

The Successful Suffering Servant Isaiah 52:13-53:12

Isaiah has four Servant Songs (42, 49, 50, here) – the hope of the world is in a Servant...

- Isaiah 53 is one of the “MT Everests of Scripture.”
- I cannot exhaust all of it without exhausting all of us, but hopefully I can help you appreciate the mountain.
- It covers the life and ministry of Christ in a marvelous way.
- “It is the Bible in miniature” (Spurge)
- It connects Christmas to Easter: **Christmas is good news because Easter is true [Pray]**

Eta Lindemann was a German New Testament scholar that we’d label as a “radical NT scholar.” She didn’t take seriously most of the historical claims of the New Testament.

- But something strange happened: **she got converted!**
- That changes everyone, **including unbelieving NT scholars!** (ht: R. Davis).
- She had never met the Savior personally and she was by her own admission bitter and enslaved to various vices. But then the Lord saved her.

In 1985, she wrote this in the preface of her book *Historical Criticism of the Bible*:

At that point God led me to vibrant Christians who knew Jesus personally as their Lord and Savior. I heard their testimonies as they reported what God had done in their lives. Finally God himself spoke to my heart by means of a Christian brother’s words. By God’s grace and love I entrusted my life to Jesus. He immediately took my life into his saving grasp and began to transform it radically.

My destructive addictions were replaced by a hunger and thirst for his Word and for fellowship with Christians. I was able to recognize sin clearly as sin rather than merely make excuses for it as was my previous habit....

About a month after entrusting my life to Jesus, God convinced me that his promises are a reality.... I became aware of what folly it is, given what God is doing today, to maintain that the miracles reported in the New Testament never took place. Suddenly it was clear to me that my teaching was a case of the blind leading the blind. I repented for the way I had misled my students....

By God’s grace I experienced Jesus as the one whose name is above all names. I was permitted to realize that Jesus *is* God’s Son, born of a virgin. He *is* the Messiah and the Son of Man; such titles were not merely conferred on him as the result of human deliberation. I recognized, first mentally, but then in a vital experiential way, that Holy Scripture is inspired....

I have clear knowledge that my former perverse teaching was sin. At the same time I am happy and thankful that this sin is forgiven me because Jesus bore it on the cross....

I regard everything that I taught and wrote before I entrusted my life to Jesus as refuse. I wish to use this opportunity to mention that I have pitched my two books ... along with my contributions to journals, anthologies, etc. in the trash.... I ask you sincerely to do the same thing with any of them you may have on your own bookshelf.

If I may summarize, she said, **“I had gotten it all wrong!”**

I think her story is an apt introduction to Isaiah 53.

- Many got Jesus wrong – many today continue to get him wrong.
- Isaiah shows that many observed Jesus but sadly misunderstood him.
- When you read the NT you see that many rejected him, and eventually crucified him.
- Today, honest historians confirm that Jesus existed, but many don't believe he was the Son of God, who rose from the dead, and is Savior and Lord.
- But if you see him as he is, and like Dr. Linnemann, “entrust yourself to him” – everything changes.
- In Acts 8 there is an Ethiopian man who is reading Isaiah 53, and Philip explains it to him and he is converted!

Isaiah 53

700+ years before Christ. Yet he writes as if he's at the foot of the cross

- Some 85 times it's quoted in the NT.
- Who is this mysterious servant? Philip (Acts 8) and the rest of the authors tell us – it's not the Jewish nation: it's Jesus.
- It's in a unit, Isaiah 40-55 for those in captivity, giving them hope.
- The answer to the brokenness of the world is this: God is sending this Servant.
- We learn who this Servant is, why he came, and what he did.

Poetic beauty

It's not thrown together. It seems to contain a chiasmic structure.

A The Successful Servant: His Suffering Will Have Universal Benefit (52:13–15)

B The Scorned Servant: He Will Be Low and Rejected (53:1–3)

C The Substitutionary Servant: He Will Die a Sin-Bearing Death (53:4–6)

B¹ The Scorned Servant: He Will Die in Innocence and Be Buried with the Wicked (53:7–9)

A¹ The Successful Servant: He Will Rise and Be Our Great High Priest (53:10–12)

There are 5 paragraphs/stanzas with three verses each.

- Outer edges, Paragraphs 1, 5 – Exaltation of God's Servant, his victory over violent sufferings.
- Paragraphs 2, 4: the rejection of God's Servant.
- Paragraph 3: The Core of it. The bulls-eye – Christ's full atonement.

