

## The Suffering Servant – Part 3

Before I left for Vancouver, you may recall that I delivered two sermons on the Suffering Servant of Isaiah 53:1 to 4. Today, I will continue in Isaiah and preach on the next set of verses: Isaiah 53:5 to 7

Now before I segue into our passage today --- I would to spark your memories by recapping the two sermons on Isaiah 53:1 to 4 on which I have already preached.

But even before the 2 sermons,  
We learned that it was necessary for Christ to suffer,  
If you recall from Luke 24,  
***All the prophets had prophesied: It was necessary for the Messiah to suffer!***

We learned that Moses and the Prophets –  
all of Scripture – speaks of Christ.  
The central theme of Scripture is Christ, is the Gospel.  
Our Bible is all about salvation.  
The Bible is about God's rescue mission.  
The Bible is about redemption --  
God redeeming a people – a sinful people –  
unto Himself so that we sinful people  
can ultimately be holy – like He is holy –  
all through the sufferings of Jesus Christ.

And this theme of the Gospel is clearly seen in the suffering servant of Isaiah 53.

### **Isaiah 53: 1**

Who has believed our message and to whom has the arm of the LORD been revealed?

We learned that vs. 1 is a question hinting that this message – the Gospel – is so unbelievable that people would reject it rather than believe in it.

In Romans 5,

Christ died for the ungodly. Very rarely will anyone die for a righteous person, though for a good person someone might possibly dare to die. But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us. Rom 5:6-8

The Messiah dying for sinners?

To the Jew this Gospel message was scandalous and to the Gentile, foolishness.

But to us Christians – who hear and believe in the Gospel – it is sweet music to our ears.

Thank God, Christ died for the ungodly,  
Praise God, Christ died for the unrighteous.

In the second half of Isaiah 53:1,  
it mentions “the arm of the Lord.”

### Isaiah 53: 1

Who has believed our message and to whom has the **arm of the LORD** been revealed?

Unfortunately – as was prophesied –  
the Jews would fail to recognize The Arm of the Lord.

*That is why it says, “to whom has the arm of the Lord been revealed?”*

What does the Arm of the Lord mean?

We learned from **Isaiah 59:16**,

He [the Lord] saw that there was no one,  
he was appalled that there was no one to intervene;  
so his own arm achieved salvation for him,  
and his own righteousness sustained him. (Isaiah 59:16)

The Lord saw that there is no one ...

This passage comes from Psalms 14:1-3:

there is no one who does good,

no one is without sin,

not even one.

“No one” means we all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.

Because no one – among the human race –

could intervene for sinners

God Himself (who is holy – set apart from sin)

stretched out His Arm –

that is, God became flesh and lived the sinless life we couldn't live, died the death we deserve.

God's outstretched arm did it all for us – through the Trinity.

Let's go to Isaiah 53:2

He grew up before him like a tender shoot, and like a root out of dry ground. He had no beauty or majesty to attract us to him, nothing in his appearance that we should desire him.

So from this passage, we learned that Jesus Christ was probably not attractive.

So often, Jesus is erroneously portrayed in Jesus paintings and movies as handsome.

But vs. 2 clearly says he had no beauty or majesty to attract us to him physically.

Because we are inventive and prone to idolatry, we should NOT acquire our theology and doctrine from art or drama. No!

Instead we should develop our doctrine directly from the horse's mouth – i.e., the Word of God.

**Isaiah 53:3** says,

He was despised and rejected by men, a man of sorrows, and **familiar with suffering**. Like one from whom men hide their faces he was despised, and we esteemed him not.

God -- incarnate -- is acquainted with our suffering, familiar with our sorrow.

He is a God, who has directly experienced our griefs.

Because he shared in our humanity,

He empathizes with our weakness, our suffering, our temptation.

But He is without sin

and so because only God is holy - without sin –

only God incarnate

could lay down his life for us as a propitiation for our sins.

In **Isaiah 53:4**, we learned that

Surely he took up our infirmities and carried our sorrows, yet we considered him stricken by God, smitten by him, and afflicted.

As Jesus carried the cross,  
the people heaped derision on him.

All those who witnessed the death of Jesus  
considered him unlucky -- punished by God.

But it was NOT unlucky!

On the contrary, Christ chose – out of his own volition –

He chose to bear OUR griefs, our sufferings and sorrows so  
that wicked sinners – like us – would not have to bear the  
punishment – the griefs we deserve.

The suffering of the Messiah was all according to God's redemptive plan.

Now that we have reviewed vs. 1 through 4, let us go to vs. 5.

5 But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was upon him, and by his stripes we are healed.

Jesus was without sin –  
he was the most innocent man in history,  
yet we punished Him like he was the chief of sinners.

All our anger, complaints, bitterness, hatred and frustrations were directed at Jesus, albeit his innocence.  
He was wounded for our transgressions.  
He was bruised for our inequities.  
His chastisement brought us peace with God.

And by his stripes we are healed.  
What does His stripes mean?

For scourging,  
the man was stripped of his clothing, and  
his hands were tied to a post.

Look at the back of this man in the pix.

The stripes that are left along his back and legs come from the lashes and welts of a Roman whip.

### **Scouring Practices**

Scourging (or whipping or flogging or flagellation) was intended to weaken the victim to a state just short of collapse or death. After the scourging, the soldiers often taunted their victim.

**Here is a Pix of Roman Flagrum** (Flagellum or Roman Whip)

This is a whiplike tool.  
Flagellum have 3 strings of leather coming off of a stick with  
two lead balls to tenderize and sharp bones to rip the flesh off  
on each string.  
These lead balls make this tool much more gruesome.

They do this by adding weight, which makes the string whip faster, and by ripping the flesh of the victim every time they are hit. The Romans did this to make sure the victim was as weak as possible before crucifixion.

