

## THE GOSPEL IN THE PROPHETS

If I were to ask you to tell the truth about your attitude to those books in the Bible we call the Old Testament Prophets, I wonder what you would say. I think if you spoke truly, some of you, at least, would say, they are like dry bones and I leave them alone. So I have a verse for you that may encourage you. Would you turn with me please to II Kings 13. If you think the prophets in the Old Testament are like dry bones and, therefore, to be left alone untouched, notice what the Scripture says in II Kings 13 beginning at verse 20: "So Elisha died and they buried him. Now bands of Moabites used to invade the land in the spring of the year and as a man was being buried, lo, a marauding band was seen and the man was cast into the grave of Elisha and as soon as the man touched the bones of Elisha, he revived and stood on his feet." Now that's a very unusual story. You won't find that type of story in the history books of the world but here was a great prophet who had died and he was in an open sepulcher and at a time of robbers, one of the company had died and he had been thrown into the sepulcher and he touched the bones of the prophet and it says as soon as the man touched the bones of Elisha he revived and stood on his feet. Of course, the Christian church, through the centuries, have seen a deeper meaning to this passage than just the thought of you and I coming into close contact with these books that we think are like dry bones--we will come alive. The Christian church has seen a deeper meaning than that. They have pointed out that Elijah and Elisha, together, did a beautiful composite picture of the character and personality and work of Jesus. Elijah is very stern like Jesus when he emptied the temple of those who were profaning it; Elisha is very soft and gentle. He is always dealing with widows, raising children from the dead and distributing loaves and so on. If you put the two together you see in Jesus what Bible scholars have always recognized that the best of masculinity and the best of femininity were both combined in Jesus, the Saviour of the world. He had the strong, stern courageous attribute of Elijah who could say in his day, "If the Lord be God, follow him and if baal be God, follow him and go to hell!" That's what it meant--that was Elijah, a prophet of fire. But Elisha was always softer, always it seemed, very gentle and there he epitomized those prevailing elements in the character of Jesus and the gentleness with which he dealt with sinners, publicans, harlots, the prodigal son,

prodigal daughters and invited all to come unto him and find in him their rest. And, of course, the deeper meaning of this passage is that because of the death of our Lord, if we make contact with him, though we've been dead in trespasses and sins, we will live to make contact with the true Elisha. You see, Elijah went to Heaven--he represents the ascension of Jesus, the going up; but Elisha pictures the potency of his death. If you and I have contact with our Saviour, the true Elisha, though we are dead, yet, shall we live. The meaning I want to draw from the passage today is this, that if you think the prophets of the Bible are like dry old bones, I want you to be encouraged that if you come into true contact with them by faith, though you are dead in joy, wisdom and righteousness, you can live!

We are going to try to take an example today from the biggest book in the Bible; apart from the hymn book of the Christian church which is the book of Psalms, apart from that book, the biggest book in the Bible is the book of Isaiah. We will pretend its a class now. How many chapters in this book? 66. How many books in the Bible? 66. The book of Isaiah has always been understood to fall into two major divisions. How many chapters in the first great division of the book? 39. How many books in the Old Testament? 39. How many chapters in the second section of the book of Isaiah? 27. How many books in the New Testament? 27. What event does the last chapter in the book, particularly point toward to in the future? Yes, the New Heavens and the New Earth. That's in the last chapter. What's the first chapter talking about? It's talking about the rebellion and the fall of the children of God. Let me read it to you in verse 2 of chapter 1 of Isaiah: "Hear oh heavens and give ear oh earth, the Lord has spoken. Sons have I reared and brought up have rebelled against me." And in verse 4, "Sinful nation, a people laden with iniquity, offspring of evil doers, sons who deal corruptly; they have forsaken the Lord, they have provoked the Holy One of Israel, they are utterly estranged." And look at the description in verse 5 onward: "Why will you still be smitten that you continue to rebel, the whole head is sick and the whole heart is faint, from the sole of the foot even to the head there is no soundness in it but bruises, sores and bleeding wounds they are not bound up or softened with oil." The first chapter of Isaiah, like the beginning of the Bible deal with the fall of man, his corrupt nature, his

