

THE REDEEMER DESCRIBED BY HIMSELF NO. 2827

A SERMON
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DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
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“Why, when I came, was there no man? Why, when I called, was there none to answer? Is My hand shortened at all, that it cannot redeem? Or have I no power to deliver? Behold, at My rebuke I dry up the sea, I make the rivers a wilderness: their fish stink because there is no water, and die for thirst. I clothe the heavens with blackness, and I make sackcloth their covering. The Lord GOD has given Me the tongue of the learned, that I should know how to speak a word in season to him that is weary: He wakens Me morning by morning, he wakens My ears to hear as the learned. The Lord GOD has opened My ears, and I was not rebellious, nor did I turn away. I gave My back to the smiters, and My cheeks to them that plucked off the hair: I hid not My face from shame and spitting.”
Isaiah 50:2-6.

WE spent this morning at the foot of the cross. [Sermon #1362, Volume 23—MOURNING FOR CHRIST—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge at <http://www.spurgeon.org>.] I hope that some of us, at least, were helped by the Spirit of grace and of supplication to look unto Him whom we have pierced by our sins, and to “mourn for Him, as one mourns for his only son.” I thought that as we then found it so good to be there, we would go there, again, the more especially as we are afterwards to gather around the communion table where we shall again be reminded of the sacrificial death which the sacred supper so clearly symbolizes. Let us come, then, under the guidance of God's Holy Spirit, very near to our Lord Jesus Christ. I pray that the Spirit of Christ may aid our meditations while I try, once more, to speak about His glorious and matchless person, and the wondrous condescension which made Him undertake such gracious offices on our behalf, and bear for us such awful and shameful griefs.

I shall need no further preface to my discourse except to say that in my opinion these verses run on without any break, so that you are not to separate them, and ascribe one to the prophet, another to the Messiah, and another to Jehovah, Himself, but you must take the whole as the utterance of one divine Person. That Jehovah-Jesus is the One who is speaking here is very clear from the last verse of the previous chapter—“I the Lord” (“I, Jehovah,” it is,) “am your Savior and your Redeemer, the Mighty One of Jacob.” It is Jehovah, as the Savior and Redeemer of His people, who is here manifesting Himself to us—and we must take the whole chapter as being uttered by Him.

I. So, then, to begin with, let us BEHOLD THE MESSIAH AS GOD—“I clothe the heavens with blackness, and I make sackcloth their covering.”

I ask you again to link this 3rd verse with the 6th—“I clothe the heavens with blackness, and I make sackcloth their covering...I gave My back to the smiters, and My cheeks to them that plucked off the hair: I hid not My face from shame and spitting.” He, then, who suffered thus, and whom we regard as redeeming us by His death, and as saving us by His life, is no less than the Almighty God who clothes the heavens with blackness, at whose rebuke the sea is dried up, and the rivers become a wilderness!

I think the first reference in these words is to the miracles which were worked by the plagues in Egypt. It was Jehovah-Jesus who was then plaguing His adversaries. It was He who stood by the border of the Red Sea, and dried it up. In a later chapter Isaiah says that “the angel of His presence saved them.” And who is that great “angel of His presence” but the angel of the covenant in whom we delight, even Jesus Christ our Lord and Savior? It was He who struck the rivers of Egypt till they began to stink, and the fish died from thirst. It was He who called for an unusual darkness—even darkness which might be felt—and which lasted three days and nights—a supernatural darkness such as had never before been

known. Think of the greatness of that God who can darken the great orb of day! The strongest eyes of man cannot bear to gaze upon the sun, for fear of producing blindness, yet Jehovah-Jesus does not only look the sun in the face, but He lifts His hand, and shuts the light of the sun from off the face of the earth! And He bids the sun—"which is as a bridegroom coming out of his chamber, and rejoices as a strong man to run a race"—to take off his bridal attire, and to put on the garments of mourning, for thus said the Lord, "I clothe the heavens with blackness, and I make sackcloth their covering." This mighty miracle, which was worked of old, was worked by that same Jesus who, in the days of His flesh, was despised and rejected of men! Learn this lesson, and adore the Lord who is so great in power, and as gracious as He is great!

