

Romans (66)
Paul's Understanding of Isaiah's Book of Consolation (Isa. 40-55) (cont.)

In this major section of Paul's Epistle to the Romans, chapters 9, 10, and 11, the apostle set forth God's purpose in history to glorify Himself by saving both Jews and Gentiles through Jesus Christ. Paul was also addressing an apologetic matter. There were many that had attempted to discredit Christianity due to the relatively few Jewish people who had embraced Jesus as their Messiah. "How could He be the Promised Savior to which the prophets had spoken?" The apostle explained that there were relatively few Jews who had embraced Jesus Christ as Lord because it was never God's intention to save all Jewish people. In fact, due to God judgment upon the Jewish people for having broken the Mosaic covenant and for God to have exiled them to Babylon for their transgression, God purposed to save only a remnant of Jews through the coming Saviour. He would cause them to return from Exile. He would deliver them by sending His Servant to remove their sin from them and restore them to relationship with God through a new covenant. He would then lead them through this life in their return, their pilgrimage, to their future and final destination, their heavenly Zion that will be enjoyed by them after their journey of faith through this life.

But God purposed to do much more than save a mere remnant of Jews through His Servant. Because of the Servant's faithfulness to do all the will of God, God promised to establish His Kingdom that would encompass many Gentiles from all over the world. These Gentiles, too, would "all upon the Lord and be saved", for God intended to greatly bless His Servant with a people comprising believers from every tongue and nation. As we read last week in **Isaiah 49:1-7** in Isaiah's **Second Servant Song**. Here Jesus Christ was speaking prophetically of His own calling and mission to save His people from their sins, but His people would include a multitude of Gentiles. (In the following I have italicized and emboldened references to Gentiles being saved through the Servant.)

"Listen, ***O coastlands***, to Me,
And take heed, ***you peoples from afar!***
The LORD has called Me from the womb;
From the matrix of My mother He has made mention of My name.
²And He has made My mouth like a sharp sword;
In the shadow of His hand He has hidden Me,
And made Me a polished shaft;
In His quiver He has hidden Me."

³And He said to me,
'You are My servant, O Israel,¹
In whom I will be glorified.'
⁴Then I said, 'I have labored in vain,
I have spent my strength for nothing and in vain;
Yet surely my just reward is with the LORD,
And my work with my God.'"

⁵"And now the LORD says,
Who formed Me from the womb to be His Servant,
To bring Jacob back to Him,
So that Israel is gathered to Him
(For I shall be glorious in the eyes of the LORD,
And My God shall be My strength),
⁶Indeed He says,

¹ This use of the name of "Israel" is a reference to Jesus Christ, the true Israel, God's true and faithful Son.

‘It is too small a thing that You should be My Servant
To raise up the tribes of Jacob,
And to restore the preserved ones of Israel;
I will also give You as a light *to the Gentiles*,
That You should be My salvation *to the ends of the earth.*’”

Paul is teaching that God is bringing back from “exile” all of His chosen people, who are dwelling in this fallen world, which is spiritually “Babylon.” His people include a remnant of Jewish people and a vast number of Gentiles that God has chosen to save from their sins. Jesus Christ lead the way for them out of “Babylon”, having secured their release from bondage to sin and this fallen world through His suffering and death, showing them that they too, would escape this world following the same path of suffering, the path that He had blazed before them. But He will help them and even make their journey pleasant and joyous, although it is a very difficult journey.

Isaiah 35 describes the spiritual journey of the redeemed, that is, all believers, who are journeying to Zion, their promised eternal homeland. As we read this passage, consider all of the allusions to Christ as well as New Testament Scripture.

The wilderness and the wasteland shall be glad for them,
And the desert shall rejoice and blossom as the rose;
²It shall blossom abundantly and rejoice,
Even with joy and singing.
The glory of Lebanon shall be given to it,
The excellence of Carmel and Sharon.
They shall see the glory of the LORD,
The excellency of our God.

