



He was Wounded for our Transgressions

A sermon preached by George Müller at Bethesda Chapel, Great George Street, Bristol, on April 25th 1987.

Isaiah Liii

This chapter was written by the Holy Ghost, through the prophet Isaiah, 740 years before the birth of our Lord Jesus Christ; and all that we read here regarding Him was fulfilled in His life, and in His atoning work. Another most precious truth out of many thousands that the Word of God is its own proof. It is not at all necessary to have external evidences that the Holy Scriptures are the Word of God! They themselves are proof of its truths!

The commencement of the chapter plainly indicates that multitudes might hear and read what is revealed by the Holy Ghost in this portion, and yet the message of God be not received. “Who hath believed our report?” Comparatively a small number! “To whom is the Arm of Jehovah revealed?” The Lord Jesus Christ is called here “the Arm of Jehovah.” Even as our arm is the great instrument by which we work in connection with the body, so the Lord Jesus Christ was God’s great Instrument in working; and therefore He is called “The Arm of Jehovah.” “For He shall grow up before Him as a tender plant, and as a root out of a dry ground; He hath no form nor comeliness, and when we shall see Him, there is no beauty that we should desire Him.” This brings before us, in figure, the outward meanness of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the inferiority of His position in the world.

In the first place, it is stated, “He shall grow up before Him as a tender plant.” A tender plant, a very little plant; just something springing up out of a tree cut down – yet a little life in the root, and a little shooting forth. This refers to the Lord Jesus in being connected with the House of David, the Son of David. The might and power and wealth and riches, seen in the days of Solomon, were all done with His mother, after the flesh, so poor that she was unable to bring a lamb for an offering, but must be content with a pair of turtle doves. Not merely a tender plant, but “a root out of a dry ground.” Water is wanted to make it become larger and larger, for it is found only in a dry ground. “He hath no form nor comeliness.” All the representations of the Lord Jesus Christ as an exceedingly beautiful man, all are fancy representations. Nothing of the kind, so far as His outward appearance was concerned. There was “no form nor comeliness” found in Him. “When we shall see Him, there is no beauty that we should desire Him,” for it was on purpose that there should be no attraction according to the eye of the flesh.

“He is despised and rejected of men.” This was His standing in the world. Instead of being honoured by everyone, sought after by everyone, it was the very opposite. “He was despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief.” That was one reason why there was nothing attractive in His appearance, because of the sorrow that was continually found in Him, on account of the ungodliness in all directions surrounding Him. This filled His heart with grief; and therefore no comeliness was found in Him. “And we hid, as it were our faces from Him,” because of there being no attraction at all to nature. His very appearance was always indicating His communion with God; His perfect holiness; His abhorring that which was hateful to God. Therefore those who were not likeminded with Him “hid their faces from Him.”

“He was despised, and we esteemed Him not; surely He hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows, yet we did esteem Him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted.” The great mass of the people regarded Him as suffering on account of His own sins; on account of that which was wrong in Him they considered Him “stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted.” But the next two verses tell us the true reason. “But He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement of our peace was upon Him, and with His stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned everyone to his own way, and the Lord hath laid on Him the iniquity of us all.” On these two verses I say nothing now, because we shall more especially meditate on them presently.

“He was oppressed and He was afflicted, yet He opened not His mouth; He is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so He opened not His mouth.” The meekness, the gentleness, the patient suffering, the passing through heavy trials and afflictions without fretting or complaining, far less murmuring, is here brought before us. One of the figures used, “As a sheep,” etc, is very remarkable. I have seen again and again, with my own eyes, when sheep are shorn, that instead of resisting and making a noise, they very patiently bear it. And thus is the word fulfilled. “As a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so He (the Lord Jesus Christ) opened not His mouth.”