But we must not restrict the text to that which happened in the land of Egypt, for it has a far wider reference than that. All the great wonders of nature are to be ascribed to Him upon whom we build all our hopes for time and for eternity. There are channels of great rivers to be found that are now perfectly dry. Travelers tell us of vast lakes, and riverbeds that have become mere pans of salt. How came they to be dried up? "By the action of the laws of nature," some people say. But laws have no power to act by themselves—they need force at the back of them to make them operate. And whose force is that? It is the energy of God—and that same energy dwells in the adorable person of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. When the storm-clouds come hurrying up, driven by the winds, and the crash of heaven's dread artillery is heard, and the dashes of forked lightning follow each other in rapid succession, we tremble at the power of the Lord who thus makes the earth to quiver before Him. But who is He that is thus driving in His conquering car? It is Jesus Christ, our Lord and Savior! All the elements of nature are under His control, and He rules all things according to the good pleasure of His own will. He sits at the right hand of God, even the Father, being Himself very God of very God!

The last miracle recorded here, namely that of covering the heavens with sackcloth, was performed by our Lord even when He was in His death agony. We read that at high noon the sun was veiled, and there was darkness over all the land for three black hours. Wonder of wonders! He who hung bleeding there had worked that mighty marvel! The sun had looked upon Him hanging on the cross, and, as if in horror, had covered its face, and traveled on in tenfold night. The tears of Jesus quenched the light of the sun! Had He been wrathful, He might have put out its light forever, but His love not only restored that light, but it has given to us a light a thousand times more precious, even the light of everlasting life and joy!

I cannot preach worthily upon so sublime a doctrine as this, so it is no use for me to attempt to do so. I always feel, when I begin to speak of the Deity of our blessed Lord and Master, as if my heart were too full for me to give utterance to my deepest feelings and convictions. My heart is indeed inditing a good matter when I am speaking thus concerning the King, but I cannot say that my tongue is as the pen of a ready writer when it has so vast a theme to dwell upon. What I want to bring before your minds most clearly is the blessed truth of God that you are not depending for your salvation upon a mere man. He is man—certainly man—man of the substance of His mother. But He is just as truly divine. In trusting Him, you are resting your souls upon One who is infinite and almighty. Nothing can be too difficult for Him to do. It is He who asks these questions in the second verse—"Is My hand shortened at all, that it cannot redeem? Or have I no power to deliver?" You may depend upon it that you are absolutely safe in His hands! What you commit to Him, He will securely keep, rest assured of that. Even when you draw nearest to Him in the familiar union which He graciously permits to those whom He loves, never think of Him as being less than the Eternal God; so worship Him, so trust Him, and so rejoice in Him!

II. Now let us turn to the next verse of our text, and BEHOLD THE MESSIAH AS THE INSTRUCTED TEACHER—"The Lord God has given Me the tongue of the learned, that I should know how to speak a word in season to him that is weary: He wakens Me morning by morning, He wakens My ears to hear as the learned."

Our Lord veiled His Godhead in the robe of manhood, and He came and dwelt here, among men, that He might proclaim liberty to the captives and the opening of the prison to them that were bound. He came in fact as it was foretold concerning Him, that He might save His people from their sins. But before He began to teach, it was necessary that, as man, He should be prepared for His work. I call your special attention to the condescension of our Lord in coming here on purpose to care for the weak—to speak consoling and sustaining words to them, and also to the fact that before He performed that service,

He learned the sacred art from His Father. It seems, according to this verse, that His chief work was to speak words in season to the weary ones. How sweetly He has learned that blessed lesson, and how graciously He has turned it to practical account! Have not many of you found His words to be exceedingly reasonable to you when you have been weary? When you have been most depressed, have not the consolations of Christ been more precious to you than at any other time? Have you not, often, in seasons of sorrow, wiped away your tears at the sound of His cheering voice? As for you who have beat upon your breasts in deep contrition of heart because of the burden of your sin, has not Jesus removed your load from you when you have heard Him speak? We do well to treasure up every sentence that He has uttered, for there is not ever a word that has fallen from His dear lips, by way of promise and encouragement, but exactly suits our experience at some time or other! Whatever our distress or difficulty may be, He knows how to speak a word in season to everyone who is weary. To us He says, as He said to His disciples, "Let not your heart be troubled: you believe in God, believe also in Me." He knows, even to perfection, the blessed art of consoling the sad and sorrowful!

