

The Servant's Voluntary Sacrifice

Isaiah 53:7-9

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Introduction

Today we come to the fourth section in Isaiah's marvellous prophecy about Jesus as the suffering servant.

- This particular section is the one that the Eunuch particularly inquired about when Philip the evangelist appeared to him on the desert road.
 - We read about this meeting in Acts chapter 8 for our NT reading
- The Eunuch wanted to know the great question that continues to be asked about this passage even to the present day.
 - He wanted to know of whom the prophet speaks—of himself or of another—
 - He inquires especially about verse 7 & 8 where the suffering servant is spoken of as a lamb who did not protest and whose life was taken away.
 - And Philip, of course, immediately tells Him that this suffering servant is Jesus.
 - This should have settled the matter for every Christian interpreter.
 - But as I have told you, there are many unbelieving teachers of Scripture who continue to struggle with the same question the Eunuch had.
 - Not only should it be obvious to them now that Jesus has been revealed as crucified,
 - but also because we have the clear testimony of Philip the evangelist in God's Holy Word.
 - This all goes to show that these men are not honest men—they are rather rebellious who hate the truth when it is plainly shown to them.

But you who love Jesus and have trusted in Him as your Lord and Saviour,

- For you, Isaiah 53 is a tremendous portrait of your dear redeemer...
 - In the first section, we marvelled at His prudence...
 - In the second section, we marvelled at His glory that was veiled, yet revealed...
 - In the third section, we marvelled at His burden-bearing love...
 - And now I want to present to you His voluntary sacrifice.
 - We have a Saviour who was a willing sacrifice for us!
 - We have a Saviour who was an official sacrifice for us!
 - We have a Saviour who was a spotless sacrifice for us!

This morning I want to look at each of these characteristics of our Saviour as a sacrifice.

I. First, Christian, see how your Saviour was a *willing* sacrifice for you.

A. This is brought out for us in verse 7!

1. First, in that it says “He was oppressed and He was afflicted.”

a. You need to look back at verse 6 to see where this oppression came from!

1) It came from Christ being made a sacrifice for our sin.

- Last week in verse 6, we saw that He was a vicarious or substitutionary sacrifice...
- In verse 6, you remember, it says:
 - Isa 53:6: 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.
- You will remember that this *laying* of our iniquity on Him was a laying on that was done with great violence.
- It involved the transference of the wrath and curse of God that is upon us because of our sin upon Him!
 - He bore our griefs and carried our sorrows
 - He was bruised for our iniquities!
 - He took our place in the same way that the sacrifices in the Old Testament took the place of the one who offered them.
 - Our sin was transferred to Him so that He suffered the complete penalty of it for us—
 - and in turn, His righteousness was transferred to us so that we were set free from the everlasting curse.
 - He became a sacrifice for our sins.

2) Now we know, from the whole of scripture, that this oppression came from many sources... an interesting combination of them...

a) Ultimately it came from the Father who brought down the full weight of His wrath and curse upon Him...

b) But it also came from the Jews and the Romans who conducted His trials, ordered Him to be crucified, and carried out the sentence upon Him with great cruelty.

- In Acts 4:26-28, it explains how in their guilty rebellion, they carried out the will of God:
 - Acts 4:26-28: The kings of the earth took their stand, And the rulers were gathered together Against the LORD and against His Christ.’ “For truly against Your holy Servant Jesus, whom You anointed, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles and the people of Israel, were gathered together to do whatever Your hand and Your purpose determined before to be done.

TRANS> He was oppressed because He became a sacrifice for our sins.