estrangement from God, his alienation from goodness. So the book of Isaiah is a little Bible--66 chapters, like the 66 books. It falls into two divisions, you remember the second division begins with chapter 40, "Comfort ye, comfort ye, my people, saying to Jerusalem her warfare is accomplished, sins are pardoned." So the first section, 39 books like the first section of the Bible; the second section 27 like the second section of the Bible. The Bible begins with the fall of man after creation and ends with a new creation, a new heavens and a new earth. And so does the book of Isaiah. Now, here's a harder question, what's the main difference between chapters 1-39 of this great neglected book, these dry bones and the second section of 40-66? What is the main difference? I'll tell you in a nutshell. The first large section of Isaiah is talking about judgment--judgment, condemnation and judgment. Because Israel has broken the law of Jehovah, there will be judgment. So the first six chapters are talking about judgment on Jerusalem and then it will go on to talk about judgment on the northern kingdom of Israel. Then it talks about judgment on other surrounding empires including Assyria and Babylon and then it talks about judgment on the whole world. They have circles of judgment, judgment on Jerusalem, judgment on Judea, judgment on Israel, judgment on Syria, Assyria, Babylon, Egypt and then judgment on the whole world. But the second part, the second section of Isaiah is full of comfort--"Like as a mother comforts her children, so the Lord comforts his children. They may forget but I'll not forget you. You are written on the palms of my hands. The mountains may depart, hills be removed, but the covenant of my peace will not be removed from thee. The second section is all full of grace, glory and comfort and forgiveness of sins..." "I have blotted out as a cloud thy sins, as a thick cloud thy transgressions, so let the unrighteous man forsake his way and the wicked man his thoughts and return unto me for I will abundantly pardon." Now, when you look at the Bible which you know begins with five books known as the Pentateuch, or the Law, and then you compare the Old Testament with the New, both of them tell much about the love of God but all readers of the Old Testament know that compared with the New there is much more about judgment and law. Remember how the Old Testament finishes? "Remember the law." These are the last words of the Old Testament, "which I

proclaimed through Moses lest I come and smite the earth with a curse." What a way to end a book! The Old Testament, the first part of the Bible, like the first part of Isaiah has much to say about the law and judgment and the curse--punishment for sins but the second section, like the second section of Scripture puts its emphasis on grace and mercy and forgiveness of sins. Don't misunderstand me. There is grace, mercy and forgiveness in the Old Testament too, lots of it, but law predominates. And in the New Testament there is lots of law, many admonitions, but grace predominates. So here's a book that is a little Bible. It is obviously too big for us to study in any detail so I want you to turn to what is known as the great passionale. That is chapter 53 of the book. Before we look at it I want to remind you that not only does the book fall into two large sections--the first 39 and the second section of 27 chapters, but the last section of the book, from 40 to 66 falls into three divisions. You might think that 40 to 66 means 26 chapters but that is not true is it? Forty to sixty-six is 27 chapters, conclusive reckoning. And it falls into three divisions of 9 chapters each. So would you look please at the end of those first nine chapters and see what it says. You have to turn to the end of chapter 48. That's the first 9 chapters, 40 to 48 and look at the last verse, "There is no peace, says the Lord, for the wicked." Now go to 9 chapters on which brings you up to 57, the end of 57, and look at the last verse there: "There is no peace, says my God, for the wicked." Now come and look at the end of the next 9 chapters, look at the end of the book. It does mention the new heavens and the new earth in verse 22 but look at verse 24, "And thou go forth and look on the dead bodies, the men that rebelled against me. Their worm shall not die, their fire shall not be quenched, they shall be an abhorrence to all flesh." As with the ending of the first 9 chapters, as with the ending of the second, it is a warning of the terrible pain that will come on those that reject the grace, the mercy because you know the greatest sin in the world is not adultery, the greatest sin in the world is not murder, the greatest sin in the world is to reject unselfish love. So the section of Isaiah that deals so much with love, mercy and grace, at the end of each section it has a warning, don't reject my love for it can only bring you pain. God is pleading with the children that he loves.



