

Iniquity Laid On Him

Isaiah

By Ken Wimer

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Shreveport Grace Church

2970 Baird Road

Shreveport, LA 71118

Website: www.shrevegrace.org

Online Sermons: www.sermonaudio.com/shreveportgracech

If you will, look with me in Isaiah 53. We've been studying through Isaiah 53 verse by verse. I can't tell how long it's going to take us but certainly we're not in a hurry. It is God's word and the portrait of Christ, his glory that we see portrayed here is certainly one of those priceless treasures of which we have just sung.

Isaiah 53 and I'll be preaching primarily from verse 6, talking about "Iniquity Laid On Him." Iniquity laid on him, but let's begin in 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.

So in the few moments that we have together here in God's word, that's where I would pray that the Spirit of God would draw our attention to consider together today what it is that the iniquity of sinners was laid upon him.

Now, we've all heard of cases in courts where the wrong person has been judged and condemned. They're going back now with DNA and actually finding out that certain people that were executed back in the day were innocent and, of course, that unleashes all kinds of lawsuits, anger, people upset because, in essence, iniquity was taken and imputed to somebody that they feel was innocent and they cry, "Unjust! It's an injustice." Well, that may be so in the court of men and yet when you stop and consider how it is that God has purposed to save sinners, it is in just this way: to take the sin of those

sinner that he has purposed to save and charge it to the account, not of just anybody, but his own precious Son. As I mentioned last time, when you consider what it was that God spared not his own Son but delivered him up, what must then be the holiness of God? What must then be the justice of God?

Men in their prejudice would easily say, "Ah, just take it and impute it to this guy over here because he doesn't deserve to live anyway." That's kind of the way people react. "Let's be rid of him anyway because he's a scoundrel, so let's just impute this to him and be done with it." That's the way men reason, but when you stop and consider that the way, the exclusive way that God purposed to save sinners was to take their sin and to put it to the account, not just of an innocent man but of a righteous man, and through that to establish righteousness that God himself might be just to declare those sinners for whom he died just, we shake our head and we wonder.

But dear friends, that the sum of the Gospel. That's why we're gathered here today as we do every week day over and over again, to exalt a God who would not lower his standard in order to save sinners but justly take their sin and put it to the account of his Son and that he would willingly, not in a fight, not in a rebellion, not in a countersuit saying, "Oh, it's not just," but that he would willingly take their sin and bear it to the satisfaction of a holy God to such a degree that there remains nothing of the wrath of God, that there remains nothing but righteousness to impute, so satisfactory was his death.

There is a lot in this particular word here in verse 6 of Isaiah 53 where it says, "and the LORD hath laid on him," his Son, "the iniquity of us all." I just have a few points to help us consider this. First of all, consider how that sin was laid on him. How was sin laid upon the Lord Jesus Christ? Well, it says very specifically there, doesn't it? "The LORD hath laid on him the iniquity of us all." There are some today that would take the trial of our Lord Jesus Christ and his death and they spend all kinds of time trying to show how it was a false trial and that there were false witnesses and that had certain ones stood up perhaps he would not have been crucified or he would not have died. All of that is, dear friends, false thinking because very clearly Isaiah, the Spirit inspired words that we read here were written some 500 years before it took place. You know, men always try to figure out somebody to blame whenever there is what they consider a mistrial. I will tell you that there was no mistrial with our Lord Jesus Christ; that nothing happened or took place in his life all the way to that cross but what the Lord, his Father, laid it upon him.

Isn't that what your Scriptures say? That's what I read here, "And the LORD hath laid on him the iniquity of us all." That's how it was done. It was an act of justice. Not that he deserved it. And notice it says there, "the LORD laid on him the iniquity." He did not put the iniquity in him. Christ bore the sin but he did not take the depravity. He had to be just, just like those Old Testament lambs had to be without fault and blameless. So just as the scapegoat where the hands were laid upon that scapegoat and there was a transference of guilt to the scapegoat where the scapegoat died, such was the case of our Lord. The sin, the iniquity, the transgression, was laid on him in a manner of justice or of establishing righteousness. It's the Lord's doing.

If you look over here in Acts 2 and I'm thankful that we have the entire word where Scripture explains Scripture. We're not left to ourselves to wonder about these things. Here in Acts 2, in Peter's message there on the day of Pentecost, notice what verse 22 and 23 say, "Ye men of Israel, hear these words; Jesus of Nazareth, a man approved of God among you by miracles and wonders and signs, which God did by him in the midst of you, as ye yourselves also know," notice, "Him, being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain." Notice here that the accountability was not removed from those that crucified him. Peter very specifically addresses them as having "wicked hands who have taken and have crucified and slain," and yet we cannot detach it from the first part of the verse in verse 23, "Him, being delivered by," and again, the double emphasis, "determinate counsel."

