

Smitten of God and Afflicted

Isaiah Chapter Fifty-Three

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~ Our Spiritual Safari bows before our Heavenly Father today, as we come to Him with humble hearts, and overwhelming gratitude, for the grace He has shown us through the cross. As we study Isaiah's words, we need to be acutely mindful of the work that God desires to perform in our hearts. Let us each ask the Lord in prayer to fill us with the Holy Spirit of wisdom, judgment, and spiritual discernment now; and to show us where we need to surrender more completely to Him, how to trust Him more — and for our minds to be enlightened of His redemptive work in our lives. In the Name of the Lord Jesus Christ we shall pray forevermore.

Moving through the prophecy of Isaiah, up to this point, there has been a silhouette working quietly in the background. The silhouette is a servant making sacrifices for our understanding of these words that constitute Holy Writ. If you have not read our last several safari reports, I suggest you go back and do so now. As we approached chapter fifty-three, the shadowy figure clearly emerges as the Servant of Jehovah – the Lord Jesus Christ. In this report, we're going to see Christ's death on the cross. For those in Isaiah's day, this prophetic announcement would not be fulfilled for another seven hundred years. For us today, we look *back* two thousand plus years; and it is now a historical fact. God has painstakingly taken the two previous chapters to say to us, "*wake up, get dressed; you have much to learn.*" Let me begin this report by saying that someone is going to have to travail if you and I are going to rejoice in a new birth in a new world. That suffering will only be accepted by God if it is the suffering of His Servant.

It has been many decades since the bombing of Pearl Harbor by Japan. After WWI, the American public demanded disarmament. Well, thank God there were men who understood wars and rumors of wars will continue as long as there is sin and unrighteousness in the world. These men recognized that sin isn't a skin disease – it's heart trouble. December 7, 1941, proved their observations correct. Some people think Christ is a passivist; but Jesus Himself said, "*a strong man armed keepeth his house.*"

The world doesn't want the doctrinally sound fundamentals that I am teaching in this Spiritual Safari; they want something cheerful and uplifting. People call me bitter and angry – amongst other things. They tell me I am not saved, and that I have no earthly idea what I am talking about. Well, friends, all you get on safari is sound doctrine taught through me by the Holy Spirit of God from His Word. Christ is fighting the battle against sin and evil – not me. The truth can be profoundly bitter; I am sensitive to that fact.

Our last report brought us a picture of the crucifixion of Christ. That prepared the way for this chapter. Chapter fifty-three is likely the single most quoted chapter from Isaiah. Unfortunately, this passage is almost always handled incorrectly. When we teach that *"His visage was so marred that His appearance was not that of a son of man"* — we need to be careful handling that verse. It is not always a sign of Orthodoxy to dwell upon the sufferings of Christ. It is possible to wax crude, and it is so easy to get *"off point"* preaching the cross. Further, I don't totally agree with mixing and mingling the cross and Jesus' suffering as a Man with our human suffering here on earth; because His was altogether different.

During the last three hours of the crucifixion, darkness overcame the cross. It is as if God brought a curtain down and said, *"you cannot see this."* Man could no longer do anything; the night had come when no man could work. That's when the Son of God was working on the cross. Those are the hours in which the cross became an altar upon which the Lamb of God that taketh away the sins of the world was slain for our iniquity. When light finally broke again, at three o'clock in the afternoon, and men saw Him, they were startled, stupefied, and shocked. Jesus didn't even look human anymore. His treatment was unspeakable. There was no beauty that we should desire Him. But there is nothing here to satisfy the morbid curiosity of man, either. This is one reason I am vehemently opposed to *ALL* pictures of Jesus – but particularly those of Him on the cross. The movies that have been made in recent years about the crucifixion are, in my estimation, heresy, blaspheme, and an outrage; but I digress.

