

The Man of Sorrows

Isaiah 53

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Bible Text: Isaiah 53:1,2

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Alright. Let's take our Bibles and look together in Isaiah 53. Isaiah 53. I know you're not supposed to have favorite chapters, but it's hard not to like Isaiah 53, and how the Lord has used it to the converting of the souls of many of His sheep. I think of Philip proclaiming this word to the Ethiopian eunuch, the Lord having already prepared his heart to read, and the Lord bringing Philip alongside many years later, and how we're blessed today to read it and to hear it. I guess I'm a little bit odd when it comes to not worrying about numbers of people to hear. I used to. I used to worry about it. But if I told you that a master chef was coming to town, and that you and your spouse were the only two invited to come and sit while he prepared you a meal and enjoyed it, versus he's coming to town, and you can join thirty-thousand others to watch him do his thing. Which would you prefer? I'd rather be that one that had all the attention of the master chef. I don't care how many others aren't there. But if he has drawn me, then I'm going to feed what he's given to me. And that's, ever since the Lord began that work of grace in my eyes, it caused my eyes to be taken off of men. Stop worrying about what others think, or whether they believe. That's the Lord's work to do. But if He has drawn me, if He has drawn this poor sinner, then it's a mercy above anything I could ever imagine just to sit at the Master's feet and be like that Shunammite woman that said, "Just the crumbs from the Master's table." Crumbs of mercy. And that's what I pray. And I'm thankful that the Lord has brought you here today too to share in this.

But my subject is Man of Sorrows. And we're going to read from Isaiah 53 from verse 1 down to verse 9. But we're going to take our time going through this. There is a lot here, and time is one thing we do have, as long as the Lord gives us breath. So let's go down through it line by line. Isaiah 53 beginning with verse 1.

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

We're going to be singing it at the end of this message. "Man of sorrows what a name for the Son of God, who came ruined sinners to reclaim: Hallelujah, what a Savior!" The Gospel is a mystery and unless the Lord Himself, by His Spirit, reveals His word in the heart of the sinner, it will remain a mystery. There will always be an ignorance. There will always be a perversion. There will always be a denial of it. And so, the chapter here, Isaiah 53:1, begins with that question which the Lord directed Isaiah to ask. "Who hath believed our report?" In many ways, in every way, the Gospel to the natural mind of men is the most unbelievable word. Great is the mystery of godliness. God became flesh. I think there is a danger among men to try to simplify it, try to come at it from a different angle just to try to take away the edge a little bit and help people that oppose it to try to embrace it. You can't come at this thing sideways. In fact, our Lord said, "Thieves and robbers come over the wall, but the shepherd calls his sheep through the door." That door is narrow, but his sheep hear his voice, and they follow him.

And so, the question is asked, "Who hath believed our report?" Who among this world and this generation has believed, notice, the report, or our report, that which the Lord has given His true messengers to declare without compromise, without watering it down. And I heard it said a number of years ago, and this was back where it was an African preacher that was preaching, because they use a machete to go out and clear their field. You talk about hard labor. Just to plant a rice field they've got to, once a year, go out with a machete, and tear down some overgrown brush that has grown up, and get it ready for the rainy season, so when it rains they can have some food to eat. And I heard a preacher say to his fellow preachers, "Who among you just gets up in the morning, and goes out, and says, 'I don't care if the machete is sharp or not. Let's just go out and chop,' like a lot of people say of the Gospel. 'Let's just go preach. It doesn't matter.'"

I've seen these people. And you can see it during the season when they're getting their fields ready in the early morning, seven, eight, nine in the morning, before the sun gets hot. You can hear people all around, your neighbors, sharpening their machetes. They get a file, and it's just a "sharp, sharp, sharp, sharp." They're making it sharp. Once they get out there and cut for about a half an hour or forty-five minutes, they sit down and sharpen it again. They spend their day sharpening that machete before they go to work. And if in things of life such things are necessary, how much more so with regard to the Gospel,

declaring it, setting it forth, just as God has declared it. Like Paul said, "That which I have received of the Lord I declare unto you." We dare not add to it or take from it to try to make it palatable, to try to make it believable. It's impossible for a natural mind to embrace what is revealed here, unless the Lord Himself is pleased to reveal Him in the heart of the sinner.

