

Consider this exalted servant

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[0 : 0 0] Now we might turn our attention this morning to Isaiah chapter 52 verse 14. Isaiah 52 verse 14, as many were astonished at thee, his visage was so marred more than any man, and his form more than the sons of men.

In the previous verse it says, Behold my servant shall deal prudently.

And when the writer asks us to behold this, he is telling us that we are to consider what is going to happen to this servant of God's, to this servant who is going to deal prudently and who is going to be exalted and extolled and be very high.

Because your destiny and my destiny, as far as our whole future is concerned, is determined by our relationship to this servant whom God sent forth in his name.

Now what was going to happen to this servant? Well, people were going to be astonished at him. And the reason for their astonishment was, or is, that his visage would be so marred more than any man's, and his form more than the sons of men.

[1 : 3 6] In other words, the work that this servant would be involved in, would cause him the greatest disfigurement, and it would cause people to be astonished at the disfigurement that took place.

But let's look, we haven't got time to go into great detail in the following chapter, but let's look at some of the things that are mentioned here that were to take place with regard to Christ.

And first of all, we ought to consider the depth of his humiliation, the depth of the humiliation that was involved for Christ, because this is the one that the chapter is referring to.

It's referring to Christ Jesus. And we are concerned just now about the depth of his humiliation. His visage was so marred, more than any man, and his form more than the sons of men.

Now what did it cost Christ Jesus to come for your salvation and for my salvation if we belong to him? What do we owe to Christ for being saved?

[2 : 5 5] Well, it involved for our Lord coming forth from glory, and that is in the essence of his humiliation.

Our Lord speaks about the glory that he enjoyed before he assumed our nature, before he ever came into this world of ours.

You recall how as Jesus went to the cross, his thoughts turned from the world of time and change to the eternal world that is unchanging.

And in that priestly prayer of his, which is recorded for us in John chapter 17, this is how he begins his great prayer, just before he was crucified.

Father, he prays, I will, that they also whom thou hast given me be with me where I am, that they may behold my glory, which thou hast given me, for thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world.

[4 : 12] Now doesn't that indicate to you and to me that there was Christ in the eternal order of things with his Father, and he withdrew from that glory to come down here, and it involved him in the greatest humiliation to do that.

In that same prayer, again we quote from it, he prays that the glory that he enjoyed in his divine pre-existent state might be shared with his people.

And this is how he prays, glorify thou me with thine own self, with the glory which I had with thee before the world was, so that in the eternal order of things, Christ Jesus was with God the Father.

And being with God the Father, he could truly say, as it says in the book of Proverbs, the Lord possessed me in the beginning of his way, before his works of old.

I was set up from everlasting, from the beginning, wherever the world was. In our sinful conception of things, we can have no real understanding of the perfection of God's glory.

[5 : 52] We can have no understanding of God's holy habitation. And let's remember that in that holy habitation of God, the order there is absolute, and the order there is perfect.

And because it is absolute, and because it is perfect, the order is surpassing in delight. That's why heaven is spoken of as the place that it is.

It's a delightful place. It's a glorious place. It's a beautiful place. It's a perfect place. It's a happy place.

That's why it says of heaven, there are no tears there. There is no sorrow. No more crying. No more pain.

You never discover poverty in heaven. They hunger no more. Neither do the thirst anymore. There's nothing to distress them. The sun never lights on them, nor is there any heat.

[7 : 04] Well, it was from that holy habitation that the Lord of glory, God's servant, Jesus Christ, came forth. And why did he come? In order to give the redemption price for his people.

In order to pay what had to be paid for them. And part of his humiliation was this coming forth from the eternal order that he enjoyed with his father.

But it also involved for him subjection to human weakness and to human limitations. You see, for Christ Jesus to be born into our world, it meant that he, the eternal, had to become an infant of days.

He was the prince of heaven. He was the prince of glory. He was the subject of angelic adoration and worship.

All the angels worshipped him. And in that order, he wasn't restricted in any way, nor were there any limitations upon him.

[8 : 20] But you see, this is the thing of astonishment that the prophet here is speaking of. That Christ our Lord placed himself under human weakness and under its limitations in order that he might suffer and die.

And so when Jesus was born, he wasn't born in a royal palace among kings and queens. He wasn't born in any of the superior homes of Judah.

He wasn't brought up among the aristocracy of the land. He wasn't trained in the colleges of the learned. No, when Jesus was born, he was born in a manger.

