

## **The Servant: The Servant Stricken**

**Isaiah 52:13–53:12**

**By [David Strain](#)**

*December 7, 2014*

Now if you would please take a copy of God's own holy Word in your hands. As the children make their way to their children's church this evening, turn with me to the prophecy of Isaiah, chapter 52, on page 613. Isaiah 52. We're going to read from the thirteenth verse through the end of chapter 53. Before we do, would you bow your heads with me as we pray together? Let us pray.

*O Lord, as we turn to this portion of Scripture in which the wounds of our Redeemer are once again set before us, we come with the sense that we have stepped onto holy ground. And so we bow down and humble ourselves before You, confessing our sin and bankruptcy and need and running to Christ alone for mercy and pardon, for grace and cleansing. We pray, O Lord, as we hear Your Word read and proclaimed, that You would wield it, the Sword of the Spirit, piercing and penetrating to the division of soul and spirit, joints and marrow, cutting to the heart, wounding and healing, we ask that You would do it among us tonight, in Jesus' name. Amen.*

Isaiah 52 at verse 13. This is the Word of Almighty God:

Behold, my servant shall act wisely; he shall be high and lifted up, and shall be exalted. As many were astonished at you - his appearance was so marred, beyond human semblance, and his form beyond that of the children of mankind - so shall he sprinkle many nations; 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.

Who has believed what he has heard from us? And to whom has the arm of the LORD been revealed? 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. 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. Surely he has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows; yet we esteemed him stricken, smitten by God, and afflicted. But

he was wounded for our transgressions; he was crushed for our iniquities; upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace, and with his stripes we are healed. 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. 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. 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? 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.

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. 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. 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.

Amen, and we praise God for His holy and inerrant Word.

### **The Servant: Isaiah's Depiction of the Sufferings of Christ**

It is a happy providence that three things have come together this evening. First, this is the next section in our ongoing studies of the Servant's Song, the portion of Scripture that we read together. And second, that we have begun this Lord's Day Morning our meditations on the Advent season and the coming of Christ. And it is surely important for us to be reminded, as we think about the baby of Bethlehem, that the purpose for His coming was to be the Man of Calvary, the Man who bore in His own body on the tree the penalty of our sin. And then the third happy providence is that tonight we are ordaining and installing elders and deacons. And in the portion of the song that we are dealing with tonight, there is, I think, a number of useful applications that will speak to all that we do tonight.

And so we have come to the penultimate section. If you will remember, there are five stanzas in this great song of the suffering Servant. In chapter 52:13-15, God the Father Himself directed our attention to His Servant. "Behold, my servant," He said. "Here is your Savior, My Son, the Lord Jesus Christ." And He spoke in that opening stanza of the song of the Servant's triumph as King. Here we saw the Servant succeeds. The Servant succeeds. Then the second stanza of the

song, chapter 53 verses 1 to 3, it is now the prophet Isaiah who speaks and his message in these verses is a plaintive cry of concern. “Who has believed what he has heard from us? The Gospel message that we’ve just learned will one day triumph! Presently,” Isaiah says, “presently endures the rejection of the mass of humanity.” And so he’s crying out in lamentation. And here we saw the Servant scorned. First the Servant succeeds; then the Servant scorned. And then the third stanza of the song, 53:4-6. Here we have a theological commentary on the sufferings of Jesus Christ crucified. It is, verse 4, a substitutionary death. It is a penal death, verse 5. He is bearing our penalty. And it is an atoning death, verse 6, satisfying the wrath and justice of God. Here in the third place we saw the Servant sacrificed. The Servant succeeds, the Servant scorned, the Servant sacrificed.