“He was taken from prison and from judgment; and who shall declare His generation? For He was cut off out of the land of the living; for the transgression of My people was He stricken.” This refers to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ-“ He was taken from prison and from judgement. “Who shall declare His generation.” In consequence of what the Lord Jesus Christ did, and what He suffered, I here should be given Him a multitude of believers: this is the generation that cannot counted. “He was cut off out of the land of the living,” and this was done not on account of His transgressions, but “For the transgression of My people was He stricken.” In our room and stead He suffered, and as our substitute.

“And He made His grave with the wicked.” That is, as if He had been an ordinary man, and especially as if He had been a wicked man. “And with the rich in His death.” That refers particularly to the splendid grave He had, in being buried in the sepulchre of Joseph of Arimathea, a grave which was cut out of the rock, and therefore exceedingly costly. “Because He had done no violence.” The word “because” here is rather more correctly in the Hebrew, “although.” “Although He had done no violence, neither was any deceit in His mouth,” yet had He to die, and to be buried, just as if He had been a sinner like ourselves.

“Yet it pleased the Lord to bruise Him.” This bruising Him refers to the greatness of His agonies and sufferings in His atoning death. “He hath put Him to grief; when Thou shalt make His soul an offering for sin, He shall see His seed, He shall prolong His days, and the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in His hand.” All this is now being fulfilled. The soul of the Lord Jesus, or the life of the Lord Jesus, has been made an offering for sin. He does see His seed, O the numberless millions who have been brought to the knowledge of Jesus Christ since His crucifixion, and O the thousands upon thousands, and the tens of thousands upon tens of thousands, who are continually being brought to believe on Him, “He shall prolong His days.” He is living now after His resurrection; though 1860 years and upwards have passed already, He is the Living One, and after thousands upon thousands of years shall have passed away, and millions upon millions of years have gone, He will still be the Living One. And thus the fulfilment of the Word, “He shall prolong His days.”

But this is not all, for “The pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in His hand.” The atoning work has been carried on these 1860 years, and will be carried on till all is completed, till Satan has been entirely confounded, and the works of the devil have been completely destroyed. Thus the atoning work has been going on, and thus the fulfilment of the prophecy, “The pleasure of Jehovah shall prosper in His hand.” Satan has sought to resist it continually, but has been as frequently foiled, and the work of the Lord, in the midst of all the opposition of Satan, still goes on!

“He shall see of the travail of His soul, and shall be satisfied.” There are not a few present this very evening who are regenerated by the power of the Holy Ghost, through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. Thus the fulfilment, “He shall see of the travail of His soul, and shall be satisfied.” And this very day we have reason to believe that multitudes, considering the whole number of human beings on earth to whom the Gospel has been proclaimed, have been brought to the knowledge of Jesus Christ; thereby further fulfilling this word. “By His knowledge shall My Righteous Servant justify many.” “My Righteous Servant,” that is a title given to the Lord Jesus Christ. By knowing Him, many shall be justified; that is, brought into a state, through faith, that Jehovah can count them just and righteous, though unjust and unrighteous in themselves. That is the meaning of being justified. “For He shall bear their iniquities.” By reason of these individuals having a Substitute, Who in their room, fulfilled the law of God and Who in their room bore the punishment of the law, they are justified.

“Therefore will I divide Him a portion with the great, and He shall divide the spoil with the strong.” Satan, the angels of Satan, the powers of darkness, these are the strong ones here referred to; but the Lord Jesus Christ gets the victory, takes the prey out of their hands, and therefore gets the glory to Himself. “Because He hath poured out His soul unto death, and He was numbered with the transgressors, and He bare the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors.” This, again, has had its fulfilment, and is going on being fulfilled in our day, and will be fulfilled while the Lord Jesus Christ tarries.

Verses 5 and 6 bring especially before us the vicarious sufferings of our Lord Jesus Christ, that He, as our Substitute, not merely fulfilled the law of God, which we have broken times without number, but that He, likewise standing in our room and stead, endured the punishment due to us, on account of our numberless transgressions. For this reason these two verses are exceedingly precious, and are to be present in our hearts and our faith, in our life and deportment, and are continually to be looked at and applied to our life and conduct, in order that, in the midst of all our failures and shortcomings, as long as we do not wilfully go on in a course contrary to the mind of God, we may have “peace and joy in the Holy Ghost.”

