

He Shall Prolong His Days: Isaiah 53

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This morning we will look at the last stanza of the Servant Song found in Isaiah 53. And in this last stanza we will see the Servant's Success. We will see that His death was not the end of Him. Indeed, He will prolong His days. The cross was not the end of His days. No, there is a resurrection. There are more days beyond His death. Never-ending days. And that's what we celebrate on this Resurrection Sunday.

The song began, in 52:13, with the Servant's exaltation. But then it has spoken of his humiliation. He was despised and rejected. He was a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief (v. 3). The reason He was afflicted was not because He had done anything wrong, but because He was putting Himself in our place. He was wounded for our transgressions; he was crushed for our iniquities (v. 5). On Friday evening we saw that Jesus' death was substitutionary, voluntary, effective, and it happened according to the Scriptures. On this Easter morning we'll look at the outcome of Jesus' suffering, which is what verses 10-12 speak of. The suffering and humiliation and sacrifice were not futile. Jesus did not fail in what He came to accomplish. He succeeded. He was triumphant. And He is now highly exalted.

WHO IS RESPONSIBLE FOR JESUS' DEATH?

Before we talk about the outcome of His suffering, though, we're faced with an important question in verse 10. The question that we must ask in light of this verse is: "Who is responsible for Jesus' death?" There are many correct answers to this question. We could say that the Jews are responsible for His death, because they demanded His crucifixion. Or we could say that Judas is responsible, because of his betrayal. Or Pilate, because he consented to what the Jews were demanding. Or the soldiers, because they actually put Him on the cross. We would also be right in saying that WE are responsible for Jesus' death, because He was suffering the penalty for our sin. All of us played a role in Jesus' death. But from a much broader perspective, from a divine perspective, we see in this verse that it is God the Father who ultimately ordained this and designed it. God the Father is ultimately responsible for Jesus' death on the cross.

"Yet it was the will of the Lord to crush him; he has put him to grief" (the beginning of verse 10). The Lord is God the

Father, and the One put to grief is the Suffering Servant who is being talked about in this passage of Scripture, who is the Messiah, Jesus Christ. So this verse is saying very clearly that God the Father is the One who crushed Jesus on the cross. He put Him to grief.

The New Testament confirms this truth that the Father is the One who planned Jesus' death. In Peter's sermon in Acts 2 he says to the men of Israel, **“this Jesus, delivered up according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God, you crucified and killed by the hands of lawless men” (vv. 23-24)**. So, yes, the Jews killed Jesus. The soldiers killed Jesus. But it was all according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God, so that ultimately it must be said that God the Father put Jesus on the cross. There is not a contradiction here between human responsibility and God's sovereignty. Those involved in putting Jesus to death are guilty. They were doing what they wanted to do. They were following their hateful passions. And yet it was also happening according to God's design. Not either / or. Both / and.

Also in Acts 4, the believers were praising God and said, **“truly in this city there were gathered together against your holy servant Jesus, whom you anointed, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, along with the Gentiles and the people of Israel, to do whatever your hand and your plan had predestined to take place” (vv. 27-28)**. Again, we see that all of these various individuals were involved in putting Jesus to death, and they're responsible for their sinful actions. But the big picture reality is that it all happened exactly according to God's predestined plan. Ultimately, God the Father is the One who sent Jesus to the cross.

This might be a shocking statement to you if you haven't thought about this before. And it's even more shocking when we look more closely at this word translated “will” in the ESV in Isaiah 53:10. The verb form is found in the beginning of the verse: “it was the *will* of the Lord to crush him.” And the noun form of the same word is found at the end of the verse: “the will of the Lord shall prosper in his hand.” But the English word “will” doesn't capture the full meaning of that word. It refers to more than just a decision. It's not an unemotional act of the will.

In fact, and you can see this in how the word is used elsewhere, it would be appropriate to translate Isaiah 53:10, as the NASB does, “But the Lord *was pleased* to crush Him, putting [Him] to grief; If He would render Himself [as] a guilt offering, He will see [His] offspring, He will prolong [His] days, And *the good pleasure* of the Lord will prosper in His hand.” Or we could

even say, “It was the Lord’s delight to crush Him.” But this seems even more shocking and troubling.