But tonight as we come to the fourth and penultimate stanza of Isaiah’s song, verses 7 to 9, we move from explanations of the meaning of the work of Christ or of its results and consequences, now simply to a description, remarkably accurate and vivid, detailing the events of Christ’s sufferings themselves. Amidst all the profound implications of the cross teased out for us in this chapter, verses 7 to 9 remind us that the cross and the Christian Gospel is not an abstraction. It is not an abstract idea. No, the object of our faith, it’s not a series of principles or a mere philosophy, but rather it rests on facts, historical, solid, and real. And so that is where Isaiah takes us in verses 7 to 9. Not to the implications, not to the meaning of the events, but to the events themselves. He rehearses them for us that we might be reminded that the truths we cling to are “true truths,” as Francis Schaeffer once said: historical, solid, tangible, and real. And so here in verses 7 to 9 we are taken, as it were, into the crowd to take the vantage point of an eye witness at the trial and at the execution of Jesus of Nazareth.

The Servant succeeds, the Servant scorned, the Servant sacrificed; here tonight, the Servant stricken. The Servant stricken. And there are three themes in Isaiah’s description of Christ’s sufferings, each following one of the three verses in this section. First in verse 7, Christ’s submission is emphasized; His submission. Then in verse 8, His sacrifice. And in verse 9, His sinlessness. Submission, sacrifice, and sinlessness.

## **I. Christ’s Submission**

First, verse 7. Would you look at it with me please? Christ’s submission. That is particularly highlighted by the focus here on His silence, isn’t it? He was oppressed and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth; like a lamb that is led to the slaughter, or like a sheep that before its shearers is silent, so he opened not his mouth.” Here we are transported into the council chambers of the Sanhedrin, the Jewish governing body, as Jesus stands before them in chains. Charges, false and trumped up, they are brought against Him, and Jesus does not reply. Matthew 26:62 - “The high priest stood up and said, ‘Have you no

answer to make? What is it these men testify against you?” Matthew says Jesus remained silent. Then later he goes on, as Jesus stands before Pontius Pilate He was asked, “Do you hear how many things they testify against you?” But Matthew adds, “He gave him no answer, not even to a single charge, so that the governor was greatly amazed.” Jesus was accused falsely yet He did not answer the charges even to defend Himself. He did not leap to His own defense but rather He humbly embraced the suffering that was central to His calling, like a lamb to the slaughter and a sheep to the shearer. It is a meek submission marking and characterizing the response of Jesus Christ to the terrible ordeal now confronting Him. Submission.

## **II. Christ's Sacrifice**

Then look down at verse 8; verse 8. First submission, now notice sacrifice. Do you see Isaiah's language in verse 8? “By oppression and judgment he was taken away; and as for his generation” - Isaiah there means His contemporaries, His peers - as for them “who considered that he was cut off out of the land of the living, stricken for the transgression of my people.” Here now is a prophetic glimpse of the unjust judgment passed upon our Savior that day when the crowds assembled. And Pilate proposed, do you remember, he proposed the release of one of two prisoners - either the murderer, Barabbas, or Jesus Christ. Mark 15:9 records Pilate's question to the crowds. “Do you want me to release to you the King of the Jews?” But, Mark adds in verse 11, “The chief priests stirred up the crowd to have him released for them Barabbas instead. And Pilate again said to them, ‘Then what shall I do with the man you call the King of the Jews?’ And they cried out again, ‘Crucify him!’ And Pilate said to them, ‘What evil has he done?’ But they shouted all the more, ‘Crucify him!’ And so Pilate, wishing to satisfy the crowds,” a spectacle of a craven politician, “releases for them Barabbas. And having scourged Jesus, delivers him to be crucified.” By oppression and judgment He was taken away. His contemporaries, His own generation, baying for His blood, venting their rage. Not one of them understood what was really taking place as the mob rule took over.