- b. But it also says that He was *afflicted*—
 - And according to many who are experts in the Hebrew, this could just as well be translated,
 - “He allowed Himself to be afflicted.”
 - This speaks, you see, of the voluntary nature of His suffering.
 - The word *afflicted* even conveys the idea of humbling yourself.
 - In relation to this, we may think of Philippians 2:8 where it says:
 - Phil 2:8: He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross.
 - You may remember that we saw this in a most striking way in Isaiah 50.
 - In that great chapter we saw that the Servant learned what He must do to save His people from their sins and then set out to do it!
 - And in verse 6, He declared with majesty:
 - Isa 50:6: I gave My back to those who struck Me, And My cheeks to those who plucked out the beard; I did not hide My face from shame and spitting.
 - No one forced Him—
 - He *gave* Himself to this suffering.
 - Jesus states this very strongly in John 10:17-18 where He says:
 - John 10:17-18: I lay down My life that I may take it again. No one takes it from Me, but I lay it down of Myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again.
2. Isaiah 53:7 goes on to give us a very wonderful *picture* of Christ as a willing sacrifice using the imagery of a lamb.
- a. It tells us twice that He did not open His mouth when He was oppressed and humbled Himself to be a sacrifice...
 - Two times it says:
 - “He opened not His mouth.”
 - The repetition is for emphasis because it is such an amazing thing that He did not open His mouth!
 - It compares Him to a lamb—a she lamb—who is silent before its shearers!
 - He is like the lamb who puts up no resistance, no fight!
 - Yet, He is not a lamb but the very Son of God—amazingly *acting* like a lamb!

- b. This is a most marvellous thing!
 - The point is that He did not put up resistance when He might easily have done so!
 - He who could have called 10,000's of angels to His aid kept silent!
 - He who could envelop His enemies in flames of vengeance stood as a lamb before its shearers!
 - You remember how the chief priests marvelled that He did not answer them...
 - And how Pilate marvelled when Jesus did not try to defend Himself.
 - Jesus silence unnerved Pilate so that he inquired, saying:
 - John 19:10: "Are You not speaking to me? Do You not know that I have power to crucify You, and power to release You?"
 - And then he was even more nervous when Jesus replied:
 - John 19:11: "You could have no power at all against Me unless it had been given you from above."

TRANS> Jesus was a willing, voluntary sacrifice!

- That is what is emphasised in verse 7.

B. And I say, it is a good thing that He was!

- It is a good thing that He was a willing sacrifice!

1. If Christ had not been willing to become a sacrifice for us, we would not have Him as a sacrifice!

a. Isn't that a dreadful thought!

- As Christians, we have become so used to having Him as a sacrifice for our sins.
 - But just think what it would be like if there were no sacrifice!
 - What if He had refused!
- You would still be in your sins, without hope!
 - You would have nothing but an eternity of God's wrath to bear.
 - Your future would be a future of unspeakable misery and sorrow!
 - He willingly took all that from you upon Himself!
 - It is so amazing that He did!

b. If He had not been willing, the Father would not have forced Him.

- The Father is not unjust.
 - He would never afflict a righteous man with another man's sins unless that righteous man agreed to it first!

- c. And of course, if Jesus had not gone willingly when they came to arrest Him...
 - And when they took Him to trial,
 - And when they scourged Him with the dreadful Roman whip,
 - And when they took Him to be crucified and drove the nails into His hands and feet...
 - If at any point along the way He had ceased to be willing...
 - the whole matter would have been brought to an immediate end!
 - One little word of protest from Him would have stopped it all!
 - And you would be lost forever—without a sacrifice for your sin!
 - But he remained silent—as a lamb before its shearers.
2. What a Saviour He is!
- a. What marvellous self-control and patience!
 - Who but He would have silently borne all that He bore if it all could be stopped with a mere word!
 - We find it hard to continue in ordinary obedience—
 - but He continued all the way to the point of death—even death on the cross!
 - We find it hard to restrain ourselves from angry words, even when very little if any wrong has been done to us
 - even though you are called to this, as Peter says:
 - 1 Peter 2:21-24: For to this you were called, because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that you should follow His steps: “Who committed no sin, Nor was deceit found in His mouth”; who, when He was reviled, did not revile in return; when He suffered, He did not threaten, but committed Himself to Him who judges righteously; who Himself bore our sins in His own body on the tree, that we, having died to sins, might live for righteousness—by whose stripes you were healed.

