

The Power of the Cross

Sovereign Grace Churches Pastors Conference 2022

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Please turn in your Bible to the book of Isaiah, chapter 52. Mark and Jeff, and the entire leadership team, I want to thank you, men, for this very kind, very meaningful invitation to speak at our pastor's conference. Ooh, this is quite the honor for me, given those who are in attendance. Thank you for this assignment.

I brought with me Jeff's first email informing me of this assignment and defining this assignment for me. He made it very clear in this email, "We want you to preach a sermon that, in essence, is an extended reflection on the cross. Help us linger long by the cross. No need for a new message." This email makes it very clear, "Not a new message and not a message with some new applicatory angle for pastoral ministry, something guys haven't heard before, et cetera. We want what they HAVE HEARD BEFORE. A reminder, a celebration. Remember, this is our 40th anniversary."

Thank you. That had slipped my mind. Thank you very much. This is the opening message. Thank you again for that too. No, caring for the aged here.

There will be other messages that unpack the implications of the power of the cross.

My friends, I am happy, very happy to comply with this request this evening. You, men, you really have kindly given me the greatest privilege and joy possible this evening.

A pastor has no greater privilege and joy than to preach the cross of Christ. I would add, there is no greater privilege and joy than preaching about the cross to those you labor with in the gospel, to those you deeply love and respect, to those you number among your dearest friends. I am very grateful that those leading us don't assume that we possess a sufficient understanding and appreciation of the cross of Christ.

They agree with J.I. Packer when he writes,

"We never move on from the gospel. We move on in the gospel. We never get to a point where we can cease to thank God for Calvary on a day-to-day basis and humble ourselves before Him as hell-deserving sinners."

Oh, may this always be true of every hell-deserving, sovereign grace pastor of whom I, and without doubt, fall most.

Our attention this evening will be devoted to one of the most well-known and deeply loved passages in the Bible. In this passage, God is speaking through the prophet Isaiah to His people about the one He calls my servant. You are aware this is the fourth servant song, and this one is the culmination and the resolution of all that precedes it. God has announced comfort to His people in chapter 40, "Comfort my people, says your God."

He has provided hope of restoration from oppression and exile. He has promised to bear His mighty arm on behalf of His people. The original reader's hopes for God's deliverance have reached the height of anticipation, but Yahweh has yet to answer the most important, the most fundamental question, "How?"

How can a righteous God deliver and restore such a sinful people? How can a God who is holy, holy, holy save a rebellious and unfaithful people from His righteous wrath?

This song provides the ultimate answer to that question, an answer that guarantees all of God's promises of forgiveness and restoration. This song provides the ultimate grounds for their comfort. It is through His servant that He will save a sinful people who cannot save themselves. It is through this servant, not a conquering servant, but a suffering servant. A suffering servant who will suffer like no other and suffer for others, and by so doing, He will offer true peace to a sinful people.

Isaiah chapter 52 and 53 provides us with the most detailed description of the suffering of Jesus found in the Old Testament. All of scripture is blood-stained, but His death is particularly vivid in this passage. German scholar Franz Delitzsch wrote of this passage, "It looks as if it had been written beneath the cross upon Golgotha," and we will discover that His triumphant resurrection and ascension are uniquely anticipated and celebrated in this passage as well.

The universal application of this text is seen in the frequent quoting of this text in the New Testament. Therefore, it's of utmost importance and relevance to sovereign grace and every person sitting here this evening and most important among those New Testament references would be when the Son of

God Himself quoted from this passage in [Luke 22](#) and said, "For I tell you that this scripture must be fulfilled in me, and He was numbered with the transgressors. For what is written about me is reaching its fulfillment."

John Newton wrote the following counsel to a young pastor,

"I advise you to take a lodging as near as you can to Gethsemane and to walk daily to Mount Golgotha."

Let's follow Mr. Newton's counsel this evening. Let's take this walk together with the prophet Isaiah as our guide.

Isaiah chapter 52. I will begin reading in verse 13.

