

Isaiah 53:4-6 “The Servant Who Died as a Substitute”***

Series: *In the Shadow of the Cross (an exposition of Isaiah 53)*¹

Main Idea: In Isaiah 53:4-6, the prophet predicted that the Servant would die as a substitute. In His death, He would experience three agonies that we deserve to experience.

I. The Servant took our pain (4).

A. Here’s how He did it.

1. He took our infirmities.
2. He carried our sorrows.

B. Here’s how we responded.

1. We misunderstood Him.
2. We thought God was judging Him for His own sins.

II. The Servant took our punishment (5).

A. Here’s how He did it.

1. He died a vicarious death.
2. He died as a sin-bearer.
3. He died as a guilty man.
4. He died as an atoning sacrifice.

B. Here’s why He did it.

1. It was for our peace.
2. It was for our healing.

III. The Servant took our place (6).

A. Here’s our fundamental problem.

1. We are like lost sheep.
2. We have gone our own way.

B. Here’s what God did about it.

1. God removed our sin from us.
2. God put our sin on His Son.

Make It Personal: These are the bottom-line options.

1. We can pay for our own sins.
2. We can accept the One who died as a substitute.
3. We can be sure there is no other option.

Before sermon: Redeemed people...SING THE WORD (April Scripture – Hebrews 10:14 NIV 1984 “Because by one sacrifice, He has made perfect forever those who are being made holy.”)

As we open our Bibles today to Isaiah 53, we’ve come to part two in our series *In the Shadow of the Cross*. The title comes from an old beloved hymn which begins as follows. *Beneath the cross of Jesus I feign would take my stand, the shadow of a mighty rock within a weary land*. The writer talks about standing in a shadow, but not just any shadow. The shadow of the cross upon which Jesus suffered and died.

What is the shadow of the cross? Perhaps this imagery will mean more to us if we know the person behind the lyrics. The author was Elizabeth Clephane who penned these words just a year before she died at the age of 39.

Elizabeth was born in Scotland in 1830, the third daughter of Andrew Clephane, who was the sheriff of Fife and Kinross. She lived most of her life about thirty miles southeast of Edinburgh. Apparently, her parents died when she was young and she herself struggled with health challenges throughout her young life.

But she did not see herself as a victim. I read that she spent most of her money on charitable causes.² One story said that she and her sister sold their horse and carriage for the benefit of the needy.³ Her friends called her “Sunbeam”.

*** Note: This is an unedited manuscript of a message preached at Wheelersburg Baptist Church. It is provided to prompt your continued reflection on the practical truths of the Word of God.

¹ For a previous look at this passage, see the Isaiah 53 series in 2011.

² <https://hymnary.org/hymn/LUYH2013/167>

³ <https://www.umcdiscipleship.org/resources/history-of-hymns-beneath-the-cross-of-jesus>

What inspired this young lady? What enabled her to find joy in her sorrow to the point that others would call her *Sunbeam*? I think she herself gives the answer in the third verse of her hymn, where she says *I take O cross thy shadow for my abiding place*.

We struggle to understand the value of abiding in a shadow in America. We live in houses and travel in cars with air conditioners. If we are hot, we just turn a knob. Yet if we were in many places in the world right now, we would appreciate a shadow.

Have you ever been in the middle of a hot dusty field? I think back to my teenage years on the farm. If you've ever been out working in the middle of a thirty acre field on a hot summer day, you know the importance of shade. You're on the lookout for a tree, a wall, a building, even a little shed, someplace to get out of the direct sun.

My friends, shadows are a place of refuge and protection and even refreshment. This shadow certainly is. *I take O cross thy shadow for my abiding place*.

Think carefully now. What is God like? According to the Bible, He is light. Don't think of the sixty watt light-bulb in the lamp on the end table in your living room either. Think of the fiery hot, blinding, painful-to-look-at light of the noon sun in all its brilliance. That's what God is like.

We cannot look directly at God. Not because He isn't beautiful, for He's the definition of beauty. But if we look directly at Him in our sinful condition, the sight would destroy us. Adam looked at Him and enjoyed Him immensely, yes. But we can't. Sin did something terrible to our eyes. We can't look at God any more than we can stare at the sun, not without terrible consequences. Unless. Unless we stand in a shadow.