In our last report we read, *"so shall He sprinkle many nations"* – which can be translated *"so shall He make with astonishment many nations."* Well, it happened exactly that way! This also carries the thought that the death of

Jesus will be alarming when it is properly understood. The death of Christ should never become common place. Teachers and preachers should not get in the habit of constantly talking about the death of Jesus. His death was different — and we must keep it that way. I don't think we have taught the crucifixion correctly until it almost traumatizes people hearing the account....

1 Who hath believed our report? and to whom is the arm of the LORD revealed?

~ This chapter is conceded by all schools of interpretation as the deepest and most profound chapter in the Bible. My question is the same as Isaiah's was: who hath believed my reports? Maybe I don't want to know the answer to that because bringing these reports to you requires a whole lot of suffering. Well, suffering and satisfaction belong together. Suffering *always* precedes satisfaction; but too many people are trying to take a shortcut by attempting to avoid every unpleasant experience in life. There is no short route to satisfaction. I repeatedly condemn those who erroneously pander that some little Bible course or Christian type seminar will give you all of the answers to the problems in life. Rushing through the Bible isn't the way God does it, friends. Jesus Himself could have taken the shortcut by accepting the crown offered by Satan — but He didn't — because suffering *MUST* precede satisfaction. If Jesus had accepted and bowed to the devil, you and I would have been eternally lost. It's important to understand that. It's difficult to accept. Flowers and rainbows only come after rainstorms. That's God's way of doing things. And, since that is His method, we can be sure it is the best possible way.

Isaiah actually seems to be documenting a complaint because his message was not being received by the nation. That's always the sorrow of any true man of God, to be sure. If you teach sound doctrine, that will be your experience, too, friends. God told Isaiah way back in chapter six that he was to give a message that they wouldn't hear, and they would not accept. It's working out exactly that way for Isaiah at this time in which we are studying. It's working out exactly that way for the so-called Spiritual Safari as I type this report and you read it, too. I don't know why I sometimes complain to the Lord about this; because the message of Christ will

continue to be rejected by mankind until it is too late – but I do. Well, the world doesn't welcome God's messengers with open arms — they never have — and never will. The prophets were *all* stoned to death and their messages discarded.

Now, I should add that we can be absolutely sure Isaiah is writing about the Lord Jesus Christ. Philips' answer to the Ethiopian Eunuch in the Book of Acts irrefutably confirms this. Also, Jesus Himself quoted this chapter in John chapter twelve verse thirty-eight; and Jesus made the application to Himself. Also, Paul in Romans chapter ten verse sixteen, quotes this chapter in connection with the Gospel of Christ. Most people think the four Gospel records are the only account of the horrible act of the crucifixion of Christ on the cross. However, anyone acquainted with this chapter of Isaiah, and the twenty-second Psalm, will know that these are more vivid accounts than any of the Gospel writer's record. When we examine the Gospel accounts, we discover that only a few disconnected and unrelated events of the crucifixion are given. The actual crucifixion is passed over with a reverent restraint. There are no gory details given whatsoever. The worst thing that is said is the description of the brutal mob who murdered Jesus, when the Bible tells us, "... *they sat down to watch Him die.*" You and I are forbidden from joining that crowd.

Sensational speakers and sublime screen writers who desire self-notoriety paint pictures with repugnant prose of the minutest details about what they *THINK* took place at the crucifixion of Christ. They're always wrong. Art has given us a ghastly peek - but has also utterly failed to convince *ANY* unbeliever to accept Christ as their Savior. *NO ONE* has ever been saved watching a movie. Even in eternity, I seriously doubt we will ever know the extent of the suffering Christ endured. None of the ransomed ever knew how deep the waters were that were crossed; nor how dark was the night, as the Lord passed through 'ere He found His sheep that were lost!

