

‘For’

Isaiah 53

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Bible Text: Isaiah 53:4-9

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I would like to invite you to look with me in your Bibles to Isaiah chapter 53 as we continue our study in this very important chapter in the Old Testament, one that I don't believe we could ever exhaust no matter if we took a lifetime to preach through it. I truly believe that any portion of Scripture, given eyes to see by the Spirit of God, is sufficient to teach us of Christ and his gospel. I often think if I were isolated on an island, cast away and I found one portion of Scripture and that was all I could read for the rest of my life, given the Spirit of God and eyes to see, I could find Christ in that portion no matter where and I would study him. I would make him the object of my research and prayerfully ask him to teach me. And that is certainly what I would desire as we approach Isaiah 53. Let's don't presume that we know it because it is a well known chapter, but truly ask the Lord to teach us every time we open this Word.

I am going to be speaking from verses four through nine, but I would like to read the entire chapter so that we always have the context here and just a very simple and concise title to its message and that is, "For," F O R, "For."

Here we read Isaiah 53 verse one:

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

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

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. 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. 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.¹

So you can see a small three letter word, but that is full of significance. I would have us ponder it, used here in my text in Isaiah 53:5 at least five different times. It is intrinsically attached to the truth of substitution.

If you were to ask me what is the sum of the gospel, it is Christ the substitute and Christ, God's satisfaction. The word "for" is used in the sense of in behalf of. Think of a court case where you are not expected to speak, but you have one that speaks for you. You are the defendant, but you have an advocate and his responsibility is to speak on your behalf. In essence, when he stands before the judge or the jury he represents you. It is not you speaking, but it is him in the place of or in another's room instead.

This is a truth that we find throughout the Scriptures. It goes all the way back to the garden when you think of who preached the first gospel. God did. He did it through a visual lesson. When Adam and Eve fell and they clothed themselves with those fig leaves, God came and took away the fig leaves and killed some innocent animals. Adam and Eve would have stood there and seen the blood shed and flowing and yet they didn't die. It was the victim, the innocent victim in their place with which then they were clothed with that garment. That set the foundation forever as to how God would be just to justify sinners such as we are. There could be no other way.

Unlike one popular grace preacher back in the day who wrote in his book on satisfaction, I still remember, page 33, in my shock where he said it is blasphemy to think that God couldn't have saved in some other way, but this is the way he chose. Dear friends, I prefer to believe the Word than even a man that men esteem in grace circles, but who is dead wrong. You know, there could not have been another way. This is the way that God determined that Christ should die, that his Son should die in the room and stead of those sinners that he purposed to save.

When you come over to the New Testament in Romans chapter four—and I know we are getting away from my text a little bit, but the good thing about it is we can always come

¹ Isaiah 53:1-12.

back to it if we don't get all the way through. I am certainly in no hurry, especially on a matter as important as what I have to deal with today or any day that I stand here. But in Romans chapter four and verse 25 we see this little word used again, "for." And remember that the chapter divisions were put in by editors. The original was just one continuous copy all in caps. And it was back when they determined that these Scriptures needed to be broken down in a way that could be read in a public reading such as we do, brother Mike stands up and reads a portion. Brother Bob, you read a portion. I get up here and read a portion. But these verses have been added. These chapter divisions have been added. And sometimes they are put in places where probably they could have done a better job at it.

So I mention that because really Romans 4:25 and 5:1 are all connected and here is how. We read:

"Who was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification."²

Now the word "for" there must be understood in the sense of in the room of or in the place of. So he was delivered in the place of our offenses. The penalty that we deserved he was delivered on behalf of those offenses. And then the second part is just as true. He was raised again because of our justification. When we read the Scripture we understand that there was a two fold transaction that took place there at the cross, the sin of that people, those sinners that God has purposed to save from all eternity, put to the substitute's account. He is the innocent Lamb. He is the perfect Lamb, spotless Lamb. But in return, upon completion of that work, so complete was that satisfaction that there remained nothing but righteousness to put to the account of those for whom he died. And so in one simple verse of Scripture we have the whole sum of the glorious gospel. It is in a person. Who? Not just in a doctrine. There are many people that give assent to this doctrine that are lost because Christ has never been revealed in their heart.

