

The following sermon was preached at Redemption Baptist Church on Sunday, 2 April 2023. We encourage you to look up the Scriptures that are referenced, and see the context for yourself. May the Lord speak to your heart as you study His Word.

The Slain Messiah

Isaiah 53:4-7

Back in the 1700's, in Haddington, Scotland, there lived a man named **John Brown**, who was the son of a weaver. In the earlier part of his life, Brown made his living as a weaver, fisherman, and shepherd, and later, as a schoolmaster. However, the Lord had other plans for Brown's life. Before the age of 20, Brown taught himself Hebrew, Greek, and Latin, by simply comparing the few texts that were available to him—with no teacher or grammar book to help him learn the language! He taught himself Greek during his long hours in the pasture, while he was tending sheep. He compared English words to Greek words to figure out the alphabets, and then compared texts to figure out vocabulary and grammar. In time, he also taught himself French, Italian, German, Arabic, Persian, Syriac, and Ethiopic.

Needless to say, Brown was a genius! In fact, there is an amazing story that is still remembered to this day. After he had mastered Greek, he walked 24 miles to the town of St. Andrews, to buy a Greek New Testament from a book shop. (Up to this point, he hadn't even owned one!) The owner, who was a professor of Greek, said that he would sell the book to him *if* he could prove that he was able to read the Greek text. To the man's shock, Brown opened the Greek Testament, and read it to him fluently; and, true to his word, the shopkeeper sold him the Greek Testament. In the coming years, the Lord called John to the ministry; and he went on to become a very influential pastor in Scotland.

One day, we who know the Lord will meet John Brown in Heaven. However, if, when we get to Heaven, we go up to him and ask him, "What was the most important time in your life," his answer will *not* be, "When I taught myself Greek," or "When I was ordained as a minister." No, John Brown will testify that the most important time in his life was when he came to know the Lord Jesus Christ. *How* did he come to know the Lord? It was like this. You see, one day, as Brown was thinking on the matter of salvation, and wondering how *he* could know for sure that he was saved, he opened up his Bible to **Isaiah 53:4**, and read the words, "***Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted.***" As he pondered these ancient words of the prophet Isaiah, he understood, for the first time, that Christ Jesus was "***smitten of God***" for *his* sins, in *his* place. Of course, he had heard about Jesus' sacrifice throughout his entire life, both at church, and in his family worship time every morning and evening; but now, he truly understood what Jesus had died for *his* sins; and he repented of his sin, and placed his personal trust in Christ. From that moment onward, everyone who knew John Brown knew that he was a changed man, and that he had a passionate love for God!

This morning, we will be learning about the wonderful verse that opened John Brown's eyes to the truth of salvation. As we delve into the heart of **Isaiah 53**, we will be learning about the spiritual transaction that took place on Calvary. The title of this message is ***The Smitten Messiah***.

Read Isaiah 52:13 – 53:7.

I. The Smitten Servant (53:4)

(Read Isaiah 53:4 again.) What we are reading about in this verse, and in the next couple verses, is what is called “*the atonement*.” Now, perhaps you don’t have a very clear idea of what the word “*atonement*” means. If so, it’s really simple: “atonement” simply means “*at-one-ment*.” It means that two enemies are brought back together. It means that they are made “at one” with each other, and they become friends. This word “*atonement*” was coined back in the 1530’s by William Tyndale, as he was translating the New Testament into English. As he was translating **Romans 5:11**, he came across the Greek word *katallagen*, which means “reconciliation”; but he wanted to find an even more descriptive word for “reconciliation”—a simple, but powerful word. As it turned out, he literally *invented* a new word—the word “atonement,” or “at-one-ment.” Let’s turn to **Romans 5:11**, and see how this word is used.

Read Romans 5:6-11.