When you talk about this counsel, what counsel was it? It was that eternal counsel of God whereby the Father, the Son and the Spirit, there was eternal agreement. We talk in terms of chronology, "Well, the three met together and determined that the Son should be the one to be the substitute," but it's eternal. It has always been determined. It has always been purposed that Christ should be the substitute for sinners. Even before God created the world and there again, people are shocked when you tell them that the fall of Adam was not a surprise to God. It was purposed because before ever there was a sinner, there was the Savior in the eternal determinate counsel of God, that he should come and he should bear the sin of those people that God has purposed to save, those sinners.

Notice it says he was "delivered by that determinate counsel," which means that nothing happened to him but what was already determined, and then it says, "and foreknowledge of God." That order is important. People get confused by that word "foreknowledge." They think it just means that God looked down through history to see what would happen and then determined according to what would happen. Well, that would be backwards. The reason he has foreknowledge as God of what takes place is because he has determined afore what should happen. That's why he has foreknowledge. We don't have that. We can make plans. We can say, "Tomorrow I'm going to do this or that," but we have to quickly say, "If God will," because we have no determinate counsel.

Try determining just one little thing for me this year: try to determine to never get a cold. Just determine, "I'm not going to get a cold." You know, I fall into that trap every once in a while. We got together with some people and she told me about some little Neosporin you take and you put in your nose every day and if you do that you'll never get a cold, never have to worry about a thing, you'd just be healthy. I fell for the thing. I even had my wife go and get some Neosporin and I've been putting that thing in my nose and for about three weeks, I thought, "You know, this works. This is pretty good." Then I started getting a cough; I started feeling weak; started getting a fever. I go into Velocity Care and they say, "You've got pneumonia." I've never had pneumonia in my life. The first thing I blamed was the Neosporin. But we know better. You know, some simple little thing like that that we can't determine, how on earth could we ever think that we can decide anything in this manner.

That's why I'm thankful salvation is of the Lord because it rests entirely in one whom God the Father determined should be the surety and the substitute and the Savior and according to his determinate counsel was delivered up. In other words, paid the debt to the satisfaction of God the Father. This is an amazing mystery of God's providence because those that crucified him that day were doing their will. They were doing exactly what they wanted to do. When they cried, "Crucify him! Crucify him!" it wasn't God forcing them to cry that, he left them to their own reprobate minds and they delivered him up, but in so doing, they were accomplishing the will of God the Father to pay the debt for this people that he purposed to save.

Now, the Scriptures say, "Let everything be established in the mouth of two or three witnesses." Look at Acts 4 when there was persecution brought upon the church in the first century and they began to imprison those that the Lord had taught and drawn to themselves and delivered from their bondage of false religion. They put Peter and John in prison for standing boldly and declaring it was "by the name of Jesus of Nazareth," as you can see in verse 10 of Acts 4, "whom ye crucified." It was in his name that this man stood whole in their midst. They could have said it is in the name of Jehovah, the God of Israel that he stands whole and they wouldn't have had a fight, but when you declare the truth, you declare the truth. You don't leave any doubt. The Scriptures don't leave any doubt and they said, "In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth," so they even added a little bit more punch to it. Not just Jesus of Nazareth but Jesus the Christ, the Messiah, who is of Nazareth, this man stands whole and they got upset and threw him in jail but the Lord delivered him.

You can see in verse 23 of Acts 4, "And being let go, they went to their own company, and reported all that the chief priests and elders had said unto them. And when they heard that," that is the church heard that, "they lifted up their voice to God with one accord, and said, Lord, thou art God, which hast made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and all that in them is: Who by the mouth of thy servant David hast said, Why did the heathen rage, and the people imagine vain things?" They're quoting there Psalm 2. "The kings of the earth stood up, and the rulers were gathered together against the Lord, and against his Christ." Against his Christ. Verse 27, "For of a truth against thy holy child Jesus, whom thou hast anointed, both Herod, and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles, and the people of Israel, were gathered together." But notice in verse 28, "For to do whatsoever thy hand and thy counsel determined before to be done." That's pretty clear, isn't it? So in answer to that question, "How was sin laid upon him?" It was according to the Lord; it was according to the determinate counsel of the Lord that he spared not his Son but delivered him up.