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

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

*15 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.*

53

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

*2 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.*

*3 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.*

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

5 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.*

6 *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.*

7 *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.*

8 *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?*

9 *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.*

10 *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.*

11 *Out of the anguish of his soul he shall see[i] and be satisfied;
by his knowledge shall the righteous one, my servant,
make many to be accounted righteous,
and he shall bear their iniquities.*

12 *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.*

Please pray tonight that, as much as possible, my emotions don't catch up to and overtake my words. It simply would not serve you if I just stand here and weep all evening. Like you, I'm incapable of preaching on this passage and remaining unaffected by this passage.

As you are aware, this song is composed of five stanzas. The opening and closing stanzas introduce and conclude the song, celebrating the triumph and the exaltation of the servant through suffering. The second and fourth stanzas are about His life and death, and the song is deliberately structured so as to draw the reader's attention to the center stanza, verses 4 through 6.

That's the heart of the song where the meaning of His suffering and death is revealed. That the center stanza, [Isaiah 53:4-6](#), reveals the heart of the gospel, but we begin with the first stanza, the enigma of the servant, Chapter 52:13-15.

The song begins with the Lord drawing the attention of the reader to the one He commends as my servant, "Behold, my servant will act wisely". It is through this servant that the wisdom of God will be on display resulting in a successful mission. It is through this servant that the promise of salvation will indeed come.

The stanza begins by describing the triumph of the servant, thus comforting the original readers. "He shall be high and lifted up and shall be exalted." This is an echo of [Isaiah 6](#), the one Isaiah saw high and lifted up. This servant has the status of God himself. He shall be exalted. This would appear to anticipate the divine vindication of the servant displayed in the resurrection and the ascension and the heavenly reign of Christ.

Then there is an abrupt change in mood and a stark contrast between the exaltation of the servant in verse 13, and the humiliation suddenly described in verse 14, as many were astonished at you, His appearance was so marred beyond human semblance and His form beyond that of the children of mankind. Those beholding the servant are astonished because His appearance was so marred that He was no longer recognizable as human, and the reason for His disfigurement will be given in the center stanza.

In His commentary, John McKay insightfully writes,

"In a startling reversal of previous declarations of divine strength, it is revealed that salvation will be procured for the sinful people of Yahweh, not through an Exodus style display of divine power, but by the humiliation and affliction of the servant. It is also astonishing that one so disfigured should have really an extraordinary effect on the nations and not just the Jews as described in verse 15, so shall He sprinkle many nations."

This would appear to be a reference to the priestly work of the servant removing their impurity and their defilement and sin, providing them with

cleansing and forgiveness. The broad impact of the servant's work is also described. "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."

Kings here would appear to include Gentile rulers, and kings here also seems to represent all people because if the king responds this way, so will their subjects. Kings are left speechless when they hear that it was through humiliation and suffering that the servant triumphs. This also appears to anticipate a response of repentance and faith. They see, they understand as they realize this disfigured servant and His sprinkling work is for them.

That brings us to the second stanza, the rejection of the servant, [Isaiah 53:1-3](#). Those who Isaiah here speaking in verse one are not identified, but they are clearly those who are familiar with the servant and what happened to Him, but they did not initially perceive who He was and respond appropriately to Him.

Their view of Him was previously informed by human observation, human expectation, the wisdom of this world, not the wisdom of God previously referenced. However, so we shall learn. They have changed their assessment of the servant, but they have changed this assessment only because, and all because of divine intervention and illumination.

They begin by asking two questions and the point of each is to highlight the unbelief of the Jews and all mankind by implication. "Who has believed what He has heard from us, and to whom has the arm of the Lord been revealed?"

The arm of the Lord would be a reference to the public display of God's saving power, but whoever would have believed that the arm of the Lord would be revealed in this way through a suffering servant. The word revealed is of critical importance because this describes the activity of the Holy Spirit that is necessary for one to perceive the true identity of this disfigured servant and His sprinkling work.

So left to mere human observation of the servant that is informed by human wisdom, no one, no one left to human observation and human wisdom will be able to discern the true identity of the servant. No one. No one has believed what they have said about the servant apart from divine illumination, and apart from divine illumination, they and, by implication, each of us this evening, were all numbered among those described in verse 3, "we esteemed Him not".