He was brought up in a carpenter's home at Nazareth. He knew what poverty was. And not only did he know what poverty was, but he was subject to the temptations of the devil in a peculiar and in an extraordinary way.

For a prolonged period of forty days in the wilderness, it tells us that he was subjected in the most diabolical fashion to the onslaught of the prince of darkness.

[9 : 46] Here were these two mighty princes. One is the prince of heaven. The other is the prince of darkness.

And the prince of heaven has allowed himself to be subjected to the diabolical onslaught of this prince of darkness, tempted forty days in the wilderness.

And not only that, but our Lord knew what it was to hunger, to thirst, to be weary. He knew what it was to suffer the intensity of pain in a way that you will never know what it is to suffer such intensity of pain.

Because he was a perfect man. And the sufferings that he was involved in must of necessity have been intense, severely intense, and the most acute ever felt.

And so he suffered in this world. You see, what I am saying is that the Lord of glory placed himself under the weaknesses of men and under the limitations of men.

[11 : 04] and he placed himself under these limitations and weaknesses, especially for one thing. And that one thing was his death on the cross.

He took to himself bone of our bone and flesh of our flesh. He took, as the shorter catechism tells us, a true body and a reasonable soul.

And he was touched with the feeling of our infirmities and was tempted in all points, like as we are, yet without sin.

This is the astonishment that the Lord of glory placed himself under these limitations and weaknesses in order that he might be touched with a feeling of our infirmities and be tempted in all points like as we are and remain sinless.

But his humiliation also involved him, didn't it, in a life of servitude. You see, the life of Christ, as you and I examine it, is a life of service.

[12 : 29] And the life of Christ is a service, first of all, to God the Father and a life of service to men. God appointed him his servant.

Behold, my servant. You see, God has appointed him not to be anything else or other but a servant. servant. And that is part of his humiliation to be a servant.

And God entrusted him with this work of rendering obedience. Obedience to God's law on behalf of men and satisfaction to God's law in the place of men so that he had to do these two things.

Give obedience to God's law for men and make satisfaction to that law for men. It was a case of fulfilling the law in all its details and also satisfying the law where it had been broken by us.

You see, God requires from us perfect obedience and this is what we have failed to render, isn't it? Perfect obedience to God. When God placed Adam in the garden of paradise, what God said to Adam was this, Adam, you've been made by me and I want you to enjoy yourself but I want you to obey me, to render obedience to me, complete, unquestioning, unfailing obedience to my word.

[14 : 23] But Adam refused to give that obedience and we who are Adam's children are the same. We have failed to render obedience to God's law.

In our fallen nature it's impossible for us to do other than that, to fail. And from Adam onwards to our own, the heart of man has been in a state of rebellion against God.

And if there is anything characteristic of our own day and age, isn't it this, the rebellious attitude of men and women to God today? The rebellious attitude of the people of this town to God?

But you see, with Christ it was different. He didn't come as a rebel. When God placed him in this world, it wasn't in order that he might rebel against God.

God to God what Christ did in this world was to render to God absolute and perfect and willing obedience. And so he served God in this way by living the kind of life that God demanded of Adam at the first.

[15 : 44] Christ. And so as we were singing together in Psalm 40, Jesus could truthfully say, to do thy will, I take delight, O thou my God that art, yea, that most holy law of thine I have within my heart.

There is not a man, not a woman, not a boy, not a girl in this world today who can say that. You don't take delight, nor do I take delight in doing the will of God.

We can't say that we have God's holy law in our hearts, far from it. And yet this is what God expects.

He expects us to take delight in doing his will. And he expects his holy law to be in our hearts. But thank God, here is the servant who has accomplished this.

And he has accomplished it for us, if he is our saviour. He placed himself under God's law. At the close of his ministry, this is what Jesus could declare, and this is what he was able to say in all truthfulness.

[17 : 06] I have glorified thee on the earth. I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do.

That's what Jesus could say. I have glorified thee on the earth. I have finished the work that thou gavest me to do.

So he served God willingly, lovingly, and obediently. But Jesus also came to serve men.

You see, one of the features of a king, or a queen, or a prince, is this, that that person is served. Oh yes, they act in service to the state, but really they are there being served.

In a sense, they can say, do this, and it's done. In another sense, they can say, do that, and it's done. And people are willing to serve them in this capacity.

[18 : 17] But instead of Jesus coming to be ministered unto, as he tells us himself, he came to minister. He came to be a servant.

He came to willingly serve others. He came to be not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many.