Now, we've said that the second section has three divisions, nine chapters each and they each end the same way with a warning to the wicked; now I want to find out what are the middle verses of the middle section of this New Testament part of the book of Isaiah. So we are going to turn to chapter 53 which is the chapter of the great passionale and here we will find the middle verses of the middle section of Isaiah 40 to 66. Verses 4 to 6 are the central verses because the real beginning of chapter 53 is in verse 13 of 52 which is on the same subject and we will look at that in a moment. But look at verses 4 to 6. These are the central verses of the central section of the last portion of Isaiah, "Surely he has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows, that we have seen him stricken, smitten by God and afflicted but he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities; upon him was the chastisement that brought our peace and made us whole and with his stripes we are healed; all we like sheep have gone astray. We've turned every one to his own way. The Lord has laid on him the iniquities of us all." There are the central verses of the central chapter of the central section of that New Testament portion of the book of Isaiah and, dear friends, that's what religion is about. Never make the mistake of thinking that religion is primarily morality. The Pharisees were very moral but Jesus said the publicans and the harlots who aren't moral will go into the kingdom of heaven before you. Never make the mistake of thinking that the heart and essence of religion is morality! Morality always does accompany true religion but you can have a lot of morality without true religion because, you see, morality can be a thing of the hand and the outward person whereas true religion has to do with the heart. God is much more desirous of having a person with a broken heart than one with an unbroken record. Mind you, there aren't any of the second because a person who thinks they are heading that way is so full of pride they've blotted their copy book more than an adulterer. Do keep in mind that in the New Testament scale of values, pride and selfishness are much worse sins than the sins of the flesh. That's why Jesus said to the Pharisees, harlots will go into the kingdom of heaven before you. So the essence of religion is found in these

verses, that we deserve death and that one took our place, that we've gone astray and deserve and merit exclusion from the kingdom of God but there is one who loved us so much that he took the punishment that was due to us. That's the essence of it.

Now, we are going to consider this passage. The great passionale really begins with a prelude that ends chapter 52; the last three verses belong to the same subject of this mighty 53rd chapter. It's the prelude to the great passionale but before we read it, may I point out that for centuries before the Christian era the prophet had foretold that someone would be born from the petty nation of Israel who would be a blessing to the whole world! Now, dear friends, what I am about to say is tremendously important--why are most people more like an iceberg than a ship? Why are most people more like a bubble than an egg? They drift, dear friends, because they are quite uncertain whether life has meaning because they are not sure whether God is a reality or not! If you will listen carefully for the next quarter of an hour, you can KNOW whether God is a reality, whether the promises of the Bible are true--you can know because there is no book in all the world that contains predictions like the Bible, none whatever. You have heard of Nostradamus but his statements can be twisted a dozen ways. That's not true of the Bible. The Bible is absolutely unique. At home I have the Upanishads, I have the Coran, I have the religious books of other religions--there are no prophecies in those, dear friends. But here is a book that in the first writing, Genesis, three times it says that in the seed of Abraham, all the nations of the earth would one day be blessed. You know, the Jews constitute one-third of one percent of the population of the world; in other words, they are nation number 300 in size and, yet, from them would come someone who would be a blessing to all the world. This is told us very clearly in Genesis 12:3, Genesis 22:18; Genesis 26:4; Genesis 28:14--"In thy seed," one particular seed, "shall all families of the earth be blessed." And dear friends, it is true. Wherever this book has gone, slavery has been abolished; polygamy has been abolished, womanhood has been elevated, the sick are cared for. You never find any hospital started by an atheist. The Red Cross was not started by skeptics. All the great movements for the blessing of mankind have been stirred by the

inspiration of him who loved us and gave himself for us. In Christ of the seed of Abraham, all nations of the earth have been blessed. As we come further on in the Old Testament the prophecies become more and more clear. He was to be born in Bethlehem, Micah; he would be born 500 years after return from Babylon, Daniel, chapter 9; he would be born in the days of the second temple, Haggai, chapter 2; Malachi, chapter 3 and as we come on more and more the whole chapter is given to the Messiah to come and the results of his coming. We are looking at the most important of those chapters today. No one can question that this was written before the birth in Bethlehem. The whole Old Testament was translated into Greek centuries before Christ was born. It was scattered around the synagogues of the ancient world, hundreds and hundreds of synagogues and every nation of the world had the Old Testament in Greek! So no one can say all these prophecies were written after the event. Furthermore, they were preserved by a people who were opposed to Christianity, the ancient Jews. And when the ancient Jews read the prophecies, they first interpreted them of the coming Messiah. Only after Jesus came did they try to find another interpretation. So that's a good start as we look at these verses.