Well, here's a second question coming back to Isaiah 53 and that is: for whom this sin was laid upon him? There are many who when they read verse 6 and it is being preached all over, it says, "the LORD hath laid on him the iniquity of us all," they say that the Lord Jesus Christ when he came lay down his life in a general atonement for everybody. So you ask the question, "Well, why isn't everybody saved?" Well, it's because there are many that don't believe anyway. So that's how they preach it: Christ did his part, now you've got to do your part in believing. Well, dear friends, that is not the message of Scripture and that is not what we read here. When it says, "the LORD hath laid on him

the iniquity of us all," you have to go back and look at the context. You have to read the context. It would be like me picking up one of your letters and you've been invited to a family reunion and in the letter it says, "We anticipate that all will be there." I'm reading the letter, I'm not part of your family and I'm sitting there thinking, "Okay, well then, that means everybody can come." That's not it. You've got to read the context. This is a family reunion. The "us all" has to do with those that pertain to that family and when we read this, "the LORD hath laid on him the iniquity of us all," we have to understand it in the context. When it says, "Surely he hath borne," as we read up in verse 4, "our griefs and carried our sorrows," we're reading a letter here. Who is this addressing? Well, we keep reading, "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."

So it has something to do with sinners, that's for sure. It has something to do with people like sheep, okay? Then as we read on down, it becomes even clearer because it says in verse 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." Verse 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." It says there, "He shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied: by his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many." So already we're beginning to see all "us all" has to do with many. There is no question. "He shall bear their iniquities." Now it is beginning to focus, isn't it? "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 we can see in this particular portion of Scripture that the "all" has to do with a particular people that the Lord himself has purposed and determined to save and it is those that he justifies. Well, who are they? That's what I'd like us to look at. First of all, coming back to verse 6, "All we like sheep have gone astray." That's not a very pretty picture, is it, when you stop and think of why the Lord would consider those for whom he died as sheep? Sheep are dumb animals, but doesn't it fit what our Lord said that he didn't come to call the righteous but sinners to repentance? So these are the ones for whom the iniquity was laid upon him, sheep. That's how they're described in Scripture.

If you go over to John 10, just look with me there. John 10. This is a very familiar chapter speaking of Christ as the great shepherd and yet it is addressed, just like Isaiah 53, to a particular people, a particular type of sinner, if you will. Here in John 10:1, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that entereth not by the door into the sheepfold, but climbeth up some other way, the same is a thief and a robber. But he that entereth in by the door is the shepherd of the sheep." The description here is of a sheepfold as you will find in many Middle Eastern countries where the entire village would come and place their livestock and yet each individual shepherd had a particular way of recognizing their livestock among the rest and calling them out, identifying them. That's why they started branding over here because people were starting to steal each other's livestock and so there had to be a way of marking them. But over in the Middle East, the sheep were recognized by the

shepherd. The shepherd could go in and say, "That's mine. That's mine. That's mine. That's mine." There was a trust in who that shepherd was.

"To him," verse 3, "the porter openeth," and notice, "and the sheep hear his voice." Here's the point I want you to see, "he calleth his own sheep by name, and leadeth them out." There is not a concern for all of them that are bunched up in that sheepfold, but his sheep. So here "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." All that are sheep to whom they belong to this shepherd that he calls.

"And when he putteth forth," you see this in verse 4, "when he putteth forth his own sheep, he goeth before them, and the sheep follow him: for they know his voice." Those are the ones for whom the Lord lay down his life. There are sheep and then there are goats. The goats are those whom God in his, again, determinate counsel and purpose has determined to go their own way. That's what goats do. They root, eat here and there. They'll chew garbage. They'll eat anything. They'll not heed the call of the shepherd, but those that are sheep, as it says here in verse 11 of John 10, "I am the good shepherd: the good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep." Here we're talking, dear friends, about a particular death that was accomplished according to a particular determinate counsel of God the Father for a particular group of sinners that would be saved by that particular sacrifice which the Lord Jesus Christ would offer up.

He says there as you go on down into the rest of this chapter, you get down to verse 28, look in verse 26 to begin with. Even our Lord made a distinction with those to whom he was speaking. He said, "Ye believe not," and he was speaking to a group of self-righteous religious Pharisees, "Ye believe not," notice, "because ye are not of my sheep, as I said unto you." The Lord knows his own. I don't. I'm called upon to stand here and to point everyone hearing me to the Lord Jesus Christ but there are some that are sheep, some that are goats.