What was really taking place in this unspeakable miscarriage of justice? No more monstrous crime than this can possibly be conceived, that creatures would sit in biased prejudiced judgment on the one who is Himself the true and just Judge of all the earth, that fallen, guilty rebels should unjustly condemn the sinless Lord of life. What was really taking place, despite the rage and malice and injustice of the moment? Isaiah tells us. As for his generation, who considered? Did anyone realize that he was “cut off out of the land of the living, stricken for the transgression of my people”? Verse 6, back in verse 6 we were told, we are sheep, every one of us having gone our own way. We are stray sheep, lost and wandering, guilty and condemned. But here we see the spotless Lamb of God led to the slaughter in meekness and submission, enduring a mockery of a trial, bearing the screaming crowds and all the gruesome ordeal that was shortly to

follow. And not one of the wandering stray sheep considered what was really happening. The transgressions of the people, then baying for His blood, their transgressions were being laid upon His shoulders and the penalty of their transgressions exacted from the spotless Lamb of God Himself. See Christ carrying the cross along the Via Dolorosa. Hear the crowds mocking Him as He hangs dying between two criminals on Golgotha. And see the deathblow of divine judgment that ought to fall on them, that ought to fall on us, falling instead on Him. He died for us. He died for us. Take it in, bow down, and adore Him.

### **III. Christ's Sinlessness**

Submission, sacrifice, and then thirdly sinlessness. Look at verse 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. He was, as we confess in the Creed, "crucified under Pontius Pilate, dead and buried." The consummation of all the unjust afflictions that mark the life of Christ have now come as the Servant of the Lord at last dies in ignominy and shame, bearing the vitriol and hatred of the people. The wicked make His grave and yet buried in the tomb of Joseph of Arimathea, He was with a rich man in His death. But as He passed through it all, climaxing in His death and burial, what do we find the Servant of the Lord doing? Do we hear from Him screams of rage hurled to the heavens as He protests His innocence? Do we hear sobs of self-pity? Does He hurl His defiance back at the crowds who have so mistreated Him? No, when He does speak, we find Him praying for those who spat on Him and condemned Him and drove home the nails into His flesh. We listen to Him expecting to hear self-pity or defiance, and here instead a Man commending Himself to the hands of His Father. "Father, into Your hands I commit My spirit." A testimony of Scripture is that He had done no violence and there was no deceit in His mouth. He was not guilty yet He was condemned. He lived in rejection and died in innocence. His mouth spoke only to pray for others and to cry to God. He had done no violence. There was no deceit in His mouth. He was a sinless sin-bearer, spotless Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. "He who knew no sin became sin for us that we might become the righteousness of God in Him." So here is a graphic picture of the submission and sacrifice and sinlessness of our Savior.

### **Application**

And as we take it all in, I want to suggest to you two ways in which Isaiah's portrait here really ought to affect us. And the first of them is a general word that I hope is applicable to most of us. And the second, while certainly relevant to us all, I want to address specifically to the men standing before you as ordinands for office in the church.

## **A General Word: Godliness, Suffering, and Transformation through the Death of Christ**

So first, a general word applicable to us all. If you would turn forward just for a moment to 1 Peter chapter 2, 1 Peter chapter 2, verses 21 to 25. By the way, that is a delightful sound. When I say, "Turn to 1 Peter chapter 2," it's like waves crashing on the shore! It's a beautiful sound for a preacher to hear - pages in a Bible turning. 1 Peter chapter 2:21-25. Peter is addressing household servants and he's exhorting them to live godly lives. Sometimes doing so, he explains, will mean for them real suffering, persecution as Christians. This is their calling, he says. And then he tells them Christ's suffering provides us with a model. "To this" - look at the text - "To this you have been called, because Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example, that you might follow in His steps." So Christ the suffering Servant is a model to us. And then Peter quotes Isaiah 53 verse 9, the text we have been considering. "He committed no sin, neither was deceit found in his mouth." And then he tells us what that means. "When he was reviled, he reviled not in return; when he suffered, he did not threaten, but continued entrusting himself to him who judges justly." That is the model set before us here in Isaiah 53, of a suffering Servant.