³Strengthen the weak hands,
And make firm the feeble knees.
⁴Say to those who are fearful-hearted,
“Be strong, do not fear!
Behold, your God will come with vengeance,
With the recompense of God;
He will come and save you.”

⁵Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened,
And the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped.

⁶Then the lame shall leap like a deer,
And the tongue of the dumb sing.
For waters shall burst forth in the wilderness,
And streams in the desert.

⁷The parched ground shall become a pool,
And the thirsty land springs of water;
In the habitation of jackals, where each lay,
There shall be grass with reeds and rushes.

⁸A highway shall be there, and a road,
And it shall be called the Highway of Holiness.
The unclean shall not pass over it,
But it shall be for others.
Whoever walks the road, although a fool,
Shall not go astray.

⁹No lion shall be there,
Nor shall any ravenous beast go up on it;
It shall not be found there.
But the redeemed shall walk there,

¹⁰And the ransomed of the LORD shall return,
And come to Zion with singing,
With everlasting joy on their heads.
They shall obtain joy and gladness,
And sorrow and sighing shall flee away.

Isaiah prophesied during the times just before Assyria and Babylon conquered the land. Through Isaiah God indicted the people and laid His case out before them. He told them through Isaiah that He would indeed judge them and remove them from the land. And He did just that in fulfillment of Isaiah's prophesy.

Yet God had another message through Isaiah as well. Amazingly, God revealed through Isaiah that He would yet perform a work of salvation on behalf of His people. God would be true to His promises to Abraham. He would spare a remnant of that exiled people and once again bring them into the land and bless them and their descendants. He would see to it that a people would be created and established that would dwell before Him in peace and fellowship. It would be so great it would be on the scale of a Second Exodus. This time, however, it would even surpass the deliverance that they had experienced in the beginning. God would cause them to return to "the land", the people will not be rebellious, but they would be holy. God would lead them as before, but He would do so as to secure their compliance and their safety. He would bring about their deliverance from captivity and lead them to return to the land where once again they would have free access to come before Him to worship. Isaiah 35 is a prophecy of this journey to our heavenly Zion after experiencing our deliverance from the "captivity" of our sins. Isaiah 35 describes the Christian life, the journey to "Zion" that all Christians, whether Jew or Gentile travel through faith in Jesus Christ.

And so, the question might be asked regarding this prophecy of Isaiah: When was this, is this, will this be realized? (1) Some say it was fulfilled when a remnant of Jews was brought back from Babylon. This is true to a measure. But few could say that the full realization of this hope was encountered by the few and struggling returnees under Nehemiah, Ezra, and Zerubbabel. And after they did return, they certainly did not encounter the kind of experience with God reflected here. (2) Others would say this passage is to be yet fulfilled in a future return of Jews to the Promised Land at which time they will encounter these blessings in a future Millennium. Many study Bible notes in some Bibles suggest this idea. (3) However, I take a third position. I would suggest that this passage was designed to foretell the journey that we as Christians are currently making through this life as we are traveling toward our home in heaven. As one once described this passage,

"Here the prophet discourses metaphorically about the whole course of life; because the time when the 'redeemed of God' shall actually come to Zion,' is when the course of life is closed, and they pass into a blessed life." (John Calvin).

This theme of the Christian suffering as a path to glory is reflected in many places in the New Testament. Consider 2 Corinthians 4:16-18, which read:

¹⁶So we do not lose heart. Though our outer self is wasting away, our inner self is being renewed day by day.
¹⁷For this light momentary affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison, ¹⁸as we look not to the things that are seen but to the things that are unseen. For the things that are seen are transient, but the things that are unseen are eternal. (2 Cor. 4:16-18)

We also see this reference in the English Standard Version of **1 Peter 1:10-19**.