You say, "How will it be proven?" Well, "My sheep hear my voice." There is a time when we don't hear, but then he causes to hear for his sheep. But the rest, what does he say? "Leave them alone." Leave them alone. I thank the Lord that he did not leave me alone. I've never seen my name written in the Lamb's book of life but if you were to ask me today by what confidence I have that I'm one of the Lord's, I would say he called me and he drew this poor sinner unto himself and would not leave him alone. That's grace. That's mercy. "All that the Father has given me," Christ said, "shall come to me and him that cometh, I will in no wise cast out." But it says all that the Father has given me shall come to me. He said, "You believe not because you're not of my sheep." He didn't say, "Since you don't believe you're not of my sheep. You could be if you would just believe." That's how it's often preached. That's not what he's saying. "If you're not one of my sheep, you'll never believe. You will continue to live out your life in rebellion and lostness and enter into condemnation justly for your own sin."

But he says here, verse 27, "My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me: And I give unto them eternal life." How does he give them eternal life? By their sin

being laid upon him. Life by his death. "And they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand. My Father, which gave them me." How did they become sheep? They've always been sheep. You can't take a goat and make a sheep out of a goat. A goat is a goat, a sheep is a sheep. "My Father, which gave them me, is greater than all; and no man is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand. I and my Father are one. Then the Jews took up stones again to stone him." There was that unbelief. They would not bow.

But, I'll tell you, if your sin was laid upon him, he's going to get you. His Spirit will not allow you to continue in your own way because that's what being a sheep is. That's why a sheep needs a shepherd. They will wander. "Prone to wander, Lord, I feel it. Prone to leave the one I love." All we like sheep have gone astray. There is no question. That's our nature. We're not different than anybody else, but if I'm his and I know him today, it's because he drew me by his Spirit. He would not let me go the way I would go. "We have turned every one to his own way; and the LORD hath laid on him the iniquity of us all." When you stop and think again about what this means, it wasn't for the righteous. It wasn't him saying, "Well, you believe first and then since you're going to believe I'll lay your sin on my Son." That's not how it happened.

Look over in Romans 5. For whom was this sin laid upon him? It was for sinners. Sinners. Sheep, yes, but sinners. When you read here in Romans 5:6, "For when we were yet without strength, in due time," in that determined time, "Christ died for the ungodly. For scarcely for a righteous man will one die." I was moved as I'm sure you probably were when I heard about one of our soldiers over in Afghanistan that saw a little girl that was about to be run over and he helped out. He moved her out of the way and was run over himself and they spoke of what a good deed he had done and I agree. I think myself in that particular position what would I have done? You just react. You give no thought for it.

But that's for a little girl. People are moved when they think about a child and how someone saved that child or whomever it may have been, but dear friends, it says here, "For scarcely for a righteous man will one die: yet peradventure for a good man some would even dare to die." We've heard of soldiers throwing themselves on grenades to protect their buddies. They are bound. They're one and that's an honorable thing to do and yet we read here, "But God commendeth his love toward us, in that," what? "While we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. Much more then, being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him." That's who he died for when it says that iniquities were laid on him, it took him bearing their sin. He being just dying for the unjust, that he might bring us to God. So complete was his death as we read there, we are justified by that blood. When he died, so complete was the payment there remained nothing but righteousness for God to impute to the account of those for whom he died.

Come back to Isaiah 53 and that ties us in here to the nature of the sin that was laid upon him and I'll just be brief on this because I could spend a lot of time going into definitions about what sin is. Most people think of sin as an act, something they do, and that's why they think that in the day of judgment, God is going to have your good acts and he's

going to weigh them against your bad acts. Hopefully the good will outweigh the bad and thereby have some sort of hope of eternal life. That's how most people when you talk about penance, penance is something you do to pay for something you've done. Back in the day, that's why they used to call these prisons penitentiaries. Have you ever stopped and thought about that word? You're going to pay for your debt. You're going to pay your debt to society. That was in the mindset of people. People do it with Lent. They think that somehow giving something up, they're going to somehow reduce their guilt. All of that is foolishness when you stop and consider that sin isn't nearly what we do, it's who we are.

You can't get away from who you are and unless that itself, that very being of who you are as a sinner has been laid upon him, there is no hope. You will pay eternally the debt for your sin and who you are. That's why it says here, "All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way." All it takes to be a sinner is to turn to your own way. You stop and think about that's our nature. Left to ourselves, that's the way we go and if it weren't for the grace of God, if it weren't for the death of the Lord Jesus Christ, none could be saved. None.

