The Substituted Servant, Part 2
Isaiah 53:4-6
90-440

Now, let's open the Word of God to the fifty-third chapter of Isaiah. This is our sixth journey into this marvelous chapter. And with every passing week as I survey the text that is here and all of the trails that it leads to other places, I am reminded of how fathomless this chapter really is. One could spend a lifetime here, and going from here to all of the things that are implied and elucidated by this great chapter. Isaiah 53 poses a challenge to any preacher, and that is to edit himself so that it does not become overly cumbersome and you miss the main point. I'm fighting against that a little bit.

I'm further challenged because I normally prepare to have a beginning and an end and a middle, a whole sermon. I did last week and to cover verses 4 through 6. I didn't make it. I got through verses 4 and 5, two thirds of the way, but we didn't have enough time for verse 6. So I have sort of a third of a message left. Well that presents to me is a great opportunity then to fill in with things that are really needful and related and I think helpful. It allows me to take a tangent of necessity rather than whim. And I'm going to do that with you a little bit this morning.

It is always helpful to me to get altitude when I'm looking at a passage. The higher above the passage I get, the further the range of what I see. And I even love to get 40 thousand feet above the passage and I can look down and see everything from Genesis to Revelation and then eventually kind of get down out of that altitude and put the landing wheels down and arrive at the given passage that we're looking at. And that's what we're going to do. I want to get some altitude here for you and then we'll eventually put our wheels down in a little while at Isaiah 53 and wrap up our understanding of verses 4 through 6. But I want to start from a much wider perspective.

The history of the Jewish people is the most remarkable ethnic history in the…in the history of the world. It is a long and amazing saga of survival from their point of view. To think that there are still Jews in the world, and 14 or 15 million of them at that, is to understand that they have survived when all odds were against that survival. Nobody here has ever met a Hivite, a Jebusite, a Perizzite, an Amorite, or any other "ite" from the Old Testament because they're long gone. But we actually have Israelites sitting here today and many of them in our church, and there are many of them around the world. And they are that pure strain of Jews that has gone down through the history of the Old Testament and the New Testament right through until today. From their viewpoint, it is a great story of survival. However, from God's viewpoint, it is an even more amazing story of preservation.

I suppose that we could hail the human side of it and say this is a people so committed to their perpetuation and their existence that they are *the* greatest testimony to the will to survive of any people in the history of the world. But from the divine viewpoint, we would have to hedge that a little bit and say this is not a story of the human will to survive or to stay together as a nation. This is rather a story of divine protection and divine preservation. There are still Jews in the world because God has made sure there are still Jews in the world.

They are still identifiable to their very tribe, although they don't know what tribe they belong to because the records were destroyed in 70 A.D. when the Romans destroyed the temple. God knows what tribe they're in and God will reidentify those tribes and pick out 12,000 from each tribe to constitute the 144,000 Jews who will preach the gospel at the end of human history. They will still be able to be identified with their original tribes, even in the time of Tribulation right before the return of Jesus Christ. They are a remarkable story.

Yes, there's a human element in that survival, but far more importantly, they are a remarkable story of the protection and preservation of God. God has protected and preserved them, providentially. That is by ordering the circumstances for their survival. But on a number of occasions He has also protected them miraculously, suspending the normal course of history and the way things operate in the world for their protection, such as parting the sea so they could walk across on dry land when leaving Egypt. So under the providence of God, where He orders the circumstances, and under the miracle power of God, where He suspends nature, God has made sure that the Jews are not extinct.

Now this is remarkable. First of all, because they are a small group of people. They're a small group of people. They are an exceptional people by all measure. As concerns humanity, they are the noblest of human beings. They are a very exceptional people. But they have been chosen by God for His own purposes. And they are not what they are because they have earned it. They are not what they are because they have gained it. They are what they are because God decided it would be that way. And they have been chosen by God to be blessed as a nation and through them to bless the world.

Because they have been chosen by God for purposes yet unfulfilled, they are the target of the enemies of God. They are the target of Satan, the archenemy of God. They are the target of demons, the co-conspirators, and purveyors of supernatural wickedness in the world. They are the target of men, humans who are under the power of the kingdom of darkness. There have been repeated efforts on a demonic and human level to eliminate the Jews throughout history. Unsuccessful. But they are the particular target of the forces of hell and the humans that serve those forces in order to thwart the final purposes of God. Unsuccessful efforts I might add.

