

THE SUFFERING SERVANT

(Sermon Summary)

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Reading: Isaiah 53.

This was written 740 years before the coming of the Lord. The structure of the prophecy of Isaiah is that the first 39 chapters set out judgements and the last 27 hold out the promise of the Messiah.

Isaiah 9:6-7 tell us of a mission to bring peace and justice. Yet who is the servant spoken of here? For it is clear that He is a man, but that also He is the Mighty God. Only one person can meet the description – the Lord Jesus Christ. So Isaiah 53 speaks of the sufferings of Christ.

Isaiah 53:10 has occasioned debate recently. The thought that God would bruise His Son has been attacked by people, like Steve Chalke, as being child abuse. Others have called it barbaric. Others have said it makes God look like He wants His pound of flesh. N.T. Wright calls it a pagan idea. It is actually the doctrine of penal substitutionary atonement. We must take this doctrine seriously for otherwise we are on sinking sand. This is our only hope of peace with God.

1. The justice of God.

Too often, God is reduced to mercy, grace and love. His wrath and His justice get neglected. People say that how can a loving God punish His Son like this?

In Exodus 34:5 God Himself proclaims who He is. This is the true God. Here He tells us that He by no means clears the guilty. We are all guilty so how does this work? How can God forgive sinners and remain righteous?

2. Christ our substitute.

So we see God will by no means leave sins unpunished. There is no good news here unless we believe in Penal Substitutionary Atonement. We find this in 2 Corinthians 5:21. The Lord Jesus became sin for us. This does not mean that He became a sinner. It means He was bearing the sin of His people. The Father dealt with the Son as if He was guilty of all our sin. Though sinless, He was treated as though He was a criminal.

In Gethsemane He is not feeling weak because He fears the Roman authorities. He is a strong and a powerful person. What was it in the cup of suffering that made Him recoil? (Jeremiah 25: 15-16). It is the wrath of God that was the cup of suffering. This is what made Him pray in the Garden. The Lord will drink it for us. We should drink it for all eternity. He endures the sin of all His people. He is the One who gives breath to us all. And here He is suffering on our behalf.

If we are children of God, this is a doctrine we should cling to. This is our only hope. This is how God can remain righteous while at the same time punishing sin. So our sins do not go unpunished. At the cross God displayed all His attributes. We see His justice, His love, His holiness and all His glory. From the cross, God shouts to us that He forgives sin. And verse 10 tells us that it pleased God to do this for us. Burdens truly are lifted at Calvary.

We should not think of this as being the Father who is angry and the Son who is an unwilling victim. All the Persons of the Godhead wanted to save us. The Son willingly died to save us from our sin. If we deny Christ taking the wrath of God for us, then we are still dead in our sins. We should respond with adoration.

So we must ask ourselves whether we have repented?

And if we believe this truth, why do we not plead with sinners?