The final point I'll bring out to you here is just simply this: what is the end? What is the result of him having laid on him the iniquity of us all? We can see that he was the willing sacrifice in verse 7, "He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth." That shows his willingness. "He is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he openeth not his mouth." That's the character of animals. I've told you that before, having grown up in Africa, on that day in Muslim countries where they offer up the ram, the sacrificial ram even today and they all offer it at the same time. We lived next door to some Muslim families that would offer those sacrifices every year. You never heard a cry coming out from the sacrificed ram. You never did. It was silent. It was silent. I believe the Lord, even in creating those animals, made them as a picture of what Christ's sacrifice would be, that as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he openeth not his mouth.

But look at verse 8, "He was taken from prison and from judgment." In other words, his death was to be but for a moment. In that one death, he bore the iniquity of that people that the Father gave him, sinners such as we and yet death could not hold him. You see, that's his prison. He was taken from prison and from judgment. In other words, the Father would not allow his body or his soul to see corruption. In no way in any time in bearing this sin was he ever made to be corrupt. He bore it to satisfy the holy Father and when the satisfaction was done, he was brought forth.

That's why the question is asked, "who shall declare his generation?" It's like Isaiah began this chapter saying, "Who hath believed our report?" In one sense, this is the most unbelievable news that a person could ever hear, that those that God saves are not saved on their account but they're saved on the account of another. Who hath believed that? Because apart from the Spirit of God in this heart of hearts, there is still that little thought for some wiggle room for something I contribute and nothing could condemn you more than that. The Lord has to, by his Spirit, take it all away and realize it all is based upon and due to and because of that one sacrifice in substitution, satisfaction.

God is satisfied. He brought him forth from prison and judgment but who shall declare his generation? "He was cut off out of the land of the living: for the transgression," notice, "of my people was he stricken." There, again, is a specific people for whom Christ died and yet the grave could not retain him. You see, that's the glorious message of the Gospel, not only that he was obedient unto death, but so satisfactory was his death that when he rose, those for whom he died rose with him and ever lived with him. He is seated in the heavenlies and the Scriptures say they are seated with him.

That's a glorious message. Bob read it in 2 Corinthians 5 and I would just have you come back there before I close. 2 Corinthians 5. We are going to know trouble and tribulation in this world, we're going to deal with people that refuse to hear, refuse to believe this glorious message, but do you know what? If God has caused you to believe it and to hear it, to rejoice, that's a mercy. That's a grace and Paul says here in verse 14 of 2 Corinthians 5, "For the love of Christ constraineth us; because we thus judge, that if one died for all," again there is the "us all" again. You have to look at it in this context. Those for whom he died, he died for every one of them without distinction. He doesn't consider persons: rich or poor, color of skin. It doesn't matter. He has redeemed a people unto God from every tribe, nation and tongue.

But if he died for all of them, then it was because it says there, "then were all dead." It could be understood in two ways. They couldn't do this themselves, but I understand it in the sense of when he died they died. Then we're all dead. It was a true death that was accomplished on behalf of those, every one for whom he died, and that he died for all, notice, that they should live, "that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves." That dying is unto a living. That's why I say every one for whom Christ died, he will cause to live. That condemnation, there is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ.

It says, "but unto him which died for them, and rose again. Wherefore henceforth know we no man after the flesh: yea, though we have known Christ after the flesh, yet now henceforth know we him no more." In other words, he has ascended. He is seated in the heavenlies. He is not on this earth still bearing sin. He's done. It's finished. "Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new." Look at it in this context, what does that mean? It doesn't mean that once the Spirit regenerates you that now you're no longer the person you were. We still have this sin nature. But it's talking in the context of our position: old things have passed away. All that condemned us under the law and under sin and by Satan and this world has been put away, done away. So complete is Christ's satisfaction. "Behold, all things become new." I've been pardoned. I've been justified. I've been reconciled unto a holy God. I've been glorified with him.

When he rose, I rose and verse 18 says that, "And all things are of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation; To wit," or namely, "that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and hath committed unto us the word of

reconciliation. Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God." Do you know what? If he has reconciled you, you will be. It will be through a message like this that he will cause your heart to be reconciled to him, bring you to bow to his Son and rest in that finished work that he accomplished. Why? "He hath made him to be sin for us," not sinful, but he made him that sin offering, "who knew no sin." There it is. Simply put as I know how, "that we," upon completion of his death, "be made the righteousness of God in him." What a glorious truth. May God give us eyes to see him and rejoice.