

Our Sorrows He Carried

Isaiah 52:13-53:12

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Outline credit – Ray Ortlund, Jr.

Intro

Although I quote parts of it often in sermons, I last preached on Isaiah 53 six years ago. Something was different for me in studying it this week. And I hope something is different for you in hearing it preached this morning. The difference is that we have been on a journey through Isaiah for 10 weeks. Even if you haven't been here every Sunday or read every chapter, hopefully you're gaining a fuller perspective of this book. Hopefully you can see that Isaiah 53 is not dropped out of thin air to tell us about Jesus' death.

What Israel really needed to be rescued from was not Assyria, not Egypt, not Babylon. Their enemy was within.

We resonate with that. You haven't gone to bed at night afraid of Assyria. You haven't wondered whether you will ever return from Babylon. We don't even worry about Canada invading.

But, we do know what its like to feel shame and guilt and sorrow. Christians know this passage as one of the most famous descriptions of Jesus' death on the cross in our place. And yet justification by faith in Him doesn't always percolate down into the way we think about ourselves before God, and the way we view life, and the way we treat others. We often remain with a bent toward self-justification. We want to make excuses for things we do wrong. We want to blame others. We want to blame circumstances. We want to compare ourselves to others. Why? Because we still feel the weight of guilt and know that if we have to answer for our own guilt, we are damned.

If you're not a Christian, you came on a great Sunday. Because I can think of no place in the Bible that better summarizes the blazing center of Christianity. It's not the ten commandments. It's not a list of rules. It's *this*. And I'm so glad you're here.

In this passage we learn what God has done with our shame and guilt and sorrow. We learn about Jesus.

1. He was ***repulsive*** but ***redemptive***. (52:12-15)
 - a. Although the emphasis throughout is on the suffering of the servant, it doesn't begin or end with suffering. It begins and ends with His exaltation.
 - i. Between the bookends of exaltation, we see suffering. Lot's of suffering. Unjust suffering. Misunderstood suffering. Voluntary suffering.
 - ii. 5 sections, 3 verses each
 - b. He will be successful but the road is dark with suffering.
 - i. That's what "Prosper" or "act wisely" in some translations means – Jesus knew what He needed to do to achieve His purpose and it worked. (adapted from Ortlund)
 - c. Two-fold astonishment
 - i. Astonished at His severely marred image from His suffering
 1. **Matthew 27:30** They spat on Him, and took the reed and *began* to beat Him on the head.
 2. "more than any man" has more of the idea of beaten until hardly recognizable as human.

3. What sudden change from the language of high and lifted up and exalted.
 - ii. Speechless at His coming triumph – either His resurrection or His triumphant return.
 1. Even kings who have a right to speak with authority, even kings will be silent in acknowledgement of the Servant when He is exalted.
 2. Who is this?
 - a. This covers His career in 3 brief verses – high and lifted up, yet humbled to sprinkle the nations, with an astonishing return.
 - b. This suffering servant is also the Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Eternal Father, Prince of Peace of Isaiah 9!
 - d. Sprinkle many nations is a foreshadowing of the truth about to be unpacked – His suffering would have a spiritually cleansing effect, not only on Israel but on all the nations.
 - e. **And yet prior to exaltation, there is unbelief.**
2. He lived in **rejection**. (53:1-3)
 - a. The implied answer to the question, “Who has believed our report?” is “no one” or “practically no one.”
 - i. **John 1:10-11** He was in the world, and the world was made through Him, and the world did not know Him. ¹¹ He came to His own, and those who were His own did not receive Him.
 - b. The key phrase is in v. 3 – “we did not esteem Him.”
 - i. Who is speaking here? Not God. Who is the “we?” Israel.
 - ii. Why is it in past tense? All these verbs are past tense. This is written more than 700 years before Jesus. “We” is future Israel when they eventually come to faith in Jesus as Messiah en masse, looking back and realizing that they missed their Messiah. They overlooked Him. They didn’t esteem Him.
 - iii. “We” is also “us.” First person pronouns are used throughout this section so that we are included in this.
 1. It’s like in Rembrandt’s painting “The Raising of the Cross of Christ” where he painted his own face on one of the soldier’s lifting up the cross of Jesus.
 - c. He seemed like a common plant but one that grew in a parched land
 - i. God had pleasure in His growth, especially in contrast to the dryness of the nation around Him.
 - d. No stately form or majesty
 - i. No outer impressiveness expected of an important person
 - ii. He had no wealth, no status, no privilege, no education – He was a carpenter from Nazareth.
 - e. Man of sorrows, acquainted with grief.
 - i. “Acquainted” translates the common word for “know.” Jesus knows grief. He knows sorrows. He knows our sorrows and griefs. The words have a connection with physical suffering and sickness even. He gets it.
 - ii. Is this not what we see in the gospels?