There are still a few prophetic voices who are trying to call people to Christ from the Word of God; but, in spite of that, the world is rushing headlong and headstrong after any and all religious delusions that are dreamt up in man's personal philosophy. The man on the street today will follow *any* pied piper of liberalism who can toot an emotional tune, or write an

incoherent, poorly punctuated, and improperly spelled string of words; but they reject sound doctrine wholesale. The world only wants to hear a message that says everything is going to be alright.

Of course, sound doctrine is abject foolishness to this Christ-rejecting world. They dismiss the love found in the cross of Christ because Holy Writ condemns a sinful life. Further, God uses the weak things of the world to confound the wise and mighty — and that's just not an easy precept to submit to. If we consulted a specialist to advise us on a disease, we wouldn't accept an unscientific remedy that has been proven ineffective. Shouldn't we trust God the same way? Personally, I teach the entirety of the Bible and I know I teach it correctly — because it is the Holy Spirit speaking through me — but, again, I still have to ask as Isaiah asked: who has believed our report? The truths revealed in Scripture are utterly contrary to mankind's thinking and reasoning. I think Isaiah asked God if anyone believed either one of them; and he asked more than once, I'm sure.

There is a very definite reason why men will not believe and accept the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ; and that reason is because there is sin in their life that they refuse to give up. *NO* other reason, friends. Most Christians seem to view God sitting in Heaven on some lofty throne — and He is — but the ancient pagans also spoke of God as not dwelling with mankind. The Greeks placed their deities high up on Mount Olympus. The Romans had Jupiter hurling thunderbolts down from battlements in clouds. It is absolutely foreign to the thinking of the natural man that God came down to this earth and pitched His tent among men. Adding the shamefulness of the cross to that is just too much for most people to handle. The natural thought processes break down and terminate with this wisdom. The modern psychological and atheistic mind erroneously labels the Gospel message "*defeatism.*" As a result, God calls them fools.

A suffering deity is offensive and unacceptable to mankind on every level. The paradoxical peculiarity of this chapter is that no one has ever suffered as Jesus did. Well, Jesus said if He is lifted up, He will draw men unto Himself. Suffering has but a singular attraction: pain draws us all together — and places us all in the same boat. Suffering is a common bond uniting a

hurting humanity. The average person is compassionate on some level concerning the suffering of others. The natural human response is instinctively to help if we can. Big business “aid” organizations make lucrative profits by capitalizing on those emotions. Unfortunately, when thoroughly analyzed, it is usually just a self-righteous, self-serving reaction. What we need to do is what we are doing on safari: looking Scripturally upon the strange sufferings of the Son of God. Getting our thinking right is the only way to transform our cold hearts into the warmth of sacrifice and radiance of His love. *“To whom is the bared arm of the Lord revealed”* means God’s sleeves are rolled up to perform a tremendous work.

It has been suggested that when God created the Heavens and the earth, He was merely performing a routine work. Scripture says in Psalms, *“the heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament sheweth His handiwork.”* Dr. Talmud said, *“... God created the universe without half-trying.”* Personally, I think it was less effort than that. After all, God merely spoke the universe into existence. When God rested on the seventh day, it wasn’t because He was tired – it was because He had completed what He had established to accomplish. God didn’t have to take a day off, edit His Word, or re-evaluate something He had missed. However, when God later redeemed mankind, it required His bared arm. Salvation was, by far, His greatest undertaking. The biggest objection raised to salvation is that it is free. Well, for *MAN* it’s free, because we can’t pay anything for salvation. We have nothing to offer God; but the reason it is free for you and me is because it cost God everything. Salvation is free — but it isn’t cheap. Redemption is, apparently, an infinite task that only a Holy God could ever perform....