And you can see that's Isaiah's declaration there in Isaiah 53. He preached to a generation that was religious. The temple was there in his day. They were offering sacrifices. The priesthood was active. But to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed? I don't know if you are burdened by that or not, but I am. It's not that people don't attend church. They do. I watch them going into these buildings, in some cases carrying a Bible, in other cases not. But that isn't the problem. The problem, or the question, is "to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed?" And I would say the same here. Has Christ been made unto you wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, redemption? That's how Paul describes the work of the Lord. That's how those are identified that are truly His and all others lost. That He was made unto us wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption, that they that glory, glory in the Lord.

So this was obviously a burden even on Isaiah's mind. What follows here in this chapter is a thorough and precise declaration of the Gospel. That's why I want us to look at it word by word, line upon line, wherein Christ is its very subject. When we talk about the Gospel, here it's our report, the report of the Gospel is the declaration of Christ. He is the sum and substance of it. Mike, you brought that out aptly in your message and I'll remind us of what you quoted and read in Romans 1 in verses 1 through 4. I believe when people ask us, "Well, how do you define the Gospel?" My answer would be, "Let the Gospel define the Gospel. Let the Word define the Gospel." And you can't find any clearer declaration in Isaiah 53, but here in Romans 1, "Paul, a servant of Jesus Christ, called to be an apostle, separated unto the Gospel of God," and if you know anything about grammar it continues, there's a comma there, "Which." So what does He declare? What does He state the Gospel to be? "He had promised afore by His prophets in the Holy Scriptures." I've mentioned to you before, sitting at breakfast with a preacher over in Dallas and I about fell out of the seat at Ihop when he said, "There's no Gospel in the Old Testament." His view is that had to do with Jews. It had to do with the Law. It had to do with the Jewish nation. Well, that's a denial right here of what Paul said. "Who had promised before by His prophets in the Holy Scriptures, and how much clearer can it be concerning His Son, Jesus Christ our Lord, which was made of the seed of David according to the flesh; and declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the Spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead."

Notice even the choice of words by the Spirit as He directed the apostle Paul to write this. He was made of the seed of David. He wasn't always flesh. "A body has Thou prepared for Me." But he was declared to be the Son of God. He's ever been the Son of God. So just as Isaiah was caused to write there in Isaiah 9:6, "Unto us a child is born, unto us a Son is given." A child born. That's His humanity. A Son given. Whose Son is He? The Son of God.

And I believe all the way down through this portion here coming back to Isaiah 53, it's clear that the Gospel concerns the Lord Jesus Christ, but not just in title, not just in name, but who He is, what He accomplished, why He did it, for whom He did it, and where He is now. All of that is declared right here. Notice in the verses that I read, and this could be stated all the way through the chapter, but how many times the word "He" is used. I took the time in reading, preparing, to underscore. I didn't count them, but in every verse, "He shall grow up before him as a tender plant. He hath no form nor comeliness. He is despised and rejected. Surely He hath born our griefs. Yet we did esteem Him stricken. He was wounded. He was bruised. The chastisement of our peace was upon Him." And so in every one of these declarations, we can see Christ being glorified.

Now there are numerous descriptions of our Lord Jesus and His glorious titles. I still have a book on my shelf that I bought, I don't know, years ago back when I was in college on the different divine titles of Christ and it's a very interesting study. Someone took the time to put all of these titles alphabetically, and all it does is go through and quote Scripture. But it's in alphabetical order. The titles of Christ. It's about that thick. It's unbelievable. It's all here. It's declared. And I'm sure like any of us, we have our favorite titles. I love to speak of Christ as the Redeemer; Christ as the Substitute; Christ as the Great Shepherd.

But here we have a title that is not so much one that men like to think about or even think about, and that is Man of Sorrows. Do you see it there in verse 3? "He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows." Now when some read that, immediately, it evokes in their minds an attitude of pity. But I would have you to understand that Christ, the Spirit of God, did not declare Him to be a man of sorrows in order to evoke pity on our part, but so often that's how He's preached. Preachers will stand up, and they want to play on people's emotions and get them to make a decision for Christ, so called, out of pity. "Look what happened to Him. Are you going to continue in your unbelief and cause that these sufferings that He suffered be for naught?" That's how often that Christ is declared.

But I would tell you that He is called the Man of Sorrows, not so much out of pity, but out of necessity. It was necessary that a body be prepared. It was necessary, even as we read in Hebrews 9, that He come as the satisfaction and completion, fulfillment, of all that was written of Him in the Old Testament. It was necessary that He come as the Lamb of God, and not to live a pristine life never to be touched with the infirmities of those He came to save, but to be numbered among the transgressors. Don't picture a lamb. He had to be perfect in Himself, and He was, but don't think of a lamb as you see in Bible storybooks many times, just a clean, washed lamb. I'm sure that having lived in this life, the wool of that lamb got dirty through walking through life. It didn't affect the nature of the lamb, but our Lord, in walking through this world, and bearing the sins of His people endured suffering, endured affliction, but all of it for the purpose of Him being taken to the cross.