¹⁰Concerning this salvation, the prophets who prophesied about the grace that was to be yours searched and inquired carefully, ¹¹inquiring what person or time the Spirit of Christ in them was indicating when he predicted the sufferings of Christ and the subsequent glories. ¹²It was revealed to them that they were serving not themselves but you, in the things that have now been announced to you through those who preached the good news to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven, things into which angels long to look.

¹³Therefore, preparing your minds for action, and being sober-minded, set your hope fully on the grace that will be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ. ¹⁴As obedient children, do not be conformed to the passions of your former ignorance, ¹⁵but as he who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct,

¹⁶since it is written, “You shall be holy, for I am holy.” ¹⁷And if you call on him as Father who judges impartially according to each one's deeds, conduct yourselves with fear *throughout the time of your exile*, ¹⁸knowing that you were ransomed from the futile ways inherited from your forefathers, not with perishable things such as silver or gold, ¹⁹but with the precious blood of Christ, like that of a lamb without blemish or spot. (1 Peter 1:10-19)

Now to return momentarily to the passage under consideration, Romans 10, Paul quotes from the Old Testament repeatedly. His quotations are 12 in number and include the following: Leviticus 18:5, Deuteronomy 30:12-14, Deuteronomy 30:13, Deuteronomy 30:14, Isaiah 28:16, Joel 2:32, Isaiah 52:7, Isaiah 53:1, Psalm 19:4, Deuteronomy 32:21, Isaiah 65:1, and Isaiah 65:2. The number and selection of these verses reveal that the apostle Paul not only understood the Old Testament to be authoritative Scripture for New Testament Christians, but Paul taught that the unfolding of the expansion of the Gospel into the Gentile world was a fulfillment of God's promises through the prophets that He would redeem only a remnant of Israel even while He was expanding the influence of the Gospel throughout the Gentile world. Paul was teaching this church through this epistle that they were experiencing the fulfillment of the Old Testament hope of Israel through the Gospel proclamation and its success throughout the world. Just as God called a remnant of Jews to return to Him from Exile through faith in what the Servant of Jehovah would accomplish through His obedience and suffering sacrifice, even Gentiles were also a part of this vast returning pilgrimage of the people of God who are coming from all over the world to come to worship and serve the crucified and risen King, even as they are journeying through faith in their exodus from this world unto the eternal rest, the Promised Land of their heavenly Zion.

In the immediate context of Romans 10 to which we are now giving our attention, we read one of Paul's Old Testament quotations to show that God had foretold, in other words, foreordained, that Israel would largely not believe on the Suffering Savior in order to be saved from their sin. Romans 10:9, “*But they have not all obeyed the gospel. For Isaiah says, ‘LORD, who has believed our report?’*” This is from Isaiah 53:1, which is a verse within the Fourth Servant Song of Isaiah, which so clearly and graphically prophesied of our Savior's life, character, and suffering in His atoning death for His people. Paul quotes Isaiah 53:1 in order to show that God had foreknown the refusal of most Jews to believe on the Suffering Savior who was to come.² As we stated earlier, this reveals that Paul believed that the return from exile was taking place in this Gospel age. Only a remnant of Jews would be saved, the majority of Jews “have not obeyed the gospel.” But Gentiles are coming along with the remnant of Jews, as the prophets foretold would occur.

We sought to give attention last Lord's Day to the great movement of God's purpose in history beginning with the Babylonian Exile that initially began in 587 BC and from which a remnant would return to receive God's gift of salvation. It is this return from Exile, which was the manifestation of God's judgment for Israel breaking its covenant with God, which is the historical event in which salvation is promised throughout the prophets. The curse of God was upon the people and it would remain until the Messiah came to remove through His saving work. Again, Paul believed and taught that the return of those who had formerly been under God's wrath to place their faith in Jesus Christ, was the realization of the hope of Israel. Just as earlier in biblical history the exile of Israel from bondage in Egypt was the premier demonstration of God's power in bringing salvation, so after the kingdom of Israel had fallen and the people were under the wrath of God for having broken its covenant with God, this return from the Babylonian Exile is the event that gives meaning and context to the salvation that God brings through Jesus Christ. This entire work of God in salvation for His people is seen in what is termed, The Book of Consolation, which is from Isaiah 40-55. We devoted last week to rehearsing in broad strokes the main message of the chapters that lead up to the Fourth Servant Song of Isaiah 52:13-53:12.