1. Jesus touching shunned lepers, weeping over death and disbelief, growing hungry, getting weary.
- f. Not only did they fail to esteem Him, they despised Him.
- i. Have you ever seen something so horrific that you turn your face away? Car accident, brutal scene on tv, so people turned their eyes from Jesus.
 - ii. We're going to look at Him, and see His utter commonness, His suffering, and we're not going to esteem Him.
 - iii. Likewise today so many overlook Jesus in disbelief. Or they wonder at the symbol of Christianity – the cross.
 1. The cross is a source of confusion for some. Why celebrate the instrument of death? Why celebrate the tool utilized to kill your leader?
 - iv. **The striking turn is that the sorrows and griefs He bore were "our" sorrows. The suffering that we interpreted as God's judgment (smitten of God), was actually God's judgment on US!"**
 - v. **This is at the heart of repentance – realizing your rejection of Jesus, your overlooking of Jesus, and acknowledgement of sin.**
3. He was our **sin-bearer**. (53:4-6)
- a. "Surely" – whatever people may have thought about the sorrows and sufferings they saw, the truth was dramatically different. (Motyer)
 - i. Those sorrows and griefs were ours.
 - b. A vivid description of the cross that Jesus experienced.
 - i. Pierced, crushed, chastened, scourged – all fulfilled.
 - c. In what way did He bring healing through the cross?
 - i. Jesus healed many people while He was on earth as a foretaste of future complete healing.
 1. **Matthew 8:16-17** When evening came, they brought to Him many who were demon-possessed; and He cast out the spirits with a word, and healed all who were ill. ¹⁷ This was to fulfill what was spoken through Isaiah the prophet: "HE HIMSELF TOOK OUR INFIRMITIES AND CARRIED AWAY OUR DISEASES."
 2. Not every sickness will be healed now. We can pray for healing and God may heal now but there is no guarantee.
 - ii. But the main healing He brings that is consistent with the context is spiritual healing through the forgiveness of sins.
 1. **1 Peter 2:24-25** and He Himself bore our sins in His body on the cross, so that we might die to sin and live to righteousness; for by His wounds you were healed. ²⁵ For you were continually straying like sheep, but now you have returned to the Shepherd and Guardian of your souls.
 - d. Our condition – like wandering sheep, each going to our own way. (v. 6)
 - i. **Judges 17:6** In those days there was no king in Israel; every man did what was right in his own eyes.
 - ii. Many different words are used for sin in this passage, displaying the many aspects of sin.