#1: The Successful Servant: His Suffering Will Have Universal Benefit (52:13-15)

This is a **synopsis** of the whole text to come.

- It is about the Servant's **Victory/Success**.

4 Promises about His Victory

1. He Will Be Successful (13a)

- CSB: “See my servant will be successful “
- He will act wisely; he will prosper succeed.

Before any word is said about the atonement, God says, “My servant will succeed!”

- Nothing can thwart it!

- King Herod killing children 2 under? Can that stop it? Not a chance!
- Pharisees couldn't stop him before finishing his work!
- When Jesus suffered; when he fell to the ground in the garden, surely this idea encouraged him.
- Isaiah is setting us up for what's coming next... it may not look like success but is.

2. He Will Be Exalted (13b)

- Three words: high, lifted up, exalted – the highest possible exaltation!
- Isaiah 6 – “I saw the Lord high and lifted up...”
- Present ministry of Jesus – His Session
- Philippians 2, Hebrews 1

3. He will Astonish People (14)

The idea is of “**horror**.” They are horrified, or astonished at such suffering.

“**Marred**” – At the cross, **He would not look human...**

- **Psalm 22:14-16** – heart wax, tongue sticks to roof, dogs encircle me...
- **It didn't look like victory.**

There they **taunted** him: “If you are the Son of God, come down from the cross.”

- **We have salvation not because he came down, but because he stayed up.**
- **This marred one, has purified us completely and eternally**

Would you invest in this business plan?

- **Imagine going on Shark Tank explaining how Jesus would win the nations to himself.... Most of them would say, “I'm out.”**

4. He Will Incite Awe (15)

He will **sprinkle [startle in the note]:**

- Sprinkle, like the priest would do under the sacrificial system, or...
- Startle, contrasting verse 14 (astonishment)– v 15: **to be shocked at the success of the servant... even kings will shut their mouths!**

15c: Some will be shocked in this life as a result of preaching of the gospel(**Romans 15:21**)

- Paul this uses this text in talking about the Great Commission.
- Paul's preaching left the nations mystified by the news of the Messiah.
- Many who have never heard the good news, will be astonished by the best news in the world.
- Others will shut their mouths **at the second coming.** (Rev 6)
- All the nations will be hushed

His work/victory/success should leave everyone in speechless wonder.

#2: The Scorned Servant: He Will Be Low and Rejected (53:1–3)

Question: Who has believed...?

- **Isaiah doesn't expect hands in the air...**
- **Answer: No one believed it (for the most part) ... believed what?....**

1b: “arm of the Lord” – A reference to **salvation** (see 52:10)

- God rolling up his sleeves, reaching down to save us in Jesus Christ... like Exodus
- It will take revelation to believe it.

Why Was He Rejected? (3 Reasons)

1. He Had the wrong background (53:2a)

- insignificant – like a twig to be cut away
- **Unimportant:** Stable. Manger. Nazareth. Son of Carpenter. Poor.
- **Isaiah 9:6-7.** This is this the king? He’s a root in “dry” ground? (Not likely to bear fruit)
- Born into a land suppressed by Romans. Questions about in the gospels:
 - “Isn’t this carpenter’s son?”
 - Isn’t this *Mary’s* son?
 - Nathaniel, “Can anything good from Nazareth?”
 - John 7 – own brothers *didn’t believe*
 - Hometown? They wanted to throw him off a cliff! (Lk 4:28). Not a book deal!!!

2. He Had the Wrong Image (53:2b)

- “Image is everything!”
- Andre Aggasi used to say, [flipping down his glasses] while sporting his mullet.
- “You look like that everyday” – His everyday look was not impressive.

2b: No form or majesty that we should look at him, and no beauty that we should desire him”

- Jesus wasn’t **King Saul**...
- Today, you hear this about Christian leaders... It may be that you were the football star, or the class president, but not everyone...
- You can hear the image consultants, “This will never sale!”
- Too Humble... Too Gentle ... Too Meek ... Too Just
- Greeks look for wisdom to wow you; Jews miracles to wow you
- We look to one who lived in relative obscurity for 30 years, and died on a cross...
- Yet, he is exactly what we need.