Those speaking in this passage were among those who initially dismissed the servant as the arm of the Lord, bringing the salvation of God because, by human standards, He appeared unimpressive.

Verse 2, "We grew up before Him like a young plant, and like a root out of dry ground." This young, vulnerable plant and root out of dry, note, dry ground and not fertile ground are unimpressive. This is no cedar of Lebanon. The birth and background of this servant are unimpressive. As one reads this verse, one can hear New Testament voices saying, "Can anything good come out of Nazareth? Is this not the carpenter's son?"

The description of the servant continues with the human assessment of His appearance, "He had no form or majesty that we should look at Him, and no beauty that we should desire Him." He was not striking in His appearance. He looked like a typical Palestinian Jew, there is nothing, nothing stood out about His appearance. You couldn't have picked Him out in a photograph of Him with His disciples or in a crowd. If you passed Him in the street, or even in the mall, you wouldn't notice Him.

You could not discern the intrinsic beauty of the servant by merely looking at Him. They were expecting the arm of the Lord. They were expecting the arm of the Lord to be someone impressive and imposing in appearance, a warrior king who would deliver them. Instead, this servant, He looked ordinary and so ordinary He was easy to overlook, and even ignore, consequently, He wasn't esteemed, but instead, He was despised and rejected by men.

He was a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief. He did not fulfill the expectation of those who anticipated Him. This guy couldn't be the arm of the Lord, uniquely demonstrating the power of God to deliver and save. Fallen humanity lacks the spiritual capacity to perceive His true identity. His true identity is revealed by the spirit. It is not discovered by human observation.

In his commentary, Alec Motyer makes this point-- sets us up for the next stanza when he writes,

"Nothing but divine revelation can make the servant known to us and draw us to Him."

What the human eye missed. What can be known only by revelation is now stated in this section, verses 4 through 6. So we come to the heart of this song, to the central stanza. All that has been previously written has been preparing us, has been setting us up for the center of the song.

Here is the explanation for the servant's marred appearance. "Behold the arm of the Lord." God's saving power is most clearly seen in the servant's suffering. My friends, this is what the angels, though they have no need of salvation, this is what the angels long to look into and never tire looking into, quoting [1 Peter 1:12](#), stanza three, the mission of the servant, verses four through six.

In this stanza, those speaking have experienced divine illumination. They have discerned the true identity of the one despised and rejected. Previously, they had completely misperceived and misunderstood the true identity of the servant and all that He endured, but now they get it as they state in the opening word. Surely, NIV starts with, "However." Verse 5, "But."

This apparently unimpressive individual to unenlightened eyes, this suffering servant actually suffered for us and suffered because of our sins and suffered as our substitute. Let's consider this sweet stanza under those headings first. "He suffered for us." There are just two subjects in this stanza. He, the servant, and us. 10 times, counted them 10 times in just three verses, the personal pronouns, our, we, or us, appear.

Through divine illumination, those speaking realized the servant they once despised and didn't esteem suffered for us. The despised and rejected servant was actually the one prophesied in [Isaiah 9](#) as the child born for us. He is the son given to us. [Isaiah 53](#) should inform our advent celebration in [Isaiah 9](#). He suffered for us. He suffered because of our sins. Note the repeated reference to sin in the descriptions of our sins. "Griefs, sorrows, transgressions, inequities, gone astray, each His own way."

This is the part we play in this intense drama and description of the servant suffering. This is the part that we play. We are referenced as those who contribute their sin. Our sin is the cause of His suffering. "It was I that shed the sacred look. I nailed Him to the tree," Horatius Bonar writes in his famous hymn. Luther said, "We carry His very nails in our pockets." Stott writes, "There is blood on our hands. Before we can begin to see the cross as something done for us, we have to see it as something done by us."

Sin is our most serious problem, and if sin is not our most serious problem, then Christ's death on a hill called Calvary is no longer the most important event in all of human history. My friends, there is simply no avoiding the reality and seriousness of sin in [Isaiah 53](#), and let there be no avoiding of the doctrine of sin appropriate to whatever passage you are preaching lest we undermine the sacrifice of the servant for our sins.