Who was delivered because of our offenses is the way that word "for" should be understood. And was raised again because of our justification. What it says is that justification must have been then accomplished for God to be satisfied and therefore declared righteous those for whom Christ died.

And you can see the connection then with Romans 5:1.

"Therefore being justified..."³

In this manner. How is it that sinners were justified? It was in, by, through and upon completion of the death of the Lord Jesus Christ. The death of the testator was necessary in order for God to declare righteous those for whom he died.

Now, again, editors not only put in chapter divisions and verses, but they also put in punctuation. And I have to tell you, as much as I prefer and I recommend the King James

² Romans 4:25.

³ Romans 5:1.

Version because it is that translation which is the closest to the original, yet the translators were human and there are times where they imposed their belief system into the translation and I believe this is an example right here where they did in that they put the comma... remember there is no comma in the original. So someone had to put it somewhere. They put the comma after "faith." And so it reads:

"Therefore being justified by faith..."⁴

Well, faith doesn't justify me. Faith did not die on the cross. Faith is not my Savior. Faith is not my Substitute. Faith is not the priceless Lamb, precious unto God. So I would have you move the comma. You can do it. You are not touching the inspired Word. Move it to after justified and you will see how it makes sense.

Therefore being justified, comma. How? According to what we just read in 4:25 in that full, free and final work of the Lord Jesus Christ whereby he cried, "It is finished."⁵

Being justified in him, by him and through his death, now, comma, by faith we have peace with God through the Lord Jesus Christ. That makes sense, because faith is a gift of God. Faith is that gift which Christ himself purchased for his people, the faithful one. And so everyone for whom he died in time he grants them faith to believe and it is by that faith, that objective truth. I don't understand faith here even to be some subjective touchy, feely type of sentiment, but the objective truth. Faith is always in connection with Christ and his death. By that objective truth concerning Christ revealed in the heart, we have peace with God. That peace is established. There is reconciliation of the sinner in his heart to God for whom Christ died through our Lord Jesus Christ. But it is all bound up in his work and what he accomplished.

Dear friends, if the justification of sinners was not fully accomplished at the cross, then we would read there that he was raised in order to justify us. But that is not what it says. That little word "for" says because of. So it declares that it was finished. It was completed there at Calvary. And such is the truth that we find there.

So come back to Isaiah chapter 53. I want us therefore to look at what it was for Christ to be that one who stood in the sinner's place as the substitute. And the first thing that we see here in verse four and five is that as substitute his sufferings were real. They were both physical and spiritual. There was a physical suffering. There was a spiritual suffering.

I have often said that if we want to have an idea of just how God looks upon sin, you know, some would go back to the days of Noah and look how he destroyed a whole world and spared only eight people and they will say, "See, there is an indication of the wrath of God." And certainly that is a picture. Or they might go to Sodom and Gomorrah and see how he destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah and say, "See how just God is in dealing with sin."

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ John 19:30.

But, my friends, if we want to have a clear view of just how holy God is and just how sinful we are, I would say consider that he spared not his own Son, but delivered him up that he might freely give us all things in him. How great is God's justice? It is so great that he would not lower his standard in order to save sinners, that he had to do it in a just way and that just way was in no less than delivering up his Son.

And so in all of his sufferings... You say, "Well, when did Christ's sufferings begin?"

It is from the womb all the way to the cross. He was the sin bearer. You stop and think about what it was for infinite God to take on finiteness. I know this is a mystery. Great is the mystery of godliness. How do you get a whole ocean and put it in a thimble? And yet in that man Jesus of Nazareth that walked upon this earth, he was God in the flesh. And yet we read that he tired. He was weary. He got thirsty. I believe in those senses he was acquainted with grief as it says there in verse three, a man of sorrows.