Remember Moses' request in Exodus 33? "Please show me your glory," he said. And the Lord's reply? "You cannot see my face, for man shall not see me and live (Exodus 33:20)." So how did the Lord solve this problem for Moses? He put him in the cleft of the rock (verse 22).

It reminds me of an experience I've had on many Sunday and Wednesday evenings. As the church gathers for our services, I'm standing at the front door looking west. But it hurts. I can't see very well. Why? Because I'm looking right into the brilliant setting sun. But I've found a solution. I move into the shadow created by one of the pillars in front the building. The pillar protects my eyes. The pillar enables me to see.

This is what the cross provides for us. *I take O cross thy shadow for my abiding place*. When we're standing in the cross's shadow, we're able to see God.

Thank you, Sunbeam, for teaching us this. Thank you for demonstrating the importance of abiding in this life-giving shadow.

But there's more. This morning, I want us to think about the next image used by Sunbeam in her beloved hymn. Clephane says, "*I take O cross thy shadow for my abiding place. I ask no other sunshine than **the sunshine of His face**.*"

Think carefully. When you're gazing at the face of Jesus as He hangs on the cross, what do you see? What does His face look like? Clephane doesn't tell us.

But Isaiah does. Isaiah provides us with the alarming answer in today's text. Let's place ourselves once again in the shadow of the cross by reading and then expounding what Isaiah saw and wrote.

Scripture Reading: Isaiah 53:4-6

Two weeks from today, the Lord willing, we will celebrate the most significant day in the history of the world, the day Jesus Christ walked out of His tomb alive! On Sunday mornings this month we are preparing for Resurrection Sunday by gazing at Isaiah's portrait of the One he identifies as *the Servant*. To help us appreciate just how life-like this picture is, listen to author, Arthur Walton, as he shares a story from his childhood:⁴

⁴ Arthur Walton, *Portraits of Christ in Isaiah*, p. 81.

When I was a student in public school, each school day began with opening exercises. They had three parts: the pledge to the flag by the students; the reading of a portion of the Bible by the teacher; and the recitation of the Lord's prayer by the students. In one community that contained a large Jewish population, the Jews objected to the reading of the New Testament. The school administrators and the parents agreed that since the Old Testament is common ground to both Jews and Christians, all Scripture readings would come from the Old Testament. All went well until the day that one of the Jewish children reported to his parents that the teacher had read about the crucifixion of Jesus from the New Testament. When the parents looked into this violation of the agreement, they learned that their child was only partially correct. The Scripture passage was indeed about Jesus' crucifixion, but it did not violate the agreement, for the text came from the Old Testament. The teacher had read Isaiah 53. Some have called the book of Isaiah the fifth gospel. Over seven centuries before Jesus was nailed to a Roman cross, the prophet of God described in great detail what happened on that day we call Good Friday.

"See, my servant shall act wisely," God declared in Isaiah 52:13. Last week we looked at Isaiah 52:13-53:3 and observed two stunning features of *The Servant*.

First, in verses 13-15, His *honor*. "He will be raised and lifted up and highly exalted." Isaiah predicts that the coming Servant will be a King, one before whom all kings will "shut their mouths" (52:15).

But before the honor, He will experience something else. The second stunning feature is His *humiliation* which Isaiah describes in great detail. Before He rules, the Servant will *suffer*. Many will be "appalled" at him, at his "disfigured" and "marred" appearance (52:14). He will have "no beauty or majesty to attract us to him, nothing in his appearance that we should desire him (53:2)." This Servant is going to be "despised and rejected by men, a man of sorrows, and familiar with suffering (53:3)."

Yet why? Why would God send His chosen Servant into the world and subject Him to such abuse and suffering? It's that question that God Himself answers through the prophet in today's text. In Isaiah 53:4-6, we find out that it was God's purpose that the Servant suffer and ultimately die as a *substitute*.

A substitute? Why a substitute? When a teacher gets sick, the principal makes a phone call and lines up a *substitute*. When a ballplayer is injured in a game, the coach looks at his bench and sends in a *substitute*. A substitute is someone who takes the place of another, right?