Let us consider this **Fourth Servant Song** (Isa. 52:13-53:13). As we look over our passage we see that not only is the Gospel beautifully prophesied in these verses, but also the reaction and response of the Gospel by both Israel and the Gentiles. It is so clearly evident before our eyes we might question how the Messiah as a suffering Servant is not readily recognized by the Jewish people both in the first century and centuries ever since. The answer may be seen as in that first, many Jewish people are led to skip over this passage in their reading of Scripture, and second, that only eyes which have been illumined by the Spirit of God can see clearly even the most obvious of spiritual truths.

² Of course God foreknew their rejection for He had decreed from eternity that this would take place in history.

I. The Servant is greatly exalted after being deeply humiliated (52:13-15)

These three verses in Isaiah 52 may be seen as containing the message of chapter 53 in capsulated form, but in reverse order. In chapter 53 the suffering of the Servant is set forth which then results in His exaltation. But in these three verses the Servant's exaltation is presented first, and then the cause of His exaltation, His sufferings.

We first read the opening words of the song in 52:13:

**Behold, My servant will prosper,
He will be high and lifted up, and greatly exalted.**

Here God is speaking. Although appearances seem to the contrary, His Servant will accomplish what He set out to do; He will redeem His people. He will be exalted.

The kingly authority of the Servant is stressed. Christ Jesus has been declared to be both Lord and Christ by the resurrection from the dead. And it is through His kingly power that He brings the benefits of His death to His people. He is King now, and that we are saved today is due to His kingly power. Here is the statement from **The First London Confession of 1644**, Article XIX:

CONCERNING His kingly office, Christ being risen from the dead, and ascended into heaven, and having all power in heaven and earth, He doth spiritually govern His church, and doth exercise His power over all, angels and men, good and bad, to the preservation and salvation of the elect, and to the overruling and destruction of His enemies. By this kingly power He applieth the benefits, virtue, and fruits of His prophecy and priesthood to His elect, subduing their sins, preserving and strengthening them in all their conflicts against Satan, the world, and the flesh, keeping their hearts in faith and filial fear by His Spirit: By this His mighty power He ruleth the vessels of wrath, using, limiting and restraining them, as it seems good to His infinite wisdom.

1 Cor.15:4; 1 Pet.3:21,22; Matt.28:18,19; Luke 24:51; Acts 1:1, 5:30,31; John 19:36; Rom.14:9; John 5:26,27; Rom. 5:6,7,8, 14:17; Gal.5:22,23; Mark 1:27; Heb.1:14; John 16: 15; Job 2:8; Rom.1:21; Eph.4:17,18; 2 Pet.2.

We next read in **Isaiah 52:14** these words:

**Just as many were astonished at you, My people,
So his appearance was marred more than any man,
And His form more than the sons of men.**

Israel's humiliation under the judgment of God had been described earlier by the prophet as having been so severe that it astonished the nations who witnessed their judgment. In the same way, when the Servant suffered, the reaction of those who witnessed it was astonishment. His suffering bordered on the unthinkable. They witnessed His suffering, as ones standing stupefied, overpowered by the paralyzing amazement of His wretched condition. His appearance "turned away the faces of hardened men, men accustomed to viewing and inflicting great torments." His disfigurement caused Him to no longer appear human.

