

Isaiah 53 (Part 2)

The Structure of the Song

The Song comprises 5 stanzas of 3 verses each:

Stanza	Speaker	Subject	Subject
Isaiah 52.13-15	Jehovah	The Servant as Sovereign	Reign of the Servant
Isaiah 53.1-3	The Nation	The Servant Scorned	Reception of the Servant
Isaiah 53.4-6	The Nation	The Servant's Suffering	Recognition of the Servant
Isaiah 53.7-9	The Nation	The Servant's Submission	Righteousness of the Servant
Isaiah 53.10-12	The Nation (v.10) and Jehovah	The Servant's Satisfaction	Reward of the Servant

Isaiah 53.4-6: The Servant's Suffering

4 Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. The nation had estimated the Lord Jesus to be worthless (v.3), but now strongly realises ('surely') that He was suffering for them ('our griefs', 'our sorrows'). He is the One who has 'borne' their 'griefs' and 'carried' their 'sorrows'. This indicates that the Lord Jesus lifted up and carried away ('borne') the sicknesses ('griefs') of the people as His very own burden. He also shouldered as a heavy load ('carried') the grief and pain ('sorrows') of the people. In what way did the Lord Jesus bear the sicknesses of the people?

He did not bear their sicknesses by becoming sick Himself with their diseases! Matthew quotes this passage from Isaiah in Matthew 8.17 and suggests that the Lord Jesus fulfilled this prophecy by literally 'taking away' or healing the people of their diseases. In this way He carried their burdens as His very own. Furthermore, He compassionately entered fully and personally into the sorrows of the people and felt them as His own (Matthew 9.36, 14.14, 20.34, Mark 1.41, 5.19, 6.34, Luke 7.13), *Romans 12.15: Rejoice with them that do rejoice, and weep with them that weep.* In addition, the Lord Jesus was also going to the cross where He would bear the sins which were the very root cause of the sickness and sorrow. "He who had the power and authority to remove the **effect** and **penalty** of sin thus made Himself responsible for the **cause!**"

The repentant nation now recognises this substitutionary work of the Lord Jesus, although at the time they 'did esteem Him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted'. As One 'stricken', He was viewed as being 'plagued' or having been inflicted with the blow of a hateful, shocking disease (i.e. leprosy), cf. Genesis 12.17, 2 Kings 15.5. As One 'smitten of God' they believed He was experiencing divine retribution for a 'heinous sin'. Of course, the Lord Jesus was 'stricken' (cf. Isaiah 53.8) and 'smitten of God' (cf. Zechariah 13.6-7) but not for His own sins, rather on account of the sins of others! It is worth remembering the lovely type associated with this. Moses smote the Rock in the presence of the Lord to draw out the water of life (Exodus 17.6). As One 'afflicted' He was bowed down by suffering, humiliated and humbled.

5 But he was wounded for **our** transgressions, he was bruised for **our** iniquities: the chastisement of **our** peace was upon him; and with (by) his stripe(s) **we** are healed.

This verse indicates the true meaning of His sufferings; He suffered for the sins of the nation, not His own sins!

Cause of Suffering	Effect of Suffering
'Our transgressions '. A wilful rebellion and stepping over a known mark.	' Wounded '. He was 'pierced through' or 'wounded to death' (Zechariah 12.10, Psalm 22.16). This is a remarkable prophecy concerning the crucifixion.
'Our iniquities '. Rather than the stepping over a known mark, this is a deviation from the mark. The root word indicates a bending, twisting and distorting of God's standard to suit our own.	' Bruised ', i.e. 'crushed' or 'utterly broken'. Speaks of the enduring of agony ending in death. This may have reference to the emotional and spiritual suffering of the Lord Jesus, yet this was all in God's plan (Isaiah 53.10).
'Our peace '. Indicates the whole, complete and harmonious relationship we now have with God (Romans 5.1).	' Chastisement '. The punishment or remedy necessary for us to obtain peace fell upon Him.
'Our healing '. This one single stripe suffered under the judgment of God has effected our spiritual healing (i.e. forgiveness of sins, cf. 1 Peter 2.24).	' Stripe '. This word is in the singular (also in 1 Peter 2.24) and speaks of 'an open and untreated wound'.