According to Isaiah's prophecy, this is what the Servant will do. He will come into the world, yet not just to *live* as a substitute, but to *die* as one.

I have good news for you, my friend. God provided a substitute for sinners like you and me. In His death, God's chosen servant took upon Himself three agonies that we deserve to experience, as Isaiah explains in verses 4-6.

I. The Servant took our pain (4).

"Surely he has borne our griefs [NIV "our infirmities"] and carried our sorrows; yet we esteemed him stricken, smitten by God, and afflicted."

You'll notice that Isaiah speaks of this event, though yet future to him in the eighth century BC, as if it had already occurred. The verbs in this section are all past tense. Let there be no doubt about this. Though yet future, Isaiah says this event will occur. *Surely*, Isaiah begins. We can know this for sure, the prophet says, and *why*.

It's in the past tense for us, of course. Two thousand years ago God's Servant came right on schedule, and took *our pain*.

A. Here's how He did it. Isaiah mentions two types of pain.

1. *He took our infirmities.* In the ESV, our *griefs*. Isaiah uses the first person plural pronoun *our*. You'll find this pronoun repeated again and again in verses 4-6. He took *our* infirmities, *our* sorrows, *our* transgressions, *our* iniquities, and so on.

Who does Isaiah have in mind when he says *our*? Obviously, he's including himself, but not just himself. He's thinking of the Israelites, too. But not just Israelites, for he just mentioned the "nations" in 52:15. So "our" includes a people from both Jewish and non-Jewish heritage. And "our" indicates that this is very personal. When the Servant comes He will bear *our* griefs/infirmities. And that's what He did. As well as a second pain.

2. *He carried our sorrows.* Some translations use the word "diseases." The Hebrew term depicts both physical and mental anguish. Back in verse 3, Isaiah says the Servant will be a "man of sorrows" and one who is "familiar with suffering" (NIV).

Question. How do you "take/bear" someone's infirmities and "carry" someone's sorrows? The first verb means "to lift, carry, or take." The second verb means "to bear a heavy load." The words indicate an exchange took place. We had infirmities and sorrows, and the Servant took them upon Himself. They became His. He "hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows," as the KJV puts it.

This is reality. We are sinners. All of us. We live in a sin-cursed world filled with griefs and sorrows. This is also reality. When God's Servant came to earth, He didn't come with an insulated bubble or shield around Him. Rather, He identified with the people He came to save. He experienced their infirmities and their sorrows. He *took* them upon Himself. He *carried* them.

It's interesting that one of Jesus' followers, Matthew, quotes this statement in Matthew 8:17. Right after Jesus healed Peter's mother-in-law and others, Matthew says, "This was to fulfill what was spoken through the prophet Isaiah: 'He took up our infirmities and carried our diseases.'"

Think of the implications. The One who came to save us knows us intimately. He sees our sorrow. When He came, He literally *carried* our sorrow. This speaks of His intentional identification with His people, and of His great love and compassion for them.

I can barely fathom this. You mothers, perhaps, can appreciate the significance more fully. A father knows about his children's sorrow, and he certainly cares. But a mother has the God-given capacity to *carry* her children's sorrows. She feels the weight of the sorrow. She takes it upon her heart.

This is what the Servant did. He *took our pain*. Now if someone would do such a loving thing on our behalf, surely we should appreciate it, wouldn't we? Indeed, we should. But according to Isaiah, we didn't.

B. Here's how we responded. The NIV says, "Surely he took up our infirmities and carried our sorrows [that's what He did, but how did we respond?], *yet we considered him stricken by God, smitten by him, and afflicted.*" The ESV says, "We esteemed him stricken, smitten by God, and afflicted."

According to the prophecy, this is how the world responded to the Servant, and particularly to His suffering. Again, it's first-person plural language, how *we* responded.

1. *We misunderstood Him.* We "esteemed him stricken." The world didn't expect the Anointed One to be lowly and meek. They anticipated a sword-flashing conqueror. When He came as a humble servant taking upon Himself our infirmities and sorrows, we made a judgment call. We calculated. We *esteemed* but did so wrongly.