2 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 the Person of the Lord Jesus Christ in Isaiah. By the time we get to Jesus’ earthly ministry, the family line of David had been completely cut off from the kingship. The line of Jesse was no longer princes; they were dirt-poor peasants. The entire nation Israel was no longer free – they were under the iron heel of Rome. Rome never produced

any great civilization, of course – they were merely a somewhat acceptable imitation of what the world labels a great civilization according to worldly ideals. It was all mediocre achievement and pseudo-culture in Rome. All moral foundations in Israel under Roman rule were eroded by that time. The day and age were decadent. A virile manhood and a virtuous womanhood had been supplanted by a debauched, pleasure-mad citizenry. The Mosaic System had been thoroughly corrupted. All that happened in the temple at that time was a vain, dead and empty ritual; their hearts remained as cold and indifferent as one could possibly get. Into *THAT* situation came Christ. Christ came from a noble family that had been cut off; and from a nation that had become a slave to Rome. It would have been impossible for the generation of that day to produce Jesus without supernatural intervention. So, this verse is like walking through the desert, dying of thirst, surrounded by sand as far as we can see, and the sun beating down relentlessly on our burned heads when, all of the sudden, there pops up a blue-ribbon watermelon — growing in the dust. It's not a mirage. Christ's appearance was an amazing miracle.

Evolution attempts to rid the human conscious of Jesus – because He arrived prematurely in their manufactured parade of species. If evolution could produce the perfect man, then why haven't we produced another? Christ is different, because He was sinless, and yet He came directly into a debauched humanity. That means He is the root out of a dry ground. As we move along, the focus changes immediately to Christ's suffering and death on the cross. "*.... no form or comeliness*" and "*.... no beauty that we should desire Him*" has been irreverently misunderstood by some to mean Jesus was malformed at birth. Others have even dared say He was repulsive in His physical appearance. Well, the Gospel records don't lend any support to those viewpoints. It was on the cross that Isaiah's declaration in verse two becomes true — in a very real way. The cross and the events immediately before being nailed to it were just not pretty mental pictures. The beautiful gold crosses we wear around our necks and carve out of wood for the sanctuary of our church may look nice – but they don't represent His cross in any way. The real cross was a horrible, frightening sight. A Roman cross evoked terror and nightmares. What happened on them was unspeakable. Jesus no longer even looked like a human being after the crucifixion....

3 He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief: and we hid as it were our faces from him; he was despised, and we esteemed him not.

4 Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted.

~ Isaiah was, obviously, so afraid that we would miss the point that Christ was “*smitten of God*” that he mentions it three different times in this passage. The Lord hath laid on Him the iniquity of us all. Yet it pleased the Lord to bruise Him. He hath put Him to grief. Consternation fills our souls when we finally recognize it was God Himself Who treated His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, in such a brutal manner. Quite frankly, you and I can’t understand it completely. We have to ask, if we are sincere, why God treated Jesus this way. Jesus had done nothing to merit such mistreatment, friends. It was *our* sins that were being dealt with!

So, let’s briefly recap this section: during the first three hours on the cross, man did his worst, as he beat Jesus, spit on Him, and nailed Him to it without mercy. Then, they folded their arms, and sat down to watch Him die. After three hours of that, the Father drew a veil over the cross, and darkness covered the earth. Human eyes were denied witnessing the transaction between the Son and the Father. *THAT* is when Christ became the sacrifice for the sins of the world; and His soul was made an offering for our sin. We know that Christ was treated as sin — because we are told He Who knew no sin was made sin for us. Anyone who questions whether God hates our sins need only take a quick glimpse at the cross. If we doubt whether God will punish sins, behold the Darling of His heart as He endured torture and penalty for our sins. Only by vain conceit and self-deception can we expect to escape damnation if we reject His salvation....

5 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.

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

~ Christ's stripes healed us from *S-I-N*, friends. The unlearned Christian incessantly attempts to tie this into physical healing, but, in order to make that quantum leap, one must ignore verse ten of this chapter. It will also require dismissing Simon Peter, who said, "*... who his own self 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.*" The offering was for sins. Period. Full stop. We are dead in trespasses and sins before we are saved. Most people are physically perfectly healthy when they are saved. If you tell someone this passage speaks of physical healing, and that person does not get physically healed, then what you have really told that person is that they don't have enough faith. That's the single cruelest thing one can say to another person. No, friends, this is about Christ taking our rightful punishment concerning the sins for which we are worthy of death. With all of that said: can you think of anything more egregious than rejecting the free gift God offers by providing us a Savior?