What is the shortest verse of the Bible?

"Jesus wept."⁶

The point is to show us that as a substitute he was not some Teflon man going through life as if it was some play, some role in a play that he was acting out, how when it is all over with, well, we know everybody is still alive anyway. They are just actors. There was a very real conception. There was a very real birth. There was a very real life that he lived in identifying with those he came to save and we know a very real death, but also a very real resurrection being brought again to life. It was not possible, because of who he is, that his body or soul should see or know corruption. And that is what we see here with regard to Christ as the substitute. He abased himself. He humbled himself.

A great... I believe brother Lane mentioned it when we were reading Scripture just before the time of worship that infinite stoop of God whereby he condescended to become a man.

All of this was necessary to him as being the substitute. Otherwise he wouldn't be a substitute.

"...a body hast thou prepared me,"⁷ is what he said in the Scriptures according to what was written. He had griefs and sorrows. He was acquainted with griefs. These were allotted to him. They weren't because of anything inherent in him. You know, there are some that are trying to say that he had to become exactly what we are. And so they say when the Scripture says that he became sin they actually believe and say that he became sinful. That is not the case. There is no way that he could have been made a sinner and still be the perfect Lamb, the sacrifice. God couldn't have accepted that. No, he bore our sin. He bore our griefs. He bore our sorrows. He did not take our depravity. Such is the

⁶ John 11:35.

⁷ Hebrews 10:5.

substitute that he is. The load was heavy and the way long. None could have borne this but him. It took perseverance. You talk about the things that relate to who we are as men. It took him persevering in obedience unto death. And yet so complete and full was that persevering in his identifying with our sin if we are his, it is that he was able to cry, "It is finished, it is accomplished." It means satisfaction has been made.

But he had blows. He had bruises. It is described here in verse four:

"...yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted."⁸

It was real pain. How he was flogged. There is no man that could bear that sort of flogging that he did in his flesh exposed and blood and endure but what God was with him. I don't believe it is as men portray in some of these movies where you just see him crying out in agony and pain and writhing. I believe that the Scriptures say, just as it says there in verse seven.

"He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth."⁹

There wasn't, you know, some martyrs have died with more grace than that. They have died as the fires leaped up around them singing praises unto God. Why would it be any less for our Lord? You know, he was not wincing at their blows. He was, as it says here, silent.

"...he is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he openeth not his mouth."¹⁰

When he did speak it was to the glory of his Father and the good of those that stood around to hear him. And yet that doesn't in any way diminish the pain he endured. And there is different types of pain when you think about human relationships when his disciples abandoned him.

Think about the last time a person abandoned you, somebody that you were close to and they turned and fled. Imagine your feeling. Imagine your hurt. And our Lord was not exempt from these things. You read in Scripture where it says he groaned in his Spirit. To me that just shows, again, his humanness, but I am thankful, because how many times have I groaned in my spirit and yet he the forerunner. My eyes are caused to turn to him and to know that anything I go through can't even compare to what my Lord endured for my sin. And I deserve justly what comes to me, but he did not. He was wronged and abused and when it says there in verse seven he was oppressed, that word literally means injuriously treated. He was dealt with hardly. He endured the contradiction of sinners against himself. Yet in all that he opened not his mouth.

It says there that he was cut off.

⁸ Isaiah 53:4.

⁹ Isaiah 53:7.

¹⁰ Ibid.

“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.”¹¹

That just simply means he didn't die a natural death, that his death was an execution. He was stricken to death and that, again, according to God's sentence. Such was the lot that he would bear as the substitute in the place of, for those sinners that he came to represent.

So we see that clearly set forth, him as the substitute in all that the endured. But, as I said, it is not just physical, it is spiritual. I can't imagine what it is for him to be the just one dying for the unjust, but that is the significance of what Paul wrote in 2 Corinthians 5:21 where it said he was made sin, not made sinful, because it very clearly says he was made sin who knew no sin. How was he made sin? Well, verse 10 gives us that explanation.