2. *We thought God was judging Him for His own sins.* When the first-century crowd watched Jesus of Nazareth carry His cross through the streets of Jerusalem, when they heard the frightful sound of Roman spikes penetrating His wrists, when they saw His bloodied body raised up on the tree, the people dropped to their knees and concluded. "Oh, how He loves us! He's dying for our sins!"

Is that what they concluded? No. Just the opposite. God is *striking* Him. God is *smiting* Him. God is *afflicting* Him. God is judging Him for His *own* sins.

It's amazing how two people can look at the same evidence and come to such conflicting conclusions. It happened with Jesus. It is still happening with Jesus. There is no greater demonstration of love than what Jesus endured for us, beloved, yet many continue to esteem Him guilty or just ignore Him.

This is one of the reasons for the Cross Shadow gift you'll be receiving. God has given us Scriptures and songs to help us think and respond rightly to the cross. The Cross Shadow is a tool to help you memorize and meditate on cross-centered Scripture passages and songs.

For example, here are some Scriptures and songs that have been meaningful to me in my morning quiet time: Galatians 2:20; Isaiah 53:6, When I Survey the Wondrous Cross, I Gave My Life for Thee, Am I a Soldier of the Cross?

Philip Bliss, for example, penned these words no doubt with Isaiah 53 in mind.

*'Man of sorrows!' what a name
For the Son of God who came
Ruined sinners to reclaim!
Hallelujah, what a Savior!*

*Bearing shame and scoffing rude,
In my place condemned He stood,
Seal'd my pardon with His blood;
Hallelujah, what a Savior!*

*Guilty vile, and helpless we,
Spotless Lamb of God was He;
Full atonement! can it be?
Hallelujah, what a Savior!*

*Lifted up was He to die,
'It is finished,' was His cry;
Now in heav'n exalted high,
Hallelujah, What a Savior!*

This is the first agony that the Servant endured for us as our substitute. Our pain.

II. The Servant took our punishment (5).

"But he was pierced for our transgressions; he was crushed for our iniquities; upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace, and with his wounds we are healed."

According to Isaiah, the Servant will fulfill the divine plan in this way. First, He will take our pain—that's verse 4. But He also will take our punishment—that's verse 5.

A. Here's how He did it. You'll notice a series of clauses in verse 5. With each clause Isaiah is showing us how the Servant will die, four characteristics of His death.

1. *He died a vicarious death.* "But he was pierced ['wounded' in the KJV] for our transgressions." He was pierced, a term meaning to "bore" or "wound." This is what they did to Him, didn't they? Spikes pierced His hands and feet, a sword His side.

And why was He pierced? Isaiah says it happened "for our transgressions." Again, not for His own for He had none, but for *ours*. His was a *vicarious* death.

"Vicarious" means "taking the place of another." That's what Servant did on the cross. He died a *vicarious* death, thereby taking our place.

I've read that Rembrandt tried to depict this in his painting *The Three Crosses*. When you look at that masterpiece, your attention is drawn first to the center cross on which Jesus died. Then as you look at the crowd gathered around the foot of that cross, you're impressed by the various facial expressions and actions of the people involved in the awful crime of crucifying the Son of God. Finally, your eyes drift to the edge of the painting and catch sight of another figure, almost hidden in the shadows. Art critics suggest that this is a representation of Rembrandt himself, who recognized that by his sins he helped nail Jesus to the cross.⁵

It's about us, my friend. He was pierced for *our transgressions*. Again and again the New Testament writers describe the vicarious purpose in the death of our Savior.

Galatians 3:13 "Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law *by becoming a curse for us*, for it is written: 'Cursed is everyone who is hung on a tree.'"

Hebrews 9:27-28 "Just as man is destined to die once, and after that to face judgment, ²⁸ so *Christ was sacrificed once to take away the sins of many people*; and he will appear a second time, not to bear sin, but to bring salvation to those who are waiting for him."

1 Peter 2:24 "He himself *bore our sins* in his body on the tree, so that we might die to sins and live for righteousness; by his wounds you have been healed."

1 Peter 3:18 "For Christ died for sins once for all, *the righteous for the unrighteous*, to bring you to God. He was put to death in the body but made alive by the Spirit." Indeed, when the Servant died, He died a *vicarious* death, as predicted by Isaiah.

