

God Justifies
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Isaiah 53:1-12

Who has sacrificed for your good? How grateful are you for their sacrifice?

Most of us would point to parents, spouses, other friends and family that sacrificed for our good. In rare instances someone might point to a first responder who risked or even sacrificed their life to save them from death. We should all honor those who have worn the uniform of our country and especially those who gave that supreme sacrifice of their life for our freedom.

For our study of this pivotal passage of scripture our lesson writers entitled the study, "God Justifies." We will look at how this passage describes God's plan for justification and forgiveness for sinners, but I also want to highlight several other key words that describe what we see in Isaiah 53 as the Big Idea of this lesson. At the risk of alliteration overkill, they all start with the letter "s."

Big Idea: Christ's SUFFERING (on the cross) provided the SATISFACTION for God's wrath (against sin) as the SUBSTITUTION for all guilty sinners, so we could experience SALVATION. It all began with Jesus' SACRIFICE.

- Isaiah 53, part of the fourth and final "Servant's Song" in this book, is a true and accurate picture of the cross of Calvary.
- Written 700 years before Christ was crucified, it is also an amazing example of Old Testament prophecy fulfilled in the New Testament.
- Let's dive into this familiar and fundamental chapter about the suffering, saving Servant, Jesus Christ. Verse one begins with two questions:

¹ Who has believed what he has heard from us? And to whom has the arm of the Lord been revealed?

- God's saving Messiah would not be what the people of Judah expected.
- Eugene Peterson's Message paraphrase: "*Who would have thought God's saving power would look like this?*"ⁱ
- The captive exiles from Judah would have imagined a king and general to lead them back to Jerusalem; a majestic leader on a white steed.
- That WILL be true of Jesus' second coming, but not His first appearance.
- The Servant "to whom the arm of the Lord" was revealed was different.

² For he grew up before him like a young plant, and like a root out of dry ground; he had no form or majesty that we should look at him, and no beauty that we should desire him. ³ He was despised and rejected by men, a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief; and as one from whom men hide their faces he was despised, and we esteemed him not.

- Like a "young plant" Jesus came as a baby into the "dry ground" of small-town Nazareth. Though He would change the world, the people of Israel would be asking, "*Can anything good come out of Nazareth?*" (John 1:46)ⁱⁱ
- "Despised and rejected," a "man of sorrows," not "esteemed" by the people, who else could this be than the suffering Servant Jesus Christ?
- Verses four and five speak of His substitutionary suffering for all men:

Isaiah 53:4–5 (ESV)

⁴ Surely he has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows; yet we esteemed him stricken, smitten by God, and afflicted. 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.

- The Messiah suffered in place of sinners and God orchestrated it all.

- He suffered to satisfy God's wrath for the sins of those who trust in Him.
- His suffering "brought us peace" and eternal "healing" of our sin condition.
- The theological term for this is "substitutionary atonement."
- It is described: "*Literally, "in place of "...in that Jesus died "for us," that is, took on himself the consequences of human sin, theologians often speak of his sacrificial, substitutionary death as a vicarious atonement.*"ⁱⁱⁱ
- Verse six sums up the "sin condition" of mankind how it is healed:

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.

- These verses also describe the "doctrine of justification" and what we call "the great exchange." On the cross, God "laid on him (Jesus) the iniquity (sin) of us all." Then God "exchanged" our sins for Christ's righteousness.
- In summary: Because of the fall of man in the Garden of Eden, all human beings are born sinners. Our Holy God cannot tolerate sin so a sacrifice is required to pay the price. In the Old Testament, animals were "temporary" blood sacrifices but mankind needed a perfect and permanent sacrifice.
- Hebrews 10:10 tells us, "*...we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all*"^{iv} ...our perfect, permanent sacrifice.
- As the old gospel song put it:

*"I should have been crucified,
I should have suffered and died.
I should have hung on the cross in disgrace,
But Jesus, God's Son, took my place."*^v
- Let's thank God for Jesus' substitutionary sacrifice that paid for our sins and justified us in God's eyes because we're covered in Christ's righteousness!
- In verses seven through nine we see a detailed description of Calvary:

⁷ He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth; like a lamb that is led to the slaughter, and like a sheep that before its shearers is silent, so he opened not his mouth. ⁸ By oppression and judgment he was taken away; and as for his generation, who considered that he was cut off out of the land of the living, stricken for the transgression of my people? ⁹ And they made his grave with the wicked and with a rich man in his death, although he had done no violence, and there was no deceit in his mouth.