I want to point out that the verses have two main subjects, they talk about suffering and they talk about triumph. And in most translations the sufferings are put in the past tense and the triumph is put in the future tense. That's true of most translations. Hebrew verbs are not always easy to translate and some of the translations as regards tense in the King James' version are not the most accurate. Modern translations, when they deal with these verses, put the verses about the suffering in the past tense and the verses about the triumph in the future tense, why? To show that the sufferings are the reason for the triumph. And you will recall that in I Peter 1:11 it says that the prophets foretold the sufferings of Christ and the glories that would follow. You recall that when Jesus interpreted the Old Testament to his disciples in Luke 24, thus it behove Christ to suffer and to enter into his glory. And, dear friend, if that was so of the best of men, could it not be true of you and of me also? That before we go to glory, before we have the eternal triumph, everlasting felicity and bliss, that you and I must know a measure of

suffering too? God had one son without sin but he never even had one child without pain and if you think that pain is an unfortunate intruder in life, I would say to you that the Biblical view is that pain is as much a necessity of life as food and drink and the clothes we wear.

Let's look at it. We've mentioned the great passionale, that's the name given to chapter 53 which deals with the passion of Christ but before that, we have at the end of chapter 52 three verses, the prelude to the great passionale and in these three verses there are three themes, the first verse, 13, is the exaltation of the coming servant. You remember Ezekiel, Zechariah called the Messiah the servant, my servant the branch, says Zechariah, my servant David, said Ezekiel, looking forward to a coming David of the future. Ezekiel was written long after King David. Repeatedly in the New Testament Christ is called the holy servant of God, in Acts, in Philipians. So verse 13 of chapter 52 talks of the exaltation of the servant, "Behold my servant shall prosper, he shall be exalted and lifted up," he will be very high but then to our surprise it talks of the humiliation of the servant. You know, most people who are high and lifted up don't have much humility and the reason<sup>is</sup> they don't have much humiliation. We all hate humiliation but we will never be humble without it. And that was even true of our great pattern though by nature humble, he went through the same humiliation but to a worse degree that all his followers must know. Look at verse 14, the humiliation, "As many as were astonished at him, his appearance was so marred beyond human semblance and his form beyond that of the sons of men. Think of this Christ who was lashed. He had more than one flogging, according to the Gospel and it was not like the Jewish flogging that had to be limited to 40 lashes, the Roman flogging knew no such limitation. The Christ that went to the cross was one great wound. He had been buffeted, hit with fists, slapped with the hand, kicked in the guard room of Herod's place and in Pilate's mansion. He had been tied twice to a pillar and lashed unmercifully, not just an ordinary cord, but a cord that had pieces of fish bone in it, pieces of metal tied into it so when the lash caught with the skin, it dug in deep and pulled out hunks of flesh as it came away. His appearance was so marred; the blood that

came down from the crown of thorns, the pierced hands and feet, the open side, the bruises, the wounds, the lashings. Then in the last verse, 15, the blessed result. Pain received rightly is never in vain. Remember it when you are in pain, pain received rightly is never in vain, always there is a harvest and it always brings forth fruit. The more pain, often the more fruit. Look at the verse, "So shall he startle many nations," some translations have "sprinkle," the Hebrew word is a difficult one; "kings shall shut their mouths because of him for that which they had not been told, they shall see, and that which they have not heard they will understand." Here one man's sufferings will go to all the kings of the earth and kings will be overwhelmed, surprised, staggered and amazed by such a story. Now comes the 53rd chapter, "Who has believed our report?" Even though the evidence would be so overwhelming that this sufferer was the promised Messiah--this chapter alone is enough to establish that. No other man in history can fulfill this chapter but Jesus Christ. Here is a chapter all about the sufferings of the cross that he is being linked with the transgressors, numbered with the transgressors, interceding for the transgressors, being brought out of prison, being brought to judgment, being silenced before his judges--an innocent man bearing the guilt of his nation and of all the world. He would be cut off and yet he would prolong his days. He would die but he would live. He had no children but he would see his seed. These marvelous prophecies would never be fulfilled in anyone but Jesus of Nazareth. That's why we know the world is a ship and not an ice berg, an egg and not a bubble, full of life, because there is someone in charge even though it's a world of rebels... "Who has believed our report?" Though the evidence is clear, it's only a small number comparatively that ever believe. Don't expect to find majorities on the side of Christianity. It will never be. Don't even expect to find majorities in the church on the side of the Gospel, it will never be. Most religion is anathema to heaven. Most of what is called religion stands in the way of God. When Gandhi was asked to give one word why he was not a Christian, he said, Christians. There is so much bad religion because the devil wants the Gospel to be like Saul who was hidden under the \_\_\_\_\_. "Who has believed out report?" Only a minority ever comes through and accepts what God has really said. Don't expect, even in churches, the majority will rush the Gospel. Churches are often just a refined sophisticated