The most condescending part of this truth is that He received from His Father the power to deliver such words of consolation. He says, "The Lord God has given Me the tongue of the learned, that I should know how to speak a word in season to him that is weary." He became a disciple, sitting at His Father's feet. For 30 years, He was learning much in Joseph's carpenter's shop. Little do we know how much He learned there, but this much we do know, for Luke records the fact, "Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and man." And afterwards, when He entered upon His public work among men, He spoke with the tongue of the learned, saying to His disciples, "All things that I have heard of My Father, I have made known unto you." All through His time of teaching, He was still listening and learning. Notice the words in the 4th verse—"He wakens Me morning by morning, He wakens My ears to hear as the learned." The Lord Jesus was often up early in the morning—even when He had not been all night in prayer—that seemed to be the special season in which He communed with His Father. He first went and enjoyed most intimate fellowship with the Lord, refreshing Himself by talking of heavenly things, and receiving new strength for service. And then, with the dew of heaven fresh upon Him, He came forth and taught the people. They, very likely, were still sound asleep, but He was awake early, receiving renewed inspiration in prayer and fellowship. And then He came forth, fragrant with the savor of His union with His Father, and the sweet odor of His consecration was shed abroad among the sons of men through the blessed truths of God that flowed from His lips! I ask you again to think of this wonderful condescension, that He who clothes the heavens with blackness, and makes sackcloth their covering, should, for our sake, stoop to learn in His Father's school. "Though He were a Son, yet learned He obedience." And though He was "over all, God blessed forever," yet did He increase in wisdom and stature, as a boy, and as a man, and He condescended to be a learner that He might speak as the learned, and know how to utter words that would be in season to us when we are weary.

III. Now I want you to go down a step lower, to the next verse, in which we BEHOLD JESUS CHRIST AS THE SERVANT OF THE LORD—"The Lord God has opened My ears, and I was not rebellious, nor did I turn away." He stood upon earth, not like a prince but as the *servant* of God! He was made to be under the law and in all things to be subservient to the Father's will.

Notice that first of all, He speaks of Himself as being *prepared by grace*, for He says, "The Lord God has opened My ears," as if there had been a work worked upon Him to fit and prepare Him for His service. Yes, and so it was—and the same Spirit which rested upon Christ must also open our ears. It often amazes me that our Lord should have been willing to be baptized in Jordan even though that baptism was attended by the descent of the Holy Spirit upon Him, for, albeit that He was truly human, we know that He was also just as truly divine. Being found in fashion as a man, He received of God the Holy Spirit the same anointing which is now bestowed upon His people. God forbid that our tongue should ever speak a word concerning Him that should confound His Deity and His humanity, but, still, we do assert that He did need that the Spirit should rest upon Him, for, otherwise, the Spirit would not have come, for He never does anything unnecessarily. This is matchless condescension on His part—that He should, voluntarily, put Himself into such a condition of necessity for our sake!

Being thus prepared by grace, He was *consecrated in due form* so that He could say of Himself, "The Lord God has opened My ears." Brothers and sisters, there was never such an ear as Christ had! He

heard the faint whispers of His Father's voice. He never neglected the will of God, nor needed to be reminded of it, or to be pressed and persuaded to do it. See how different it is with us. Our ears are dull of hearing, or, if the precept is plain to our apprehension, we often do not yield obedience to it. There are some professors who know their duty—they have been wakened to know it morning by morning, but, nevertheless, they pretend not to be aware as to what is required of them. The sound of God's voice has only reached their outward ear—it has never penetrated as far as the inward ear—their heart has not perceived its divine force and power. But it was never so with our blessed Lord. Whatever His Father willed, He at once rejoiced to do. He could always say, "I always do the things that please Him."

That is the next point, for He not only heard His Father's voice, but *He was obedient to it in all things*. He says, "I was not rebellious." I cannot find anything in the life of Christ that even *looks* like rebellion. From the day when, as a child, He said to His parents, "Know you not that I must be about My Father's business?" till the hour when, on the cross, He cried, "It is finished!" He was always obedient to the will of God. "Being found in fashion as a man, He humbled Himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross." His obedience was absolutely perfect in all things. Think of this, and remember that this is the same Divine Being who clothes the heavens with blackness, and makes sack-cloth their covering when it so pleases Him!