Here is a Pix of Me with Whip at the Shroud of Turin Museum in Turino, Italy.

The wooden handle of the flagrum is about 8" long, and the leather strings can vary from 11" to 13".

### The Medical Aspects of Scourging

As the Roman soldiers repeatedly struck the victim's back with full force, the iron balls would cause deep contusions, and the leather thongs and sheep bones would cut into the skin and subcutaneous tissues. Then, as the flogging continued, the lacerations would tear into the underlying skeletal muscles and produce quivering ribbons of bleeding flesh. Pain and blood loss generally set the stage for circulatory shock. The extent of blood loss may well have determined how long the victim would survive on the cross.

Eusebius (a church historian circa. 350 AD) states that "certain martyrs were torn by scourges down to deep-seated vein and arteries, so that the hidden contents of their bodies, their entrails and organs were exposed to sight."

Jesus went through such extreme agony.

His pain was predicted 700 years with great accuracy by Isaiah.

Only one man fits this description perfectly, and that's Jesus.

Isaiah goes through great pains to articulate the pain, suffering and distress the suffering servant had to undergo.

To help give you a better idea of this, I went through all of Isaiah 53 and

highlighted all the words associated with suffering. Considering Isaiah 53 is a short passage, it's remarkable that there is an inordinate number of words and Expressions Associated with Pain, Suffering, and Distress:

The following are the words and expressions:

despised (multiple times)  
rejected by man  
suffering (multiple times)  
pain (multiple times)  
held in low esteem  
punished (multiple times)  
stricken  
afflicted (multiple times)  
pierced  
crushed (multiple times)  
wounds  
oppressed  
slaughter  
oppression  
judgment  
taken away  
cut off from the land of the living  
assigned a grave with the wicked  
his life made an offering for sin  
poured out his life unto death  
numbered with the transgressors  
bore others' sin (multiple times)

Wow, in just a span of only a few verses, so many words and expressions were devoted by the prophet Isaiah to describe pain and suffering. Why does Isaiah do this?

I conceive this is what happened:  
God gave Isaiah a prophetic sight 700 years into the future. Isaiah saw disturbing scenes of Jesus' unjust trial, his bloody beating and flogging, his strenuous ascent to the cross, and then

his excruciating death on the cross.  
It must've been shocking for Isaiah to see the degree of pain the suffering Messiah had to endure.  
And for him to painstakingly articulate those unspeakable scenes of suffering onto a scroll,  
Isaiah must've had to extend his vocabulary.

Perhaps he took out his Hebrew thesaurus and looked up as many words for pain he could possibly find, hoping to do his prophetic vision of Jesus's suffering justice. And after he exhausted his long list of words and expressions, he probably thought –  
within my ability –  
this is the best I can do to vividly describe the suffering of our Messiah.

Now why did the Messiah – an innocent man – willingly – of His own volition – without any resistance in action or speech go through such a horrendous punishment, a horrific death?

This question is the question all people – Jew and Gentile – Christian and non-Christian – should be asking.  
It is the question of all questions.

What was the reason for His horrifying death?  
What would cause a man to willingly go through such excruciating pain?

The answer: Because of our sin! Because of our iniquities.

Verse 6 says,

We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way; and the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all.

You see Jesus came to take care of the biggest problem we all have.

Think about it.

Unfortunately, most people, including churchgoers,

fail to see sin

as the biggest problem that needs to be dealt with.

What do you consider to be the biggest problem in your life?

What do you spend your time concerned about right now?

If I were to ask you over coffee as a friend,

what's your biggest problem you have in your life right now?

You might say,

money – I need more of it.

Maybe it's your current job -- I don't like it?

or I need to find a new job.

Maybe it's stress in your life.

Or relationships with family members, friends, or acquaintances.

Perhaps it being a better mom, dad, better son, daughter or better sister or brother.

Finding your future spouse.

Or maybe it concerns your enemies – you wish they fell off of the face of the earth.

Maybe you have health issues.

Or what about finding meaning in your life.

But .... How many of you woke up today saying,

“Oh no! SIN is the biggest problem in my life!”?

Unfortunately, we have forgotten the problem of sin.

Why is this a problem, you ask?

Because God is Holy – set apart from sin.

When you die, God will judge you for all that you have done.

If you have sin,

God cannot accept you because God is set apart from sin.

Where God is, there is no sin.

If you are a sinner,

you must be eternally separated from a holy God.

God is the source of life, so if we are eternally separated from God, we will die eternally.

Remember in Romans it says the result of sin is death.

And that is why sin is a problem to all of us.

And it should be our greatest concern.

If it is not your concern today,  
trust me – on judgment day –

it will not only be your greatest problem,

it will be THE problem of all problems –

the only problem you wish you had dealt with in this life.

So back to our question,

What is the answer to our sin problem?

**Jesus's suffering is the answer to our sin problem.**

**Here Peter quotes from Isaiah:**

**He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, that we might die to sin and live to righteousness. By his wounds you have been healed. 1 Peter 2:24**

By His wounds WE are healed.

His suffering is the only answer for us.

Remember Jesus says in John 14:6, "I am the Way, the Truth and the Life, no one comes to the Father except by me."

Why only through Jesus?

Because God alone is holy,

Only God Himself could save us –

and only in man form –

so that through the shedding of His holy blood that covers us,  
we are healed and have eternal life.

And so:

**Only Through the Suffering of the Righteous Can We Come to God**

**For Christ also suffered once for sins, the righteous for the unrighteous, that he might bring us to God ...**

**1 Peter 3:18**

And that is why it was necessary for the Messiah to suffer for us so that we might be brought to God.

Praise God for the suffering servant.