reputable form of Phariseism. Unless there are broken hearts and humble hearts and generous hands, there is no true religion there.

To whom is the arm of the Lord? The arm of the Lord is an allusion to the servant of God been revealed. He grew up before him like a young plant. You know, a young plant grows silently. It is easily crushed, it can be nipped in the bud. And so our Lord, Jesus, grows up at Nazareth. Just imagine he had a fight one day with a young teenager and been pushed over a Nazareth cliff, there would have been no cross. He grew up as we do with all the perils of existence. Life is a very dangerous affair. Just about as many people are killed in their homes as in motor car accidents. We are in trouble in even our homes. One cosmonaut who went to the moon and came back faithfully, broke his leg in the bath. It's a dangerous world. Christ was like a young plant, he could have been squashed by Herod, crushed when the soldiers went through Bethlehem and killed the children; he could have died in a 1000 ways. God was looking after him. There is no chance with God. "Like a root out of dry ground"... Can any good thing come out of Nazareth?" they said. Nazareth was dry ground and unlikely to rain for the son of God but God loves hard places..."Like a root out of dry ground. He had no form or comeliness that we should look at him; no beauty that we should desire." What does that mean? Was Christ ugly? No, dear friends, Christ in physical appearance was attractive. How do we know? It is very rare for the Bible to give physical appearance of anybody, very rare. If it says someone was tall the short people would feel left out; if the Bible said someone was short, the tall people would feel left out, the same with fat and thin, black and white. So it is very rare that the Bible gives these details. It wants us to look at the heart, the character, not the physical outside...but there are some exceptions; in certain of the types of Christ, we are given a physical description. We are told, for example, I Samuel 16:12 about David, that he was handsome to look upon, beautiful and fair, ruddy and well favored. That's a rare verse! You are practically never told what a person looks like in Scripture but you are told about David because David pointed forward to Jesus, who also was ruddy and well favored, beautiful to look upon. We are told about Moses, that he was a special child (Hebrews 11:23) in his appearance and Jesus had to be



the spotless lamb without spot or blemish. His nose wasn't too long or too short; his brow wasn't beetling or too recessive; he was just right. He was a perfect man, the only one that's ever lived since Adam. Well what's this mean then...he had no form or comeliness, no beauty we should desire him? It means two things, he clothed his deity with humanity. He did not outwardly look what he was and, secondly, it points forward like the rest of this chapter to the passion. When Pilate brought him to the people, he said, "Behold your king," they didn't want him. As they looked at this man bleeding, bruised, they didn't want him. So the verse primarily applies not to his original appearance but to the passion experience when the people rejected him; they didn't want him. "He was despised and rejected of men, a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief."