6 *All we (universal) like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one (individual) to his own way; and the LORD hath laid on him the iniquity of us all.*

Verse 6 describes the necessity of the sufferings of Christ. The nation first of all describes itself collectively ('all we'), then individually ('every one'). It is seen as a scattered flock wandering from the protection of the Shepherd, having gone 'astray' ('erred', wandered from the path of righteousness that God has set). Not only has the nation done this collectively, but individually too they 'turned away from' the truth of the Word of God. This describes iniquity exactly; deviation from the mark. *Note. In the past, Israel's shepherds led them astray (Jeremiah 50.6) but in the future the Son of David will be their Shepherd (Ezekiel 14.11) and gather them back together. Left to our own devices we scatter and cause division. In Christ we are all brought together in unity.* God has dealt with our iniquity by laying it upon Him. The word 'laid' is 'caused to meet' or 'made to strike with terrific impact'. The Servant was the meeting point for the iniquity of us all. The LORD is the One who laid our iniquities upon Him, as Abraham was the one who took and bound Isaac, laid him upon the altar and 'took the knife' (Genesis 22, cf. Leviticus 16.21). The picture of substitution is clear and is more fully expressed in v.11, 'my righteous servant (shall) justify many; for he shall bear their iniquities'. Remember that the Lord Jesus died on **behalf** of all (propitiation, 1 Timothy 2.6), but **instead** of the many (substitution, Matthew 20.28). It is only the language of faith which can say that Christ bore my sins in my place (1 Peter 2.24).

Isaiah 53.7-9: The Servant's Submission

7 *He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth: he is brought as a lamb (sheep) to the slaughter, and as a sheep (female ewe) before her shearers is dumb, so he openeth not his mouth.*

The Song moves to its central stanza which emphasises the submission of the Servant. He was 'oppressed' or 'treated harshly and brutally'. This word is used of the cruel taskmasters which afflicted the nation of Israel in Egypt (Exodus 3.7). In spite of this the Servant was submissive. He offered **no physical resistance** but rather 'suffered voluntarily', 'humbled Himself' and 'bowed Himself' ('afflicted'). He also offered **no verbal resistance** as He did not open His mouth. The nation of Israel soon cried out to the LORD in their slavery in Egypt, but the Lord Jesus was silent. Never was there such eloquence in silence (Matthew 27.12, Mark 14.60-61, 15.3-5). The Lord Jesus, the Lord of Glory, was 'brought' or 'led' as a lamb to its slaughter (Matthew 4.1, 26.57, 27.2, 31, Mark 8.23, 14.53, 15.16, 20, Luke 4.1, 29, 22.54, 66, 23.1, 26, 32, 24.50, John 18.13, 28, 19.16). What submission! Praise God, He now leads us (Psalm 23.2, Luke 24.50). The Lord of Glory was also brought as a female ewe (emphasising gentleness and submission) before her shearers. Spurgeon says: '*Our Lord was brought to the shearers that he might be shorn of his comfort, and of his honour, shorn even of his good name, and shorn at last of life itself; but when under the shearers he was as silent as a sheep. How patient he was before Pilate, and Herod, and Caiaphas, and on the cross.*' *Note.* Freshly shorn sheep are in need of protection from the elements. He knew no protection from the fire of Calvary.

8 *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 (inflicted with a blow).*

As if this suffering and shame wasn't enough, He was 'snatched' or 'hurried' away ('taken') from 'prison' (violent constraint, or bonds) and from 'judgment' (or 'justice'). Where was He hurried to? He was rushed away to His cross where He was removed from the realm of physical life by experiencing physical death ('cut off'). God is a God of justice (Isaiah 30.18) and His laws display His justice (Deuteronomy 33.10, 21), but God Himself was hurried away from 'justice' indicating that He received an unfair and unjust trial (Acts 8.33). There are many reasons why the trial of the Lord Jesus was unfair, unjust and illegal. It included false witnesses (Mark 14.57), took place at night (John 18.12-14, 19-23), condemned Christ on His own testimony (Luke 22.67-71), did not include all of the Sanhedrin (Luke 23.50-51) and gave no opportunity for a defence case to be considered (Deuteronomy 13.14). This may be one of the explanations for the phrase 'who shall declare His generation'. Some suggest that it should be rendered 'who among His generation poured out a complaint (i.e. at His treatment) or a prayer (i.e. on His behalf)'. There was a custom which called on those who knew anything in favour of the accused to come forward and declare it. This was not observed in the case of Christ. It is also likely that none dared to appear in His favour (Mark 14.50). **Christ is still on trial today. Who will stand for Him?** Others suggest the phrase refers to the fact that Christ had no offspring to be declared (unlike Adam, Genesis 5) and therefore carry on His claims to the throne as David's Son. As the Servant enters into death, these claims appear to be lost, the nation's hopes appear to be dashed (cf. Luke 24.21, Acts 8.33). In this verse the emphasis is on the unlawful trial of the Servant, hence the use of the word 'transgression'.

9 *And he (they) made (appointed) his grave with the wicked (plural), and with the (a) rich (man) in his death (plural); because he had done no violence, neither was any deceit in his mouth.*

Jewish law stated that anyone suffering the shame of crucifixion should be buried in a dishonourable manner (Isaiah 14.19, Jeremiah 26.23, John 19.31), **but** God saw to it that He was with a rich man, Joseph of Arimathea, in His death (Matthew 27.57, Luke 23.53). His honourable burial was in accord with His moral beauty. No taint of corruption would be associated with His tomb (Acts 2.27, 13.35).