In that obedience, *He was persevering through all trials*. He says that He did not turn away. Having commenced the work of saving men, He went through with it. He steadfastly set His face to go up to Jerusalem, though He knew that He was going to His death. He asked not that He might be delivered from completing the work that He had undertaken. There was a time when, in the horror of His spirit, He cried, "If it is possible, let this cup pass from Me," yet He never flinched from any suffering that was necessary to our redemption. It was human weakness that spoke for a moment, but His inmost soul was fully set upon the work of redeeming His people unto Himself. He set His face like a flint, and He would not turn back. Even in His direst agonies, His thoughts were all for others. He saved others—Himself He could not save—for it was impossible for Him to draw back from the work which He had once undertaken.

You know all this, beloved. I do but remind you of what has been familiar to you ever since you have believed in Jesus, but I pray you to think of it again and again, for it must have been a matter of the utmost amazement to the angels to see their Lord acting as a servant—to see Him, without whom was not anything made that was made, here below, dressed in a peasant's garb, and, as a humble, way-worn son of poverty, sitting on a well to talk to a poor sinful woman about the water of life. You know what lowly service He rendered, even to the washing of His disciples' feet. There was nothing too menial for Him to perform, yet, all the while, He was truly divine! Oh, this is a truth that needs to be meditated upon by the hour, together, and to be considered again, and yet again! This is one of the things which angels desire to look into, and we may try to look into it as long as we will, for, beyond and above all controversy, great is this mystery of godliness—*God manifest in the flesh!*

IV. The last step in this wondrous ladder is revealed to us in the next verse—"I gave My back to the smiters, and My cheeks to them that plucked off the hair: I hid not My face from shame and spitting." **BEHOLD THE MESSIAH AS THE PEERLESS SUFFERER.** And this Sufferer, on whom men spat, was the Eternal God!

Scripture sometimes speaks concerning Christ in such a way that fastidious critics seek to correct it. There is a hymn, by Dr. Watts, in which there is this verse—

*"Well might the sun in darkness hide,
And shut his glories in,
When God, the mighty Maker, died
For man, the creature's sin."*

It has been asked, "Did God really die?" No, for God cannot die, yet He who died was God. So, if there is confusion in your mind, it is the confusion of Holy Scripture, itself, for we read, "Feed the Church of GOD, which He has purchased *with His own blood*." He who purchased the Church with His own blood was, indeed, God. There are clever men who could draw up this particular truth of God as clearly as Athanasius drew up his Creed, and finish it up with a curse as loud as his, yet those men, nevertheless, might make a great blunder, while another, who might not speak exactly according to logic, would nevertheless hit the mark which they missed. How are we to speak upon such a wondrous theme as this? How *can* we speak upon it? It belongs not to mortal man to comprehend Deity—and if Deity compli-

cates its own incomprehensibility by taking into alliance with itself, our humanity, who is he that may not be made an offender for many and many a word, and yet, for all that, may not have offended against the truth? He who was a prisoner in Pilate's hall, accused of sedition, was the King of kings—He who was taken from that hall, and covered with an old red cloak, and set up in a chair as on a mimic throne—He who had a reed put into His right hand, was none other than the Almighty Lord who said, "Light be," and the light flashed forth out of the darkness! And He upon whose sacred shoulders fell the cruel flagellation of the Roman scourge till the plowers made deep scarlet furrows down His blessed back—He was that God who created, and who still sustains the heavens, and the earth, and all things that exist, or ever have existed! He was a suffering man, but, at the same time, He was the Son of God—and He is the Son of God, today—and God, the Son, too! As you think of His pain, couple with it the thought that He bore all that agony voluntarily that we might be saved—"I gave My back to the smiters, and My cheeks to them that plucked off the hair: I hid not My face from shame and spitting."