Do you see why Tyndale liked that word “atonement”? He could have used the word “reconciliation”; but he coined the word “at-one-ment,” to show that Christ’s sacrifice makes sinners “at one” with God. Because Christ took our sins upon Himself on the cross, we can be made “at one” with God by simply trusting in Christ’s sacrifice. In both the Old and New Testament, the Scriptures teach that our *sins* were laid upon Jesus as He hung on the cross. Isaiah prophesied that the Messiah would be “*wounded for our transgressions*,” and “*bruised for our iniquities*.” In the New Testament, the Apostle Peter says that Christ “*bare our sins in his own body on the tree*.”

Now, it is important to understand *what* was laid on Jesus. Isaiah says that our *sins* would be laid upon Him. Why is this so important? Because many charismatic preachers say that our *physical diseases and sicknesses* were laid on Jesus as He hung on the cross. In fact, many of them say that Christians should not even *get* sick (or, if they do get sick, they should be miraculously healed). How do they figure this? Because they say that Christ’s atonement on the cross *guarantees* our physical healing! The main Scripture that they use to “prove” this teaching is usually **Isaiah 53:5**, where Isaiah says that “*with his stripes we are healed*.”

Is this really what the LORD is saying in these verses? Is physical healing *guaranteed* to believers because of Christ’s atonement? No, it is not! When Isaiah said, “*with his stripes we are healed*” he was talking about the healing of *spiritual* sickness. Throughout Scripture, our sin is often compared to physical sickness. Let’s look at an example.

Read Isaiah 1:2-6.

In this passage, God is comparing the nation of Israel to a person whose head is “*sick*,” whose heart is “*faint*,” and who is filled with “*putrifying sores*.” Spiritually speaking, this was Israel’s condition, because they had gone astray from their God, and had worshipped idols. But guess what? The same that is true of Israel is true of *all of us*. It was *our* spiritual “sickness” (our sin) that Christ bore on the cross.

Now, one day, for the believer, physical sicknesses *will* be banished once and for all. In **1 Corinthians 15**, Paul says that “*This corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality*.” In **Philippians 3**, Paul says that on the Resurrection Day, Christ will “*change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body*.” In **Revelation 21**, the Lord promises that one day for the believer, there will be no more tears, death, sorrow, crying, or pain. When we receive our resurrected bodies, sickness and death will be banished; and it will all be possible because of Christ’s purchase of our salvation on the cross. As believers, we are looking forward to that future day. However, to say that Christians are guaranteed physical healing *during this lifetime* is utterly false. Every day, godly believers go through physical sickness and pain, without receiving any healing from the Lord, yet remain faithful to Him. The Apostle Paul had a physical infirmity, for which he

asked God for healing three times; but God's answer to him was, "***My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness.***" (In other words, "I'm not going to heal you.") Paul was content with this answer, and said, "***Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me.***" Even for those who *are* saved, God does not guarantee physical health. The fact of the matter is that, unless we live until the day of the Rapture, we will all grow sick and frail, and eventually die.

Now, did Isaiah have *anything* to say in **Isaiah 53** about the Messiah's healing of physical diseases? Yes, he did. In fact, the Apostle Matthew pointed this out!

Read Matthew 8:14-17.

Matthew went out of his way to point out that Jesus healed the sick, so that "***it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Esaias the prophet, saying, Himself took our infirmities, and bare our sicknesses.***" The words "*griefs*" and "*sorrows*" in **Isaiah 53:4** *can* be understood as *physical* "infirmities" and "sicknesses"; and in this passage, Matthew applies it in this way. Matthew *is* teaching us that Christ "bore" our physical sicknesses. No one who asked Jesus for physical healing was ever denied. In His love and compassion, Jesus *healed every single one of them*. He *literally* bore people's sicknesses, as He often physically *laid his hands* on those who had deadly, contagious diseases, such as leprosy!