The very first word, how precious! “Surely.” “Surely,” it is said in the 4th verse, “He hath borne our griefs.” “Surely” He hath “carried our sorrows, yet we did esteem Him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted.” But! O what a “but” this is! “But He was wounded for our transgressions.” The whole in regard to the sufferings of Christ is to be put aside, and simply are we to look at it in reference to ourselves, as if we were the people, and the only people, for whom He endured all this. And it is just in the degree in which we are able to apply the atoning work of the Lord Jesus Christ to ourselves, and to enter into it with reference to themselves, that comfort, peace and joy in the Holy Ghost results. If we think at all upon other persons, we do not to the full degree, as otherwise we might, obtain the blessing. We should write, as it were, our own name on the fifth verse, and say to ourselves, individually as believers, “He was wounded for my transgressions. He was bruised for my iniquities; the chastisement of my peace was upon Him” – that is, that I might have peace in my soul and be at peace with God, therefore He had to suffer – “and with His stripes I am healed.”

And thus applying the whole to ourselves, the result will be the heart will be brimful of peace and joy in the Holy Ghost; while, on the other hand, the more we look at the sufferings of Christ, the atonement He made, with reference to others, the less will peace and joy in the Holy Ghost result from it. “He was wounded for our transgressions.” Here we have especially not to lose sight of the fact that it was not merely bodily pain and suffering which our Lord Jesus had to endure – though, unquestionably, that was exceedingly great – but He passed through “the hour of darkness,” and His holy, righteous soul had to suffer. And in connection with all this, we have never to lose sight of the fact that the Father did not deliver at that time, in order that, really and truly, He might pass through all the woe, the misery, the agonies, and pain, and suffering of body, mind and spirit through which we ought to have passed, on account of our numberless transgressions. All this we have to carefully consider, in order to get the least idea of the greatness of the sufferings through which our blessed Lord had to pass.

Then it is further stated, “He was bruised for our iniquities.” Ground, as it were, in the mill to powder by His sufferings – something like this is brought before us by the expression, “Bruised for our iniquities.” O the vastness of the sufferings, the greatness of the agonies, through which our Lord had to pass! And, O how this should make us to abhor ourselves on account of sin, for our sins brought all this on our Lord. Speaking after the manner of men, had we been free of sin, had all human beings been perfectly free from sin, the atonement would not have been necessary! But by the fall, sin being introduced into the world and all human beings to a greater or less degree being actually transgressors, and guilty of sinful deeds, sinful, unholy words, sinful, unholy thoughts, desires, purposes, and inclinations, therefore, in order that we might be reconciled to God, that we might be cleansed from all our numberless transgressions, the Lord Jesus Christ had to endure all this, so that we could be saved finally. “He was bruised for our iniquities.” I ask, affectionately, my beloved brethren and sisters in Christ, to ponder this word, “bruised.”

“The chastisement of our peace was upon Him.” That is, He was chastised in order that we might have peace in our souls, and in order that we might be reconciled unto God. He had to endure all that which we ourselves

ought to have endured; but if we put our trust in Him, if we look at the atonement of the Lord Jesus Christ with regard to ourselves, then we shall have peace in our souls, and be at peace with God, because what the Lord Jesus Christ endured, He endured vicariously, on account of our numberless transgressions. "And with His stripes we are healed." The moment we believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, we obtain the Lord Jesus Christ as a Spiritual Physician, and get under His care, and are placed in a kind of spiritual hospital; and there we remain, under the care of this infinitely great Physician, who watches over us, who looks after us, and who does not discharge us as incurable ones, as many people are discharged from the hospitals in the world. Not thus! Not thus! But "The Great Physician" remains through the whole life we spend on earth "Our Great Physician," and we remain under His care and keeping temporally and spiritually. In His own great, precious spiritual hospital, we are kept till we are perfectly cured, perfectly healed. The moment we believe in Jesus Christ, He becomes our Physician. The moment we believe in the Lord Jesus Christ we are placed under His care, for being perfectly healed. And the same moment we are entered in the hospital of the Lord Jesus, and there kept and looked after, and attended to by the Great Physician, and never let go till we are perfectly healed.

