

Isaiah 53 (Part 3)

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	Isaiah (as representative)	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	Isaiah (as representative)	The Servant's Submission	Righteousness of the Servant
Isaiah 53.10-12	Jehovah (vv.11-12)	The Servant's Satisfaction	Reward of the Servant

10 Yet it pleased the LORD to bruise (crush) him; he hath put him to grief: when ~~thou shalt make his soul~~ (He Himself shall make) an offering for sin, he shall see his (a) seed, he shall prolong his days, and the pleasure (purpose) of the LORD shall prosper in his hand.

'Yet' refers back to v.9. Even though there was nothing deserving of death in Him, yet 'it pleased the LORD to bruise Him'. The word 'please' does not imply that God enjoyed the death of the Servant, but rather that it was God's good will or desire (John 6.38, Ephesians 1.5, Hebrews 10.7-9) that Christ should die in order that a trespass offering might be provided for sinners. Note that the atoning sufferings of the Lord Jesus were divinely inflicted. It was Jehovah who caused the Lord to be 'bruised' ('crushed', 'utterly broken', 'endure the agony of death') and 'put to grief' ('made Him sick' in the sense of mental and physical anguish, or 'brought Him into a condition of severe distress by wounding').

Now the emphasis changes and states the fact that the Lord Jesus Himself is the One who voluntarily made His soul an offering for sin (John 10.17-18, Ephesians 5.2). The whole Godhead is involved in the work of Calvary (Hebrews 9.14). The Lord Jesus made His 'soul' (speaking of His life, cf. Leviticus 17.11) an 'offering' (the word used here is the word for 'trespass offering', cf. Leviticus 5) for sin. The trespass offering is significant and differs from the sin offering (Leviticus 4). The sin offering considered the sinful state of the offerer (sinners by nature), whereas the trespass offering was for transgressions (sinners by practice), the actual fruit of the sinful state. The trespass offering was also very much concerned with 'guilt'. An individual person would bring this offering in compensation for any wrong he had committed. He would then be discharged from the guilt and set free (Leviticus 5.15). Christ took upon Him the burden and guilt of our transgressions against God, thus setting us free (Colossians 2.13-14).

A delightful addition to the teaching of the trespass offering is the fact that in cases of theft or damage to property, the guilty party did not only have to give back the price of the debt, but give an additional 20% on top (Leviticus 5.16). This speaks of the added glory which Christ has secured for God in virtue of the finished work of Calvary. **CH Mackintosh:** *In the work of the cross, God has not merely received back what was lost, but He is an actual gainer. He has gained more by redemption than ever He lost by the fall. He reaps a richer harvest of glory, honour, and praise, in the fields of redemption, than ever He could have reaped from those of creation.*

The Song now speaks of six glorious results from the Saviour's trespass offering for sin. They are: a spiritual seed (v.10), a victorious resurrection (v.10), a completed work (v.10), a satisfied soul (v.11), a justified people (v.11) and a glorious inheritance (v.12).

A Spiritual Seed (v.10): In virtue of His once for all sacrifice for sin, the Lord Jesus shall 'see His seed'. This seed is spiritual (cf. Genesis 3.15, Psalm 22.30, Malachi 2.15) and speaks of all the redeemed (John 12.24). Praise God, He is bringing many sons to glory (Hebrews 2.10, 13) and what joy it must bring Him when He gazes upon them (Genesis 48.11).

A Victorious Resurrection (v.10): The phrase 'He shall prolong his days' refers to the everlasting, resurrection life of the Lord Jesus. What a paradox this is! The Lord Jesus was 'cut off out of the land of the living' and yet He lives forever (Revelation 1.18). This is an evidence of divine favour (Proverbs 3.1-2) and is possible because of His glorious resurrection (Psalm 21.4).

A Completed Work (v.10): The **final** phrase of the verse relates back to the **first** phrase, 'it pleased the LORD to bruise Him'. There Jehovah effected His will upon the Servant, but here the Servant effects Jehovah's will. The 'purpose' (or 'will') of Jehovah shall 'flourish' ('prosper') in the 'hand' of the Lord Jesus. His personal work will ensure that the will of God is fully and completely accomplished (Hebrews 10.7, 9). Remind yourself of Isaiah 42.1-7, 49.5-6, Colossians 1.19-20 and Ephesians 1.9-11 to see God's final purposes in Christ.