However, *when* did Christ "bear" our physical sicknesses? *That* is the important question. Matthew says that He bore them **during His earthly ministry**, as He went about healing people. Right up to the night of Jesus' arrest, He was still bearing people's sicknesses. Remember in the Garden of Gethsemane, when Jesus healed Malchus's ear, after Peter had had cut it off with his sword? We have no record that Malchus ever believed on Jesus, or that he even *thanked* Him for healing him; but Jesus healed him, anyway. Jesus *did* bear people's *physical* sicknesses during His 3 ½-year ministry. **However**, He bore our *spiritual* sickness on the cross, when He was wounded for our transgressions.

For 3 ½ years, Jesus poured out His love to the sick and sorrowing. Yet, what was the response of the people? Isaiah puts this way: "***yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted.***" When Isaiah says "*we*," he is talking about his own people, the nation of Israel. In spite of all the love that Jesus had shown to His people, most of them still viewed Him as a criminal. When they saw Jesus hanging on the cross, they assumed that He must have done some terrible sin to have merited this terrible judgment from God. They failed to understand that the Messiah would be "***numbered with the transgressors,***" and "***bear the sin of many.***"

Now, how can we apply this verse to our lives today? There are a couple ways. First, we who know the Lord should be ready to give a biblical answer to those who *think* that they are saved because they were healed of some physical ailment. Christian, when you meet with someone who thinks he is on his way to Heaven because "the good Lord was looking out for me when I had that terrible sickness," or because "the good Lord spared my life in that accident," don't just smile and nod, and let him go on thinking that he is right with God. God is merciful to lost people every day, and He *does* often heal them of physical diseases; but they have a much greater ailment that needs to be healed—and that is the deadly infirmity of *sin*. In order to be healed of their *sin*-sickness, so that they can have eternal life, and enter Heaven one day, they must place their faith in Jesus' atoning sacrifice on the cross. Your friends and loved ones must hear, and respond in faith, to the Gospel message, or else they will perish eternally!

Perhaps some of *you* have the idea that you are right with God because you were spared from some deadly disease, or from a terrible accident. If so, I am here to warn you that this is not so! Jesus said that you must be born again; and to be born again, you must *repent* of your sin

in your heart, stop trusting in your own good works, and trust in Jesus alone! For those of us who are saved, I would say this: Don't ever forget Jesus' affliction on Calvary! Never lose sight of the fact that you were "***purged***" from your "***old sins***." Before you carelessly sin against God, take another look at Calvary!

As we look at the cross of Calvary, we should be horror-stricken at the thought that our sin is *so bad*, that Jesus had to suffer that horrible judgment in order to pay for it. If you have never been born again, this truth should drive you to Jesus' feet! In simple faith, ask Christ to forgive you of all your sins, and to come into your heart, and to be your Lord and Master.

II. The Chastised Servant (53:5)

(Read Isaiah 53:5 again.) This wonderful verse begins with the words, "***But he was wounded for our transgressions.***" The word "***wounded***" is translated from the word *chalal*, which literally means "bored through," or "pierced." Other Hebrew words for "pierced" are used in other Old Testament prophecies of the Messiah, as well.

For example, King David, in his prophecy of Christ's crucifixion in **Psalm 22**, wrote, "***For dogs have compassed me: the assembly of the wicked have inclosed me: they pierced my hands and my feet.***" In **Zechariah 12:10**, the LORD Himself says, "***And they shall look upon me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for him, as one mourneth for his only son.***" In the New Testament, the Apostle John points out that this Scripture was fulfilled as Jesus hung upon the cross, with nails driven through His hands and feet.

Read John 19:31-37.

Isaiah said the Messiah would be "***wounded***"—pierced! But that's not all. Isaiah also says that Jehovah's Servant would be "***bruised***." The word "***bruised***" (*m'duka*) means "broken to pieces, or crushed." This harkens back to the Garden of Eden, when God promised Adam and Eve that one day, a Saviour would come to earth to take care of their sin problem. As God was pronouncing His curse upon the serpent, He said, "***And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel.***" On the cross, Jesus "***bruised***," or "crushed," Satan's head; but in the process, He Himself was "***bruised***" in His "***heel***." This means that Christ, in His humanity, was "crushed" as He hung upon the cross. The sin of the whole world was a horrible crushing weight upon the sinless Son of God!

