

- Looking Back to Calvary (Isa 52:13-15)

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- **Looking Back to Calvary** (Isa 52:13-15)

Please open your Bibles to the prophecy of Isaiah, Isa 52:13 (2X). Since today is the day that we celebrate the Lord's Supper, I want this to be the first day that we will study Isa 53. But since Isa 53 is a chapter loaded with concepts and symbolism, it will take us many Sundays to cover every detail of this wonderful chapter. And so, every following Lord's Supper Sunday we will continue this study of Isa 53 until we have grasped the magnitude of the Lord's suffering as described in this chapter. But since today is also the day called Easter, we want to remember that the Lord Jesus Christ did not stay on the cross. He was buried and two days later He rose from the grave victoriously. It means He was victorious over His enemies. His human enemies thought to destroy Him by nailing Him to a cross, and His spiritual enemies thought to destroy Him by tempting Him to make a full atonement for the sins of all those whom He came to save, which would require the payment of an eternity in Hell. But when Christ rose from the grave, He thereby proved that He had been 100% successful in paying this enormous price. And even though the cross is past, and all the sufferings of Christ are now back in history, nevertheless it gives us great edification by looking back and meditate on those things that the Lord Jesus Christ has done on our behalf. God Himself gives us an example, for throughout the last epistle of the Bible, which is called the Revelation of Jesus Christ, God calls Him repeatedly "The Lamb", thereby reminding us that Christ was "The Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world".

So let us now turn our eyes to the prophecy of Isaiah, and let us remember that Isaiah did not write this. God did. God dictated these words to the prophet Isaiah, Isaiah wrote these words in the Hebrew language, and the King James translators translated these words as close as possible in a word by word translation into the English language. But since the work of the KJ translators is only a human endeavor, it is not without error. It is true that the Bible is the inerrant Word of God, but only in the original Hebrew and Greek texts. If we believe that the English Bible is the inerrant Word of God, we have actually added and taken away from the inspired and inerrant Word of God. So let us not do that, and let us have an open mind for any additional information that we find in the Hebrew Masoretic Text or in the Greek Textus Receptus, which are the texts that God has wonderfully preserved for us.

When we try to understand a difficult passage in the Bible, especially in the OT, it is often useful to begin at the end and slowly work our way back to the beginning of that passage. Isa 53 is a difficult passage. And thus I would like to start with the last verse of this chapter. Even this last verse contains a large number of topics to talk about. And so I would like us to focus on one subject matter contained in this last verse. That subject matter is also the title of this sermon: "**He Was Numbered With the Transgressors**" (2X). In the last few months we have learned how to maintain a focused look on any topic that we attempt to study. Let us now apply this discipline, and let us use the principles that we have developed so far. Let us begin with Isa 52:13, for there is really the beginning of this chapter. This is the Tenth Servant Song dedicated to the Suffering Servant of Jehovah. We read in Isa 52:13,

Isa 52:13-14 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:

Isa 52:15 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.

What does this mean? We must realize that the passages in the OT prophecies are not always chronological, so that each verse must be interpreted in harmony with what we have learned from the rest of the Bible. Briefly, what God is saying in verse 13 is that in the end Christ shall be victorious and shall be exalted. This does not refer to His exaltation on this sin-cursed earth, for sinful man does not know how to glorify Christ in all His glory. Christ shall be exalted in heaven and be very high, as high as God Himself, for Christ is also God, since He is the Second Person of the Triune God. But in verse 14 God says that first Christ shall have to suffer beatings and torture, more than any other man. His blood shall flow. Then in verse 15 God says, "So, in this manner, shall He sprinkle many nations". So shall He sprinkle His blood in many nations of the world. But only a remnant out of every nation shall be touched by His blood. Only a remnant shall be redeemed by the suffering and death of the Lord Jesus Christ, for He did not come to save everyone in the world. He came to save a remnant out of every nation. And who are these kings in verse 15? For we know that most human kings have rejected the Christ of the Bible. Most human kings have refused to believe the words of Scripture, and instead they have gone their own way. We will come back to these kings of verse 15.