2. *He died as a sin-bearer*. Isaiah says, "He was crushed ['bruised' in the KJV] for our iniquities." "Crushed" refers to the effect of the great weight the Servant bore while hanging on the cross. What weight? The weight of sin. Is sin heavy? Yes. So heavy that it will take a sinner down into the depths of hell forever.

Isaiah uses the same word again in verse 10. There he says, "Yet it was the will of the LORD to *crush* him." Why would God crush His chosen Servant, indeed His own beloved Son? Isaiah gives the answer in verse 5. He says the Servant was *crushed* (passive, God *crushed* Him) "for our iniquities."

This is what necessitated the crushing. While hanging on the cross, the Servant willingly took upon Himself sin's hell-deserving load. He became *our* sin-bearer.

Many of us have heard these words so many times in our lives that we struggle to appreciate the significance. Let's hear them again, beloved, as if for the first time. Let's ponder anew what really happened on the cross. Listen to the words of Paul in 1 Corinthians 15:3, "*Christ died for our sins* according to the Scriptures."

Marvel at the depth of those words. *Christ*—the innocent, perfect King and Son of God. *Died*—He who is the author of life endured the horrid consequences of sin, that is, death itself. *For*—in behalf of, in the stead of, to take care of. *Our*—not His own for He had none, but our. *Sins*—our greatest problem since Adam, stains that blemish our lives and make us unfit for God's presence. *Christ died for our sins*.

Yet there's more. He died a vicarious death. He died as a sin-bearer.

3. *He died as a guilty man*. What Isaiah says is stunning. "Upon him was the chastisement [NIV "the punishment"] that brought us peace."

Remember the scapegoat? We read about this special creature in Leviticus 16. Once a year on the day of atonement, the high priest would place his hands on the head of a goat. He would then confess over it the transgressions of the people and then send the goat away. Once the goat went into the wilderness, the people's sins "escaped" through the atoning work of the *scape-goat*.

⁵ Source unknown

God was not saying that a goat could take away sin. He was giving His people a type that foreshadowed the work of the One who could and would take away sin.

I'm not sure there is a more staggering announcement in the New Testament than the one we read in 2 Corinthians 5:21. "God made him who had no sin *to be sin for us*." The only perfect person who ever walked on the planet, Jesus the Christ, died as a guilty man.

And why? As 2 Corinthians 5:21 concludes, "So that in him we might become the righteousness of God." Yet there's more. His was a vicarious death, as a sin-bearer, and as a guilty man.

4. *He died as an atoning sacrifice.* "And with His wounds ['stripes' in the KJV] we are healed." When we read the Old Testament, we see the necessity of atonement over and over. God repeatedly demonstrates that the only way a sinner can enter His presence is to have his sins removed, and the only way sin can be removed is through atonement. There must be a covering for sin, a blood covering. And so, for centuries innocent little lambs were slain and their blood placed on an altar.

Until the day when the Lamb of God was slain. When the Servant gave His life on that Roman cross, He did so to provide an atoning sacrifice. He provided what theologians call a "substitutionary atonement" which means that when He died, the merit of His death was applied to those for whom He died.

Again, we turn to the New Testament for a fuller explanation.

Matthew 20:28 "Just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to *give his life as a ransom* for many."

Romans 3:25 "God presented him as a *sacrifice of atonement*, through faith in his blood."

Ephesians 5:2b "Christ loved us and gave himself up for us *as a fragrant offering and sacrifice* to God."

1 John 2:1-2 "My dear children, I write this to you so that you will not sin. But if anybody does sin, we have one who speaks to the Father in our defense—Jesus Christ, the Righteous One. ² *He is the atoning sacrifice for our sins*, and not only for ours but also for the sins of the whole world."

This brings us to the vital question *why*? We've seen that the Servant died a vicarious death, as a sin-bearer, as a guilty man, and as an atoning sacrifice. Yet why?

B. Here's why He did it. According to Isaiah, He had two outcomes in mind.

1. *It was for our peace.* The prophet says, "The punishment that *brought us peace* was upon Him (NIV)." Peace. The Hebrew is *shalom*. Wholeness. Restored relationships with God, man, and self. This is what the Servant had in mind when He died. This is what He gained for us when He died.

