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# The Servant's Victory

## Isaiah 52:13-53:12

*Daniel Turner*

Sign language speaks volumes. Hearing with our eyes powerfully communicates. And we all do it. We all sign. We all interpret. And much of these symbols we use are universal.

For example

- a hand waved in sweet gesture = greetings.
- An index finger extended upward = jubilant victory.
- An index and middle finger extended and raised = peace bro

Or what about...

- An index finger extended outward at someone = ?

So what does that one mean? What are we saying when (in an argument and sensing personal blame) we extend the index finger outward at someone and spew words out to lighten our load? What's going on?

Yes, we may be scolding someone. But it's deeper than that, isn't it? Are we just "telling off someone"? Are we simply "making a point"? No, I think it's more than this.

The index finger extended outward at someone reflects a profound need in every human being. This signal with the hand is none other than guilt transference. **We attempt blame shift** (cf. Genesis 3). We simply cannot bear our own guilt. It crushes. It suffocates. Like fighting to the surface of water for air, we must have our shame transferred from us onto someone else lest we die an awful death. But as you know, when we try to transfer our guilt onto someone else, it doesn't work. It doesn't go away.

So here's the question for this morning: **What makes our unbearable guilt go away?** Is there hope that I can have a clear conscience? Are you ready this morning? We are about to see the most staggering of all miracles in the Bible. And this miracle is like a GPS tracking device leading us to the only place at which we can experience an unburdening of crushing guilt from our souls. Do you need rest for your soul? Are you this morning experiencing a troubled conscience? Do you want to find the peace and healing for your heavy heart? If this is you, open your Bibles. Turn please to Isaiah 52:13-53:12 and get ready to watch the unveiling of the suffering servant whose only guilt is yours and whose only righteousness is his. <pray>

Isaiah 52; starting in verse 13 unfolds the gospel for us. Taken a listen as I read the poem in its entirety.

Isaiah 52:13-53:12

Behold, my servant shall act wisely;  
he shall be high and lifted up,  
and shall be exalted.

As many were astonished at you—  
his appearance was so marred, beyond human semblance,  
and his form beyond that of the children of mankind—

so shall he sprinkle many nations;  
kings shall shut their mouths because of him;  
for that which has not been told them they see,  
and that which they have not heard they understand.

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

For he grew up before him like a young plant,  
and like a root out of dry ground;  
he had no form or majesty that we should look at him,  
and no beauty that we should desire him.

He was despised and rejected by men;  
a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief;  
and as one from whom men hide their faces  
he was despised, and we esteemed him not.

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

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

All we like sheep have gone astray;  
we have turned—every one—to his own way;  
and the LORD has laid on him  
the iniquity of us all.

He was oppressed, and he was afflicted,  
yet he opened not his mouth;  
like a lamb that is led to the slaughter,  
and like a sheep that before its shearers is silent,  
so he opened not his mouth.

By oppression and judgment he was taken away;  
and as for his generation, who considered  
that he was cut off out of the land of the living,  
stricken for the transgression of my people?

And they made his grave with the wicked  
and with a rich man in his death,  
although he had done no violence,  
and there was no deceit in his mouth.

Yet it was the will of the LORD to crush him;  
he has put him to grief;  
when his soul makes an offering for guilt,  
he shall see his offspring; he shall prolong his days;  
the will of the LORD shall prosper in his hand.  
Out of the anguish of his soul he shall see and be satisfied;  
by his knowledge shall the righteous one, my servant,  
make many to be accounted righteous,  
and he shall bear their iniquities.  
Therefore I will divide him a portion with the many,  
and he shall divide the spoil with the strong,  
because he poured out his soul to death  
and was numbered with the transgressors;  
yet he bore the sin of many,  
and makes intercession for the transgressors.

Oh my! May God use His Word to unburden our hearts bringing joy into our lives and attention to Jesus Christ.