But when you think back about their history, you understand this is a small group of people living in a very vulnerable place in the Middle East, surrounded by all kinds of pagan powers, who throughout all their history wanted to obliterate them. They have survived. So many times they could have gone out of existence. A famine during the time of Jacob and his sons could have taken them. They could have literally disappeared from starvation, but God didn't let that happen.

God deposited one of the sons of Jacob, by betrayal, in the midst of Egypt and gave him all the power to disperse food and they knew it was available. Because of a dream that Joseph had, you remember, Egypt was ready for the famine and could provide food for other nations that might have perished without them. God planted Joseph, made him an interpreter of dreams, had him prepare Egypt for famine, and thus saved Jacob…or Israel. And when the brothers of Joseph came down to try to get some food from the stores of Egypt, it could have been that Joseph was so angry and so full of vengeance because they had betrayed him and sold him into slavery, that he might have decided to kill his brothers, but God didn't let that happen either.

God worked through the compassion and the forgiveness in the heart of Joseph to spare his brothers and thus perpetuate the family. That family stayed in Egypt, grew from one little family, Jacob and his family, to several million people, two million people in the land of Goshen. Four hundred years it took for that nation to develop. At the end of that period of time, plagues hit Egypt. Those plagues had devastating deadly effects on the Egyptians. They well could have also affected the children of Israel had God not made sure that they did not.

The killing of the firstborn could have devastated the Jews had God not stepped in and provided a way to the firstborn could be saved by putting the blood from the sacrificial lamb on the doorpost and the lentil. Pharaoh could have massacred the escaping Jews en masse and that's what he attempted to do when he chased them, had not God opened the sea, let them through, and then drowned Pharaoh's entire army when the sea collapsed on them. They could have disappeared from history in the forty years they wandered in the wilderness. They…they…they complained, they rebelled, they sinned violently against God and a whole generation died, their corpses drying out in the desert.

But there was a remnant of them, under the leadership of Joshua, that made it into the Promised Land. When they entered Canaan, they could have been destroyed again because they were entering a land, and they were a meager group of people, and they were facing formidable pagan enemies who didn't want to give up their land and their property. They could have been destroyed by any number of the enemies that occupied the land of Canaan which they were to conquer. But God made sure that that didn't happen. It was sort of metaphorically demonstrated in the fact that a massive Goliath was slain by a shepherd boy with a stone and a slingshot. That is how it was. Israel was like a shepherd with a slingshot against a massive giant in the land of Canaan. But God made sure that they survived.

It isn't just the story of human survival. It's a story of divine preservation. When they got in the land, and they settled in the land, and they were scattered around the land and divided into sections by tribe, you know what happened. They got caught up in idolatry. They got caught up in apostasy. They got caught up in the worship of false gods. And then they were caught up in immorality. And then their religion became superficial and hypocritical. They began to be absorbed into the pagan culture, and they could have literally disappeared by melting into the nations. But God made sure that didn't happen. They could have been lost forever by intermarriage with pagans and their ethnicity dissipated.

And when the kingdom split, ten tribes went to the north and established what became known as Israel, and two tribes stayed in the south, Judah and Benjamin, which became known as Judah. In the subsequent years there was not one good king in the north. They were so rebellious and so evil that God brought judgment on them, and the Assyrians came in 722 B.C. and sacked the northern kingdom and took captive all that they didn't kill, and those people never ever returned. They disappeared into the melting pot of the nations. They completely faded out of existence, which left the two tribes in the south and people from the other ten, who had migrated south before the northern kingdom was destroyed. And so there were people from every tribe now in the south.

But then the Babylonians came around the year 600 and they sacked Jerusalem and massacred people. And those who didn't get killed, they were hauled off to Babylon where they were to be mingled into the Chaldean culture. People like Daniel and his three friends were given names that weren't their own names. They were given names that connected them with the Chaldean/Babylonian gods, and then they were to be trained in the culture.

That could have spelled the end. The whole of the people of God in Babylon could have literally been absorbed by intermarriage and mixed religion and lost forever to human history. But it didn't happen. They were never absorbed in to Chaldean culture. Seventy years later a massive remnant of them came back and they reestablished their land. That's how their history went.