3. He Had the Wrong Personality (53:3)

- “**Despised**” – lifting of the head, contempt, to draw back
- “**Rejected**” – forsaken
- “**A man of Sorrows**”
 - It means “pain”
 - It does not mean that he didn’t laugh, or enjoy life... He did
 - He was a welcomed guest at parties!
 - He was accused of being a party animal
 - This is a reference to Jesus’ holiness and knowledge
 - **John 11** – Jesus wept, was angry at sin! Feeling it more than we ever will

The Man of Sorrows... He knows it...

- It’s the way you feel when... you
- see a child abused

- see a man destroy his life over porn
- see lives wrecked for alcoholism
- see your friends die in front of you...
- **When you see sin and horror up close, and know the eternal ramifications, then that makes you sorrowful...**
- Acquainted w grief - disease, he knew it well

Result? (53:4b) – People looked down on him, and counted him as scum

- **“Esteemed”** is an accounting term... We added it up, and it makes no sense.
 - He was a zero.
 - It is utterly foolish to some.
 - It’s the power of God unto salvation to another.

That’s his rejection. Can I ask you a question:

Have you ever been rejected by someone who should have loved you?

- A parent, a fiancé, a friend, a teacher?
- Then consider this Jesus.
- He is not unaware of the rejection.
- He was the rejected one.
 - They should have loved him.
- We go to the one who understands rejection...

#3: The Substitutionary Servant: He Will Die a Sin-Bearing Death (53:4–6)

At the heart of this amazing chapter is the **atonement**.

Atonement means **“Make at one”**

How does **“a making at one”** involve?

(1) the Means, (2) the Benefit, and (3) The Sovereign Love

1. The Means of Atonement: A Substitutionary Sin-Bearer (53:4-6)

The Problem: Sin (5)

- **Transgressions (5)**
- **Iniquities (5b) – bent/twisted (Hitting a cow, looks good, but it’s bent. My Jeep had iniquity in it!).**
- **Sickness (5c) – like sickness, sin leads to misery and death.**
- Turning to **our own way (6b) – like sheep**
 - **“Have it your way” (the essence of sin)**
 - **I will do it my way! – Sinatra**
 - **Me first! It’s written inside of us. You don’t have to teach that to kids.**

“I want to work with people” – really?

- **Ask a teacher/coach/counselor/pastor.**
- **Ask one of our moms!**
- **They will talk about the foolishness of people**
- **A week on a boat w your family, you realize they’re not perfect...**
- **“I want to drive a Little Debbie truck.”**

True picture of human nature

- **Oh we are special; made in the image of God, but the fall has affected us thoroughly.**
- What do we need? More education? More psychological adjustment? More medicine? More equality?
- What is the solution for human beings most fundamental problem?....

The Solution: Substitution: Jesus took up our griefs/infirmities/sickness

o He took them up – He bore them

4-6: Notice the **pronouns** – **our** griefs, **our** sorrows, **our** transgressions, **our** iniquities, **we** are healed, he brought **us** peace.

It is central in the biblical storyline....

- **Genesis**, Where is the Lamb?
- **Exodus**: Be under the blood of the lamb,
- **Leviticus** – Day of atonement, sins are carried away by the lamb
- That all leads to **Isaiah 53**
 - o Someone would come and take the place of sinners ultimately, finally.
- **John the B**, “Behold the Lamb of God”
- **Revelation**, “Worthy is the Lamb”

53:4b: What everyone thought: “We esteemed him as stricken, smitten and afflicted”

Jesus was the suffering sin-bearer

- Christ’s Sufferings were **severe** (wounded, punctured, to prove fatal, crushed)
 - o Even in **post-resurrection** appearance, these wounds identified him
 - o **Rev 5** – looking as if it been slain – still bearing the marks of his sacrifice
- Christ’s Sufferings were **diverse**
 - o Physical – nails, whip, club, close fist, thorns, naked
 - o Mental – betrayed, forsake by disciples, mocked by onlookers
 - o The inner torment of the Father turning his face away
 - o The Lord laid on him the iniquity of us all
- Christ’s Sufferings were **fatal**
 - o Lamb to the slaughter (down in v. 7)
 - o Laid in a grave
 - o Not enough to even bleed or suffer, but He had to die
 - o “It is finished”
- Christ’s Sufferings were **vicarious/substitute**
 - o **Communion**: “Shed for you” “Torn for you” 2 Cor 5:21
 - o **Essence of sin, essence of salvation**

*Oh, make me understand it, Help me to take it in,
What it meant to Thee, the Holy One, To bear away my
- Katharine A. M. Kelly*