In his book titled *Old Testament Theology*, Paul House wisely writes,

"I strive not to minimize sin in part because I honor God's sacrificial plan for removing it. Any minimizing of sin dishonors God's sacrificial plan for removing it."

And my friends, only those who realize the seriousness of their sin are amazed by the Grace of God revealed in Christ and Him crucified.

That there is simply no other way to discover the wonder of grace than realizing the seriousness of our sin, than realizing the depth of our sin. If you do not think of your sin as serious and pervasive, well, then you will not realize and recognize and acknowledge your need of saving grace. When you do see the depth of your sin, you are not perceiving the wonder of Christ. If you do perceive the seriousness and depth of your sin, oh, you will be truly and genuinely amazed by the Grace of God.

He suffered for us, and He suffered because of our sins, and He suffered as our substitute. The language of substitution is present and pronounced in these verses. Substitution means that the servant underwent something in our place instead of us so that we would never have to do so.

Let us contemplate. Contemplate with me for just a moment the language of substitution that is so present and pronounced in these verses. He has borne our griefs, carried our sorrows. He was wounded for our transgressions. He was crushed for our iniquities. Upon Him was the chastisement that brought us peace. With His stripes, we are healed. The Lord has laid on Him the iniquity of us all.

Oh, my friends, meditate or take time to meditate on these realities and their meaning. Take a daily walk to the hill called Calvary and allow these realities of His substitutionary sacrifice on the cross for your sins to awaken, in your heart, fresh affection for the Savior. To contemplate these substitutionary realities is to be amazed by the grace we simply do not deserve.

Note, note, note the comprehensive nature of His suffering. All that merited wrath in us, all that merited wrath in us was dealt with by the sin-bearing, wrath-absorbing servant so that we might be reconciled to God, forgiven by God, have peace with God, and satisfied with God for eternity.

He suffered for me and you. He suffered because of my sin and your sin. He suffered in my place and your place. He suffered as our substitute. In my place condemned He stood. That the punishment for my sin that I so richly deserved He endured. The innocent one endured in my place. He absorbed my greatest threat, the wrath of God against my sin and because of my sin.

He suffered in this way all so that you and I do not have to suffer in this way. While you and I were straying in our sin, verse six, He suffered the wrath of God that we deserved because of our sin.

In his commentary, Allan Harman writes of verse six.

"The wonder is that there is a shepherd who will care for such wandering sheep."

Those who are limited to human observation and evaluation, they missed it big time. They esteemed Him stricken, and smitten by God, and afflicted because of His sin. Great suffering was a sign of divine displeasure, and hanging on a tree was the most severe form of divine punishment.

Though the word on the street was that Jesus of Nazareth was justly judged for the sin of blasphemy because, according to Deuteronomy, cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree, but those who are given new eyes realized that he was indeed smitten by God and afflicted, but not for His sin, for He was sinless, but instead for our sins, and He was made sin with our sin.

He was the object of the righteous, furious wrath of God because of our sins that left Him, my friends, humanly unrecognizable as He hung suspended between heaven and earth, enveloped by darkness, and crying out, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?"

We want to turn away from this site, but we need to survey the wondrous cross. Survey the wondrous cross with me, where the prince of glory died, disfigured, humanly unrecognizable as our sin-bearing, wrath-absorbing substitute. Puritan Richard Sibbes wrote of this scene,

"Christ was never more lovely to His church than when He was most deformed, forced."

This is why He agonized in the Garden of Gethsemane. This is why He sweat drops of blood. This is why He appealed for an alternative to the cross. It was that cup, a cup of wrath, full fury of God's wrath. The unmitigated wrath of God against our sin and because of our sin, but He drinks the cup. He drinks the cup of wrath as our substitute. Why does He drink it? He drinks it so that we will never have to drink it.

Which brings us to the fourth stanza, the death of the servant, verses seven through nine. Sheep imagery continues in the fourth stanza, but in this stanza, it's not about sinful straying sheep, but instead, a submissive sheep that voluntarily submits to a sacrificial death.

Animal sacrifices in the Old Testament pointed to the final Lamb of God because, ultimately, it would require a sinless human to be the substitute for sinful humanity. The emphasis in verse seven is on the false accusations, the harsh treatment, and the physical violence the servant endured, and He endured this voluntarily. "Help the Lord," and He endured it silently.