Jesus himself says this, the Son of Man is come to seek and to save that which was lost. And you see our Lord on this mission of service, seeking out, saving the lost, and saving them in the process of dying for them.

No wonder God says, behold my servant. Take cognizance of my servant. And as you and I take cognizance of God's servant, and as we consider all that was involved in him being the Savior of men, it can only fill us with astonishment.

As many were astonished at thee, his visage was so marred more than any man's, and his form more than the sons of men.

[19 : 51] But we've considered his humiliation. Let's think too of the severity of his sufferings. His visage was so marred more than any man, and his form more than the sons of men.

Now with regard to the sufferings of Jesus, we can say that these sufferings were what we call penal. That is to say, Christ Jesus suffered punishment.

When we use the word penal, that's what we mean. Penal sufferings. He suffered punishment. punishment. It wasn't just a case that he suffered in this world being a man, but let's remember that it goes much further than that, and it was a case that Jesus was involved in penal sufferings.

He suffered the punishment of God due to sin. sin. When we see Christ suffer, let's remember that these sufferings of his are real.

They are intense. When it tells us that Jesus sweated great drops of blood in Gethsemane, it means that he was in an agony.

[21 : 16] An agony so intense that the very blood of his body began to exude through his skin.

Now, why was Jesus in this agony? I've never known or I've never heard of another man being in an agony like that. Have you? Have you ever heard of a man or a woman being in such an agony that they begin to sweat like blood coming from them?

I've never known it. I never heard of it. But here is our Lord and he is in this agony, this intense agony that passes human comprehension.

And in this agony he begins to pray and it's rather a startling prayer. Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me.

Nevertheless, not my will but thine be done. Now, let's remember that Christ wasn't just shirking from the mere pain of the cross.

[22 : 33] That's something that could be endured. It's something that was endured by other men. There were many people crucified in the days of the Roman Empire. It was a common enough sight to go along the roads of that Roman Empire and see here and there a cross.

Where a man had been crucified, this was the extreme penalty meted out by the Roman authorities. service. That's why these two thieves were hanged on crosses on either side of Jesus.

It was a common method of execution. Indeed, had it been left to the Jews, they wouldn't have crucified Jesus. What they would have done to Jesus is, they would have stoned him to death because that was their method of execution, stoning to death.

But you see, God had made this quite plain that the death that a man dies by being hanged is a curse of death.

It's a felon's death. And up until the abolition of capital punishment in this country, this is how we executed a man. He was hanged on a tree.

[23 : 54] We might have made it a presentable thing, but it was still a tree. And so Jesus was hanged according to the Roman method of execution.

In fact, as you study this whole thing, you see how all these bits and pieces were fitted in by God in order that this son of his might bear the curse.

of his people. Cursed is everyone that hangeth on a tree. So he had to bear their curse. And he was hanged on the tree for them. Now he didn't shrink.

Our Lord didn't shrink from that experience, the pain that would be involved. But what our Lord did shrink from, and what he asked his father to prevent if it were within the possibility of the divine decree was that he might not suffer God abandonment of being forsaken.

you see, that is something that he had never, never experienced. Never in the eternal dimension, and never in his earthly life.

[25 : 23] Never for a moment had he ever experienced being abandoned by his father. father. He and the father were one.

The father had declared of him again and again, this is my beloved son in whom I am well pleased. But you see, the sufferings that our Lord endured as he died for his people on the cross wrung from him.

that bitter cry of dereliction, my God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me? You see, his father was inflicting punishment upon him.

We can understand the awfulness of the treatment meted out to Jesus when we read that Pontius Pilate ordered him to be flogged, or that could be endured.

We can understand when Herod and his men of war made fun of him, that could be endured. We can understand when the Roman soldiers mocked him and made a crown of thorns and pressed it on his brow, that could be endured.

[26 : 49] endured. We can understand when he was spat upon, that could be endured. We can understand when he was nailed to the cross and when he was uplifted on the cross, that could be endured.

But this is something, you see, that could hardly be endured. when his father hid his face from him as the sin-bearer.

Behind that distressing suffering was the punishing hand of God. in his great Pentecostal sermon, Peter says, him, talking about Jesus being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken with wicked hands, have crucified and slain him, but it was by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God.

So, Christ Jesus suffered penal sufferings. He suffered the punishment of God due to sin.

But we also speak of the sufferings of Christ not only as being penal, but we speak of the sufferings of Christ being vicarious. And when we use the word vicarious, we mean in the place of others.