A king arose in Persia. His name was Xerxes…it would be the Greek way to say it. His other name, perhaps the one you know him by, Ahasuerus… he reigned in Persia from about 486 to 465, and the Jews were still there intact in Persia. However, there was an effort at genocide led by a man named Haman, who wanted to exterminate the Jews. And you remember the story because the story is told in the book of Esther, how that God used Esther in the Kingdom for just such a time as that to save the Jewish people from genocide in the land of Persia. And God had to order the providences so that the king, who had a beauty contest, selected Esther as the winner of the beauty contest.

She became his wife and her favor with him saved her people. Every year there's a feast that Jews hold. It's called "The Festival of Purim," P-U-R-I-M. It is a non-biblical feast. It's not recorded in Scripture. It's like Hanukkah, which is the other of the Jewish feasts that's not in Scripture. Purim is a celebration of their survival. It's a celebration of Esther and the survival of the Jewish people.

Then came the Greek power, and Antiochus Epiphanes attacked and slaughtered the Jews. Then came the Romans in 70 A.D. and massacred hundreds of thousands, by any count of Jews, destroyed Jerusalem, destroyed the temple, and then went into about a thousand towns and villages in subsequent years in the land of Israel and massacred people. It went on after 70 A.D. The story of their survival is an astonishing story of divine protection.

From the year 250 A.D., let's go from there to 1933, just summing it up. You can check this history; it's all chronicled very, very well. Jews in various places…and we're talking mostly in Europe, but in and around Europe that would stretch into the Middle East and into Africa…Jews in various places and times were attacked, expelled from cities, expelled from countries, forced to convert on the threat of death, enslaved, outlawed, massacred, had their property confiscated, were forced to wear identifying badges so they could be alienated socially, put through inquisitions that were deadly. On a number of occasions they were burned alive, that's from 250 to 1933. And then you pick it up in 1938 to 1945 and you have the Holocaust under Hitler and multiple millions of Jews are slaughtered.

And, today, they are the direct object of all the accumulated hate of the Islamic world that wants to obliterate them, remove them from the planet. So when you talk about the survival of the Jews, you're talking about something that is really astonishing. And it is more than a testimony to their will to survive. It is a testimony to God's preservation. That is the only explanation. They are a small people. They are not a powerful people. Oh, they have gained some powerful weapons in the modern era but throughout their history they were a small and beleaguered and somewhat weak people, militarily speaking.

Yes they've had a strong will to live, but that's not an explanation. The explanation is the purpose of God. Why have they survived as an ethnic people until today? And the answer is because God has not yet fulfilled His promise to Abraham and His promise to David, and His promise to the prophets to bless Israel with salvation and make Israel a blessing to the world. That will not happen until they put their trust in Jesus Christ as a nation, and that will happen in the future.

We've looked at it, Zechariah 12:10, "They'll look on the One they've pierced, mourn for Him as an only Son, and a fountain of cleansing will be opened to them. They will be saved and then through them the world will be blessed when the Lord brings His Kingdom (Zechariah 12 to 14). The future salvation of Israel is a promise in the Old Testament, as well as a promise in the New Testament. In the eleventh chapter of Romans, very, very important chapter, the apostle Paul is talking about this very issue. He says, "I do not want you, brethren, to be uninformed of this mystery so that you will not be wise in your own estimation that a partial hardening has happened to Israel until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in."

That's the church. "When the fullness of the Gentiles comes in, – " in other words, when all the elect in the church are gathered together, when that is complete – "then all Israel will be saved." And Paul says, "Just as it is written – " and then quotes from Isaiah – "the Deliverer will come from Zion, He will remove ungodliness from Jacob. This is My covenant with them when I take away their sins." That's from Isaiah 59. So Paul says there's coming a time that the church will be complete. And then when that is complete will come the salvation of Israel; that's God's covenant with them.

They are preserved for a future salvation. They need to be saved so that they can be blessed, because that was the promise of God in Genesis 12 and repeated again and again to Abraham. Not only so that they can be saved, and blessed by salvation, but that through them the world will be blessed. When they are saved, the Messiah comes, sets up His Kingdom, reigns in Jerusalem over Israel and the world. Israel becomes the most powerful and influential nation in the world and they are an influence for peace and righteousness. They will not only be blessed, they will bless the world. That's the promise of God. And it hasn't changed. And that's why they're still around.

And there's another powerful reality to consider. You're talking about a nation that, in and of itself, is vulnerable and weak, and you're talking about a nation that is beleaguered by attacks from hell and humanity. But you're also talking about something else that has to be brought into this, and it is simply this. Not only have they survived the hatred of the forces of hell and survived the hatred of the forces of humanity, but at the same time, listen, they have been under divine judgment.