“Yet it pleased the LORD to bruise him.”¹²

There wasn't one hand raised against him. There was not one nail driven or one piece of that whip that whipped him but what it pleased the Lord to bruise him.

When you see “pleased” there it doesn't that the Father was giddy, rejoicing, laughing. No, but it speaks of his good pleasure. It was the Lord's good pleasure to so bruise him in this manner. And yet men did not add one stripe to his body or affliction to his pain but what the Lord himself directed it. He bore the full weight of the curse of sin. It says he hath put him to grief.

People are trying to figure out who is to blame for Christ being crucified. Some say it is the Jews. Some say it is the Romans. Everybody has got somebody they are blaming. Well, if he died for me, my sin put him there and if he died as my substitute, God the Father put him there for, in the place of this sinner. Such was his will.

But you can see how it was done when it says:

“...when thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin.”¹³

And here is the part where I have to stand back and wonder. You know, when Christ died on the cross there were three hours of darkness, so great that none could see. I believe there was an entering in of Christ into the veil, because at that time it says the veil in the temple was rent in twain from top to bottom. That means a man didn't do it. If it was a man he would have cut it from the bottom up. But this was from the top to bottom. This is God himself now putting away all of that Old Testament sacrifice, that Old Testament law. It was fulfilled. It was done. This was the Son entering in to the Father not with the blood of bulls and goats, but with his own precious blood entering in through the veil through his flesh and baring, his soul baring an offering for sin.

¹¹ Isaiah 53:8.

¹² Isaiah 53:10.

¹³ Ibid.

And it says there:

“...he shall see his seed.”¹⁴

The Father would see his seed. Who is his seed? It is his son. It is not us the seed. Christ is the seed. And the Father would see that seed and prolong his days. In other words, raise him again unto everlasting glory.

“...and the pleasure of the LORD shall prosper in his hand.”¹⁵

And so when it says that he was made sin, he was made a sin offering. He bore in his body and his soul the full weight of sin of his people to such a degree, dear friends, that upon completion of his death God raised him from the dead, again, because of justification, because there was no more reason for him to suffer.

And Christ today is no longer the sin bearer. Where he is seated in glory it is not as the sin bearer. Sin has been put away. God is satisfied. And it is not that he is put here pleading now for God to be merciful to those for whom he died. Scripture says that just like the high priest of old that went into that holiest of holies with the blood of the animal once a year bore the names of the children of Israel on his breastplate, so Christ having entered in, when he died his people died. When he rose again, they rose again. When he is seated in the heavenlies, they are seated in the heavenlies with him. His very presence alone is satisfaction.

You know I am not as sure of heaven as my own name, but if he died for me, I am as sure of heaven as his own name, because God will not deny his Son. To think that somehow he laid down his life for people that end up hell anyway, what kind of God would that be? What kind of substitute would that be? Can you imagine someone being a lifeguard for the summer and at the end of the summer they ask, “Well, how was it?” And the lifeguard said, “Well, it was all right, but I lost about 90 percent of the people I tried to save”? What kind of lifeguard would that be? But that is the kind of Savior that this world is proclaiming, that somehow he came with some general plan and laid down his life and now it is time for a pity party. Let’s see if we can get as many to rally behind him as possible, because we certainly want more in heaven than hell. That is kind of the way they reason.

What kind of substitute that can’t do his own work? What kind of Savior that can’t save? That is no Savior at all. That is not the Christ of Scripture. That is not this substitute that is spoken of here. He is a sure Savior.

And so having seen him as that substitute, his trial, his temptation, he was tempted in all things such as we yet without sin. What a forerunner, what a blessed Redeemer to whom we are drawn and we rest in hope. But when we come back here and look at just the

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Ibid.

meaning of his sufferings as the substitute, you know, there were those in his day that saw him physically hanging on a tree that remained lost. They mocked him. They went their way.