He stands before His prosecutors, He stands before His accusers, frustrating them because He speaks not a word in His own defense, and He endured this gross, grossest of grossest possible miscarriage of justice silently. "Like a lamb that is led to the slaughter, like a sheep that before its shears is silent, so He opened not His mouth."

In his ESV expository commentary, Bob Fyall writes,

"What happened to the mighty voice that raised Lazarus and stilled the raging waves? He was silent because He was standing in for us. Our guilt could not be put away except by His death, and thus at that moment, there was nothing to say."

If you're wondering why was He silent, here's why, He was standing there for you. He was standing there for us. He voluntarily submitted to this oppression and this affliction. He didn't resist. He didn't retaliate because this is what He came to do. This is what He came to do. He was not a helpless victim, and Jesus made that clear when He said of His life, "I lay my life down for the sheep. No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord."

In verse 8, "The innocent servant suffers death for the transgression of others, bearing the guilt and the penalty of those to whom it rightly belonged, stricken for the transgression of my people." The servant's death provides the remedy for the transgressions Isaiah revealed in chapter 6, the transgressions of God's people. "After the death of the servant comes His burial."

In verse 9, "His innocence is asserted again. He had done no violence. There was no deceit in His mouth." It appears that though His enemies want to heap shame upon Him and deny Him an honorable burial, in His death, their plan would be providentially frustrated.

In God's providence, a rich individual, Joseph of Arimathea, placed His corpse, not in a criminal's grave, but Luke describes in his gospel, in a tomb cut in stone where no one had ever yet been laid, which brings us to the final stanza. It returns us to the theme of triumph and exaltation introduced in the first stanza.

The final stanza opens with the stunning declaration, the shocking revelation that the suffering and death of the servant is the will and the plan of God. Verse 10, "Yet it was the will of the Lord to crush Him. He has put Him to grief." Well, my friend, we're on hallowed ground here. We are on hallowed ground in verse 10. Here is divine mystery. Divine mystery revealed. Here is divine wisdom unveiled.

Verse 10 makes it explicitly clear who was behind the servant's suffering. He was not only despised and rejected by men, He was crushed by the Lord Himself. Behind the horrific human act of crucifying God's servant was Yahweh Himself. Verse 10 informs us that the ultimate actor against the servant, the one who planned blow after blow against the servant, He was smitten by God. He was afflicted by God. He was pierced by God. He was crushed by God. God Himself was behind the blows that came on the servant. It pleased the Lord to bruise Him. What explanation is there for this? Oh, my friend, here-- Oh my, here we encounter the love of God revealed in a most unexpected place and displayed in a most unexpected way. God, the Father, was ultimately responsible for the death of His son, revealing His love for sinners like you and me. God did not spare His own son. God did not spare His own son because it was the only way He could spare us and remain a holy and just God, so He crushed Him.

He crushed Him, crushed Him with the weight of our sin. Crushed Him with the full fury of His wrath against our sin, crushed Him. Hung there suspended hour after hour where darkness enveloped all. What is going down here? Isaiah informs us, in verse 10, what is going down here is not simply He was despised by men. No, what is going down here is not simply the unimaginable pain of a crucifixion. No.

What is going down here is He is being crushed by God Himself under the weight-- the innocent one, under the weight of our sin, enduring the unmitigated wrath of God, and somehow without severing the unity of the Trinity, He endures this crushing blow forsaken by God.

Sinclair Ferguson marvels at this love revealed on Calvary when he writes,

"When we think of Christ dying on the cross, we are shown the lengths to which God's love goes in order to win us back to Himself. We would almost think that God loved us more than He loves His son."

We cannot measure love by any other standard. He is saying to us I love you this much.

God does something to us as well as for us through the cross. He persuades us that He loves us. Question, are you persuaded? Are you persuaded? Are you freshly persuaded? My friends, is this not sufficient to persuade you of His love for you? The one who hates sin crushes His son with our sin. His son is crushed with the righteous anger that we richly deserve because of our sin so that we might experience God's love. The one who hates sin crushes His son with our sin so that He might save sinners like you and me by name. Convinced?