11 *(Because) of the travail (labour) of his soul, He shall see (His seed), and shall be satisfied: ~~by his knowledge~~ (by the knowledge of Him) shall my righteous servant justify (the) many; **for** he shall bear their iniquities.*

A Satisfied Soul (v.11): The 'toil' and 'labour' of the Lord Jesus has resulted in His complete satisfaction as He gazes upon the company of redeemed. The word 'travail' also means the 'rigour and discipline of doing something painstakingly' and includes the physical and spiritual sufferings He endured. Now His work is finished He is satisfied, meaning He is not only 'contented' but 'filled or abundantly supplied'. This stands for the fullest realisation of desire; that desire was for us (cf. Ephesians 1.23, 5.25).

A Justified People (v.11): The phrase 'by the knowledge of Him' can be taken in two different ways. It is **either** that justification comes 'by the Servant's own knowledge' (i.e. Christ fully knew God's requirements in relation to sin and met every claim) **or** through 'experiential, heart knowledge of Him'. This second phrase is the more likely and illustrates the fact that righteousness for the sinner ('justify') is not available, except through a personal experience of salvation in Christ (John 17.3). That is why justification is only communicated to 'the many', because **not all** believe. This verse also emphasises 'the Righteous One, My Servant' (cf. Acts 3.14, 7.52, 22.14, 1 John 2.1). The word order indicates that Christ stands alone in a pre-eminent position of righteousness (both intrinsically and in the works of righteousness He has performed (1 John 2.29, 3.7).

12 *Therefore will I divide him a portion with the great (many), and he shall divide the spoil with the strong; **because** he hath poured out his soul unto death: **and** he was numbered with the transgressors; **and** he (himself) bare the sin of many, **and** made intercession for the transgressors.*

A Glorious Inheritance (v.12): On the basis of the Servant's finished work of Calvary He shall be 'apportioned' or 'assigned' ('divide') the whole company of the redeemed ('great'). That is, they now belong to Him (John 3.29, 6.37, Revelation 21.2). But there is more! Wonder of all wonders, the many now not only belong to Him, but He shall divide and share the spiritual fruit of His victorious work with all of the company of redeemed ('strong') too. We have every spiritual blessing in Christ (Ephesians 1.3).

The remainder of the verse describes why the Servant has received the many as His portion.

- **'He hath poured out His soul unto death'**. The word 'poured out' means to 'make bare' or 'empty', to 'clean out, even to the very last remnant' and is a figure of death (Psalm 141.8, 2 Timothy 4.6). This signifies something of the cost of the work of salvation. The Lord Jesus voluntarily (John 10.15, 17-18) and completely emptied out His life unto death. He gave everything for us (Matthew 13.46).
- **'He was numbered with the transgressors'**. This phrase can read, 'He allowed Himself' to be numbered with the transgressors, thus emphasising the voluntary submission of the Lord Jesus once more. He was personally identified with the 'transgressors'. 'Transgressors' is 'base criminals' and of course was literally fulfilled at Calvary (Luke 23.33). It is marvellous to think that the One Who is 'the Righteous' should allow Himself to be associated with such wicked sinners.
- **'He bare the sin of many'**. 'Bare' has the idea of 'carrying or shouldering the pressure of a heavy burden'. It is not just suffering for sins but signifies the **'lifting up and taking away'** of sins'. Note. The Lord Jesus 'bare the sin of (the) many'. It is not Scriptural to say that Christ has borne the sins of the whole world, otherwise the whole world's sins have been lifted up and taken away; all are saved. Scripture is very careful on this matter and so should we be. Christ gave Himself a ransom for (on behalf of) **all** (1 Timothy 2.6) but when it is a question of sin-bearing it was for **'many'** (Hebrews 9.28, 1 Peter 2.24). His death is sufficient for **all**, but effective for those who **believe**. His death is **potentially** for the whole world, but **effective** only for those of the world who believe. Remember, on the Day of Atonement the blood of the first goat went into the Holy of Holies and speaks of propitiation (provision has been made for all). However, the scapegoat **bore** upon it only the sins of the people that were confessed (substitution). It is only the believer who can say, 'Christ bare my sins in His own body on the tree'. The blood in the holiest meets the claims of **God**. The scapegoat bearing away their sins met the needs of the **people** of God.
- **'Made intercession for the transgressors'**. The tense of the verb suggests that Christ has begun the work of intercession, but it has not yet ended (Isaiah 62, Hebrews 7.25). The Lord Jesus as intercessor is one who 'causes one's pleas to reach God' (to intercede), or 'introduces one into God's presence' (to mediate). The Servant is therefore a Bridge. After having dealt with our sins, He voluntarily stands with us to bring us to God.