Some of you have anger problems. I know how it feels. We all do from time to time, don't we, when our temper gets the better of us? Some of you have a temper and in some cases it can come out in explosive displays of hostility and spite. You shout in rage at others around you - in the car, at your kids, at your spouse. You are under pressure. Stress is eating away at you. People are getting at you. Some of you may even be facing prejudice and exclusion because of your faith and it is pushing down on you and you find yourself justifying your shortness of temper and your stinging words by an appeal to your own sufferings. "It's other people's fault, you see. If only they would listen then I wouldn't have to yell at them! If she'd just be more patient with me I wouldn't have to lose my temper. It's her fault. The kids are out of control. It's their fault. You don't know the pressures I'm under." But here Peter takes us to the cross and he tells you, "Just stand here. Stand here and look there. Listen to everyone else surrounding the cross, screaming and mocking and jeering and pouring out their hate speech, and listen carefully to Jesus Christ. When He was reviled, He reviled not in return. When He suffered, He did not threaten. What does He do instead?" Peter says, "He continued entrusting himself to the one who judges justly."

If you are a victim, you have access to the final court of appeal in which there never has been a single miscarriage of justice. God your Father is a faithful and just Judge. Appeal to Him. Entrust yourself, as your Savior and example did, to Him. Turn God-ward with your burdens and your trials. Look where Jesus looked in the terrible extremity of the cross. Never was there a man under more pressure than Him. Bring your trials to the King instead of venting them on your children, on your spouse, on your colleagues. "But it's so hard!" Well, I know it is, but Peter doesn't stop with an exhortation to do better. Look at what else he says

as he reflects on Christ's sufferings. 1 Peter 2:24 - "He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree that we might die to sin and live to righteousness. By his wounds," again quoting Isaiah 53, "by His wounds you were healed," for you were like straying sheep but now you've returned to the Shepherd and Overseer of your souls.

The cross is an effective example, but only effective because it is itself power to bring into your life the very change it exemplifies and calls you to. He bore your sin, the guilt of your fits of rage, so that you might die to sin and live to righteousness. Change, change is what He died to bring you. There is grace that flows to you from the wounds of the Redeemer to take you in your out-of-control anger to a place where you are increasingly enabled to entrust yourself "to Him who judges justly" that you might love those around you, even when they misunderstand you and mistreat you and pull all the old triggers that once provoked you. Now like your Savior, you are able in every extremity more and more to intercede for them and to speak words of hope and mercy and love to them. Perhaps tonight, as Peter says, some of you are still straying like sheep. As we look once more to the cross, the living God is calling you to return to the Shepherd and Overseer of your souls. The good news isn't just that Jesus' cross secures forgiveness for you until the next time. The good news is that Jesus' cross secures transformation for you that in Christ you might become a new creation.

### **A Specific Word: Sins of Speech, yet, Cleansed and Washed for Service**

So there's a general word for all of us but then there's a specific word, I think particularly applicable to those of us called to serve in sacred office in the Church of Jesus Christ. Do you notice again the emphasis on speech in Isaiah 53 verse 7 and again in verse 9, both ends of the passage we were considering? You see it in verse 7. "He was oppressed and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth. Like a lamb that is led to the slaughter, like a sheep that before its shearers is silent so he opened not his mouth." Verse 9 - "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." Isaiah focuses in, interestingly, on the Savior's words, on His mouth, on His lips, on His speech. Now do you know what Isaiah's own besetting sin was? He's the great prophet of the Lord, he's the preacher of the Word, the servant of God and His people, but when God met him back in Isaiah chapter 6, Isaiah was overcome with the realization of the depths of his remaining corruption. And do you remember how he poured out his confession? What did he say? "Woe to me! I am ruined, for I am a man of unclean lips and I live among a people of unclean lips and my eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts!" The awareness of his own sinfulness before the molten, hot glory of the divine presence almost un-mans him and the especial focus of his shame - his speech; his words. His calling was to speak the truth in love, to open the Word, to speak for God, but his lips were as unclean as the people's, his speech no different from the world's. Doubtless, as the prophet then

penned, this part of Isaiah 53. He remembered that day when he saw the Lord and his own sinful speech was unmasked in all its ugliness and shame. The contrast between himself and the Servant of the Lord, his Savior, in whom no deceit was ever found, would I'm sure have come home to him again with renewed force and power and conviction.