If you need more convincing, Isaiah informs us that not only was it the will of the Lord to crush Him, He made the servant an offering for guilt. The sacrifices of the Old Testament for sin and guilt, they were pointers. They were pointers to the ones for all sacrifice of the servant. He rescues the guilty from divine punishment by making the servant our guilt offering, restoring peace to the relationship between sinner and the Lord.

Just ponder this for the moment. The one who has been offended by our sin provides the sacrifice for guilty sinners, and all because of His love for them. Listen to what Albert Mattia writes about our guilt offering and what this reveals about God's hearts.

"The heart of God is revealed in His delight, even at such cost in finding and providing a guilt offering. The servant is not bringing the sacrifice for He is the sacrifice. We are not bringing the sacrifice, but coming to that which has been provided on our behalf."

Oh, so good news for us this evening. We, as guilty sinners, are no longer presenting an animal sacrifice for a priest to offer on behalf of ourselves for our sins, but instead, the servant himself is our guilt offering. The cross was the ultimate day of atonement, and Christ Himself was the ultimate guilt offering for our sins.

My friends, if the Israelites felt that the burden of their sin lifted when the priest presented a sacrifice on their behalf, oh my friends, how much more should we, how much more should we as Christians owe because of this suffering servant? Because this suffering servant is the ultimate and perfect guilt offering, how much more shall we feel this evening the entire burden of our sin lift from us and lift from us definitively and decisively and eternally?

It's another sweet reality meant to convince us and assure us that He loves us. Finally, verse 10 and following reveal the Father's satisfaction with the servant's sacrifice, the vindication of the servant, and His work by raising Him from the dead. "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." This is Isaiah's poetic way of describing the resurrection.

He shall see his offspring. Those pardoned, well, they become His people. He shall prolong His days. His existence, it's eternal. The will of the Lord shall prosper in His hands. His purpose, oh, that will be completed and cannot be frustrated.

The resurrection was the public statement by God the Father that He was satisfied with the sacrifice of His son. Salvation has been secured. His death was not in vain, and His purpose in history and for eternity is assured.

In verse 11, we are informed of more good news. He gives us the righteousness. The righteousness. He gives us His righteousness as a gift. He gives us the righteousness that we could not achieve ourselves. It continues. In verse 12, He makes intercession for the transgressors. Oh my, those He rescues and redeems, He ever lives to make intercession for them in the court of heaven at the Father's right hand.

How good is that, my friends? How good is it to know that right now at the right hand of the Father, the one the Father crushed, the one who is our eternal guilt offering, the one whose death the Father was satisfied with, the one the Father raised from the dead, the one who ascended to the right hand of the Father, the one whose purpose is fixed and cannot be frustrated, how good is it to know that He, at the right hand of the Father, even this very moment, is praying for the likes of you and I by day?

There's all kinds of people, beginning with my dear wife, who I take great comfort in knowing they are praying for me. Great comfort. This exceeds anyone and everyone who is praying for you and for me. He lives, ever lives not merely to observe. No, to intercede so that we can be assured not only of His love but that His purpose for us cannot be frustrated. Oh, He who began a good work in you will bring it to completion. How's that? Well.

If you're wondering how Isaiah would like to have a word with you and you'd like to, here's how. Oh my. Hallelujah. What a savior. One cannot read this passage without looking up from one's Bible and worshiping, you can't. Singing to this suffering servant, this servant who suffered for us because of our sin and in our place. Singing to Him with the deepest affection that has been informed by the gracious work of the spirit, providing us with divine illumination. Singing to Him with deep affection and profound gratefulness, it's really the only immediate appropriate response to this passage, both now and in preparation for eternity.

John Piper describes our singing throughout eternity when he writes,

"We will sing about suffering through eternity, not our suffering but Christ's. We all remember that He was pierced for our transgressions and crushed for our iniquities, and our hearts will overflow with a song of praise to the lamb who endured the ultimate pain to redeem us."

Rich wounds, yet visible above. Let's rehearse together. Let's rehearse right now together in preparation for eternity future.