I mean, that's three strikes. They have been under divine judgment. And this goes way back to Deuteronomy, back to the writing of Moses when they got on the edge of the land ready to go into the land; God said this to them, "You obey Me and you'll be blessed." Remember that? Deuteronomy 27:28? You obey Me, I'll bless you. You disobey Me, I'll curse you. And God spelled out the blessings and spelled out the cursings. And you can go back and read them and that's their history. They disobeyed God; they continue to do that. They are a cursed people. They are under God's judgment.

So God is preserving the very people that He is judging. He's done that all along. He started judging them way back in the Old Testament and He's been judging them all the way through human history, at the same time preserving them under that judgment. Israel's judgment continue day; the judgment of Jewish people continues today, because they rejected Christ. First Corinthians 16:22 says, "If any man doesn't love the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be cursed."

They are cursed for their disobedience through past history, but they're doubly cursed because they've rejected Jesus Christ. And when you look at Israel today, you're seeing a nation that has not

yet experienced the blessing of God. It is an apostate nation. It is a Christ-rejecting ethnicity. Religion is not godly. They claim to worship the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. They do not; they cannot, because you cannot honor the Father unless you honor the Son. They are disloyal. They are disobedient to God.

They are the enemies of the gospel, Romans 11:28 says. They are the enemies of the gospel. They deny the Trinity. Jewish people deny the deity of Christ. They deny the true teaching of the Old Testament and they deny the whole New Testament. That is not a formula for blessing. They reject their Messiah. They believe Christians are blasphemers because we worship a man who Himself was a blasphemer in their view. They follow the lie of salvation by works and human effort and self-righteousness. And so they are a cursed people right now under judgment, but at the same time being preserved by God.

If you suggested that a nation that weak and that small and that ancient would still be around, just history alone would tell you that's a nonsensical idea. Then if you added the component of the fact that there has been set against them such massive supernatural and natural powers, there would be no possibility of their existence. And then if you throw in the fact that God has been for millennia heaping judgment on them, you would assume that their survival was utterly impossible. But there they are and God has preserved them to save them in the end as a nation.

In Luke chapter 13 and the end of the chapter, our Lord looks at Jerusalem…sort of the city that stands for the whole of the nation…and He says this, "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem – " verse 34, Luke 13 – "the city that kills the prophets and stones those sent to her." They were about to kill Him. "How often I wanted to gather your children together just as a hen gathers her brood under her wings and you wouldn't have it. Behold, your house is left to you desolate." That house is still desolate. The Jewish people are desolate. They have no relationship to God.

Now there are believing Jews who have come to faith in Christ that make up the church, Jew and Gentile. But I'm talking about the nation itself, the people. But He says this to them in Luke 13:35, "I say to you, you will not see Me until the time comes when you say, 'Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord.' " There is a time in the future when Israel will look at Jesus Christ and say, "Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord." They will recognize the ir Messiah. That's what Zechariah wrote about, that's when they look on the One they've pierced and mourn for Him as an only Son, and a fountain of cleansing is opened to them. That's their future salvation.

Now the Old Testament prophets wrote about this, and they wrote about it in no vague terms. I want to show you two portions of Scripture. Since we have the time this morning, we're going to do this. Go to Ezekiel 36. There are two other prophets that stand out, of course…Major Prophets, along with Isaiah. That would be Ezekiel and Jeremiah. And, of course, you can add Daniel to that. But Ezekiel and Jeremiah were prophets at about the same time. They come about a hundred years after Isaiah, and they actually are prophesying right at the time the Babylonians are attacking. Ezekiel gets hauled off into captivity in 597; Jeremiah gets thrown in a pit and ends up escaping to Egypt. And so they were alive when the holocaust of the Babylonian invasion came. Their prophecies, their messages, are very important and very pertinent and received from God and dispersed at a time of great crisis.

Ezekiel 36, some very important insight in verse 16. Here's the message that comes to the people of Israel, the Jewish people. Verse 16, "Then the Word of the Lord came to me saying – " and here's

the history – “Son of Man – ” that’s a title given to Ezekiel – “when the house of Israel was living in their own land, they defiled it by their ways and their deeds. Their way before Me was like the uncleanness of a woman in her impurity.” Very gross description. “Therefore I poured out My wrath on them for the blood which they had shed on the land because they had defiled it with their idols. And I scattered them among the nations and they were dispersed throughout the land. According to their ways and their deeds, I judged them.”