How could God the Father be the One who sent His own beloved Son to such an agonizing death, let alone delight to do so? How could He find pleasure in this? What kind of Father is He? When Jesus was baptized, didn’t the Father say, “This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased” (Matthew 3:17)? Why would a Father allow this to happen, even ordain this to happen, and cause it to come about? Either the Father doesn’t really love His Son, or there is some massively compelling purpose that warrants this action.

Let me assure you that the Father loves His Son. The love between the Father and the Son is immeasurable. It is infinite. The Father looks upon His Son and sees the radiance of His own glory (Hebrews 1:3), and He delights in Him. We must not doubt that the Father loves His Son.

FOR WHAT PURPOSE?

Why, then, would the Father cause this to happen? Why would He crush His Son? Why would He put Him to grief? Aren’t those things that only an *unloving* Father would do? What compelled the Father to do this? And what compelled the Son to submit to this?

The purpose that the Father and the Son agreed to was the redemption of sinners in such a way that would magnify God’s justice and righteousness and glory. **Ephesians 1** speaks of God’s purposes of salvation, and three times it says that this is “**to the praise of his glory.**” You see, God shows His greatness to us in this stunning display of love and sacrifice. He shows His greatness to us in the justice of punishing sin. He shows His greatness in the grace of putting our sin on Christ. He shows His greatness in the power of the resurrection.

I’ve been thinking about a commercial I saw a few weeks ago. A commercial that has some unique connections to our congregation. First of all, it takes place here in Pittsburgh—in the Beechview neighborhood. And secondly, the Mastro Ice Company provided the ice and snow. It’s a commercial for the Audi Quattro, and Audi wanted to make this car look really good. So they found the world’s steepest street, which happens to be in Beechview. That’s no surprise to many of you. And then they put dirt on the street, and rocks, and then snow. And they drove this car up and down that snowy, steep street. It was pretty impressive. And then

they put a snowboarder and a skier and a mountain biker on the street too, just for added effect. A very cool commercial.

By way of contrast, it makes me think of a time several years ago, when 3RG used to meet in a building in Beechview, and I was driving my little 2-door Toyota Tercel (which I had at the time) over there early on a wintery Tue morning for men's Bible study. And there had been a water main break on Methyl St., which I didn't realize until I was on the sheet of ice sliding down the hill, narrowly missing the parked cars along the side. Fortunately, I didn't hit anything. But I wouldn't have made it back up that hill. And nobody made a commercial out of that.

Anyway, the point is that there are ways to highlight the power and capabilities of an automobile. That's what the Audi commercial did so well. You put it on the toughest possible road conditions, and then watch it perform. And at the end of the commercial, you're supposed to stand in awe of this amazing vehicle.

God, on a cosmic scale, is doing something a little bit similar. He is taking on the impossible task of rescuing hard-hearted, hell-deserving sinners like us and transforming us into the likeness of His Son. And for this to be possible, it required this plan which was agreed to by the Father and the Son—that the Father would crush His Son, and the Son would submit to being crushed. And as we gaze on this great plan of redemption, we should stand in complete amazement that God is so great to be able to do this, and so gracious that He would do this for us.

And so we see God's pleasure in crushing His Son, not because He's an abusive Father who finds some twisted delight in hurting His Son, but because He and His Son delighted together in this awesome plan of redemption. It was the only way to magnify God's justice and righteousness and also to magnify His glorious grace. This was the only way that He could be just and the justifier of those who trust in Jesus (Romans 3:26).

So on this Easter Sunday morning I plead with you to trust in this Jesus. Don't look past this amazing reality that God punished His Son in our place. He crushed His own Son. He put Him forward as a propitiation, to bear the wrath that we deserve. And therefore Jesus is our only hope of escaping the penalty we deserve for our sin. There's no other way. You can't work your way into God's favor. There's no way we can appease His wrath against sin. No matter how smart or kind or godly you think you might be, you have a sinful heart that puts you at enmity with God. God's wrath is against you as long as you are separated from

Christ. Without Christ, you are an enemy of God, and that's a scary place to be. But Jesus hung on that cross such that all who trust in Him will be justified, declared righteous in God's sight, and reconciled to God. We are no longer enemies, but friends. That is something to stand in awe of, something to rejoice in.