If you look over in Philippians 2. When I read, "Man of Sorrows," and the Spirit of God, the Spirit of grace, revealing this one in my own heart, it doesn't evoke pity, but it evokes praise, honor, and glory unto Him. Here in Philippians 2 notice, beginning with verse 5,

"Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: Who, being in the very form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God." Here again, Scripture explains Scripture. Being in the form of God does not mean that He was like God. It means He was God, because the second part explains it. "Thought it not robbery to be equal with God." There is no division in the godhead and again, this is a mystery that men try to reason, and I've heard all the explanations. You can't have a stool that stands on just two legs. There has to be three. But we're talking about an eternal godhead. And the three are one. And yet there is the Father, the Son, and the Spirit. There's no hierarchy within the godhead, even when it talks in terms of the Son being subject to the Father. It was as a man that He was subject but as God, He has ever been God, and continues to be God, and ever shall be.

But He "thought it not robbery to be equal with God: but made Himself of no reputation." I've heard some, and you may have even thought it yourself, how the sin of His people might affect His reputation. "Be careful how you act. Be careful what you say. You don't want to hurt Christ's reputation." You can't get any lower than He was made. He made Himself of no reputation. He identified with the worst of sinners. There's nothing you can do or say, or I can do or say, that's in any way going to affect Christ's reputation. He already came as the sin bearer. He bore that sin. And rather than being worried about when you fall, "Oh no, I wonder how this is going to affect Christ's reputation," be thankful that if He has taught you of Him as Christ the Redeemer, Christ the Man of Sorrows, in your mind and heart you be brought to say, "Yes, Lord, even for that sin, You paid the debt. Even for that."

He was made "of no reputation, and took upon Him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men." Notice how important these words are. He wasn't in the likeness of God. He was God, equal with God, but He had to be made in the likeness of men. In other words, He had to be a man as if He were not man, but He had to be in their likeness, but at the same time not being made in their depravity. There is a reason why it says, "Made in the likeness of men." He had to be perfect in that flesh, and yet that flesh could not be anything less than who we are. He took our sin, but He did not take our depravity and that's important. He was made sin. He was made a sin offering. He was judged of His Father as if He were that sinner, but He was not the sinner.

"Made in the likeness of men: and being found in fashion as man, He humbled Himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross." This is the sense in which He was called a Man of Sorrows. In other words, a man, flesh of our flesh and bone of our bones, a man and of sorrows, not in Himself necessarily being sorrowful in the sense of evoking pity, but identifying with the grief, identifying with the sin, identifying with the affliction, the infirmities of those He came to save.

And it says, so perfect was His work, verse 9, "Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name: That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; And that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father." He's no longer the Man of Sorrows. He is not now being a sin bearer in heaven.

He bore it. He put it away. It's done. He has now been given a name that is above every name, but we in reflection go back and see what it was for Him to be called the Man of Sorrows. That's why in Hebrews 9, the portion I just read, it says, "When He comes again it will be without sin to the salvation of His people." It doesn't mean that He was sinful, but without sin in the sense that sin has been put away. Those for whom He comes, their sin has already been put away. When was it put away? There at the cross. How was it put away? In His obedience unto death. When Christ died, that's where God justified His people. The reason is sacrifices ceased, or should have. It took the Lord completely destroying the temple some forty years later to make that clear. Don't go back in there. Don't sew the veil back up again and act like nothing was accomplished. It's done. It's finished. Christ is that sacrifice. Christ is that high priest.

So our looking at this today as the Man of Sorrows is in remembrance. It's to look at what it took. How that Christ endured that suffering and that shame of the cross that sinners such as we might be saved. Do you realize that this is what is the offense of the cross? And this is why the more you declare it, the more you find out who really is the Lord's and who isn't, who has believed this report, in whom the arm of the Lord has been revealed.