On the other hand, we know that there were some who initially did not see him for who he is and mocked him just like that thief on the cross, railed against him. You know, crucifixion, a place of crucifixion is not a pleasant place. The stench of death, of flesh, of blood, of rotting flesh, because many times they just took bodies and threw them over the cliff. The whole place was a place of death and it was there that God purposed to deliver up his Son and yet in the middle of it all, there were some that the Lord purposed to save and caused them to see just like that thief on the cross who in his final hour, you know, you stop and think, “Lord, remember me when you come in your kingdom.” He was looking physically at a man who was identifying with him in his death, hands tied, feet nailed, dying. And yet by the Spirit of God caused to see that he, indeed, was the substitute.

“...remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom.”¹⁶

And the Lord said:

“To day shalt thou be with me in paradise.”¹⁷

Or that hardened centurion. You know, those centurions that were given that task of crucifying criminals, you know, for him it was just another death. For him it was just one more person to see suffering and executed, hardened and yet there came a time when his eyes were opened and the Spirit of God broke that man down to where he said:

“Truly this man was the Son of God.”¹⁸

Never has a man died as this man died. He saw something in the death of the Lord Jesus Christ. And I will tell you, I don't care how hardened any person is sitting here listening. If the Lord paid your debt he is going to bring you. He is going to draw you and he is going to cause you to see his glory in his death and you won't be able to explain it to anybody else. You won't have to, because unless the Lord died of that other person, it doesn't pertain to them anyway. This is a testimony for a poor sinner whom the Lord would not leave to himself to cause to see the glory of Christ in his death.

I don't know about you, but I can't read verse five without considering myself. You know, my sins nailed him there.

“But he was wounded for our transgressions.”¹⁹

¹⁶ Luke 23:42.

¹⁷ Luke 23:43.

¹⁸ Matthew 27:54; Mark 15:39.

¹⁹ Isaiah 53:5.

That is not everybody's. That is those whom God himself has chosen and made to see their need of Christ and have no hope in any other. He was wounded for our transgressions. He was bruised for our iniquities.

Do you see any condition put there? Certain sins. It just... it sums them all up. Our transgressions. That is... you say, "You know, I am not a murderer. I am not a thief."

Oh, yes you are. You know, you have robbed God of his glory from the time you came forth from the womb. You came forth speaking lies.

I will tell you this. If you are the Lord's and he bought you. He will cause you to see that. He will cause you to see that, you know, just my going my own way will be enough for him to send me to hell. But why didn't he? Why doesn't he if he paid the debt? So complete and full is that debt, I stand justified in him.

"...he was bruised for [because of] our iniquities."²⁰

It wasn't anything in him.

"...the chastisement of our peace was upon him."²¹

It is not talking there about some subjective peace where people run around trying to feel at peace with God. No, the chastisement of our legal peace, what it would take for God to be just and declare me righteous. That chastisement that I deserve fell upon him. And, notice:

"...with his stripes we [not shall be healed, but] are healed."²²

If someone asked me today when was I saved, do you know what I would tell him? Some 2000 years ago when it pleased God to take my sin and put it to the account of the Savior and take his righteous and put it to this poor sinner's account. I wasn't even there. That shows that it is completely outside myself. But in time he brought me by his Spirit to see that I was that sinner for whom he died and caused me to look to him and cry unto him. But it is by his stripes. That word "are" is in the sense of have been healed. You talk about peace and rest. You know, I am not having to deal with a God that has to be satisfied every day. I have got to get up and make sure I do my devotions and pray and watch my step and make sure that, you know, I am living right. No, it had to do with Christ having lived right, righteously and Christ having paid the debt. And either he paid it or he didn't. Either I was healed, I am healed by those stripes or there is no healing. But it is certainly not in attempts that I make. Those are all false, but it is in what he has accomplished.

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Ibid.

²² Ibid.

Well, I pray the Lord will take his Word and bring it home to our hearts. As I said in the beginning it is all about worshipping him. And may that faith the Lord would grant us be more than just an assent to the truth. May he truly bring us to bow and to worship him as the Savior and the Substitute.

All right, brother Mike...