Isaiah goes on to say that "***The chastisement of our peace was upon him.***" In other words, the chastisement, or punishment, for our sin was laid upon Christ, so that in exchange, we might be forgiven, and be made at peace with God. **Colossians 1:20** says that Christ has "***made peace through the blood of his cross***"; and **Romans 5:1** says that we who are saved "***have peace with God.***"

Read Romans 5:1.

Isaiah finishes **verse 5** with the statement, "***And with his stripes we are healed.***" This Scripture was quoted by the Apostle Peter in **1 Peter 2:24**, where he says that Jesus "***bare our sins in his own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness: by whose stripes ye were healed.***" Because Jesus took the stripes of God's judgment upon His back, *we* can be healed of our spiritual sickness of sin.

The chastisement of our sin was laid upon Christ, and upon no one else. No saint or angel in earth or Heaven could have borne our chastisement. Christ is the only one who can heal us of

our sin-sickness, because He is the only one who was qualified to pay our sin debt. On the cross, He purged our sins by Himself, with no help from anyone else.

However, in order for Christ's payment to be *applied* to us, we must receive His wonderful gift by faith. When we, by faith, apply the blood of Jesus to the "door post" of our hearts, God sees the blood, and "passes over" us, and spares us from eternal death and hell. He removes the condemnation, which was ready to crush and destroy us, and gives us eternal life instead. If you have no applied Christ's blood to *your* heart's door by faith, I urge you to do so today!

Some of you have received God's gift of salvation, and have been accepted into God's family. However, if you want to have victory over sin, you must go to Christ for cleansing every day. Judicially, you already "have peace" with God, and you are no longer His enemy; however, if there be unconfessed sin in your heart, you will not have a full sense of peace in your heart. You must confess and forsake the sin, so that you can be restored to close fellowship with Him. God promises, "***But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin.***"

III. The Sin-Bearing Servant (53:6)

(Read Isaiah 53:6 again.) In our modern, humanistic societies, people are not the least bit ashamed to declare their intention to live their lives their "own way." For example, one of the biggest hit songs of modern times is Frank Sinatra's song "My Way." Even a leading fast-food chain advertises its burgers with the slogan "Have it your way." During a recycling campaign here in Ireland a few years ago, we saw the slogan "Bin it your way." This constant theme, repeated again and again in pop culture and advertisement, is just a small reflection of man's attitude about life. Man's attitude is, "I'll live my life my way."

People have been going "their own way" for 6,000 years now. Ever since the Fall of man in the Garden, we have each gone astray from God's way from the moment we entered the world. In Psalm 58:3, David said that the wicked "***go astray as soon as they be born, speaking lies.***" The Bible says that "***There is a way which seemeth right unto a man; but the end thereof are the ways of death.***" That is why Christ, in His mercy, took our iniquities upon Himself. He took *our* death penalty. Christ died to save us from our "own way"!

Your "own way" is lethal, regardless of what form it may take. It's easy enough to recognise the destructive end of a life that is lived for drugs, alcohol, or unlawful sexual pleasures. We can look at those who have made these kinds of choices, and see how sin has destroyed their lives. Oftentimes, people's sinful way of living even *ages* them by a decade or two! However, what about those who are walking the path of morality, good living, and religion, yet refuse God's way of salvation through Jesus Christ? They are still going their own way. I don't know how many times I've attempted to share the Gospel with someone, only to be told, "I have my own religion, and you have yours." Whether they be talking about an established religion, or their own "self-styled religion," they are still going their "own way": and its end is eternal death in hell.

We who know Christ as Saviour have lost friends and relatives, whom we love very much; and because we cannot bear the thought of their spending eternity in hell, it is tempting to try to convince ourselves that "They *might* actually be saved; but they just worship God in their own way." Brethren, let's not deceive ourselves. If our loved ones have not come to God by the way of the cross, they are *not* worshipping God at all, because they do not know Him. When the woman at the well tried to protest that *her* people worshipped in Mount Gerazim, whereas the Jews worshipped in Jerusalem, she was basically saying, "I have my religion, and you have yours." However, Jesus didn't tiptoe around the issue. At the risk of offending her, Jesus told her exactly what she needed to hear. He told her that *her* way was one of apostasy.