As Hebrews 9:15 explains, "For this reason Christ is the mediator of a new covenant, that those who are called may receive the promised eternal inheritance—now that he has *died as a ransom to set them free from the sins* committed under the first covenant."

There's why He died. As a ransom. To set us free. *For our peace.*

2. *It was for our healing.* "And with His wounds we are *healed*." This is why He experienced unimaginable brokenness, so we can experience unimaginable wholeness.

Does that mean if we know Jesus, we'll never be sick again? *Eventually*, yes! When we accept Jesus as our Savior, He gives us a new heart that very moment and the promise of a new body in the life to come. Spiritual healing now. Physical healing then. It's all ours. By His wounds we are healed.

Hebrews 10:14 explains, "*By one sacrifice* he has made perfect forever those who are being made holy." That's why the Messiah suffered such abuse. He did it for us. Let this sink in, beloved. He did it *for us*! When He died, He took *our punishment*.

Charles Haddon Spurgeon pondered this in a sermon he preached in the late 1800s entitled, “*Christ Made a Curse For Us.*”

It was an anguish never to be measured, an agony never to be comprehended. It is to God, and God alone that His griefs were fully known... See, beloved, here is Christ bearing the curse instead of His people. Here He is coming under the load of their sin, and God does not spare Him but smites him, as He must have smitten us, lays His full vengeance on Him, launches all His thunderbolts against Him, bids the curse wreak itself upon Him, and Christ suffers all, sustains all.⁶

And yet there’s more. When the Servant died, not only did He take our *pain* (verse 4) and *punishment* (verse 5), but also our *place* (verse 6).

III. The Servant took our place (6).

“All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned—every one—to his own way; and the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all.” This is the gospel in one glorious sentence. It presents our *problem* and the *solution* God provided for it.

A. Here’s our fundamental problem. According to Isaiah it’s twofold.

1. *We are like lost sheep.* Think about that for a moment. How are we like sheep? According to verse 6, we’re like sheep because we wander off so easily. We stray from the Shepherd to our own harm. Like sheep, he says, we’ve *gone astray*.

“We all, like sheep, have gone astray,” says the NIV, “each of us has turned to his own way.” The psalmist confessed in Psalm 119:176, “I have strayed like a lost sheep.” We all have. Isaiah says, “We *all*, like sheep, have gone astray.” The whole human race would have perished had it not been for the Servant.

This raises a question. Where did we go when we got lost? According to Isaiah...

2. *We’ve gone our own way.* As the *New Living Translation* puts it, “We have left God’s paths to follow our own.”⁷ This is a serious problem. This is why the world is in the terrible shape it’s in. We were created by God, to live for God, and were placed on this earth to live *God’s way*. But we have gone *our own way*.

A hammer is a great tool. But it’s only a great tool when you use it for the purpose for which it was made. If I use a hammer to cut a board, I’ll have a mess on my hands. It wasn’t designed to cut things.

If a person has sex outside of marriage, there will be disastrous results. Why? The problem isn’t sex. Sex is a good gift from God, but He intended that we enjoy this gift in a certain way, within the boundaries of a marriage covenant. When we leave God’s way and start living our own way, we always end up with a mess on our hands.

If a man pours his life into his job and puts God and his family and his church on the sidelines, he’s in trouble and will soon have a mess on his hands. Why? Because work is bad? No, because God never intended a man’s life to revolve around his work.

When a young mother finds her identity in her children, when a teen finds her identity in her appearance, or in athletic accomplishments, or academic pursuits, it’s the same outcome. It’s always the same outcome. Friends, we’re in trouble any time we ignore the intent of our Creator.

Yet this we do. All of us. From birth, we enter the world with a bent to live life *our* way instead of *His*. It’s our fundamental problem. And we are powerless to change it.

Thankfully, this verse does not stop there. It also shows us the solution.

⁶ Charles Spurgeon, *Twelve Sermons on the Passion and Death of Christ*, p. 64.

⁷ Romans 3:10-12 “As it is written: “There is no one righteous, not even one; ¹¹ there is no one who understands, no one who seeks God. ¹² All have turned away, they have together become worthless; there is no one who does good, not even one.”