And that’s exactly what happened. That’s called the Diaspora, and every Jew knows about that. And it started with the Babylonian deportation. Some came back to reconstitute the nation, but that was the beginning of the scattering. And even subsequent to the rebuilding and restoring of the nation, the Jews have been scattered to the far corners of the world as we all know. And that’s part of their judgment. However, verse 20, “When they came to the nations where they went, when they got scattered all over the world, they profaned My holy name.”

How did they do that? “Because it was said of them, 'These are the people of the Lord. Yet they have come out of His land.'” What is that saying? It’s saying this. When they were scattered all over the world, they profaned My holy name because people said, What kind of a God do these people have who can’t even keep them in their land? And they mocked God. The nations have mocked God. The God of the Jews has been mocked by the nations into which they have been scattered through human history.

And so, in verse 21 God says, “I had concern for My holy name which the house of Israel had profaned among the nations where they went.” Jews all over the world, beleaguered Jews all over the world struggling throughout all their history, it was hard to sell the rest of the nations on the greatness and the glory and the power of their God. He couldn’t even keep them in their own land. And if you ask somebody in the Middle East today, “Who has the more powerful God, Islam, or Judaism?” What do you think they would say? The God who has the money and the arms and the power and the population and the masses is Allah. This is a picture of the profaning of the name of the true God in the scattering of the Jews through history.

Verse 22 is the “therefore.” “Therefore say to the house of Israel, ‘Thus says the Lord God, it’s not for your sake, O House of Israel, that I’m about to act – ’ ” This isn’t about you – “but for My Holy Name which you have profaned among the nations where you went.” I’ve got to do something to gain My reputation back. That’s what God is saying. “ ‘I will – ” verse 23 –“vindicate the holiness of My great name which has been profaned among the nations which you have profaned in their midst. Then the nations will know that I am the Lord,’ declares the Lord God, ‘when I prove Myself holy among you in their sight.’ ”

The only way that I’m going to be able to put My glory on display in the nations is to put My glory on display through you. How am I going to do that? First, verse 24, “I’ll take you from the nations and gather you from all the lands and bring you into your own land.” Well, we have a preview of that, don’t we? Nineteen forty-eight, they went back, reconstituted their nation. That is a fact…incontrovertible fact…they are there. This is not the salvation of Israel, this is simply a preview, and an indication of what is to come. I’ll bring you back, and then it will happen. When I get you back in the land…and this is coming as we watch, isn’t it? Jewish people from all over the world, migrating in, rolling in. Some of them even coming to Christ now as individuals. Some of them embracing the gospel now, embracing Jesus as their Messiah now.

But the nation remains fixed against Christ as a people. But the day will come in the future, and He's talking about the people, the nation, the house of Israel, verse 25, here's the key, "I will sprinkle clean water on you and you'll be clean. I'll cleanse you from all your filthiness and all your idols, moreover I will give you a new heart, put a new spirit within you, I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes and you will be careful to observe My ordinances." That is a statement of salvation. That's dramatic.

In concern for His own holy name, to vindicate His faithfulness and demonstrate His glory, God will one day save the Jews. He is already in the process of re-gathering them, and in the future He will save them. Now look at the components of this. These are elements of salvation. Verse 25, "I'll sprinkle clean water on you and you'll be clean. I'll cleanse you from all your filthiness and your idols." That's what salvation is. It's the washing of regeneration, isn't it? It's the cleansing, a sanctification.

And then He says in verse 2,…verse 26, the second of these two verses, "I will give you a new heart." That's regeneration. You could say that the cleansing is the sanctification and the new heart is the regeneration. A new heart means new life. And I'll give you a new spirit, a new disposition, a new attitude, a new nature…that's conversion…a new mind, new affections. I'll give you a new power. A new power, what is that? I will put My Spirit within you. And based on the power of the Spirit in you, cause you to walk in My statutes and to be careful to observe My ordinances. A new behavior, obedience; a new condition, sanctification, cleansed from sin; a new heart, regeneration; a new disposition or spirit, conversion; a new power, the indwelling Holy Spirit; a new behavior, obedience.