He also was not afraid to point out that her “live-in” relationship outside the bounds of marriage was sinful, and that she needed to repent. He spoke kindly to her: yet, He was firm in telling her that she needed to repent of her “own way,” and believe on Him. The result of this uncomfortable confrontation was that the woman believed on Jesus as Messiah and Saviour; and her life was gloriously transformed!

Read John 4:6-30.

Isaiah ends **verse 6** with these sobering words: “*And the LORD hath laid on him the iniquity of us all.*” This statement is the “mountain peak” of this entire passage. The message of salvation is that Jesus Christ, the Just One, took our sins upon Himself, so that we, the unjust ones, might be saved!

IV. The Silent Servant (53:7)

Before we delve into **verse 7**, let’s look back over what we’ve learned. In **Isaiah 52:13-15**, we saw two very different portraits of the Messiah. First, we are told that the LORD’s Servant will deal “*prudently*,” and that He will be “*exalted*,” “*extolled*,” and “*very high*.” Yet, in the very next verse, we are told that He would be humiliated—that “*his visage*” (or “face”) would be “*marred more than any man*.” Christ suffered great humiliation in His first coming to earth; but when He comes again to set up His Kingdom, He will be greatly “exalted.”

In **Isaiah 53:1-3**, we saw that the Messiah **would be rejected** by His own people. So few people would believe the message of the Messiah, that Isaiah asked the Lord, “*Who hath believed our report?*” Most of the Jewish people despised Jesus, and rejected His message. He was a “*man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief*.”

In **Isaiah 53:4-6**, we learned about the **atonement of Christ**. During His lifetime, Christ bore people’s “afflictions” and “sicknesses,” as He went about healing them of their diseases. However, healing people of their physical sickness was not Jesus’ ultimate purpose. His ultimate purpose was to provide **atonement** between sinners and God. He did this by allowing Himself to be “*wounded for our transgressions*,” and by taking upon Himself “*the iniquity of us all*.” On the cross, Christ became the Substitute for our sins.

With this in mind, we now come to **verse 7**. (**Read Isaiah 53:7 again.**) In this verse, Isaiah compares the Messiah to a Lamb going to the slaughter. Folks, this is one of the most important prophecies of Christ in the entire Old Testament. Jesus’ public ministry began when John the Baptist pointed to Jesus and cried, “*Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world*.” Every Jew who heard this title, “*the Lamb of God*,” would have had just one thought—the thought of a spotless lamb on the altar of sacrifice, taking the judgment for Israel’s sins. This is exactly the idea that God *wanted* to get across! From the very start of Jesus’ ministry, God was preparing Israel (and the world) for the fact that His Son would soon become the *sinless, innocent sacrifice* for our sins—the Lamb of God!

Throughout the New Testament, Christ is called “*the lamb of God*.” This name reminds us that Jesus is without sin, and that He came to be the Sacrifice for our sin. But there’s something else it conveys. It also conveys the fact that Jesus was “*dumb*,” or *silent*, before His oppressors. The word *alamah* literally means “bound”; but it is translated as “*dumb*.” It is as though Jesus’ mouth were literally bound. Just as a lamb is “silent” while going to the slaughter, so Christ was silent and non-resistant as He was taken away to judgment and death.

Read Matthew 27:11-14.

Read Luke 23:6-11.

As Jesus stood on trial before the Sanhedrin, and before Pilate, He did say a few brief things, in answer to the direct questions that they put to Him. However, He did not complain, nor lash out at His false accusers, nor even defend Himself. This is the idea that Isaiah is getting across when he says that the Servant *“openeth not his mouth.”* After a certain point, Jesus said nothing more. He spoke little to Caiaphas and Pilate; and He said nothing at all to Herod. He had spoken the truth, and there was nothing more to say. Jesus would not humour a man whose only desire was to be amused with “magic tricks.”