In Galatians, if you look at chapter 5, Galatians chapter 5. Christ as He is being preached today in many, I would say in most of Christendom, is a Christ that is popular. That is what men want. They want somebody that is in their hands that they can, like Play-Doh, take and mold and shape however they want. And that's how preachers preach Him. "Here He is. He's done all He could do, but now He is waiting for you." And I sadly, to my shame, say that I was involved in and taught all of those tactics in so called evangelism classes. We literally had classes on how to deal with different types of people, whether it was a Jew, whether it was a Muslim, whether it was a Jehovah's Witness. It required a different approach. And I thought I was wise. You go back in your mind and think, "Okay, I'm dealing with a Jew now. Here's how I've got to approach Him." You found yourself actually going through a sequence in your mind, because that's how you thought you were to convince people. But what I've found is, it doesn't matter the background. You don't have to go and study what's false in order to show what's true. It's like one preacher said, "Lay the straight stick down each time, and it will show what's crooked." But the cross, or Christ, clearly declared, set forth without compromise, will always be an offense to any sinner out there, regardless of their religious affiliation until or unless God is pleased to reveal Him in the heart. That's the only way anybody is going to believe this report.

And Paul declared that over here in Galatians chapter, I put 5:15, but I don't believe that's the right portion that I was looking for. It might be in Philippians where he talks about the offense of the cross. I will have to find it. I will find it later.

But the offense of the cross is just that. It's the cross declared as the one means of satisfaction for God, and the necessity, as we read in Hebrews 9, of His death. And religionists, they attempt to minimize that offense by preaching up what men did to Christ. They make a martyr out of Christ, and we're getting into that time of year right

now where this is being played out in passion plays; it's being played out in pulpits trying to evoke emotional responses, just like the movie that was done by Mel Gibson a number of years ago. You can watch that whole thing and just come away with tears just because of the physical view of what men did to Him. What a lot of people don't know is that Mel Gibson, as an artist, as a producer, by his own declaration, did that movie as a form of penance to show the different stations of the cross and that be his offering unto God for all of his "mistakes," is the way he would speak of them. I was shocked to hear that, and I don't know why I was shocked, but in an interview this is what he said, "This is my gift to God." I don't know what he did with all of the money that he made. It's just to say that men would rather have a martyr and rally behind the cause of a martyr to seek to solicit pity for him, rather than to have a substitute, rather than to have Him be declared as the Savior.

But coming back to Isaiah 53:10, notice, we didn't read it, but we will get to it. "Yet it pleased the Lord to bruise Him". Yet it pleased the Lord to bruise Him. Sure, men took Him and with wicked hands crucified Him, but it was the Lord. It pleased the Lord to bruise Him. He hath put Him to grief. And it brings me to the conclusion, how great then must be the justice of God that He spared not His own Son but delivered Him up. But secondly, how great must be the nature of sin that nothing less could be accepted than such a death. Such a payment that the Lord Jesus Christ Himself delivered up.

So it's not pity, which the Man of Sorrows demands but worship, but praise, but honor, and glory, and so, what we have here is a portrait of our Lord Jesus in His life and death through His sufferings. Now, I didn't particularly bring this out as we were going through Isaiah, but what we are reading here some have described as being part of a song, just the way that it's written in the Hebrew, almost a poetic form much as we sing hymns, as we are going to sing here in a minute. "Man of Sorrows what a name!" But this actually began back, if you will, in Isaiah 42. And again, I'm just trying to lay some groundwork here for us, so you can see pattern and design.

It's one thing that fascinates me. I don't know why. It's just the way the Lord has made me. I could be on a little architectural tour like we went on in Chicago in a little boat, and they were taking us around and showing us the buildings of Chicago and everybody was kind of pointing out something different, and I'm looking at the design. I'm looking at how it's made, how it's put together, how it stands. These are things that fascinate me. If I go out shopping for a car, I like to know how the motor is built; I like to know how the body is; I like to know a little bit about the design of it, not just that it's got four wheels and that it drives.

And that's how I like to read the Scripture. There is a design, there is a progression, in Scripture, and it's how the Lord, as He began to deal in my heart, brought me to see that all of this book from beginning to end has to do with Christ and Him crucified. The Lord set it out in type, in picture, in pattern, in prophecy, in promise, and then fulfillment. Just like Paul said, "First the natural, then the spiritual." And there is a progression here that is like a concerto that has a crescendo as we go through Isaiah, and in Isaiah 42, remember this in verses 1 through 4? This is written in the form of a song. So those that have

studied the Scriptures in the original, even more than I, say this is like the first song. This is like the first verse of the hymn.

"Behold My servant, whom I uphold; Mine elect, in whom My soul delighteth; I have put My spirit upon Him: He shall bring forth judgment to the Gentiles." Meaning He will satisfy justice for the nations, Gentiles meaning nations.