- The details are amazingly specific right down to Christ's crucifixion with two thieves ("the wicked") and the last minute twist of the wealthy Joseph of Arimathea offering his own tomb for Jesus's body's temporary burial.
- No objective observer can look at these details (and those of Psalm 22) and not connect the dots to the New Testament description of Christ's crucifixion.
- John MacArthur writes: *"This section contains unarguable, incontrovertible proof that God is the author of Scripture and Jesus is the fulfillment of messianic prophecy. The details are so minute that no human could have predicted them by accident and no imposter fulfilled them by cunning. Clearly this refers to Messiah Jesus, as the New Testament attests."*^{vi}
- Isaiah 53 is not only a theological masterpiece on justification; it's solid evidence of the credibility of scripture because of fulfilled prophecy.
- Verses ten through twelve predict the ultimate outcome of God's plan for justifying sinners through Christ's sacrifice on the cross.

Isaiah 53:10–12 (NLT)

¹⁰ But it was the Lord's good plan to crush him and cause him grief. Yet when his life is made an offering for sin, he will have many descendants. He will enjoy a long life, and the Lord's good plan will prosper in his hands. ¹¹ When he sees all that is accomplished by his anguish, he will be satisfied. And because of his experience, my righteous servant will make it possible for many to be counted righteous, for he will bear all their sins. ¹² I will give him the honors of a victorious soldier, because he exposed himself to death. He was counted among the rebels. He bore the sins of many and interceded for rebels.

- This was “the Lord’s good plan.” When we view Jesus’ terrible agony on the cross it’s hard to think of this as a “good plan,” but when we understand that His suffering and sacrifice makes it “possible for many to be counted righteous” because He bore all our sins, it is a marvelous plan indeed!

So, what’s the Takeaway?

- Why is it important that we are familiar with Isaiah 53?
- For anyone who hasn’t trusted Christ as Savior and Lord, this is a wonderful text that the Holy Spirit can use to convict and draw them to life in Christ.
- If we profess to know Christ as Savior and Lord, we need to understand exactly what He did for us on the cross so we can have eternal life.
- These twelve verses are a great overview of how justification by faith works.
- As we said, Christ’s SUFFERING (on the cross) provided the SATISFACTION for God’s wrath (against sin) as the SUBSTITUTION for all guilty sinners, so we could experience SALVATION. It all began with Jesus’ SACRIFICE.
- That’s all interesting, but what is a follower of Christ to DO with this?
- I close with the words of advice that Martin Luther once wrote to a friend: *“Learn to know Christ and him crucified. Learn to sing to him, and say, ‘Lord Jesus, you are my righteousness, I am your sin. You have taken upon yourself what is mine and given me what is yours. You became what you were not, so that I might become what I was not.”*^{vii}
- That’s the “great exchange” of justification and atonement.
- Christ-followers should see Isaiah 53 as a call to worship! Verses that move us to worship Him for His great sacrifice that purchased us a children of God.

ⁱ Peterson, E. H. (2005). [The Message: the Bible in contemporary language](#) (Is

ⁱⁱ [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#). (2016). (Jn 1:46). Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles.

ⁱⁱⁱ Grenz, S., Guretzki, D., & Nordling, C. F. (1999). In [Pocket dictionary of theological terms](#) (p. 120). Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press.

^{iv} [*The Holy Bible: English Standard Version*](#). (2016). (Heb 10:10). Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles.

^v <https://lyricstranslate.com>

^{vi} MacArthur Study Bible John MacArthur 2006 Thomas Nelson

^{vii} Butler, Trent. Holman Old Testament Commentary - Isaiah (p. 302). B&H Publishing Group. Kindle Edition.