## **Mystery**

**52:13-15**

As we look at these verses related to Jesus, we begin with the first section (v13-15). Here, we are confronted with the mystery. We see the Servant high and lifted up and yet we see him repulsive and defeated and yet we see him accomplishing redemption. This high / low / victory movement stands forth as the mystery of the Bible.

### **glory**

**v13**

First, found in v13 what we see of the prophecy of the Lord Jesus is his glory.

“high and lifted up” was used of Isaiah back in chapter six. Should you desire to feel the majesty of this description of Christ chapter six will assist you (John 12:41). He is the king. He is enthroned. He is holy, holy, holy.

Perhaps too, this verse hints at the mystery of his resurrection and ascension. Truly, we are on holy ground.

### **disgraced**

**v14**

And yet, the tone shifts in the poem. V.14 is appalling. If you read this verse well you will feel it in your stomach. It describes Jesus on the cross. He was not merely beaten up. It was not as though people stared at him merely and said, “is this the Christ”? No No. It was far worse than that. You can hear the people outside Jerusalem on the hill called Golgotha say, “is that a human being”?

Ripped, smeared, broken, battered, bleeding – disgraced. Hanging on the cross like a raw piece of meat infested with flies and maggots was the Christ on the cross.

## graced

v15

And now the movement of the poem changes again – abruptly. V15 talks about Christ’s accomplishment on the cross. Due to v13 and his exaltation and due to v14 and his humiliation we find in v15 redemption. Sprinkling to cleanse the nations we see the Christ as a high priest. Washing his people all over the world of their polluted souls / shutting their mouths in sheer awe and reverence – and the effects of the cross for the nations came as a result of seeing and understanding this mystery.

Are you beginning to see something? I’m asking you something personal this morning. Do you see what is before your eyes? Do you understand how the guilty go free? Can you make sense now of what makes your unbearable guilt go away?

You cannot see and you cannot hear by your unaided intellect. To believe and receive understanding you must have the revelation found in 53:1-9 to which we now turn.

## Revelation

53:1-12

When we look at Jesus we see utter suffering. Question: How does one explain this appearance of defeat and loss? How can a defeated, dejected, dehumanized king triumph over my sin and guilt?

These verses before us communicate that without revelation people simply have human opinion. They only have natural means to understand what they are seeing. They judge on appearance only. And their conclusions will be in error. And yet, those who have been given ability to see spiritual realities see Jesus’ suffering as both personally & profoundly significant and His resurrection as total victory. Notice this by first noticing v1-3.

### Without it...

v1-3

In v1 we are told that without revelation we view Jesus inaccurately.

#### Jesus’ life is not believable

v1

Without God revealing the identity and nature of Christ and his cross work to us, Jesus is not believable. We look at Jesus and we do not believe. He will appear to the one who cannot see spiritually as not believable / as not credible / as not reliable.

#### Jesus’ life is not desirable

v2-3

Watch how this section develops. In v2-3, not only will Jesus look not credible but as a result he will not appear desirable. Without God-given sight we do not esteem him / we do not desire Jesus. We do not regard him as worthy of praise / as worthy of pursuit / as worthy of worship. We just see a bloody mess of defeat. And that my friends does not dazzle the heart with intrinsic value.

### With it...

v4-12

Ah but... in v4-12 with revelation we see the dying of Jesus as our only hope / we see the death of Jesus as the victory. The explanation of the great mystery of 52:13-15 is given. In these verses, we come across God revealing the true identity and activity of His son Jesus. In these verses we see **how our unbearable guilt goes away**. And what that produces in the believer’s life is life-changing.

### **We see Jesus' dying as our relief**

**v4-5**

According to v4-5, with revelation we see the dying of Jesus as the only source of relief. All the grief, all the sorrow, all the gaping wounds in his body flowing blood upon the thirsty land is due not to his sin but ours. When God opens our eyes to understand why Jesus came to die we see the transfer of our guilt onto him. All our griefs, sorrows, transgressions, iniquities were placed on him. He was the fall guy. He was the scapegoat. He took our place and was pierced by God's just wrath. And this brought us peace with God and healing for the soul.