Folks, there is only one Jew in history of whom this verse could be speaking: and that Man is Jesus of Nazareth. Yet, tragically, most Jewish rabbis, to this day, deny that *“the Servant”* of **Isaiah 52 and 53** is Jesus. They insist that *“the Servant”* is not a single man, but rather the whole nation of Israel. They say that Israel, through their suffering at the hands of their enemies, is making atonement for themselves, and for the world. Now, to be sure, there *are* some passages in Isaiah where “the servant” being spoken of *is*, clearly, the nation of Israel. In **Isaiah 41, 43, 44, 45,** and **48**, there are places where the *“servant of the LORD”* is, without question, Israel. However, in passages such as **Isaiah 42, 49, 50,** and **52 and 53**, the Servant clearly is not Israel, but instead is a *particular Man* of Israel. There are several reasons why the Servant of **Isaiah 52 and 53** can be none other than Jesus of Nazareth.

First, Isaiah repeatedly states that *“we”* would *“not desire”* Him, and that *“we”* would *“despise”* Him, and *“esteem Him not.”* Remember—who is the *“we”* that Isaiah keeps talking about? He’s talking about his own people, Israel! How can Israel the “Servant,” yet, at the same time, be the very ones who are *despising and rejecting* the Servant?

Secondly, if *Israel* were the Servant of **Isaiah 52 and 53**, then what we are reading here in **Isaiah 53:7** would be a lie. Israel never stayed *“silent”* while under the bondage of their oppressors! They cried out in pain and anguish; and most of the time, they did so with bitter complaints against God, and against God’s prophets, whom God had sent to deliver them. They certainly did not remain passive and docile, like a lamb. They rose up against their oppressors countless times. Jesus, on the other hand, silently went to the slaughter.

Thirdly, how could Israel’s sufferings atone for *anyone’s* sins? **Isaiah 53** clearly teaches that the Servant would atone for our sins through His suffering; and He is able to do so because He is spotless and pure, like an innocent lamb. In contrast, Israel has *been anything but* spotless and pure through the centuries. Despite their sufferings, Israel is rejecting their God more than ever before. In fact, the city of Tel Aviv, Israel, is regarded as the “gay capital” of the world. How can the nation of Israel, which is polluted with sin, provide a ransom for themselves, much less for anyone else? They can’t! Sinners cannot provide any ransom for other sinners’ sins. **Psalm 49:6-8** says, *“They that trust in their wealth, and boast themselves in the multitude of their riches; none of them can by any means redeem his brother, nor give to God a ransom for him: (For the redemption of their soul is precious, and it ceaseth for ever:).”* Only the sinless Son of God can pay the ransom for our sins!

From the earliest days of the church age, **Isaiah 53:7** has changed countless lives. The Ethiopian eunuch was one of them. Before he ever came into contact with a Christian, God used the words of **Isaiah 53:7** to prepare his heart to believe on the Lamb of God!

Read Acts 8:26-38.

Conclusion: To this day, people’s hearts are still believing on Jesus through the prophecies in **Isaiah 53**. Perhaps the Lord is preparing *your* heart to believe on Him. It doesn’t matter who you are: you need the blood of the Lamb to wash away your sins! The Bible says, *“Forasmuch as ye know that we were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, by your vain conversation received by tradition*

from your fathers, but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot.” If you have never asked Jesus to save you, I urge you to do so today!

Christian, I would ask you this: are you following Christ’s example? In our Scripture today, we’ve seen a perfect example of how to respond to persecution. It’s easy for us to lash out at those who oppress and persecute us. However, Jesus set a completely different pattern for us. Christ has left us *“an example, that we should follow his steps...who, when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not; but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously.”* Christian, allow the Lord empower you to follow in your Saviour's steps of meekness and silent forbearance!