Verse six is astounding; it begins with *ALL* and it ends with *ALL*. That means *ALL* of us. Our problem is that we have turned everyone his own way. When that happens, every man will do that which is right in his own eyes; and when men do that, chaos ensues. Man's problem is that he has gone *HIS OWN* way and rejected God's way. Of course, there is a way that seemeth right to a man, but the end thereof is death. As Christians, we're told that we're to acknowledge Him in all of our ways, and He will direct our paths. The Lord Jesus said that He was the way – so, by turning to our own ways, we have a real problem. Any man that does not respond acutely to this doctrine taught this way is hopelessly dead inside. Pray for that soul, and see if you can pull a brand from the fire. Selah.

Further, Christ does not want or expect our sympathy for His death. No, Jesus didn't die to enlist us in a defence. Jesus told the women who were crying as He went to the cross, "*weep for yourselves!*" Christ didn't die a martyr's death. Jesus was not espousing a lost cause. Martyrs all sang praises during their deaths, and confessed Christ was standing by them – as Steven in the Book of Acts did – but Jesus was forsaken of God! Jesus even asked the Father *why* He had forsaken Him. The death of Jesus is altogether different. He died alone — with the sins of this world being placed upon

Him. I recognize that some feel the death of Christ should be exercised in our lives; and that we should be persuaded to turn from sin as a result. I tend to agree at face value; however, that does not happen to be the experience of any man - and it isn't the experience in my life, either. That view is not satisfactory in light of other statements made in this chapter – and none of that explains His death as the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world...

7 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 openeth not his mouth.

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.

9 And he made his grave with the wicked, and with the rich in his death; because he had done no violence, neither was any deceit in his mouth.

~ I understand this report probably doesn't make much sense to a whole lot of people. Some of the things I am saying are almost impossible to comprehend. However, it makes total sense; it is the wisdom of man that fails. Man's erroneous "wisdom" is why this world is in its current dire predicament. The issues in this life are not settled; and yet, man wants to claim he is scientifically certain about what happens after death. I don't see how anyone can possibly be any more gullible or naive than that. Education and science have not solved our problems. If education were the answer to our problems, then we wouldn't have any problems! Each new scientific discovery only compounds the myriad problems we already have. This is evident in landfills oozing radioactive garbage; and a sea that that is so polluted it threatens to stop producing life sustaining food — not to mention space being relegated to a technical gadgetry junkyard. Man is so wrong in so many areas; but he refuses to believe that he just might be wrong about the Word of God, too. It is simply mind-boggling for people to assume the Lord will do anything for them in eternity when they have rejected His wisdom and His salvation....

10 Yet it pleased the LORD to bruise him; 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.

11 He shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied: by his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many; for he shall bear their iniquities.

12 Therefore will I divide him a portion with the great, 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 bare the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors.

~ So, as we close out this profound leg of our Spiritual Safari expedition through the entire Word of God, we read, “... He shall see the travail of His soul and be satisfied” – which means the death of Christ is not the end of this story. The death of Christ and His suffering *MUST* be accompanied by His resurrection. We have a Savior Who is alive, sitting at the right hand of God the Father in Heaven today — continuously making intercession for us — and, for that, rejoice! His suffering has finally led to our opportunity for satisfaction. Christ took away our hell so that we might have Heaven!

~ Heavenly Father, Your love for us stuns us into silence. All we can do now is thank You for the gift of salvation that the Lord Jesus Christ made possible by His death on the cross. Help us to grow deeper in our comprehension of this holy mystery; in Jesus Name we pray ~

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