TRANS> What a Saviour He is!

- b. Here you see His unwavering love for His Father in submitting to His call.
 - He took delight in doing the Father’s will—in doing all things to please Him...
 - And it pleased the Father to make Him an offering for our sins.
 - Oh that we had such love for the Father!

- c. Here you see His unwavering love for *you* in willingly offering Himself for you.
 - Herein is love, not that we loved Him, but that He loved us and gave Himself for us...
 - He stayed on the cross to give us life!
 - He was not forced!
 - He willingly gave Himself to bear our sins!
 - Now will you not lay down your life for Him?
 - And for His people?
 - May it ever be so!

TRANS> Your Saviour was a willing sacrifice for you.

- That is the first thing we learn about Him as a sacrifice from our text.

II. Second, see how your Saviour was an official sacrifice for you.

A. By official, I mean that He was offered up by duly appointed authorities who truly represented God!

1. This is brought out at the beginning of verse 8 by the use of the words *prison* and *judgement* when it says:

- Isa 53:8: He was taken from prison and from judgment,
 - *Prison* is a general word that refers to violent constraint so that one is incarcerated or bound or in some way held by force.
 - *Judgement* is a word that refers to judicial proceedings in which one is put to trial, accused, and officially sentenced.

a. Both of are words that have to do with official proceeding.

- Oh yes, it was unjust proceedings—but it was still official proceedings conducted by those that were God’s official representatives...
 - His death did not come about through mob violence!
 - It was not a case of death by an unfortunate accident.
 - It was an execution by judicial proceeding.

b. And so it was that when they spoke, God spoke through them!

- In declaring Him guilty, God Himself was declaring Him guilty through their official words...
 - They meant that Christ Himself was personally guilty,
 - but the Father meant that He was guilty as the one who stood in the place of His guilty church.
 - He meant that He was bearing the guilt of our sin.

- You see, once again, we are shown that the action of these men, in declaring judgement against Him, corresponded to God's declaration.
 - Acts 4:27-28: "For truly against Your holy Servant Jesus, whom You anointed, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles and the people of Israel, were gathered together to do whatever Your hand and Your purpose determined before to be done.
- In their position, they spoke and acted for God even though they did not intend to do so.

TRANS> So you see that there was a prison and there was a judgement—it was an action taken by duly appointed authority.

2. That His sacrifice was an official action is even more demonstrated by the declaration that He was “cut off out of the land of the living”
 - He was *taken* from prison and judgement (from judicial proceedings)
 - to be cut off.
 - To be “cut off out of the land of the living” is a term of official proceeding.
 - That clearly speaks of His death, as anyone can tell from the words...
 - but it is a technical term for execution by judicial process of a person who has been found guilty of breaking God's law.
 - This language is of God cutting off the inhabitants of the earth in the great flood.
 - It is used when God first appointed circumcision for his people and declared :
 - Ge 17:14: And the uncircumcised male child, who is not circumcised in the flesh of his foreskin, that person shall be cut off from his people; he has broken My covenant."
 - In Exodus 12:15, the Lord declares that those who eat leavened bread during the feast of unleavened bread will be *cut off* from the congregation.
 - In Exodus 31:14, it is used with reference to the Sabbath when He says:
 - Exodus 31:14: You shall keep the Sabbath, therefore, for it is holy to you. Everyone who profanes it shall surely be put to death; for whoever does any work on it, that person shall be cut off from among his people.
 - You get the idea...
 - To be cut off was to be excluded from God's covenant people by judicial action.
 - It was to be excommunicated, often by the sentence of death.
 - To be cut off out of the land of the living, is clearly to be executed.