2. The Benefits of Atonement (v. 5)

A. Peace

- Shalom – wholeness

- Intimacy
- “It is well with my soul...” My sin, o the bliss...
- Romans 5:1
- 1 Peter 3:18: For Christ also suffered once for sins, the righteous for the unrighteous, that he might bring us to God

B. Healing

- We have a disease that only One can cure.
- He came to redeem us totally (Rom 8); and our redemption comes through his work on the cross.
- “He forgives all your sins, and heals all your diseases.” (Ps 103)

3. The Sovereign Love of God in the Atonement (6)

- Sin (not new)
- Substitute (not new)
- Source – “**The Lord laid on Him!**” (New)
 - **Verse 11** – the Lord was pleased
 - **The dying of God the Son was the doing of God the Father**
 - It is a Trinitarian atonement
 - It originates in the love of the Father

Look to him, see His blood flowing toward you, the guilty one.

Ray Ortlund:

His blood flows out toward a woman who has shamed herself in a desperate craving to be loved. His blood washes her shame clean off her. Then that shame flows back to the cross, where it shames Jesus and is no longer her burden to bear. His blood flows out toward a man held in bondage to lust. He has discovered too late that there is no comfort there, only emptiness and self-hatred. But the blood of Jesus flows out to that man, cleanses him entirely, and takes that painful wrong back to the cross where Jesus suffers for it as his own wrong, freeing that man forever.

The blood of Jesus is flowing out to sinners of all kinds, taking from them their guilt, their shame, their loss, their tears and despair, and giving them a whole new life. Jesus is saying to you right now, “I don’t want you to bear your burden one moment longer. Let my chastisement give you peace. Let my stripes heal you.” We are all like stupid sheep, wandering off from him through our own futile self-remedies and self-righteous excuses. Who can deny it? But look what God has done. God has laid on Christ the iniquity of us all. Believe it, and entrust your guilt to him. He can’t bear it and survive, but he’s still willing to bear it.

Let me ask you a different question:

Have you ever been loved by someone who should have rejected you?

That’s the gospel.

- Jesus should have rejected *us*. Yet, he receives us.
- Greater love doesn’t exist.
- Greater news doesn’t exist.

- Christian, YOU are loved with an everlasting love. The cross displays it!

#4: The Scorned Servant: He Will Die in Innocence and Be Buried with the Wicked (53:7-9)

The main events of Good Friday.... (3 Parts)

1. He endured violent oppression in silent submission (53:7)

- “**Oppressed**” - Slave drivers – Exodus
- “**Afflicted**” – can’t get up
- Both of these occur just prior to the cross....
- He washes Feet; takes the Passover meal; excuses Judas; institutes the Lord’s Supper; provides the most intimate and intense instruction;
- Then: His appearance was disfigured from the scourging, the whips, the fists. After beating him so badly he couldn’t carry the beam.
- This was the beginning of the atonement, of our reconciliation with God.
- In all of this.... Isaiah says, He did not open His mouth!
- It was silent love, submissive love.
- **John 10:17-18** – I lay it down, no one takes it from me
- Jesus was not overpowered; he was living out the Father’s will
- **1 Peter 2:21-25** reflects on this remarkable fact

2. He endured total injustice in complete disregard (53:8)

- John 18:12-ff
- No one bothered to open up this prophecy.
- They couldn’t care less.
- He was totally innocent, completely mistreated, and no one cared.

3. He faced public humiliation in spotless innocence (53:9)

53:9b: He deserved none of it

- No violence
- No deceit

Assigned a grave with “**the wicked**”

- The two men beside him
- **After crucifixion, the final act of degradation was to throw the body into a common grave.**
- The last great indignity.
- Jesus and the thieves were given their assignments...

But what happens? Mystery here. Joseph of Arimathea request the body...

- Amazingly, Pilate grants it!
- God used it to fulfill prophecy
- God’s meticulous sovereignty on display

He’s given a new tomb, though assigned a common one

- It was an identifiable tomb, also.

Isaiah gives you a bit of what's coming next!

Good news is coming in this final paragraph....

#5: The Successful Servant: He Will Rise and Be Our Eternal High Priest (53:10–12)

In the final three verses we read about the glory of the atonement.

