

Jesus, Our Substitute

Text: Isaiah 53:4-6

Date: 1-22-23 10:30 AM

III. The vicarious suffering of the Servant (Isa. 53:4-6)

****The Servant's immense suffering on behalf of our sinful conditions (Isa. 53:4-5)**

To understand afresh the fact that Jesus was suffering and dying on our behalf, not because He was being punished by God for something He had done wrong. He was the Righteous One dying for the unrighteous that He might bring us to God (1 Peter 3:18).

Combining the two verbs the picture is that of the Servant taking our sicknesses, lifting them up upon Himself and carrying them. Read I Pet. 2:24 here. Jesus Christ bore our sin which is the cause of all our sicknesses and thus became our substitute. He took our sins for us. He took our consequences for us. He took our pain for us. He took our punishment for us.

God did do these things to the Servant but the people mistook and misunderstood why. Jesus was not stricken by God over His own sin. He was not smitten by God as divine retribution. Rather, these were done to the Servant for our sins. God did allow Him to suffer, but it was for the express purpose of providing Him as an expiatory offering for our sins. "Little did people realize that He was being subjected to such indignities for their sins, not His own" (Hailey 438).

The picture is of the violent death of crucifixion on our behalf. That wounding, that piercing was all on the account of our rebellious acts against God. Our rebellious transgressions against a holy and righteous God had to either be punished or pardoned. Through Jesus' atoning death, our sins were both punished AND pardoned. "God's reaction to transgression may be judgment (Ps 37:38; Isa 1:28; Dan 8:23), but his deep desire is really to provide salvation from this way of living".¹

The word *iniquities* comes from a root word meaning *to bend, twist, or distort*. **Sin** or wickedness, **guilt** that results from sin, and **punishment** for wrongdoing are all a part of the word. The word means "**sin (act)** — an act or feeling that transgresses something forbidden or ignores something required by God's law or character; whether in thought, feeling, speech, or action".² It is this iniquity that we are guilty of that falls on Him. Even a stronger picture, Young says, is that iniquity "does not come back to us to meet and strike us as we might rightly expect, but rather strikes him in our stead. The Lord caused our guilt to strike him not merely in the soul but in the whole person" (350).

How did He bear our sin, our guilt, and our punishment? He stood in our place. He was our Substitute. He was sinless and free of transgression and iniquity. He bore not just the sins against God, but our guilt before God. Our guilt leads to punishment and the wrath of God against that guilt. Jesus took our punishment due to us because of our sins. He bore it all. Jesus Christ is mankind's total vicarious offering.

Consider the sacrificial system in the Old Testament. The complete sacrificial system demonstrated not only the need of a substitute but produced one every time there was an offering. The innocent animal was sacrificed for the guilty party. Yet no sacrificial animal no matter how perfect and innocent could make atonement for sin. All that it could do was cover it for another moment, another day, or another year. The OT sacrifices only pointed to the truth that the offeror deserved to die and needed another sacrifice again the next time.

¹ Livingston, G. H. (1999). [1846 יַעַבְדָּ](#). In R. L. Harris, G. L. Archer Jr., & B. K. Waltke (Eds.), *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament* (electronic ed., p. 741). Moody Press.

² Brannan, R., ed. (2020). In [Lexham Research Lexicon of the Hebrew Bible](#). Lexham Press.

The Servant of Isaiah 53, the Servant of God, who willingly and voluntarily took upon Himself the world's sins, was our substitute. John the Baptist said, "Behold, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!" (John 1:29). Jesus was our sacrificial Lamb, He died in our place, just like the innocent animals who died as part of the Jewish sacrificial system.

Our transgressions had broken the harmonious relationship and unity with God. The punishment for those transgressions between man and God was laid upon the Servant. God was not at peace with us. If God were to have peace with us, it would be through this punishment which we deserved. Yet, that chastisement or punishment did not fall on us, it fell on the Servant.

**** The Servant was intensely stricken on behalf of our rebellious condition (Isa. 53:7).**

We have chosen our own path. This pictures: 1) We are responsible for our own conduct and decisions. 2) We have chosen the path that winds opposite of God. 3) The path is lonely, forsaken, and separated from God. 4) We are in desperate need of being shown the correct way. 5) God, the Good Shepherd, in His mercy and grace, has not left mankind without a way to Him. 6) The path to God only comes through His Servant's pain and suffering.

We are now no longer lost in our sin and guilt without hope. The suffering Servant, our Savior, took our place and suffered on our behalf so we can now have a relationship with God. Halleluiah!