Then in **verse 15** we read,

**Thus He will sprinkle many nations,
Kings will shut their mouths on account of Him;
For what had not been told them they will see,
And what they had not heard they will understand.**

But to the same degree that they were astonished at His humiliation, they will be astonished at His exaltation. "Never was a man brought so low, never was anyone raised so high" (Leopold). His exaltation is seen in that He "sprinkles" many nations. This speaks of cleansing; as when a leper was cleansed, this servant renders unclean Gentiles as "clean", rendered fit to approach and commune with a holy God. These Gentiles who had not the truth proclaimed to them, who had not the advantage of possessing the oracles of God, see this sight of the Suffering Servant and are rendered clean by it. It was through His suffering that His position was obtained so as to effect fruit among the Gentiles (cf. John 12:20-24).

If any would challenge that this speaks of the Gentiles being converted to Christ in this gospel age, we might but turn to Romans 15:21, where this verse is quoted by Paul specifically referring to Gentiles coming to Christ in this church age. It reads, “but as it is written: ‘To whom He was not announced, they shall see; and those who have not heard shall understand.’”

II. The Servant is rejected because of His seeming insignificance (53:1-3)

Verse one reads, “*Who has believed our message? And to whom is the arm of the LORD revealed?*” The prophet calls out to God regarding the unresponsiveness of Israel to his message of the Suffering Servant. As a whole they did not recognize or acknowledge Him. We read of this in **John 12:37-41**:

But although He had done so many signs before them, they did not believe in Him, ³⁸that the word of Isaiah the prophet might be fulfilled, which he spoke: “Lord, who has believed our report? And to whom has the arm of the LORD been revealed?” ³⁹Therefore they could not believe, because Isaiah said again: ⁴⁰“He has blinded their eyes and hardened their hearts, lest they should see with their eyes, lest they should understand with their hearts and turn, so that I should heal them.” ⁴¹These things Isaiah said when he saw His glory and spoke of Him.

Here we see that Isaiah 53:1 is not only quoted by Paul in Romans 10:16, but John used it also in His Gospel. John attributes God directly hardening these Jews so that they would be unable to understand so that they could not believe. God often judicially hardens those whom He has determined to overthrow and damn in their sins.

And so, the Gentiles accept in faith what had been unheard by them; while Israel was lamenting because it had put no faith in a message which they had heard for centuries--that of the Servant of God who came from a lowly beginning to a glorious end.

The unassuming and humble character of the Servant is described in **verse 2**.

**For he grew up before Him like a tender shoot,
And like a root out of parched ground;
He has no stately form or majesty
That we should look upon Him,
Nor appearance that we should be attracted to Him.**

At first, the Servant appeared imperceptibly and unrecognized by those about Him. A “Tender shoot” is a sucker springing from the root at ground level. This speaks of his Davidic lineage, heir to the throne (cf. Isa. 11:1). “Dry ground” speaks of the barren, desolate condition of Israel when the Servant appeared on the scene.

And then verse 3 describes how His people reacted to Him.

**He was despised and forsaken of men,
A man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief,
And like one from whom men hide their face,
He was despised, and we did not esteem Him.**

Verse 53:2b may speak of His appearance on the cross. There was nothing about Him seemed to inspire a following. Or, it may speak about Him as a person throughout His life. He did not use human personality or fleshly means to gather a following. He was “despised” rather than “loved.” He was “rejected” rather than “embraced.” He was “forsaken” rather than “defended”; “We hid as it were our faces from Him.” He was viewed as a source of shame rather than an object of worship, for we “esteemed him not.”

III. The Servant’s willingness to suffer for His guilty people (53:4-6)

Surely our griefs He Himself bore,

**And our sorrows He carried;
Yet we ourselves esteemed Him stricken,
Smitten of God, and afflicted.**

Christ gave Himself as a sacrifice for others, but at the time He was crucified, He was seen as having been rejected by God; “cursed is everyone who hangeth on a tree.”

And then in verse 5 we see:

**But He was pierced through for our transgressions,
He was crushed for our iniquities;
The chastening of our well-being fell upon Him,
And by His scourging we are healed.**

The true state of the condition is stated. He was not accursed of God. He was not smitten for any transgressions of His; rather, He was wounded for “our transgressions” said the prophet.