B. It is very important for Jesus cutting off to be official if we are to be saved.

1. As we have seen already, Jesus was offered as a sacrifice.
 - a. You know that from ancient times, God had appointed that sacrifices be offered for the sins of His people...
 - The idea was that instead of the worshipper dying, the sins of the worshipper were transferred to the animal which was then slain.
 - This was all to point the way to Jesus who would be revealed in the fullness of time as the lamb who takes away the sin of the world.
 - b. And through the ages, unofficial sacrifices were forbidden!
 - The LORD was very strict about this!
 - No one but the official priests were permitted to offer them, and then only in the place and in the way that God had commanded.
 - Unauthorised sacrifices were not acceptable.

TRANS> Surely if this was necessary for the sacrifices of bulls and goats, how much more for the one true sacrifice of God's Son that takes away the sin of the world!

- c. For this reason, God arranged things in His providence so that Jesus' sacrifice was official...
 - so that the High Priests, the official representatives in the ecclesiastical realm, judged Jesus and ordered Him to be crucified...
 - so that Pilate, the official representative of the civil realm ordered Him to be crucified.
 - The cutting off of Jesus was officially recognised by God—
 - not in the way the High Priest and the Governor intended—
 - but in the way that our gracious God intended it to be—
 - Christ as an official offering for His people's sins!
2. God brought official charges against Jesus.
 - a. The charge that was brought against Him is expressed at the end of verse 8...
 - “He was cut off from the land of the living for the transgressions of my people was He stricken.”
 - You see, He was officially charged, not for His own transgressions, but the transgressions of those Isaiah calls “my people.”
 - Isaiah and all other believers!
 - As we saw last week,
 - the full sentence of God's everlasting wrath and judgement was brought to bear down upon Him.
 - The Lord laid on Him the iniquity of His all—
 - He was wounded for our transgression—our rebellion.

- He was bruised for our iniquities—the evil that is a part of us.
 - Under the weight of this dreadful curse, He cried out:
 - My God, My God, Why have you forsaken Me!

- b. Those for whom He died are not only referred to by Isaiah as “my people”, but they are also called “His generation.”
 - In verse 8, after saying that Jesus was taken from official process,
 - it says, “Who shall declare His generation!”

 - As the one who was officially offered as a sacrifice, there is a whole body of people that belong to Him.
 - Those people are here called “His generation.”
 - Some have objected that to be used this way, the word generation out to be plural...
 - but not so—His people are all one—they are the generation of the upright—
 - the generation of those who are made righteous by His sacrifice!

 - And what a company they are!
 - Who can declare—or reckon—His generation?
 - They are, as God promised to Abraham, more than the stars of the heavens and more than the sand on the seashore!
 - They are a great multitude which no man can number!
 - He was cut off for them and now they are free from sin!

 - They are the official heirs of Jesus Christ!
 - His heirs are not children that were born to Him according to the flesh, but those for whom He died!
 - For them, He purchased an everlasting inheritance in the kingdom of God.
 - They shall inherit the new heavens and the new earth...
 - It is an official bequest authorised by the Father through His official offering as a sacrifice for our sins!
 - This is His generation!

- c. Are you numbered among them?
 - If not, why not?
 - There is a crucified Saviour who has borne the sins of His people!
 - It’s all official!
 - Will you instead bear your own sins?

- Will you rather be cut off for your own transgressions?
 - I plead with you—do not be so foolish!
- Come to Him and become a part of His generation for whom He was officially crucified.
 - Come and trust in His offering for sin and you will have a sacrifice, authorised by the living God, to take away your sins.
 - What confidence you can have!

TRANS> So we have seen that His sacrifice was not only voluntary, it was also official.

III. Third, Christian, see how your Saviour was a spotless sacrifice for you.

A. This is one of the features that God requires of a sacrifice for sin.

1. For example,

- At the Passover, the Lord said in Exodus 12:5:
 - Exodus 12:5: Your lamb shall be without blemish, a male of the first year.
- In Deuteronomy 17:1, the Lord says:
 - Deut 17:1: You shall not sacrifice to the LORD your God a bull or sheep which has any blemish or defect, for that is an abomination to the LORD your God.
- In Malachi, the Lord scolds His people for offering blemished sacrifices:
 - Mal 1:8: And when you offer the blind as a sacrifice, Is it not evil? And when you offer the lame and sick, Is it not evil? Offer it then to your governor! Would he be pleased with you? Would he accept you favourably?" Says the LORD of hosts.