All that will come to Israel in the future. That is the salvation of the people. I love this, verse 28, "You'll live in the land that I gave to your forefathers so you will be My people and I will be your God. Moreover, I will save you from all your uncleanness." Down in verse 31, he says, "You will remember your evil ways and your deeds that were not good and you will loathe yourselves in your own sight for your iniquities and your abominations." That's the stuff of real repentance, isn't it? They're going to look back over their sins and transgressions and they're going to hear the preaching of the gospel. Who will they hear it from? A hundred and forty-four thousand Jews, converted Gentiles out of every tongue, tribe, and nation that happens during the time of the Tribulation; angels in the heavens, two witnesses.

The gospel will be everywhere during that final time of divine judgment on the earth before the return of Christ. They will hear the gospel; they will see their sin; they will repent of their sin; they will look on the One they've pierced; they will mourn for Him as an only Son. They will be sanctified, regenerated, converted, Spirit-empowered, and turned into obedient followers of Christ. This is the real stuff. Verse 32, "I'm not doing this for your sake, for My sake. On that day – " verse 33 – "I'll cleanse you from all your iniquities." This is salvation. This is promised to Israel here. True conversion for the glory of God.

Now I want you to look at Jeremiah 31, Jeremiah 31. And I just want to cover this very briefly because our time is getting away. Jeremiah 31:31, this is the high point of Jeremiah's prophecy. "Behold the days are coming, future, declares the Lord, when I will make a New Covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah, not like the covenant which I made with their fathers in the day I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt. My covenant which they broke

although I was a husband to them, declares the Lord." What covenant is that? That's the covenant of the Law, that's the Mosaic Covenant given on Sinai, and they broke it even before Moses could get down and read it to them. When he came down, holding it in his hands, they were breaking it. They couldn't keep it. It's a covenant no one could keep. So I'm going to give you a new covenant. I'm going to make a new covenant, not like that one."

What's the nature of the new one? Verse 33, "I'm going to make this covenant with the house of Israel after those days, at the end of history." Here's the difference. "That law was on the outside, this one is different, I will put My law within them and on their hearts. I will write it and I will be their God and they shall be My people – " same thing that Ezekiel said –"and they will not teach again each man his neighbor and each man his brother saying, 'Know the Lord.' " Evangelism will end in Israel 'cause they'll all know the Lord. " 'They'll all know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them,' declares the Lord. 'I will forgive their iniquity and their sin, I will remember no more.' "

That's the conversion of the nation. The components are the same. There is here forgiveness, regeneration, conversion, true knowledge, obedience. They will believe themselves to be wretched sinners, and they will believe the Lord Jesus is the only Savior. They will believe it collectively as a nation. That in itself, folks, is a testimony to the sovereignty of God in salvation. The only way people get saved individually is by the sovereign work of God. The only way nations get saved, because there's only one nation promised salvation in one moment, would be by a sovereign act of God because not all individual Jews are going to come to the same conclusion by some act of personal free will in the same moment. God saves them.

And wonderfully, this New Covenant was made with Israel, but Israel rejected their Messiah. And after the death and resurrection of Christ, the New Covenant was opened to embrace everyone, everyone. Not ashamed of the gospel for it's the power of God unto salvation, to the Jew first, chronologically, but also the Gentile. Or Romans 10, salvation is for Jew or Gentile. Whoever calls on the name of the Lord will be saved. So the New Covenant has been ratified in the death of Jesus Christ and extended past Israel to the church. There was no church when it was promised to them. But now that the church has come, we are saved in the same way, by the same new covenant. That's why Paul in 2 Corinthians 3:6 says, "We are ministers of the New Covenant." And Paul was talking to Gentiles when he said that in Corinth.

And after the fullness of the Gentiles comes in by the New Covenant, then comes the salvation of Israel. Verse 31 talks about reconciliation. Verse 31 says, "I'm going to make a new covenant." Verse 33 talks about regeneration, "I'm going to put My law in them, on their hearts write it. I'll be their God, they'll be My people – " fellowship. It talks about knowledge. They'll have a true knowledge, they'll know the Lord. It talks about forgiveness. All these are components of salvation.

All right, you get the picture. Now let's come down for a landing. Go back to Isaiah 53. When they come to this point in the future, they will make the confession that is here in Isaiah 53; these will be their words. And let's just go to our text, verses 4 to 6. They're going to look back at Christ whom they've pierced. They're going to reevaluate the attitude. They didn't believe. Verse 1 says, "Who believed the message given to us? Few. Who actually understood the revelation of the arm of the Lord, the power of God in the Lord Jesus Christ? Very few. We weren't impressed with His origin. He was like a sucker branch. He was like a root in parched ground. We weren't impressed with His life; He had no stately form or majesty. Nothing about Him attracted us. We were certainly not impressed with His death. Despised, forsaken of men, a man of sorrows, acquainted with grief. He was so

despicable in His death we wouldn't even look at Him. He was despised and we thought of Him as nothing. He was a nobody. That's what we thought.