Teaching and ruling elders, elders, deacons, ordinands for sacred office, brothers in ministry, like Isaiah himself, a large part of your calling is to speak the truth in love, to minister in words to the hurting and the broken and the lost. It is to open your mouth in Jesus' name. And if ever you are to be any use in His service you must do again what Isaiah did when he saw the uncleanness of his lips. You must look into the darkness of Calvary. You must see your Savior meekly endure, opening not His mouth, except only to pray for His tormentors and to speak words of Gospel hope to the lost and the dying. Look again to the example of the Servant of the Lord and then examine your own hearts. And with the prophet, you must bow in repentance and confession and say, "Woe to me! I am a man of unclean lips." If you're to be useful in speaking the Word, you must deal with besetting sins of speech in your own lives.

But if, as he wrote Isaiah 53, the prophet would have remembered his own besetting sin by way of contrast with the Savior's sinless speech, I'm confident he would have also brought to mind the way in which his besetting sin was washed clean. You remember how it happened in Isaiah 6? One of the seraphim flew to him having a live coal in tongs with which he had taken from the altar, and he pressed it to his lips and said, "See, this has touched your lips. Your guilt is atoned for and your sin taken away." And now as Isaiah pens these words in chapter 53, did he connect the dots, as it were, and make the connection? "Here is the sacrifice laid upon the altar by which my sinful lips were made clean! Here is the one who lived a righteous life for me, spoke words of purity and hope that I, in my sin, even my sins of speech, might be cleansed and made new!" Isaiah, when he received the assurance of sin forgiven, you remember what he said? "Here am I; send me." As the Lord ministered grace, cleansing, atonement, renewal to him by means of Jesus Christ, he gave himself in service.

May the Lord be gracious to you, brothers, and to all of us, as the people of God as we flee back again to Calvary and receive from Jesus cleansing and mercy and grace that we, like the prophet before us, may say to the Master as He commissions us and calls us to go, "Here am I; send me."

Will you pray with me?

*Our Father, we bow down and we confess our sin. We confess our sins, especially sins of speech, the ways we have used our tongues to wound and not to heal, to tear down and to defend ourselves at the expense of others, not to bind up, not to comfort, not to offer hope and Gospel light and life. How we thank You for Jesus, who in every faculty of His humanity, was obedient for us, even in*



*His speech, that precisely there, there might be cleansing for us, that like Isaiah our unclean lips might be made clean. Have mercy on us, for Christ's sake, and commission us in Your service as we seek to follow our Savior's example, entrusting ourselves to Him who judges justly. Help us to speak out the Word of life with joy and to speak the truth in love to all who will listen. Send us in Your service now we pray, in Jesus' name, amen.*

©2013 First Presbyterian Church.

*This transcribed message has been lightly edited and formatted for the Web site. No attempt has been made, however, to alter the basic extemporaneous delivery style, or to produce a grammatically accurate, publication-ready manuscript conforming to an established style template.*

*Should there be questions regarding grammar or theological content, the reader should presume any website error to be with the webmaster/transcriber/editor rather than with the original speaker. For full copyright, reproduction and permission information, please visit the First Presbyterian Church Copyright, Reproduction & Permission statement.*

This article is provided as a ministry of [Third Millennium Ministries](#) (Thirdmill). If you have a question about this article, please [email](#) our *Theological Editor*.

#### **Subscribe to *Biblical Perspectives Magazine***

BPM subscribers receive an email notification each time a new issue is published. Notifications include the title, author, and description of each article in the issue, as well as links directly to the articles. Like BPM itself, **subscriptions are free**. To subscribe to [BPM](#), please select this [link](#).