#1. Who Hath Believed Our Report? (Isa 53:1-9)

That is a legitimate question. Who has believed the report that God gave us through the pen of the prophet Isaiah? No One! No One has believed all the words that God gave through the prophet Isaiah. Preachers and pastors say that they appreciate Isaiah. But they pick and choose from that prophecy. They do not really believe everything that they find in Isaiah. And let us face the problem in our world today. Who believes the whole Bible? No One! People who say that they believe the Bible, actually pick and choose from the Bible. They only read what their pastor says they should read. And when we show them a verse here or there that they have overlooked, they really do not want to hear those words. They will literally say, "I believe what I believe. No matter what the Bible says, I am not going to change my beliefs". It is absolutely a disgrace how most people relate to the Word of God. But God is not mocked. If you carefully read Rev 22:19 you will conclude that anyone who does not like to read or hear some part of the Bible, even if it is only one verse, that person is still under the judgment of God. And so, this question, "Who hath believed our report?" is actually a very weighty question. It is a question that causes us to search our soul, and see where we stand before God. It is a question that asks from us if our faith is Cold Orthodoxy (2X). Is It? Now let us read in Isa 53:1,
Isa 53:1 ¶ Who hath believed our report? and to whom is the arm of the LORD revealed?

Isa 53:2 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.

Isa 53:3 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.

Isa 53:4-5 Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. But he *was* wounded for our transgressions, *he was* bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace *was* upon him; and with his stripes we are healed.

Isa 53:6 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.

Isa 53:7 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.

Isa 53:8 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.

Isa 53:9 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.

Here the principle of Divine Substitution was actually applied. God said in verse 6, “the LORD hath laid on him the iniquity of us all”. Can we see what God is saying here? I am not asking you to understand it. It goes way beyond our understanding. The King of kings, the Maker of this great wide universe, the Almighty who holds our life in His hands, came down to our level, and He took upon Himself the most demeaning and horrible penalty imaginable that we deserved, and He willingly endured that penalty in our place, because we were unable to pay such a great price. Can we see what He has done for us? Can we believe it? And if we say that we believe it, is there any gratitude in us that we indeed have believed it? As you know, faith is always followed up by action. Our actions really show us what goes on in our hearts. We can say all kinds of things with our mouth, but if our actions do not measure up to what we say then we are hypocrites. And so, the question I have for each one of us is this: How great is our gratitude? We do not have to look at the gratitude of someone else. Each one of us must look at what goes on in our own heart. How grateful are we? What is the outward evidence of our gratitude? And don't come up with the lame excuse that your gratitude is reflected in that you obey His commandments. You were obligated to obey His commandments even before you were saved. Obeying His commandments is not to our credit. Thus that is not an evidence of gratitude for so great a gift, which is so great that we cannot even adequately describe it.

- **The Love of God** (Rom 5:5, Isa 53:10-12)

If the love of God for us was so great that He was willing to stand in for us before the Judgment throne of God, and endure the penalty of the equivalent of an eternity in Hell, then as a consequence the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts (Rom 5:5). Yes, that same intense love of God is poured

into our hearts, and we will show by our actions how much we love God, because He has loved us first. It would be too corny for me to give you a list of what you must do to express your gratitude. If you really love Him you will have no problem coming up with the right actions, but each one of us must make those decisions himself. But now look at the love of God as we read Isa 53:10-12,

Isa 53:10-11 Yet it pleased the LORD to bruise him; he hath put *him* to grief: when thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin, he shall see *his* seed, he shall prolong *his* days, and the pleasure of the LORD shall prosper in his hand. He shall see of the travail of his soul, *and* shall be satisfied: by his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many; for he shall bear their iniquities.

Isa 53:12 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.

Verses 10, 11 and 12 speak of Christ enduring the wrath of God in His soul. “Thou shalt make His soul an offering for sin”, and “He shall see of the travail of his soul”, and “he hath poured out his soul unto death”. You see, it is obvious that the sufferings of Christ were not all in His body. He suffered much more in His Spirit essence than in His body. When the Lord Jesus cried out victoriously, “It is finished”, He thereby indicated that the payment for our sins was finished. But He was still hanging on the cross. His body was still enduring much pain. And yet He said, “It is finished”. Does that not indicate that His substitutionary payment for our sins was so great that the sufferings in His body were negligible compared to those sufferings in His Spirit? So great is the love of God that He does not want us to know the full extent of Christ’s sufferings, for that causes us grief. And when we arrive in heaven or in the NH&NE we will still not know how much Christ suffered for us, for God does not want us to grieve about the atonement of Christ. But God has placed sufficient information all over the Bible to let us know that Christ’s sufferings were very great. Let us now focus on verse 12,

#2. The Great and the Strong (Isa 53:21, Rev 7:9, Isa 52:15)

Isa 53:12 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.