"But now, everything's changed. Now we know all those griefs, all those sorrows were ours. Truly our griefs He Himself bore, and our sorrows He carried. We had esteemed Him stricken, smitten by God and afflicted. We thought that God was punishing Him for His blasphemy. Now, we know He was pierced through for our transgressions, crushed for our iniquities, chastened for our well-being, scourged for our healing." Complete reversal of the estimate concerning Christ. They admit their horrible error in that future day. They will confess. They know the history of Jesus. They know He was pierced; they know He was crushed, or bruised. They know He was punished at the end of a mock trial. They know He was scourged. That's part of their history; every Jew knows that.

But one day they're going to admit that it wasn't for His blasphemies, it was for theirs. They're going to say, "We understand our transgressions. We understand our iniquities." *Our* transgressions, *our* iniquities, those are negatives. They will confess that Jesus was punished by God for their transgressions. That means violations; transgressions means you step over the line, violating the Law of God. Iniquities, that's a different word. Essentially it's a word that means to bend double, twisted like a pretzel, to bend double. It's perversions. We now know that He suffered for our violations and our perversions. That's the negative.

The positive is He suffered to bring about our well-being. See it there in the middle of the verse, our well-being. Punishment for our well-being fell on Him. "And by His scourging we are healed." There's the positives. He died under the weight of the punishment of God against our transgressions and our iniquities, our violations and our perversions. And in so doing, He purchased for us well-being and healing. Well-being is Shalom in Hebrew. Shalom, peace, full blessedness and healing, spiritual wholeness, spiritual health. The death of the physician made the patient well. We were sinful and thus sick, grieving, sorrowful, guilty…guilty of violations, guilty of perversions, separated from God, no peace, no spiritual health.

But He took our sins and our griefs and our sorrows and everything that comes with sin and He placed Himself under the…voluntarily under the judgment of God to be punished for our sins and to then purchase our peace with God and our true blessedness. Thus does the whole nation of Israel, at least a third after the two thirds of the rebels are purged out, according to Zechariah. One third of the nation confesses its long, long rejection of Christ, its long blasphemy of God, and they will be saved. This is the stunning reality of the future for the nation Israel.

There's one other thing that I want to do this morning and that is to help you see verse 6 in another way. In verse 6, we have the deepest recognition of sin. They talk about their attitudes; they will when they say, "We had the wrong estimation of Him, we esteemed Him, or considered Him, or thought of Him, or reckoned Him." In other words, our thinking was corrupt. We were wrong in what we thought about Him. They talk about behaviors, that's the transgressions and iniquities. And they talk about deprivations. Sinners recognize this. They lack well-being; they lack Shalom; they lack peace with God. They had no, as Isaiah 54 calls it, covenant of peace, which couldn't be shaken. And they also lacked wholeness, spiritual health. They were sick. Chapter 1 says, "Sick from head to toe, sick in sin."

So they understand those issues—the corrupt thinking, corrupt behavior, and the absence of all that is good. They know that. But there's something else that a sinner must come to grips with. And that

is it isn't just a matter of how we think, attitudes; it isn't just a matter of what we do; it isn't just a matter of what we lack, confession of sin gets down to the bottom line. It is a matter of who we are. The problem is in our nature, and that's where verse 6 comes in. It's in our nature. It is more profound than most would recognize, looking at this section. This part of the confession looks not at the manifestations of sin, but the cause. Here's the problem. All of us are like sheep, and we've gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way. And he says it's in our nature.

Sheep act like sheep. Sheep don't act like anything but sheep. We're acting consistently with our nature. And, in fact, they will find a parallel in sheep. Sheep are stupid, defenseless, helpless wanderers. They don't…they don't get in flocks like geese, and they don't hang around herds like cows. They don't stay together. So they're a good analogy. They have built into them a tendency to wander away from security and safety, and provision, and wander off, not in a group, but all by themselves, each going his own way. They follow that internal impulse that leads them away to all that is safe and secure and helpful. Our problem is deep in our nature. We are like sheep, defenseless, stupid, helpless wanderers.