And then in **verse 6** we read of the substitutionary death of the Servant on behalf of His people

**All of us like sheep have gone astray,
Each of us has turned his own way;
But the Lord has caused the iniquity of us all
To fall on Him.**

There is a peculiar sinfulness about each of us as individuals. All are sinful, but each has “some special aggravation not found in his fellow.” There is unanimity of opinion among sinners awakened to their wretchedness: “I, like everyone else, am sinful; but I, in a way somewhat peculiar to others, am more wicked than others.” Each of us could challenge rather vociferously Paul's claim to being the chief of sinners.

IV. The Servant's submission to suffering (53:7-9)

- (1) Verse 7 describes the patience and humble submission to suffering.
- (2) Verse 8 describes his departure from this life.
- (3) Verse 9 describes his burial.

We read in **verse 7**:

**He was oppressed and He was afflicted,
Yet He did not open His mouth;
Like a lamb that is led to slaughter,
And like a sheep that is silent before its shearers,
So He did not open His mouth.**

The imagery of a sheep is taken up again by the prophet. It was used in a negative sense of the remnant of Israel in verse 6; like sheep people tend to stray. Here, however, it is used in a positive sense to describe the submission of the Servant to his suffering. As a sheep submits to being sheared and is even silent when about to be slaughtered, so was Christ.

We next read of His death.

**By oppression and judgment He was taken away;
And as for His generation, who considered
For the transgression of my people to whom the stroke was due? (53:8)**

No one recognized that it was because He was a substitute for sinners that He died. It was not until after the resurrection, through the instruction of the living Lord and through the giving of the Spirit at Pentecost that even His disciples began to comprehend the substitutionary nature of His death.

Take note that the prophet is speaking of the Servant's death on behalf of "my people." Christ was a Jewish Messiah, who came as a fulfillment of Jewish sacrifices, as an atonement for Israel having transgressed the covenant given through Moses. The mystery that was hidden from them was that the benefit of His death would come upon the Gentiles as well. Two reasons why God could do this for the Gentiles:

(1) That Jews were condemned as sinners making them no more deserving of blessing than Gentiles, it enabled God to be just in showing mercy to all whether they be Jewish or Gentile (Romans 3);

(2) Because Abraham received the blessing of salvation through a faith he had prior to being circumcised, God could justify the uncircumcised Gentiles who had the same kind of faith as their father Abraham (Romans 4).

In **verse 9** we read of the Servant's burial.

**His grave was assigned with wicked men,
Yet He was with a rich man in His death,
Because He had done no violence,
Nor was there any deceit in His mouth.**

This is one of the most convincing prophecies of Scripture with regard to Jesus' sufferings and death. How could He be both identified with wicked men and a rich man in His death; answer: He died between two thieves but was buried by the rich man, Joseph of Arimaethea, in a sepulcher that he had prepared for himself.

V. The outcome of the Servant's suffering (53:10-12)

It was God the Father who put to death His Servant, who was also His Son.

**But the LORD was pleased
To crush Him, putting Him to grief;
If He would render Himself as a guilt offering,
He will see His offspring,
He will prolong His days,
And the good pleasure of the LORD will prosper in His hand.**

God is the ultimate cause of all things, although He is not the chargeable author of sin. He controls men in their sin, but their sin is owed to them, not God. Evil men do wicked things and will be held accountable one day before the Judge of all the earth; but God uses even wicked men's deeds to accomplish His purposes. It was God who crushed the Servant; it was the judgment of God that fell upon Him. Of this terrible event of the Servant being put to death by wicked men, Peter declared God's sovereignty over the event.

The kings of the earth took their stand,
And the rulers were gathered together
Against the LORD and against His Christ.'