"With His stripes we are healed." Through the instrumentality of the sufferings of the Lord Jesus Christ, we are cured. The atonement He made is God's great instrument of curing us, for there would be no spiritual cure found regarding anyone all over the world, were it not for the atonement of Christ. But through pondering more and more what He did and suffered in our room and stead, by little and little we become more and more free from sin, by little and little we become more and more cured. He has apprehended us for the purpose of curing us, and He will not let us go till we are perfectly cured – that means, till we are as spotless, as holy, as free from sin, and as heavenly-minded as He himself is, and as He Himself was in His life here on earth. And we should lay hold on this by faith. It is very difficult to enter into it; nay, it is completely impossible to enter into it by nature; and even at the beginning of the divine life it is very difficult to do so.

I found it myself thus when I was converted 71 years and 6 months since, on account of the evil habits I had contracted. It was exceedingly difficult to put them aside. I had been passionately fond of the theatre, and was there day after day. I had been found at the ball-room, and at the card-table, and again and again at a late hour at the latter. And when I was converted, though I never touched a pack of cards again, though it was all over with the theatre, though I never went any more to the ball-room, yet these evil habits, these evil natural tendencies, were very difficult to surmount. I began to pray that God would give me power and victory over them, but after I had been praying a good while, it appeared as if I never should lose my love for these things, as if continually they would come back to my mind and desire. But by little and little, after all, I got complete victory over them!

I mention this for the encouragement of young Christians, so that they may on no account despair and suppose they will not be able to withstand these things, and that they will not be able to live for the glory and honour of God. The Lord Jesus is your Physician. The Lord Jesus has taken you under His care. You are in the spiritual hospital of "the Great Physician," the Lord Jesus, and He is ready to help you. Look at Him! Expect great things from Him! "Open your mouth wide, and He will fill it." That is it. He will answer your prayers regarding the things that you require. O the blessedness of the position in which we stand as believers. Everyone of us who is trusting in the Lord Jesus Christ for salvation, who is born again, who has obtained spiritual life, shall at the last be perfectly holy! O the blessedness of this! We shall be completely heavenly-minded, so that throughout eternity never a command will go forth on the part of God that we shall do this, or another thing, but instantaneously the heart will say, "I delight, my Heavenly Father, to do Thy will." And with the greatest alacrity we shall carry out the will of God; there will be no tardiness, no hesitation, no questioning in ourselves, whether we shall do it or not. But, as quickly as the command goes forth, we shall be ready to carry out His will.

For all this we are apprehended by God in Christ Jesus. We shall not be discharged out of the hospital of the Great Physician as incurable persons, but shall be made perfectly Christ-like in the end. This is what is brought before us here when it is said, "With His stripes we are healed." The cure having been begun, you, my brethren and sisters beloved, and I, shall be as holy in the end as the Lord Jesus Christ was while on earth! We have not attained to it yet, but the work is going on, and we shall attain to it hereafter, when the Lord has taken us home to Himself.

“All we like sheep.” Notice here in the first place particularly that it is not only this one, and that one, who went like a sheep astray, but all, all, ALL – without exception. “All we like sheep have gone astray.” And it must come, with every one of us who desires to enter heaven, to this: that in our inmost soul we are able to reiterate this, and to say to God, “Thus it is that I, a guilty sinner, went astray.” Every one who supposes that he is good, or that she is good, and that they deserve the favour of God because they have not been bad, but good, excellent people, are in the greatest error.