1. The basic word for sin simply means to miss the mark.
 2. “Transgressions” stresses our rebellion – not just an accident or failure.
 3. “Iniquities” stresses our guilt and the bent of our human nature away from God and toward sin.
 4. An analogy is also used – like sheep, we’ve gone astray. We’ve wandered from our source of protection. From the good fields and clean water.
 - a. We’ve simply said, “I want to do it my way”
 5. Even the “sorrows” and “griefs” are primarily talking about the effects our sin brings about – wrecked relationships, guilt, regret. Our sin isn’t just bad. It’s destructive and wearisome. It causes misery and disappointment.
- iii. “All of us” and “Us all” – wording exactly the same in Hebrew and it begins and ends the verse.
 1. Repetition to emphasize that this isn’t describing a subset of people, it’s everyone.
 - iv. This is what makes the substitution necessary. We are rebel subjects, turned from our Creator. Not necessarily in “fist shaking” rebellion, but at least in passive indifference.
- e. But the Servant dealt with every aspect of our need. Our condition is one of sorrow and sickness and moral guilt and spiritual alienation. But then positively look what we get – well-being (shalom) and healing.
4. He died in ***innocence***. (53:7-9)
 - a. The metaphor of a sheep moves from us to the Servant.
 - i. We wandered like sheep, He silently faced death like a sheep.
 - ii. A sheep goes silently to the slaughter because it doesn’t know where its going. Jesus was silent not because He was ignorant of the destination, but because He was submitted to the Father’s plan.
 - iii. Jesus was not a weak victim of an unjust system. He was a willing, resolute, suffering substitute.
 - iv. How do you respond to rejection?
 1. Rejection is hard. I’ve known people that work for companies that do phone surveys. The rejection rate is like 95%.
 2. How do you respond to rejection? Broken hearted? Payback? “Fine, if you don’t want me, then I don’t want you.”
 3. How did He respond?
 - a. He took it. Silently. Willingly.
 - b. He was “cut off” from the land of the living
 - i. Not just a violent death in mind in that phrase, but the judgment of God.
 - c. His grave with a wicked man yet with a rich man in His death
 - i. Planned to bury him with the wicked but Joseph stepped forward and took His body

- ii. **Matthew 27:59-60** And Joseph took the body and wrapped it in a clean linen cloth, ⁶⁰ and laid it in his own new tomb, which he had hewn out in the rock; and he rolled a large stone against the entrance of the tomb and went away.
- iii. Why this detail? Remember this prophecy clearly predates Jesus, undeniable, undoubtable.
- iv. **Moves from apparent tragedy to exaltation**

5. He was ***crushed*** but ***victorious***. (53:10-12)

- a. But the LORD was pleased To crush Him, putting *Him* to grief;
 - i. But used as a contrast and reassessment, just like “yet” in v. 4.
 - 1. In v. 4 in contrasts the suffering He experienced with their misinterpretation of it.
 - 2. In v. 10 “but” brings a contrast to this seemingly tragic and senseless death of the Servant – it was actually the Lord’s will for this to happen in order to fulfill His saving purpose.
 - ii. It wasn’t the suffering of His Son that pleased Him, it was the end result.
 - 1. **Isaiah 46:10** Declaring the end from the beginning, And from ancient times things which have not been done, Saying, 'My purpose will be established, And I will accomplish all My good pleasure';
 - 2. By bearing their sin, people will be forgiven.
- b. As a guilt offering, Jesus took the sin of guilty people (the sheep who strayed) and will see them as His “offspring”
 - i. “Those who strayed as sheep will return as children”
 - ii. Isn’t that a great picture.
- c. Prolong His days, be satisfied, good pleasure of the Lord prosper in His hands . . . how is all this possible if the servant is killed? Only one way, the servant doesn’t stay dead.
- d. “see it and be satisfied”
 - i. The servant will look at His suffering and look at the result, and be satisfied. You know someone’s heart when you know what satisfies them.

6. Don’t ***overlook*** Jesus.

There are no commands in this chunk of scripture. Not something to do, but something to believe.

- a. What Jesus experienced on the Cross, He experienced willingly for you.

Isaiah 53:4 Surely our griefs He Himself bore,
And our sorrows He carried;

Isaiah 53:5 He was pierced through for our transgressions,
He was crushed for our iniquities;
The chastening for our well-being *fell* upon Him,
His scourging we are healed.

Isaiah 53:6 But the LORD has caused the iniquity of us all To fall on Him.

Isaiah 53:11 As He will bear their iniquities.

What is Christianity all about? Man rebelled against his Maker, we have turned astray. Rather than leaving us to bear the just penalty for our rebellion, God sent the suffering servant, Jesus, to die as a substitute. This brought God the Father and God the Son much joy.

All of our guilt must go to Christ. We can't hold onto it. It will crush us. But Jesus was crushed for it.

b. Don't Miss the Messiah

- i. Don't get to the end of your life, or even more tragically after the end of this life, and realize He was before you and you failed to recognize Him and say, "I believe that. I believe I'm guilty before God. And I believe Jesus died for me. I want this peace and I want to follow Jesus. "
- ii. If you are in Christ, all your guilt is gone.

c. Worship the Reigning Jesus

- i. Remember, it is bookended with the Servant high and lifted up.



1

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