²⁷“For truly against Your holy Servant Jesus, whom You anointed, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles and the people of Israel, were gathered together ²⁸“to do whatever Your hand and Your purpose determined before to be done. (Acts 4:26-28)

The Servant of the Lord is seen as an offering for sin on behalf of His people. The offering was made under the Old Testament economy in such a way as to picture the expiation (removal) of sin, both its guilt and

punishment, from the sinner to the sacrifice. Cf. Exodus 29:14,15. And so Paul describes Christ in these terms in the New Testament: (Gal. 3:13; 2 Cor. 5:21; Rom. 8:3,4.)

We see furthermore in Isaiah 53:10 that “He shall see His offspring.” After He is made an offering for sin He will see His descendants? How is this possible? Answer: The Servant will be resurrected; death will not hold Him. Through His death, Christ assured Himself a posterity, a people of His own to whom He is a Father.

Hebrews 2:13b reads, “And again, ‘Behold, I and the children God has given me.’” We entered this world as descendants of the first Adam through a natural birth. We gain entrance to the world to come as descendants of the second Adam through a second, a supernatural birth. We have His life in us, as the parent’s life is in the child. “For you are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God; when Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall you also appear with Him in glory” (Col. 3:3). “We have our natural life, this makes us men: we have our spiritual life, this makes us Christians.”

Here, we read of the Servant’s reign as King. The will of God is conducted/carried out through “His hand” or through Him. The Lord entrusts His concerns to the faithful Servant who died on behalf of His people. He who purchased them is their rightful leader who will continue to mediate the blessings of God to His people.

We next read in **verse 11**:

**As a result of the anguish of His soul,
He will see it and be satisfied;
By His knowledge the Righteous One,
My Servant, will justify many,
As He will bear their iniquities.**

This should be a cause of great comfort and joy for the Christian. As Christ had first to view the terrible prospect of a violent painful death, and even the more terrible prospect, becoming regarded as “sin”, He was strengthened and is now satisfied with this prospect, by it He secured your salvation. The salvation of your soul and the fact that you would be with Him brings satisfaction to the heart of our Lord.

Here the word, “knowledge” may be better regarded as “toil”; or “toilsome labor.”

Now here again, we have the redemption accomplished by the work of Christ being for a specific, finite number of people. When the high priest under the Old Testament system placed his hand upon the sacrificial goat on the day of atonement, the sins of the people of Israel were transferred to that sacrifice. The day of atonement did not provide a sacrifice for the Canaanite, Babylonian or the Egyptian; but for Israel only. Now the sacrifice could be reckoned as having atoning benefit for a Canaanite, Babylonian, or the Egyptian, if he would come and become a proselyte, joining himself to the people of Israel. In the same way, Jesus Christ sought to “justify the many”, He bore the iniquities of His people. Thankfully, His people has been broadened to include multitudes from every nation on the earth. But be assured of this, if one would have his/her sins pardoned, if the atonement of Christ is to be rendered effectual, one must become numbered among His people. Those who are outside this group will have to bear the full penalty of their own sin on the day of judgment. Christ’s atoning death was sufficient for all, but intended and rendered effectual for His people.

We then read the final verse in this Servant Song.

**Therefore, I will allot Him a portion with the great,
And He will divide the booty with the strong;
Because He poured out Himself to death,
Yet He Himself bore the sin of many,
And interceded for the transgressors. (53:12)**

Yet He Himself bore the sins of many and interceded for the transgressors. The image is that of a conquering warrior, the battle having ended, He now sits down to distribute the spoils.

“He was numbered with the transgressors” was quoted by Mark as having been fulfilled when Jesus hung between two thieves (Mark 15:28).

“And interceded for the transgressors” -- Perhaps this is prophetic of the statement on the cross: “Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.” Or, it may be prophetic of His high priestly ministry; after having offered Himself as a sacrifice, He entered the presence of God in order to render the benefits of His sacrifice on behalf of His people. (cf. John 17:9, 20).
