant.

Israel had a physical covenant, we have a spiritual one. Again, I want to reiterate, that doesn't mean God doesn't heal and if you've got some kind of a physical infirmity and you want healing, we are going to follow the Word of God, we're going to anoint you with oil, we're going to pray the prayer of faith, and we're going to have an expectation that God is able to do all things according to the purpose of His will, right? And that's, and we're not going to waver on that. But I can't stand here and tell you from a biblical standpoint that it is a guarantee of the covenant, okay. I hope I didn't dash anyone's hopes.

Verse 6 says, *"All we like sheep have gone astray."* Sheep are well known for their propensity to stray and to get lost and He says, we're just like that. We've, each of us, turned everyone to his own way and yet and that is… By the way,

that's a picture of sin. Turning away, going our own way, the rebelliousness, the pridefulness that causes us to leave the right way and go our own way. And yet, how has the Lord responded to our waywardness? The Lord has laid on Him the iniquity of us all, isn't that amazing?

"He was oppressed, (verse 7) *and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth."* So Isaiah prophesies how Jesus will hold His tongue when asked many questions, accused of many things. *"Like a lamb that is led to the slaughter, and like a sheep that before its shearers is silent, so he opened not his mouth."*

So we have this image of Jesus, the Lamb of God. Now, to a Jewish audience reading this to speak of this lamb going to the slaughter instant, instant connection to sin offering, instant. For you and I, who have probably never, I'm assuming ever done any kind of a sacrificial animal sort of an offering. We have to make the connection, but to the Jews, it would have been instantaneous. Isn't that interesting?

John the apostle outlived all the other apostles. He's literally imprisoned on an island because of the Word of God and while he's there, the Lord gives him a vision of heaven and what does he see? Let me put this on the screen, from Revelation, chapter 5,

Revelation 5:6-8 (ESV)

And between the throne and the four living creatures and among the elders I saw a Lamb standing, as though it had been slain, with seven horns and with seven eyes, which are the seven spirits of God sent out into all the earth. And he went and took the scroll from the right hand of him who was seated on the throne. And when he had taken the scroll, the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fell down before the Lamb…

There's 2 references in there that tell you that the Lamb is God. First of all, He is literally standing in the midst of the throne, okay. He's not standing beside it, He is standing…, and then at the end, what do they do? They fall down, they fall down and worship Him. And that is not given to anyone in heaven other than God. God will not share His glory with another.

Verse 8, *"By oppression and judgment he was taken away; and as for his generation, who considered that he was cut off out of the land of the living, stricken for the transgression of my people?"* Now a reference to His physical death.

"[9] And they made his grave with the wicked and with a rich man in his death, although he had done no violence, and there was no deceit in his mouth." So we read there about His burial.

"[10] Yet it was the will of the LORD to crush him." That means it wasn't a tragic mistake, it wasn't just a bad day that went very wrong. It was God's will to sacrifice His Son on our behalf. And *"he has put him to grief; when his soul makes an offering for guilt, he shall see his offspring;* (speaking of His spiritual descendants) *he shall prolong his days; the will of the LORD shall prosper in his hand."*

And then the last verses of the chapter just speak of how out of the anguish of that, He will be satisfied. He will be raised again to life and many will be accounted righteous on behalf of His work of bearing their iniquities. And the last verse speaks about His exaltation and dividing the portion or the spoiled, if you will with many and why? *"Because he poured out his soul to death and was numbered with the transgressors; yet he bore the sin of many, and makes intercession for the transgressors."*

As we get ready to close tonight, I'm going to show you one more quick video clip and this is less than a minute and a half long. I've shown you this before, but this is a just a very brief scene out of the movie, Jesus of Nazareth.

And I wanted to show this because it's very interesting. You remember that Nicodemus was the man who came and met Jesus at night because he was kind of afraid of being seen and that sort of thing. And they got into a conversation about what it is to have eternal life and Jesus said to Nicodemus, unless a man is born again.

And so you got to know that probably went through Nicodemus his brain for a long time. Born again, because he didn't get it at first. He even asked Jesus, how can a man be born a second time? I mean, can he enter his mother's womb? What are you talking about? So this thing really must've gotten stuck in his craw.

And what you're going to see, I'll grant you as a dramatization, but what you're going to see in this small clip is Nicodemus watching from afar, the crucifixion of Jesus, quoting Isaiah 53, recognizing this is happening in front of my eyes. And at the very end of quoting Isaiah 53, it clicks, and he makes the connection about what Jesus said about a man being born again.

I'm going to have you turn the house lights down while we watch this one and the stage and spots, if you would, and we'll close in prayer after this.

Jesus of Nazareth

He was despised, and rejected of men, man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief. He was oppressed, and afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth. He was brought as a lamb to slaughter. And as a sheep before its shearer is dumb, surely he hath borne our griefs and carried our sorrows. Yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was abused for our iniquities and through his wounds, we are healed. Born again.