B. Here's what God did about it. Two actions.

1. *God removed our sin from us.* Verse 6 refers to it as our “iniquity.” Iniquity is deliberate and willful disobedience which results in guilt deserving of punishment. God took that (our iniquity and the resulting guilt and punishment) and did something with it.

2. *God put our sin on His Son (the Servant).* “The LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all.” But why would Yahweh (the LORD) place our iniquity on His Son? Is this cosmic child abuse as some suggest? More certainly not. How can it be cosmic child abuse when the Son Himself said, “I and the Father are *one*” (John 10:30)?

Don't miss the title Isaiah uses. The *LORD* laid on him. That's God's covenant name. Yahweh laid on the Servant the iniquity of us all. In the New Testament we discover that Yahweh is *Jesus*. “Every knee shall bow and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is *Lord*, to the glory of God the Father (Philippians 2:11).”

I can't explain this fully. How can the LORD lay on Himself our iniquity? This is Trinitarian mystery. God the Father and God the Son (and God the Spirit) are totally united in this work to redeem sinners (see Ephesians 1:3-14 for a fuller demonstration).

A. H. Strong sums it up this way, “God requires satisfaction because He is holiness, but He makes satisfaction because He is love.”

Well said. To satisfy His holiness, the LORD put our sin on His Son. And His Son willingly accepted His assignment, out of His love for us, but even more so out of His love for His Father, and the Father, Son, and Spirit's united resolve to manifest the glory of their grace which results in eternal praise.

Yes, praise! Jesus explains in Matthew 18:12-14. “If a man owns a hundred sheep, and one of them wanders away, will he not leave the ninety-nine on the hills and go to look for the one that wandered off? ¹³ And if he finds it, I tell you the truth, he is happier about that one sheep than about the ninety-nine that did not wander off. ¹⁴ In the same way *your Father in heaven is not willing that any of these little ones should be lost.*”⁸

During the Middle Ages there was a popular story which circulated about Martin of Tours (for whom Martin Luther was named). It was said that Satan once appeared to St. Martin in the guise of the Savior himself. St. Martin was ready to fall to his feet and worship this resplendent being of glory and light. Then, suddenly, he looked up into the palms of his hands and asked, “Where are the nail prints?” Whereupon the apparition vanished.⁹

Friends, many people in the world today believe in a Jesus who was merely a good man. Satan doesn't mind that at all. Even a great man, yes, the *greatest of men*. Satan still doesn't mind. Until you mention the cross. Satan hates the cross.

Do you know why? Because without the cross, a sinner remains in his sin. A sinner who does a million good deeds is still under the condemnation of God for his sins. A sinner cannot save himself by his own efforts. There is no salvation apart from the cross.

Oh, dear friend, have you come to grips with what God accomplished on the cross? Have you grasped, not just that Jesus died (millions know that), but *why* He died, and *what* He accomplished in His death?

You say, “I'm not sure. How can I tell?” Again, the hymns are so helpful. When we truly grasp the significance of the cross, we're able to say from our heart what Isaac Watts said from his.

*Alas, and did my Savior bleed,
And did my Sov'reign die?*

⁸ Peter says, “For you were like sheep going astray, but now you have returned to the Shepherd and Overseer of your souls (1 Peter 2:25).”

⁹ Source unknown

*Would He devote that sacred head
For such a worm as I?*

*Was it for crimes that I had done
He groaned upon the tree?
Amazing pity, grace unknown,
And love beyond degree!*

*Well might the sun in darkness hide,
And shut his glories in,
When Christ the mighty Maker died
For man, the creature's sin.*

*Thus might I hide my blushing face
While Calvary's cross appears,
Dissolve my heart in thankfulness,
And melt mine eyes to tears.*

*But drops of grief can ne'er repay
The debt of love I owe;
Here, Lord, I give myself away,
'Tis all that I can do.¹⁰*

My friend, is Isaac Watts' testimony *yours*? Is this your heart-cry? Can you say with confidence these words? "Yes, God's Servant died as *my* substitute. He took my pain, my punishment, and my place. Three days later He conquered death, and now His empty tomb is proof that God accepted the work His servant accomplished for ME!"

Make It Personal: These are the three bottom-line options.