You know the curse was, "That in sorrow shall thou eat of it, all the days of thy life," remember? Genesis 3 :17. It said because of the fall there would be an element of sorrow in all the days of our existence. That becomes more apparent the older you grow and the more responsibility you bear...."In sorrow thou shall eat of it all the days of thy life." And so Jesus became a man of sorrows that our lot might be sweetened... "and acquainted with grief as one from whom men hide their face, he was despised and we esteemed him not; surely he has borne our grief, carried our sorrow...we esteemed him stricken, smitten of God;" that's the term used for a leper; they dealt with Jesus as though he was a leper, they thrust him out beyond the camp, that's where the lepers went. Lepers were not allowed inside the city they thrust them outside the camp. That's where Jesus was crucified, outside the camp. That's where the garbage was, lepers were garbage. But the Bible says you and I are lepers spiritually. We have a disease from which we are not going to recover in this life entirely, it's in the blood, so to speak. We're lepers, but he was treated as we deserve that we might be treated as he deserves. Upon him was the chastisement that makes us whole and gives us peace, with his stripes we are healed. We can say, the condemnation was thine, oh Lord, that the justification might be mine. We can say the agony was thine that the victory might be ours; we can say, the goal was thine that the honey and the sweet might be ours; the stripes were yours that the healing might be ours; the death was

yours that the life might be ours; the crown of thorns was yours that the crown of glory might be ours. He was wounded for our transgressions, all we like sheep have gone astray; the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all. Dear friends, forget the sweetness of that; you need to say this, I am a sinner, I have sinned, I am sinning, I will sin but upon him has been laid the iniquity of my past, my present and my future and if he has borne it, I need not. There is no need for any soul to be oppressed by guilt, to feel weighed down and burdened by mistakes. Sometimes the more conscientious you are the more worried you are about your sins; people who are the least conscientious are the least worried; the more spiritual you are the more you will see sin where other people don't see it. You become more sensitive. Just think of things you did when you became a Christian and your attitude to some of those things now...I shudder as I recall some of my early experiences that were quite respectable, quite acceptable by my generation including church goers but can be no part of my life now. But if we know that he took our guilt, there is no need for us to cherish it. You see, you will never have a day without guilt and the more sensitive you are to the will of God, the more you see how embracing is the law of God, that it demands you choose rightly in everything, how you eat and drink and work and rest and sex and buy and sell and speak and think--when you see the law of God encompasses every atom of life, every desire, every wish, every imagination--the more you see that, the more guilt. But you know the Gospel, you know what to do about it; the Lord has laid on him the guilt of us all so we need not hold onto it. When you sin, say, Lord, I have sinned but I thank you for the Saviour who took that sin away, thank you Lord, and that will energize you to be able to resist the next temptation...but even if you fall you have somebody who takes your guilt away. That should not encourage you to sin, it should break the heart; it should make one hate sin and flee from it!

Verse 7 says, "He was oppressed and afflicted, yet, he opened not his mouth." He refused to plead at his trial before Herod he said nothing, nothing, and Pilate said to him, "Don't you know I have power to crucify you or to release you?" But Jesus would not defend himself. He refused to plead at his trial..."Like the lamb led to the slaughter," he is the great Passover lamb. He dies at the time of the Passover..."So he opened not his mouth." By oppression and judgment he was taken away,

so you see, he is not accidentally killed. Not killed by a mob, he is killed by false civil and religious courts--judgment, false judgment. Don't ever expect fairness in the world, dear friends...the next world is for that. Don't expect to be treated better than the Saviour. 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, cut off. You don't say that about someone who dies at 93 or 80 or 70 but you do say that about a young person and Jesus died as a young man, in his early 30's he dies. So after our early 30's you and I are in old age, or at least, middle age. After the year 33 all of us begin to go downhill. one percent a year in most of the major physical capacities of the human being. It's a myth invented by someone over 40 that middle age begins at 40, it's not true. Jesus, the spotless lamb, had to die before the taint of death was upon him, so he was cut off, sudden death and, yet, further down it says, he poured out his soul, travail--now, that's not sudden in the sense of pouring out. Travail is not the work of a moment. These contradictory things are reconciled at the cross. It was a sudden death--33. It was an enduring, protracted death, the crucifixion. You see, crucifixion wasn't death. Crucifixion was unto death. Sometimes people hung on for days. It was because of the weight of the sin of the world was because he died early. He died of a broken heart, not at the cross. He was cut out of the land of the living, stricken for the transgression of my people. The modern Jew today that rejects Jesus says, oh this chapter is all about Israel and her sufferings, don't you see what happened in World War II? That won't wash, dear friends. It says he was stricken for the transgression of "my people." So the "he" and "my people" are different. The modern Jewish view won't hold water. They made his grave with the wicked. As he is dying he is with the wicked, two thieves; with the rich man in his death, in a rich man's mausoleum, Joseph's tomb. These sufferings, they are deserved by some people to a certain degree but look what it says next, that he had done no violence, and there is no deceit in his mouth. The man who has all this suffering is sinless. How do you know he is sinless? Dear friend, if you don't make a mistake with your tongue, you are well nigh perfect and it says, there is no deceit in his mouth and if you never get angry, you are heading for perfection. It says he did no violence, no deceit