2. The scripture tells us that Jesus,

- as the one who offered Himself as a sacrifice to actually take away His people's sins,
 - had to be without sin of His own.

a. If the types had to be without spot or blemish, how much more the antitype Himself!

- Heb 7:26-27 says: For such a High Priest was fitting for us, who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and has become higher than the heavens; who does not need daily, as those high priests, to offer up sacrifices, first for His own sins and then for the people's, for this He did once for all when He offered up Himself.
 - If He had been guilty of His own sins, He would not have been able to offer Himself up for our sins.

- It was necessary for Him to be free of sin if He was to be an acceptable sacrifice to God for us.
- b. Hebrews 9 also shows that Jesus is able to save us because He offered Himself without spot to God for us...
- Hebrews 9:12-14: Not with the blood of goats and calves, but with His own blood He entered the Most Holy Place once for all, having obtained eternal redemption. For if the blood of bulls and goats and the ashes of a heifer, sprinkling the unclean, sanctifies for the purifying of the flesh, how much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without spot to God, cleanse your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?

TRANS> Jesus could not have taken away our sins if He had not been “without spot”

3. Sadly, there are many pastors and teachers in the modern church who deny that Jesus is without sin.
- This is terrible thing...
 - It brings such dishonour to Him and to His Father, for He hated sin and loved righteousness.
 - It is very blasphemous to say that He sinned.
 - Sinlessness was the one of the main things that set Him apart from all other men.
 - What’s more, as we have just seen,
 - If He was not free from sin, He is unable to give Himself a sacrifice for sin.
 - Of course the blasphemous pastors who think He sinned do not believe such a sacrifice is needed!
 - They refuse to admit that sin is as big a problem as it is shown to be in the scripture.
 - They minimise sin in themselves and in all men...
 - Yet, even with their low view of sin, they find sin in Jesus!
 - See that you are not drawn in by their error!
 - They will not inherit the kingdom of God.
 - They are not among the generation of Jesus Christ.

TRANS> It is very important that you confess that Jesus is without sin.

- B. This characteristic of Jesus as without sin is highlighted for us in verse 9 of our text in Isaiah 53.
1. You can see that it is expressly stated at the end of the verse...
- Isa 53:9: He had done no violence, Nor was any deceit in His mouth.

- Rather than *violence*, His whole life was characterised by going about and doing good to others.
 - He even when so far as to freely offer Himself up for our sins!
 - Of Him alone can it be said that He did *no violence*!
- Rather than *deceit*, His speech was characterised by unclouded sincerity and truth—
 - Isaiah, the holy prophet, even considered himself to be a man of unclean lips, but he declares that there was no such fault in Christ's words.
 - Of Him alone can it be said that *no deceit was in His mouth*.
- Matthew Henry beautifully expounds this verse with these words:
 - He never did any thing in the least to deserve [the hard treatment He was given]. Whereas he was charged with perverting the nation, and sowing sedition, it was utterly false; he had *done no violence*, but went about doing good. And, whereas he was called *that deceiver*, he never deserved that character; for *there was no deceit in his mouth*, to which the apostle refers, in 1 Peter 2:22: *He did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth*. He never offended either in word or deed, nor could any of his enemies take up that challenge of his, *Which of you convinceth me of sin?* The judge that condemned owned he found no fault in him, and the centurion that executed him professed that certainly he was a righteous man.
- His holy Father, who has found all men to be guilty, testified that He was pleased with His Son:
 - Peter heard this testimony and reports to us:
 - 1 Peter 1:16-17: For we did not follow cunningly devised fables when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eyewitnesses of His majesty. For He received from God the Father honour and glory when such a voice came to Him from the Excellent Glory: "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased."
 - He alone is without sin—even before His Father in heaven!
 - Even after God destroyed the world so that only Noah and his family was left, He still declared that:
 - Ge 8:21: the imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth.
 - Only Jesus is declared to be without sin.