Who are represented by “the great” and by “the strong” in this verse? First of all we notice that the words “a portion” are in italics, so we can safely leave them out. But that increases the complexity of this verse. Then you want to know that the Hebrew word for “the great” actually has been translated much more often as “the many”. For example, you see toward the end of this verse the words, “and he bare the sin of many”. That word “many” is the same Hebrew word that has been translated “great”. And so, who does “the great” represent? It is “the great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues” shown to us in Rev 7:9. And now who do “the strong” represent? When we search out the Hebrew word for “the strong” we find that the meaning is: “the

strong”, because they are strong in number, or “the mighty”, because they are mighty in number. And thus, “the strong” also refers to a great multitude. Is it the same great multitude? We do not know yet. Let us first look at the word “divide”, which occurs twice in this verse in the same particular Hebrew parsing. This word does not mean “divide”, like dividing in two, but especially in this Hebrew parsing it means “apportion”, or “distribute”. And what does “the spoil” represent? The spoil refers to the booty, or the plunder of war. There is a war going on between Christ and Satan, and between the army of Christ and the army of Satan. The possessions they are warring about are the souls of men, and the future destiny of the world. Satan wants the souls of men and this world for his own glory, and he wants it forever. But God wants to gather together in Christ all things that are made righteous, and take them into His New Jerusalem for His own glory, and He will remove all things that have been defiled. And so, when we read the words, “Therefore will I divide him (a portion) with the great, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong”, we understand it in the following paraphrase: “Therefore will I, Jehovah, apportion to Christ a great multitude, and He, Christ, shall apportion the spoils of war with all the strong ones in His army”. In other words, God will give to Christ the great multitude for His Bride, and Christ will give to all those who are in His army all the possessions that He has conquered from Satan and his army. The first line of verse 12 is what Jehovah divides to His Servant, the Lord Jesus Christ, and the second line of verse 12 is what Christ divides as a victor for Himself and for His army. And why is Christ victorious in this battle? Verse 12 gives us the answer: “Because He hath poured out his soul unto death”. It is not that He went to Hell, like the Apostle’s Creed mistakenly tells us, but on the cross He suffered in His soul the equivalent of an eternity in Hell, and was not consumed in the process. It is for this reason that Christ was victorious over the Devil, and plundered his house. And notice also that the Hebrew parsing indicates that this word, translated “divide”, is in the imperfect tense, which means it is a war that is presently still going on. Now, let us relate this verse to Isa 52:15, the last verse of the previous chapter. The “many nations” of Isa 52:15 correspond to the great multitude of Isa 53:12. And “the kings” of Isa 52:15 correspond to the strong ones of Isa 53:12. And so, these two passages explain each other, and we understand the Bible as a harmonious whole. Let us now continue in Isa 53:12 and consider the phrase:

- **He Was Numbered With the Transgressors** (Isa 53:12, Luke 9:3, 22:35-38, Prov 28:9)

Who do these transgressors represent? There are two passages in the NT which literally quote this text. First I would like you to turn to the Gospel according to Luke, Luke 22:35 (2X). Just before the Lord Jesus and the disciples left the upper room where they had eaten their last Passover meal, the Lord gave them a picture showing them that He was going to leave them, and for a while they would be a church without a federal Head. Such a church would do crazy things. Such a church would do things that are totally contrary to the teachings of Jesus. For example, when they are sent out to evangelize, the Lord said unto them in Luke 9:3 (2X),

Lu 9:3 And he said unto them, Take nothing for *your* journey, neither staves, nor scrip, neither bread, neither money; neither have two coats apiece.

In other words, Christ instructed them to rely totally on the grace and providence of God, and not have any worry for their physical care. But now, without a federal Head, they would disobey all these instructions and they would be very worried about their own safety. We read in Luke 22:35-38,

Lu 22:35-36 And he said unto them, When I sent you without purse, and scrip, and shoes, lacked ye any thing? And they said, Nothing. Then said he unto them, But now, he that hath a purse, let him take *it*, and likewise *his* scrip: and he that hath no sword, let him sell his garment, and buy one.

Lu 22:37 For I say unto you, that this that is written must yet be accomplished in me, And he was reckoned among the transgressors: for the things concerning me have an end.

Lu 22:38 And they said, Lord, behold, here *are* two swords. And he said unto them, It is enough.