in his mouth. It was the will of the Lord to bruise him. It looked as though wicked men were responsible but God had his hand over all. God had a purpose in it...he has put him to grief and he makes himself an offering for sin, he will see his offspring, he will prolong his days. What a marvel, cut off but prolong his days. He will see his seed, spiritual seed, the church. The will of the Lord will prosper his hand. He will see the fruit of his travail of his soul. His sufferings were not just physical--mental and spiritual, like a woman in childbirth, but a soul in childbirth, the darkness, the agony, separation from God, enduring the pangs of the second death--he was no martyr. He endured what no man has ever endured...by knowledge of him, my righteous one, will make many be accounted righteous.

Dear friends, never forget the heart of the Gospel is not being made righteous. Don't confuse conversion with glorification. If your wife isn't perfect, or your husband isn't perfect, or your children or parents aren't perfect, just remember nobody has been glorified yet in this generation. Glorification happens at the second coming. That's when we are made perfectly righteous, every thought, every motive, every desire. That only happens at the second coming. Until then you are fighting the evil within you. Though you be a failure Christian, but you are counted righteous. Christ was counted a sinner but he was not one. The believer is counted righteous though he isn't. That's what the verse says...by a knowledge of him he will cause many to be counted righteous and he will bear their iniquities, therefore, I will divide him a portion with the great, he will divide the spoil with the strong because he poured out his soul to death voluntarily, he poured it out. He was numbered with the transgressors; they put him in the middle as if to say, he's the worst! The Jew counted anyone on the tree accursed. Yet, he bore the sins of many and made intercession for the transgressors..."Father forgive them for they know not what they do." The great passionate fulfilled only in one man--Jesus. We know the Bible is true. We know that God lives. We know the promises of God are reliable and this chapter proves it beyond any shadow of doubt. You go out of here today and look up at the heavens and say, thank you God, you live, thank you God that Christ lives, that he is my saviour. You can have that assurance that

he accepts sinners.

Now I only want to take about 2 minutes more. Often people stop at the end of 53 but chapter 54 talks about the gentile church that would result..."Sing, oh barren one that did not bear; break forth singing cry aloud; you have not been in travail. The children of the desolate will be more than the children of her that is married." God has been married to the Jews...now he is going to be married to a gentile church and it will be much bigger than the church of Judaism. And so he says in verse 2, "Enlarge the places of your tents. Let the curtains of your habitations be stretched out, hold not back, lengthen your cords strengthen your stakes. You will spread abroad to the right and to the left; your descendants will possess the nations." Dear friends, when the great commission was given a small band set out to fulfill it. By the end of the first century about one person in every three hundred and twenty, living, believed in the Gospel of Christ, or, claimed to. You know what the percentage is now? Today, one in four on earth claim to believe in Christ. Of course, many of those claims are not real but you can see when the Old Testament foretold that the church would spread to the left and to the right and center, it has happened.

Then I leave with you two more verses, two more passages. Having spoken of the results of the cross in chapter 54, the gentile church, now in chapter 55 it gives the message of that gentile church. Look at 55, "For every one who thirsts, come to the water, he who has no money, come buy and eat, come buy wine and milk without money, without price. Why spend your money for that which is not bread. You labor for that which does not satisfy. Hearken diligently to me, eat what's good, delight yourself in fatness, incline your ear, come to me, hear and your soul may live. I will make with you an everlasting covenant. my steadfast sure love, mercies promised to David." There is the message of the New Testament church--come and receive what you can't buy. Don't be so involved in material things that will die, listen, incline your ears to the Gospel, believe it and you will know the everlasting mercies of the Everlasting Covenant.