### **We see Jesus' dying as our substitute**

**v6**

If v4-5 were not enough, God through Isaiah in v6 makes plain why Jesus suffered and died. "For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God" (2 Cor.5:21). Salvation comes to enemies of God because Christ himself became the perfect and final substitutionary sacrifice on behalf of those who have saving faith in Jesus. To be reconciled to God through the suffering of Christ is to be at peace with God. The war against your treason is over. The penalty for your rebellion has been paid in full. Consequently, we do not feel the need to blame someone else. We don't need to always get the last word in. we do not have to prove ourselves right and strong when we are weak and wrong. Unbearable guilt is taken off the troubled soul by Jesus' death. Do you see the Christ this way?

### **We see Jesus' death as intentional**

**v7**

Let's keep going. As we come to v7-9 and by revelation we look at Jesus' death accurately. How do you explain the death of Christ? V.7 clears up any guess work. His death was voluntary. He intentionally laid down his life for his people. Nobody took it from him. Nobody overpower him. He simply gave it up.

### **We see Jesus' death as undeserved**

**v8-9**

And in verses 8,9 we notice how undeserved his death truly was. He did not earn this punishment because of something he did. It was all because of our sin.

Are you beginning to see what is truly in front of us this morning? Do you understand the mystery of 52:13-15 now? Are you becoming convinced of the only way unbearable guilt is taken away?

There is one last section in the poem that without it all we've hoped for and joyed over would be for not. Without the resurrection we of all people are to be most pitied (cf. 1Cor.15). Follow me out to the scenic point of v10-12 and ready yourself for the breathtaking vista of Christ's victory.

### **We see Jesus' victory through strategic death**

**v10a**

With revelation we see Jesus' victory first through strategic death. In v10 we reverently listen to the divine strategy in killing Jesus. Who killed the Christ according to v10a? Was it The Jews? Was it the Roman soldiers? Can you ultimately credit Pontius Pilate or Herod? You tell me.

Reread the first part of v10. Jesus was carrying out the will / pleasure of his Father as he hung on that instrument of human torture known as the cross. In unimaginable pain Jesus was not angry at his accusers. He did not spit out curses on his enemies. Rather, v10 tells us something different. Jesus willingly submitted to God's plan to execute His Son (cf. Acts 4:28). God almighty laid down His servant as a guilt offering. He killed the offering to provide the only means by which guilty sinners can be reconciled to a holy God. God killed Jesus! And yet, amazingly this is not the end of the story.

### **We see Jesus' victory through stunning resurrection v10b-12**

It was equally the LORD's pleasure to raise his servant up from the grave to life. In v.10b-12 we see Jesus' victory through stunning resurrection. The one who descended to unimaginable depths of death on a cross has ascended to unimaginable heights of glory.

And now, with God fully satisfied with Christ's accomplishment on the cross, v11 says that Jesus exults over his work. He looks upon his accomplishment; justifying sinners and feels satisfied. He who enjoys clearing the guilty by his death now stands over the universe; over his people with victorious joy. Making former enemies into forever friends is his delight.

This is what the poem is all about. This is the gospel's answer to human guilt. This is your answer for hopelessness.

Now can you answer the question **“What makes your unbearable guilt go away”?**

Is this gospel starting to make sense to you? Then...

- Notice how you try to shift your blame to others. Remember, there is no need to.
- Look away from your self-reliant strategies for peace and healing.
- Look to Christ who bore the guilt of his people and carried it completely away.
- Turn from sin and trust in Christ. Rejoice in the sin-atonement death and the victorious resurrection. Come to Christ. Come to Christ and live.

How does unbearable guilt go away? Let none of us any longer point outward to shift the weight of shame off of our burdened soul. Rather, let us all by faith point upward to the once dead and now living forever sacrifice for sin; point to Jesus and enjoy peace and healing.