What do we see here? This congregation of the Lord Jesus Christ has become a congregation of transgressors rather than saints. This was only temporarily, for all 11 disciples who were present were already saved. They did not need to be saved all over. But "Christ was reckoned, or numbered, among the transgressors". In other words, "the transgressors" in Isa 53:12 are identified with the church of the Lord Jesus Christ, the church for which He gave Himself, that he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the Word". Now this is logical, for Isa 53:12 ends with the words, "He made intercession for the transgressors". And this is logical also, for if Christ came to save these transgressors and turn them into saints, then Christ has to make intercession for these transgressors on the cross. Please turn in your Bibles to the Gospel according to Mark, Mark 15:25 (2X). So far, so good. So far, there is no offense in the cross of Christ. He is the dear loving Savior who came to intercede for sinners, and turn them into saints. But wait! We also need to read the words of Mark 15. The scene is the crucifixion of the Lord Jesus. He was crucified between two thieves. These were not common petty thieves. These were robbers who will kill if necessary. We rd,

Mr 15:25 And it was the third hour, and they crucified him.

Mr 15:26 And the superscription of his accusation was written over, THE KING OF THE JEWS.

Mr 15:27 And with him they crucify two thieves; the one on his right hand, and the other on his left.

Mr 15:28 And the scripture was fulfilled, which saith, And he was numbered with the transgressors.

Do we see that here? There were three crosses. The Lord Jesus in the midst of these two thieves was numbered with these two transgressors. God identified Him as being numbered with the two thieves, one of whom a few hours later became saved, but the other never became saved. God intentionally first identified the transgressors of Isa 53:12 as the church of Jesus Christ, and then God intentionally identified the two thieves as the transgressors of Isa 53:12. If we must harmonize what we find in the Bible, then we must conclude that both these two thieves and the congregation of disciples belonged to the same group of transgressors. We cannot say that they all were going to be saved, for

one of the two thieves never became saved. What message did God convey to us in these passages? You see, it is commonly believed in most churches that these two thieves represent all mankind, who are either saved before they die, or who remain unsaved. But this is not what God portrays to us here in the Bible. By comparing these three passages God tells us that these two thieves represent the saved and the unsaved in the church. Outside the church there is no confusion. If someone is saved and has not joined the church yet, he knows that he belongs to the saints. And all the others, including all the atheists, know that they are in trouble with God. But inside the church there is a great deal of confusion about this matter of salvation. That is why today I paused and I elaborated on Isa 53:1 and Isa 53:6. Everyone inside the church believes that he or she is a saved individual. But even the congregation of the Lord Jesus contained one rotten apple. Here is where the offense of the cross shows up in full strength, for people are offended when I say that they must examine themselves. People are offended when God says that not everyone in the church is saved, for Christ did not save everyone who volunteers to join a church. Most people are offended when they must search their soul to see if they truly have been saved; most people do not want to do that. People are offended when the Bible says that faith without works is dead. People are offended when God says that they are lukewarm, for God says that He will vomit them out of His mouth. People are offended when I tell them that spending one hour in church on Sunday mornings is a sign of being lukewarm. People are offended when I read to them Prov 28:9, where God says, "He that turneth away his ear from hearing the law, even his prayer shall be abomination". People are offended when I let them know that one of their friends, or one of their loved ones, who is snared in a free-will gospel is snared by Satan and is in the way to Hell. People are offended when I warn them that their children are in danger of being snared in a Charismatic gospel or they are in danger of sliding into apostasy. People are offended when I rattle their cage. Please meditate about these things, especially when we are so confident of our faith, and remember that God says, "Faith without works is dead". For if we have no works to show we might be engaging in Cold Orthodoxy. Meditate about these things, especially when we think of how great our gratitude is, and then ask ourselves, "When was the last time that I was doing things that are pleasing in His sight?" But it is better that I offend you now, and that you would hear the admonition of the Holy Spirit, than that I would leave you alone and not worry about the unsaved in the church. If there is only one person in this congregation who is not saved, and who has come under the hearing of this sermon, it was a time well spent. But let us now return to Isa 53:12, for this verse has a glorious ending. God says, "And he bare the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors". You see, Christ made intercession for us who nailed Him to the cross. Even a heinous sin like that can be forgiven. And we can detect if we have been forgiven by the miracle that God has done in our heart. Yes, there is salvation possible even for me.

AMEN.

Let us turn to the Lord in prayer.