Remember in Matthew 9:36, Jesus looked at the people and said, "They're like sheep without – " what? – "a shepherd." They're just going their own way, following their own sinful path that their nature dictates. They follow the intuition of their own wretched fallenness. That's what sinners do. That's what sinners do. I mean, how many options do sinners have today? How many do you have? There's no end to the options. You can follow your own way. And without Jesus Christ, you will; you'll follow the path of sin that you choose. You'll go your own way like sheep does. Oh, there will be some others that are going your way, so you'll eventually bump into them. But it's all very personal, and very independent. This is how sheep function.

And this is a part of a true confession, folks. This is a genuine repentance that recognizes that the evidences of sin betray a nature of sin. Gathering all that guilt and all that just punishment, and, as it were, dying for not only what we've done, but who we are. Jesus bears the full weight of our sinfulness on Himself in the sense that He takes the punishment of God. That's what the verse says at the end. "The Lord has caused the iniquity of us all to fall on Him." Our evil deeds, our evil thoughts, our evil deprivations, and our evil nature, for all of that, for all of that, the Servant of Jehovah bears the full weight of punishment.

That's what it says. The Lord has caused the iniquity of us all to fall on Him. The Lord God Himself chose the sacrificial Lamb, the Servant, Messiah, the sacrificial Lamb. The Servant Messiah was voluntarily willing to submit Himself to become the vicarious substitute. God caused Him then to pick up all the guilt that belonged to us and take the full fury of divine wrath. Five different ways in those verses, five different ways it speaks of the vicarious, substitutionary provision of Jesus Christ, dying in our place. This is the heart of the gospel.

Now, just a footnote. It wasn't the sin that killed Him; it was God who killed Him. It wasn't the sin. He didn't have any sin. He was sinless, holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sin. Sin did not kill Jesus. God killed Jesus to pay for sin that He never committed, but you did and I did. Jesus didn't die as a moral influence, showing the power of love. Jesus didn't die as an example of sacrifice for a noble cause. Jesus didn't die as nothing more than Christus Victor. That was a theory that came out in the 1930s and is still around. The idea was that Jesus died to gain a victory over hostile powers and to liberate humanity and the cosmos from social injustice. Jesus didn't die because we are victims trapped in unjust circumstances and need to be rescued.

There's only one way to understand the death of Christ and that is under the principle of penal substitution. He was our substitute to take the penalty for our sins, to satisfy the justice of God. The New Testament affirms this, doesn't it? Second Corinthians 5:21, "God made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him." Peter puts it this way, "He bore in His own body our sins." And Paul says in Galatians 3, "He was a curse for us." That's the New Testament affirmation of the truth of Isaiah 53. God has then not dealt with us according to our iniquities, He has not dealt with us according to our transgressions. But nor has He overlooked our sins, rather He has punished His Son, the Servant, the Messiah in our place and grace reigns over righteousness.

This will be the confession that Israel makes in the future. But this is the confession that any sinner can make now, and you can make it today. You remember 2 Corinthians 6:2, "Now is the acceptable time." "Today is the day of salvation," words borrowed from Isaiah again. Today is the day. Now is the time of salvation. Paul says in Romans, quoting again from Isaiah, Romans 10:11, "Whoever believes in Him will not be disappointed. There's no distinction between Jew and Gentile. The same Lord is Lord of all, abounding in riches for all who call upon Him, for whoever will call on the name of the Lord will be saved." That's now. This is the acceptable time. That means God will accept you now. This is the day of salvation.

Father, we have come again through the rich treasures of this incredible chapter. And even though we've just touched so lightly on one verse, really, verse 6, we're swept up in this massive reality that is the point of this great section of Scripture. And it's not for an exercise in learning. This is not about information; this is about salvation.

I pray for people here who now fully understand the gospel, understand the sacrifice of Christ, Jew or Gentile. I pray that today would be the day of salvation. That this acceptable time will become their time, even…even this morning, that they would turn to Christ, they would call on His name for salvation. Save sinners now, Lord, for the glory of Your name, for the glory of Your name. Father, do that work in hearts, we pray even now, in Christ's name.

Available online at: http://www.gty.org

COPYRIGHT (C) 2016 Grace to You
You may reproduce this Grace to You content for non-commercial purposes in accordance with Grace to You's Copyright Policy (http://www.gty.org/connect/copyright).