2. And in our text, His sinlessness is given as the reason that He had a rich man as His companion when He died.

 - You can see how this is all tied together in verse 9:

- Isa 53:9: And they made His grave with the wicked—But with the rich at His death, Because He had done no violence, Nor was any deceit in His mouth.
- a. This verse was like a riddle until after it was fulfilled.
- How could the servant be with wicked men (plural) and with a rich man (singular) at His death and burial?
 - We know, from the testimony of the gospels,
 - that Jesus was crucified between two malefactors—
 - The men who delivered Him over to be crucified had appointed Him a grave with these wicked men.
 - Josephus tells us that those who were executed in Israel were buried “without honour.”
 - Maimonides says:
 - “Those who have been executed by the court of justice are not by any means buried in the graves of their ancestors; but there are two graves appointed for them by the court of justice—one of the stoned and burnt; the other for the decapitated and strangled.”
 - So the authorities were expecting to bury Jesus with the other malefactors without honour.
 - But you know what happened!
 - The gospels tell us that a rich man—Joseph of Arimathea by name—came to Pilate and asked for the body of Jesus...
 - Then Joseph gave Him an honourable burial in his own tomb!
 - Now the riddle is explained!
 - Now we can see how Jesus was assigned to a grave with the wicked, but was at the same time with the rich in His death!
- b. But look at the reason given for this—the reason that He was with a rich man in His death...
- “because He had done no violence, nor was any deceit in His mouth.”
- 1) That is given as the reason that Joseph came forth to bury Him!
- It is remarkable that Joseph and Nicodemus did this!
 - They were both secret disciples who were afraid to acknowledge Jesus...
 - And now—now at this very time when His very own disciples were afraid to be identified with Him, Joseph and Nicodemus come forth!
 - Why did they do this?

- Well there is no need to guess because we are told in our text...
 - It was...
 - “because He had done no violence, nor was any deceit found in His mouth.
 - They realised that He was a righteous man, so they honoured Him and buried Him in hope.
 - They had already come to believe this before they stepped forward, but now that they had seen Him die, they believed it enough to embolden them to come forth to bury Him.
 - I wonder if they did not even understand that His death was a substitutionary death for sinners!
 - The prophecies were certainly there and they were men who knew the scriptures well!
 - I rather think they did, but whether they did or not, they recognised that He deserved an honourable burial.
- 2) And of course God was back of all this, bringing about these events to testify that His Son without sin...
- The very practice of burying the dead testifies to the hope of the resurrection...
 - The body is given an honourable burial in the hope that it will be raised again at the last day.
 - With what God had prepared for His sinless Son...
 - that He should rise on the third day,
 - it would not do for Him to be buried without hope!
 - This was the beginning of His exaltation now that He had finished the work that the Father had given Him to do as a sacrifice...
 - It is the testimony that God has accepted His work and that He will arise with life-giving power for all His dearly beloved people!
- 3) Let us be buried in this same hope!
- Not hope grounded upon the fact that *we* have done no violence or that any deceit has been found in mouth—
 - because we **have** done violence and deceit **is** found in our mouths.
 - But rather because there was no violence in **Him** and no deceit in **His** mouth...
 - And because He was offered up to bear our iniquities!

- And we, with Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus, know that He was buried in hope that He would rise for His church.
- And further, we know that He did rise again with forgiveness and eternal life for all that will trust in His offering for sin.
 - Because He is risen, we who trust in Him will also rise.
 - Because He was a sacrifice without spot of blemish, we are given forgiveness and eternal life through Him.

Conclusion:

What a blessed sacrifice He is...

- Our Saviour, a willing sacrifice!
- Our Saviour, an official sacrifice!
- Our Saviour, a spotless sacrifice!

Come and rest in Him and His offering forever!