1. The Primary Cause of the Atonement (10a)

- Who killed him?
 - Jews?
 - Romans?
 - Pontias Pilate?
 - Judas?
- The Father ultimately.
- The crucifixion wasn't a martyrdom or a murder (primarily); it was divine appointment.
- We have seen the early preaching in Acts all testify to this reality (2:23).

This is not inferring sadistic delight.

- The Father delighted in what it would bring about
- Jesus was not coerced – he was willing – made his soul a guilt offering
- Jesus offered himself, not just the priest, but the offering
- Pleasure of father, willingness of the Son – Triune God bringing our salvation about.

2. The Victory of the Atonement (10b) [6 Parts]

There's a great shift from 10a to 10b! It goes to triumph!

A. He Won a People (10b)

- Offspring
- Seed and fruit – his death wasn't a waste!
- Book of Revelation – you can't count the people!
- You are an offspring of the cross and resurrection!

B. He Inaugurated a Pattern (10b)

- There's a great
- He would SEE his offspring
- Death would not be the end! "Go tell my brothers" (Jn 20:17)
- We weren't there on that first Easter. But we will see him!
- Pattern inaugurated - 1 Cor 15:20-22
- People groups: Jesus film... change from crucifixion to resurrection...

C. He Fulfilled a Plan (10c) "will of the Lord shall prosper in his hand"

- What was the will of God for Jesus? To redeem a people for Himself

D. He Felt Pleasure (11)

- Jesus will be **satisfied!**
- Pleased the Father -
- Finished his work... You know what that's like?
- **More important the work the more satisfying the feeling.... Nothing more important..**
- Jesus doesn't regret it at all!
- His satisfaction is infinitely deep!!!
- God is happy with the work atonement!
- That atonement (again) involved counting sinners righteous through is substitutionary death (11b).

E. He Shared the Spoils of Victory His People (12a)

- Battlefield imagery – war waged and won
- The emperor conveyed his delight in giving spoils to the general
- In the presence of many, there will be a coronation of heaven
 - Ascension - Eph 4:8
- What will he do with them?
 - He will divide them – with the numerous!
 - He will share it with all the belong to him
 - **We experience some of it now, but not the greatest of his sharing!**
 - **For all of eternity will we share in the spoils of Christ's victory!**

All that he won will be shared with us!

The atonement is the fountainhead of every benefit we receive!

E. He Now Reigns and Intercedes for His People (53:12c)

Jesus, the crucified one (12b) is Jesus the great intercessor (12c)!

- Peter, "I have prayed for you"
- Cross, "Father, forgive them"
- Our coming to glory is secured by his intercession
- **Hebrews 7:25**
- **Romans 8:31-ff**

All of this 700 years before hand. You can trust God's Word!

Conclusion: 4 Ways this Passage Changes Our Lives

1. We are counted righteous through faith in the substitute.

- Essence of sin: Substituting ourselves for God; essence of salvation: God substituting himself for us.
- We can have peace with God through faith in Christ.
- We can be healed through faith in Christ.
- So, embrace the Savior!
- He came to save sinners! His arm is not short that he cannot save!

- **Through this passage, the Ethiopian man came to faith through Philip's teaching, and you can do the same today!**
- **Feel the wonder of his love, Christian.**
- **Build your life on his love. Think on it daily: "We think every day of His passion, for all our hope lies in his death." (Spurgeon)**

2. Follow his example.

- **The Christian life will involve suffering.**
- **It will involve being wounded.**
- **We look to Christ, Peter says, for example and motivation:**

1 Peter 2:20–25 (ESV): But if when you do good and suffer for it you endure, this is a gracious thing in the sight of God. 21 For to this you have been called, because Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example, so that you might follow in his steps. 22 He committed no sin, neither was deceit found in his mouth. 23 When he was reviled, he did not revile in return; when he suffered, he did not threaten, but continued entrusting himself to him who judges justly. 24 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. 25 For you were straying like sheep, but have now returned to the Shepherd and Overseer of your souls.

3. Live in resurrection hope!

- **This text tells us that suffering and death are not the end of the story!**
- **Christmas is good news because Easter is true!**
- **He shall see his offspring! His offspring shall see him!**

4. Seek his help.

- **The Savior is interceding for us.**
- **The Savior is with us.**

5. Join with the multitude from around the globe in giving him praise.

"Worthy is the Lamb who was slain, to receive power and wealth and wisdom and might and honor and glory and blessing!... To him who sits on the throne and to the Lamb be blessing and honor and glory and might forever and ever!" Amen.