So far, we raised the question, "Who is responsible for Jesus' death?" The ultimate answer is that God the Father crushed His beloved Son. The next question was, "for what purpose?" And as we've seen, the purpose of God crushing His Son is so that He can display His glory in being just and the justifier of those who trust in Jesus.

WHAT IS THE OUTCOME?

The final question is, "What's the outcome?" What resulted from the Servant's death? What happened next? And here is where we'll see the Servant's success, that He will prolong His days, because the outcome matches the purpose. The Servant was successful in what He came to accomplish. I talked about this briefly in our Good Friday service in making the point that Jesus' death was effective. And we see in these verses as well that Jesus' death was not the end of Him. His death was not pointless. He was not defeated. Rather in His death He successfully accomplished His mission. Let's look at the outcome of the Servant's death.

1) Offspring

In the middle of verse 10 it says, "when his soul makes an offering for sin, he shall see his offspring [His seed] . . ." To live long enough to see your grandchildren and great-grandchildren is a great blessing. I look forward to experiencing that someday, Lord willing. This Servant will see His descendants. He will see those individuals who are incorporated into His family by faith. It reminds us of God's covenant with Abraham, back in Genesis 15, when God took Abraham out under the night sky and told him to count the stars, and said, "So shall your offspring be" (v. 5).

And we know that these offspring will be from every people group in the world. In **Revelation 5:9** the heavenly choir sings to the Lamb, "**Worthy are you to take the scroll and to open its seals, for you were slain, and by your blood you ransomed people for God from every tribe and language and people and nation.**" This is the global family of God that continues to expand until all of these offspring are brought into the family. The Servant who was crushed will see His offspring.

2) Many Accounted Righteous

We learn something else about these offspring in the latter part of verse 11, “by his knowledge shall the righteous one, my servant, make many to be accounted righteous, and he shall bear their iniquities.” This is what it means to be justified. God is just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus (Romans 3:26). To be justified is to be accounted righteous. This can only happen because of the righteous Servant. He lived a sinless, righteous life, and then He bore our iniquities. Because of His perfect life and His sacrificial death, we can be counted righteous in Him by faith.

Here’s how it happens. If you trust in Jesus Christ, if you commit your life to Him and cling to Him as your only hope of salvation, then you will be united to Jesus in such a way that your sin becomes His and His righteousness becomes yours. **2 Corinthians 5:21** declares this glorious truth, **“For our sake [God] made [Christ] to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.”** Do you see the exchange that is happening here? Christ is counted sinful even though He never sinned, and we are counted righteous even though we are sinners. Our sin is credited to Him, and His righteousness is credited to us. This is the Gospel, that we celebrate on this Resurrection Sunday, and every Sunday, and every other day of the week, too. Christ took our sin and suffered the penalty in our place, and then He clothes us in His righteousness so that we stand before God as though we had never sinned. This is the Servant’s success, that He sees His offspring and makes many to be accounted righteous. These ones for whom He died, who are adopted into God’s family, are counted righteous.

3) Resurrection

A third indication of the Servant’s success is in the middle of verse 10, just after the statement that “he shall see his offspring.” It goes on to say, “he shall prolong his days; the will of the Lord shall prosper in his hand.” This is a reference to Jesus’ resurrection, because even though He was crushed and put to grief, He prolongs His days. His mission did not end in death. His Father crushed Him, but then His Father brought Him back to life and prolongs His days. He lives! He lives again! He will live forever!

Christ’s resurrection is essential to the Gospel, because His sacrificial death would have been an utter failure if He had been conquered by the grave. If He remained in that tomb, then He saved no one. As Paul says in **1 Corinthians 15**, **“if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile and you are still in your sins” (v. 17)**. It was not enough that Jesus died. He had to die and

then conquer death. He had to triumph over the grave. Our salvation depends upon it.

Romans 4:25 says He “**was delivered up for our trespasses and raised for our justification.**” That verse shows us the inseparable connection between Jesus’ death and His resurrection. He was delivered up (He died) for our trespasses. That’s what so much of Isaiah 53 emphasizes—His substitutionary death. And He was raised for our justification, meaning His resurrection proved that the substitutionary death was effective. The resurrection proves that Jesus’ death conquered death, and therefore purchased our justification.