"He shall not cry, nor lift up, nor cause His voice to be heard in the street. A bruised reed shall He not break, and the smoking flax shall He not quench: He shall bring forth judgment unto truth." Again, bring forth judgment, work out a righteousness in a body, in the flesh, notice, unto truth, so that when this is all said and done, those that He came to save will have a legal, just standing before a holy God. I like that. He satisfied the Law. He dotted every "i" and crossed every "t."

"He shall not fail nor be discouraged, till He have set judgment," established righteousness, "in the earth: and the isles shall wait for His law." Shall wait for that Law which declares them justified based upon, or upon completion of His work.

So that's one of the songs, but notice it's a servant song, "Behold my Servant." It's like we have in Isaiah 53. It's a servant song. But the second one we saw was in Isaiah 49. And again, nothing in Scripture is repetitive just for the sake of repeating. There is a pattern. There is a reason. Here in Isaiah 49 in conjunction with Isaiah 42 we see the Servant's mission. Here we see that opposition that He was to face. The Servant's call. It says, "Listen, O isles, unto Me; and hearken, ye people, from far; The Lord hath called Me from the womb; from the bowels of My mother hath He made mention of My name." Remember when we studied that? Again, it's talking about this one that thought it not robbery to be equal with God, but made Himself of no reputation. He became a man.

"He hath made My mouth like a sharp sword; in the shadow of His hand hath He hid Me, and made Me a polished shaft; in His quiver hath He hid Me; And said unto Me, Thou art My servant," again a servant's song, "O Israel, in whom I will be glorified." It's just like the voice from heaven that said, "This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased." This is God's Servant. This is God's salvation.

"Then I said, I have laboured in vain, I have spent my strength for nought, and in vain: yet surely my judgment is with the Lord, and my work with my God. And now, saith the Lord that formed me from the womb to be his servant, to bring Jacob again to him, Though Israel be not gathered, yet shall I be glorious in the eyes of the Lord, and my God shall be my strength. And he said, It is a light thing that thou shouldest be my servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob, and to restore the preserved of Israel: I will also give thee for a light to the Gentiles, that thou mayest be my salvation unto the end of the earth. Thus saith the Lord, the Redeemer of Israel, and his Holy One, to him whom man despiseth, to him whom the nation abhorreth, to a servant of rulers, Kings shall see and arise, princes also shall worship, because of the Lord that is faithful, and the Holy One of Israel, and he shall choose thee." There again is a servant's song. It shows His humiliation, but also His triumph. I believe both of those are important.

And then in Isaiah 50 just a chapter or two over, remember we studied this? Again, the servant theme in Isaiah 50:4, "The Lord God hath given Me the tongue of the learned, that I should know how to speak a word in season to him that is weary: He wakeneth morning by morning, He wakeneth Mine ear to hear as the learned. The Lord God hath opened Mine ear." Remember, that's the picture of the bondservant.

"And I was not rebellious, neither turned away back. I gave My back to the smiters, and My cheeks to them that plucked off the hair: I hid not My face from shame and spitting. For the Lord God will help Me; therefore shall I not be confounded: therefore have I set my face like a flint," in other words towards the cross, "and I know that I shall not be ashamed. He is near that justifieth Me; who will contend with Me? let us stand together: who is Mine adversary? let Him come near to Me. Behold, the Lord God will help Me; who is He that shall condemn Me? lo, they all shall wax old as a garment; the moth shall eat them up." Again, a servant to do the work and will of the Father in the salvation of sinners, but a triumphant servant.

So each one of these portions is considered to be a song, a hymn, a praise. That's how we're to read Isaiah 53 which is the fourth of the Servant's songs, but actually, as I said before, begins back in verse 13. The editors put in these chapter divisions, but if we could move that 53 back to the end of verse 12, I believe we would have a better picture here of this song because it begins there in the same way. Verse 13, "Behold, My servant shall deal prudently, He shall be exalted and extolled, and be very high. As many were astonished at Thee; His visage was so marred more than any man, and His form more than the sons of men: So shall He sprinkle many nations; the kings shall shut their mouths at Him: for that which had not been told them shall they see; and that which they had not heard shall they consider." And then it says, "Who hath believed this report? And to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed?" We know the answer. It is to those for whom Christ died. It is those for whom He paid the debt.

So I'm going to stop there for this time. I would like to have you read it, and Lord willing, as we work down through it, we are going to see this progression through Isaiah 53. How not only that He was the Man of Sorrows, but how He became the Man of Sorrows and His rejection as the Man of Sorrows. His mission, His chastisement, His submission willingly to it, but ultimately the glorious end of what it accomplished. So much more there than what we can touch on, but my prayer is that already the Lord would be drawing our heart to Him.