They think, on the ground of their own goodness, to go to heaven at last. On the ground of our own goodness, we can go to hell! But there is not among the innumerable multitude of the glorified spirits one single individual who got there on the ground of his or her own goodness; for, I repeat it, on the ground of our own goodness we can only go to hell, and not to heaven. We have no goodness of our own. There is nothing, nothing, NOTHING of goodness in us by nature, but everything which is contrary to the mind of God! And the worst of it all is we do not even see it is so bad – that is, in our natural condition. But there is the fact: the Word of God declares it. We have only to read the first three chapters of the Epistle of Paul to the Romans, and the second chapter of the Epistle of Paul to the Ephesians, and there is abundant proof how it is with us naturally.

But though thus with us, that like sheep we went astray and everyone turned to his own way, yet there is hope, in regard to the salvation of our souls. For the greatest transgressor, for the oldest transgressor, if only he will accept what God has provided for us in the Person of the Lord Jesus Christ, there is hope, and none need despair. “We have turned everyone to his own way.” Notice this particularly – “his own way.” That is the great sin. It is not that everyone is a drunkard, or that everyone is a thief, or that everyone is habitually given to speaking nothing but lies. That may not be at all the case. There are persons who in their whole life have never drunk more than they ought to have done, who have never been guilty of taking away from anyone as much as the value of a pin that did not belong to them; indeed, their whole life and deportment, in a variety of ways, may be not at all outwardly bad. But this is our sin: that by nature we go our own way, instead of going God’s way; and we live to please ourselves, instead of living to please God, and doing His work as we should. Doing our own work, pleasing ourselves, going our own way – this is the great sin of which everyone of the human family by nature is guilty. And we must come to see this! If we do not, we shall have no comfort whatever regarding heaven being our place and portion.

But while it is stated, and perfectly true is it regarding us, that like sheep we went astray, that every one turned to his own way, it is added, “And Jehovah hath laid on Him the iniquity of us all,” O how precious the comfort! Had this not been added, I should not have had a particle of comfort in my own soul! I could have had no prospect with regard to heaven and glory at the last. But it is added, and added for everyone of us, the weakest and feeblest believers, “And Jehovah hath laid on Him the iniquity of us all.” For my habitually going to the theatre to amuse myself; for my going to the ball-room; for my being found at the card-table, sometimes to twelve at night – yea, once to two o’clock in the morning – for this my precious Lord Jesus was punished. That I thus misspent my time, that I thus misspent my faculties and my money, everything with which God had entrusted me as a steward; that I lived to myself, pleased myself; that in travelling I sought happiness, instead of seeking happiness in the Lord Jesus – for all this my precious Lord Jesus was punished. He did willingly, worthily bear the punishment; and now I, putting my trust in Him, am a forgiven sinner; and thus my brethren and sisters in Christ, doing the like, are forgiven ones. O how precious!

Now our business is to lay hold on this to appropriate all this to ourselves; to write our very own name to these two verses, and say to ourselves, “Jehovah has laid on MY Lord Jesus Christ MY iniquity, as MY substitute, and has made Him to pay MY sins by death; and THEY have been perfectly paid, there is not found one single sin in ME unforgiven, and MY Heavenly Father is most perfectly satisfied with what MY adorable Lord Jesus Christ has done for ME, and has done for the countless multitude believing in Him.” This is the conclusion of the whole. O how delightful it is to be able to appropriate all this to ourselves. Let not my young brethren and sisters say, “O this was very well regarding Isaiah, and such men as Daniel, and Jeremiah, and the Apostles; but that does not apply to me.” Yes, it does apply to you, my weak brother and sister, my young brother and sister; it applies

to every one of us trusting in the Lord Jesus Christ alone for salvation. The sin that is in us has been perfectly punished, perfectly atoned for; and not a single sin at the last will be brought against us.

Therefore afresh we should give thanks to God for His unspeakable gift, and rejoice in Christ Jesus, with deep gratitude for what God has done for us in Him!

The word "Müllers" is written in a large, black, cursive script font. The letters are connected and have a fluid, handwritten appearance.

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