1. *We can pay for our own sins.* A holy God will not tolerate sin. Justice demands that sin be punished. Every sin must be paid for. "The wages of sin is *death* (Rom 3:23)." The penalty for your sins and mine is death, eternal death.

This is the first option. We can pay that penalty ourselves. We can pay for our own sins by spending eternity cut off from God in a place where the fire never dies.

2. *We can accept the One who died as a substitute.* Jesus' death on the cross is a historical fact. And God's assessment of His death could be no clearer—we've seen it this morning in Isaiah 53. But to benefit from Jesus' death, something must occur. The sinner must *accept* Him.

"The life of Christianity consists of possessive pronouns," said Martin Luther. "It is one thing to say, 'Christ is a Savior.' It is quite another thing to say, 'He is my Savior and my Lord.' The devil can say the first; the true Christian alone can say the second."¹¹

Can you say it? Have you by grace accepted the One God sent to die as a substitute? Is He *your* Savior and Lord? My friend, these are the options, indeed, the *only* options. You can pay for your own sins, and do so forever and ever and ever, *or* you can accept the One who one day nearly two thousand years ago died as a substitute. Which will it be? What will you do with Jesus Christ?

10 Joyful Noise Music Company, *Logos Hymnal*, (Fort Worth, TX: Joyful Noise Music Company) 1994.

¹¹ *Resource*, July/August, 1990.

3. *We can be sure there is no other option.* Jesus Christ did not endure all that we've considered this morning merely to provide another option on the shelf. He said, *I am the way. No one comes to the Father except through Me.*

Prayer

As I mentioned, it appears that Elizabeth Clephane penned the words of *Beneath the Cross of Jesus* within a year of her death in 1868. She apparently had Isaiah 32:1-2 in mind when she crafted her lyrics. "Behold, a king will reign in righteousness, and princes will rule in justice. Each will be like a **hiding place** from the wind, a **shelter** from the storm, like streams of water in a dry place, like the **shade** of a great rock in a weary land."

This is what our King provides. A hiding place. A shelter. Shade for the weary.

Closing Song: #183 "*Beneath the Cross of Jesus*" (sing all three verses to old tune)

Evangelist Dwight D. Moody and his song leader, Ira Sankey, popularized the hymn through their crusades.¹² From a musical standpoint, C. Michael Hawn observes, "The contrast between this nineteenth-century Romantic perspective of the cross and the early seventeenth-century understanding expressed in the famous hymn by Isaac Watts (1674-1748), "When I survey the wondrous cross" (1707) is significant. Only the salient differences can be mentioned here. While Clephane's cross is one of shelter and comfort, Watts' cross is one of redemption. Clephane scarcely mentions the One who hung on the cross, while Watts focuses our attention to the dying Christ in stark detail (*See from his head, his hands, his feet, sorrow and love flow mingled down*)."¹³

Community Group Discussion:

1. Today we are continuing our exposition of Isaiah 53 in a series entitled *In the Shadow of the Cross*. Who was Elizabeth Clephane and what was she trying to communicate by using the cross-shadow imagery in her hymn?
2. As a group take time to read all of Isaiah 53. Keep in mind Isaiah penned these words over seven hundred years before Christ came to earth. What effect does this passage have on you personally when you hear it?
3. What did Isaiah say the Servant would experience in verse 4? What response did he predict?
4. According to verse 5, why did Jesus die? What does the term "vicarious" mean?
5. In verse 6, Isaiah says that we are like sheep. How so? What does it mean to say we have "turned to our own way"? What does it mean to say that "the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all"? How do we benefit from the death Jesus died?
6. Next Sunday each family will receive *The Cross Shadow* as a gift from WBC. This tool is intended to help you memorize Scriptures and songs about the cross. Take time to write on separate 3x5 cards the words from Matthew 20:28, Hebrews 10:14, and Galatians 6:14. Also, write the lyrics from the hymns *And Can It Be?* (#203) and *Am I a Soldier of the Cross?* (#482).

¹² <https://dianaleaghamatthews.com/hymn-story-beneath-the-cross-of-jesus/>

¹³ <https://www.umcdiscipleship.org/resources/history-of-hymns-beneath-the-cross-of-jesus>