This is why the observance of Good Friday and Resurrection Sunday is such a significant time for Christians. These are the two realities that have revolutionized our lives, and they should be the focus of our lives *every* week of the year. Jesus died on a cross for our sins, and He came back to life on the third day to demonstrate His triumph over sin and death.

Let me ask you a question that will help you reflect in your own heart how sincerely you believe this. Do you fear death? Are you fearful to lose what you have in this life? Are you uncertain of what will happen to you when you die? This is a real life application of the truth that Jesus did not remain in the tomb, but rose again. If we believe this, brothers and sisters, if we believe this in more than just an intellectual sense, if we cherish this truth and cling to it and love it, then we will have a great weapon with which we can fight fear. Because what is there to fear, if Christ rose from the dead for our justification? If you are trusting in Christ, living with Christ, following Christ, then you can say, “Death is swallowed up in victory. O death, where is your victory? O death, where is your sting?” (1 Corinthians 15:54-55). There is nothing to fear if you are trusting in Jesus who died for our sins and rose again for our justification.

There was a riveting story in the Voice of the Martyrs publication that I read this week. It’s about a man named Obaid (at least that’s the name given him in the article). He’s from Afghanistan. Like the rest of his family, he had followed the teachings of Islam and he detested Christianity. But God began to draw him. He started questioning things in his mind. He printed a Bible from the internet. Eventually his family found it, and they asked him why he was reading it. He rejected fear and stood up for his newfound faith in Christ. At first, his family kept this a secret. But then one day, after returning from a trip to Dubai, Obaid came home and a group of religious leaders were there to tell him he must come before the mosque and answer questions

about his so-called conversion. He would potentially be given the death penalty if found guilty of converting to Christianity. His prayer was, “OK, Lord, if you want me to suffer and die, I don’t want to escape.” But God did provide a way of escape. Obaid and his wife received a visa earlier than expected and were able to leave the country just hours before he was to appear before the religious leaders. Even in his new home, though, he has been beaten and received death threats from those who know of his conversion. His picture was put on Facebook with a promise of \$20,000 to anyone who would kill him. He said that the amount later went up to \$50,000. But Obaid continues following Christ, even leading an Afghan Christian church. That is a man who is secure in his relationship with Christ. He knows who he belongs to, and he knows where he will be after death.

That’s the confidence we can have, too, knowing that Christ has secured our salvation in His death and resurrection.

4) Exaltation

Finally, the Servant’s success is seen in His exaltation. This Servant Song began with a statement of exaltation, and now it ends sounding the same note. The last line of verse 10 says, “the will of the Lord shall prosper in his hand.” Or in the NASB, “the good pleasure of the Lord will prosper in His hand.” Remember this is the noun form of the verb that is used at the beginning of the verse. The point is simply that the Lord will assure the Servant’s success. And then the first line of verse 11, “Out of the anguish of his soul he shall see and be satisfied.” Again, this points to the Servant’s success. And more than that, the Servant’s delight and satisfaction in His success. Isn’t this a beautiful thing! Not only did Christ die in our place and account us righteous, but He delights to do so. He accomplished His agonizing mission, and then He looks out over the fruit of His labors, and He is deeply satisfied.

Verse 12 begins with a very important word: “Therefore.” This follows the statement in verse 11 that the servant will make many to be accounted righteous and shall bear their iniquities. And then verse 12 says, “Therefore I will divide him a portion with the many, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong.” This speaks of the Servant’s exaltation. He receives the spoil of the victory. He receives His due reward. And as the rest of the verse emphasizes again, it is “because he poured out his soul to death and was numbered with the transgressors; yet he bore the sin of many, and makes intercession for the transgressors.” The “therefore” at the beginning of verse 12 makes the same connection between Jesus’ humiliation and exaltation as the

“therefore” in **Philippians 2:9**. **“And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name . . .”** Jesus’ humiliation on our behalf is rewarded with great exaltation.

Who is ultimately responsible for Jesus’ death? God the Father is. It was His good pleasure to crush His own beloved Son. For what purpose? To redeem sinners in such a way that would magnify His justice and mercy. And what is the outcome? The Servant succeeded in His task. His death was effective. He will see His offspring. He will make many to be accounted righteous. He will prolong His days. He will be highly exalted.