[28 : 22] And Christ Jesus suffered the punishment of God due to sin, not because he was a sinner, not because he had committed some offense against Almighty God, he had committed none.

You see, he suffered these sufferings on behalf of others. That's what makes them vicarious.

His death was a vicarious death. death. It was him dying in the place of others. Let's remember that sin deserves to be outlawed.

Sin deserves to be put in disgrace. Sin deserves to be condemned. Sin deserves to be executed.

Now what do you see Jesus? How do you see him suffering? You see him, as it were, being outlawed. You see him being put to this disgraceful death on the cross.

[29 : 37] He is condemned. He is crucified. He is forsaken. Now Christ Jesus accepts all that.

Why? Because he is the sin bearer of his people. And as our Lord Jesus goes to Golgotha, the place of a scowl, he goes there in order to be outlawed, in order to be put to the greatest disgrace, in order to be condemned, condemned, in order to be executed.

Not because, as we have said, he had done anything amiss, but you see, he took the place of others, and he suffered in their place.

I think it's beautiful the way the hymn writer puts it. bearing shame and scoffing rude, in my place condemned he stood, sealed my pardon with his blood.

Hallelujah! What a Savior! Well, his sufferings were penal, his sufferings were vicarious, and let's remember that his sufferings, too, were divine chastisement.

[31 : 14] He suffered, yes, at the hands of guilty men. He was the object of the world's hatred. Do you remember how Jesus warned his disciples that they weren't to be afraid if the world hated them because, he says, the world hated me before it hated you?

Jesus was called a blasphemer. In derision he was equated with the Samaritans, and the Samaritans were treated with contempt by the Jews.

Those of his day called him a devil. Say we not well that thou art a devil? they called him a gluttonous man because he went to meals with scribes and Pharisees.

They called him a friend of publicans and sinners that he was associating with the most diabolical, the outcasts of society. Now, these insults showed how the world held our Lord in contempt.

the world hated him. And, of course, that attitude too must have caused a great deal of pain and distress, but it was nothing, nothing in comparison with the Father's wrath that he endured.

- [32 : 53] You see, Isaiah, in the following chapter, he goes on to describe the chastisement that Christ endured. He was stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted.

It pleased the Lord to bruise him. He hath put him to grief. You see, the emphasis is all upon what the Father is doing to him.

to God to him. He was a man. When Jesus cried, it is finished on the cross, he could say, as the prophet Jeremiah puts it, he hath caused the arrows of his quiver to enter into my reins.

I was a derision to all my people and their song all the day. From that lonely cross, as we watch the Son of God die, we see him die, the just for the unjust.

Christ. And as we see him die on that lonely cross, the words of the prophet Jeremiah are applicable to him. And Jeremiah was speaking about the city of Jerusalem, abandoned by everyone, left in its desolation.

- [34 : 29] And this is what Jeremiah says of the city of Jerusalem. And as he says it of the city, we can say that these words apply to Christ. Is it nothing to you?

All ye that pass by, behold and see if there be any sorrow like unto my sorrow which is done unto me, wherewith the Lord hath afflicted me in the day of his fierce anger.

Ah, these sufferings, they were indeed extraordinary sufferings, super ordinary sufferings, and they were endured for wretched people like you and like me.

We haven't got time to go on. Many were to be astonished, as many were astonished at thee. His visage was so marred more than any man, and his form more than the sons of men.

My friends, you know Christ endured that that you might never know what it is to go through that kind of sorrow or torment. And I ask you today, do you know Jesus as your Saviour?

- [35 : 50] As you've been listening to me, maybe someone here, there, you never thought about it before, but it's suddenly come home to your mind, you know I'm a sinner, I need someone to take my place, how can I be released from the thralldom of my sins, from the guilt of my sins?

Well, I introduce you this morning to my Saviour, and He can be your Saviour. Will you take Him? I've introduced Him to you.

Will you take Him to be your Saviour, and to be your Lord? And will you go now from this church and say, thank God for such a Saviour as Jesus Christ.

He's mine. I've put my trust in what He did for me. Let us pray. O Lord, we pray thy blessing upon each one of us bowed in thy presence.

We cannot but wonder at the extraordinary sufferings endured by Christ thy Son, and not because he had to endure them for anything he had done amiss, for he was blameless, the sinless Son of God, and yet he placed himself under these sufferings for others, people like ourselves.

- [37 : 29] May we know Christ as our own and be able to say of Jesus he loved me and he gave himself for me. Be with us as we gather again here in the evening, blot out our sins for Jesus sake.

Amen.