Even if God becomes incarnate, yet none can touch Him unless He permits them to do so, but Jesus said, "I lay down My life for the sheep...No man takes it from Me, but I lay it down of Myself." No man could have scarred that blessed back of His unless Christ had been willing, out of mighty love, to suffer thus on His people's behalf! None could have plucked His hair unless He had put Himself into the position to have it plucked, in order that He might redeem us from all our iniquities! Many a martyr has suffered much, but he could not avoid it, for he was bound, and he was not able to strike his foes, or to escape. But here sat One to be spit upon, who could, if He had willed it, have withered into nothingness all who stood about Him! With one glance of those eyes of His, had He but grown angry, as He well might have done, He could have burned up their very souls, for it was He who dried up the river, and who clothed the heavens with blackness, who was thus despitely used! Blessed be the majesty of that omnipotence which controlled omnipotence—that mighty love which bound the Godhead so that it came not to the rescue of the manhood of the suffering Savior!

In addition, however, to the pain, we are asked, in this verse, to particularly notice the contempt which the Savior endured. The plucking of His hair was a proof of the malicious contempt of His enemies, yet they went still further, and spit in His face! Spitting was regarded by Orientals, and, I suppose, by all of us, as the most contemptuous thing which one man could do to another, yet the vile soldiers gathered round Him, and spat upon Him! It is almost too terrible to think of or to speak of, but what must it have been for Jesus to endure it? I think you can realize the utter uselessness of human speech in trying to describe this scene. If the divine thought of the text could leap out among you, like some mystic fire, *then* you might feel it, but as for our poor words, they cannot convey the sacred flame to you. But there stands the mysterious truth. Enlarge upon it as we may, we can never fathom it, nor half fathom it—that He, the Creator of the heavens and the earth, here declares that He hid not His face from shame and spitting!

I must again point out to you the beautiful touch of voluntariness here—"I hid not My face." Our Savior did not turn away or seek to escape. If He had wished to do so, He could readily have done it, but He hid not His face from any of the contempt that the most malicious and wicked of men wished to heap upon Him. Even when He came to die, and they brought Him a drink which was customarily given to criminals—a strong, stupefying draught which would have somewhat relieved the pain—when He had tasted it, He would not drink it. The vinegar He did taste, but that wine mingled with myrrh He would not drink because He did not come here to escape any pain, or any shame that His people deserved to suffer. He must go through with it all to the bitter end, and, therefore, He will not, in any sense or way, endeavor to escape. "I hid not My face from shame and spitting." Oh, splendor of voluntary condescension, and of marvelous love on the part of Him before whom the nations are as a drop in the bucket—who takes up the isles as a very little thing, and to whom time is but a span compared with His own eternity! The express image of His Father, yet He bows to shame and spitting! Blessed be His holy name forever and forever!

I will close when I have noticed three combinations which the verses of my text will make. I will but mention them, and ask you to meditate upon them at your leisure.

First of all, put the first and the last together, as I have already done—"Behold, at My rebuke I dry up the sea, I make the rivers a wilderness: their fish stink because there is no water, and die for thirst. I clothe the heavens with blackness, and I make sackcloth their covering...I gave My back to the smiters,

and My cheeks to them that plucked off the hair: I hid not My face from shame and spitting.” Those verses together show you the full ability of Christ to save. Here we have *the God and the Sufferer*. What a wondrous Christ He is—divine, and therefore able—human, and struck and suffering, and therefore, full of compassion! “It behooved Him in all things to be made like unto His brethren.” And see how like His brethren He is, yet He is God! The ladder that Jacob saw had its foot upon the earth, and its top reached to heaven. It would have been of no use if its foot had not been upon the earth, for what man on earth could have climbed it? It would have been of no use if, with its foot upon the earth, it had not reached to heaven—there would not have been any connection, after all. Behold, then, in the humanity of Christ, how the foot of this ladder rests upon the earth, and see, in His Deity, how the top reaches to heaven! Happy are the feet that tread the rungs of this celestial ladder—they shall climb into eternal rest! Glory, O believers, in the divine and human person of your Lord, and rest in Him in confidence and peace!

Now put the two middle verses together—“The Lord God has given Me the tongue of the learned,” and so on. And then, “The Lord God has opened My ears, and I was not rebellious.” Here you have *the Teacher and the Servant*, and the two together make up this truth of God—that Christ teaches us, not only with words, but with His life. What a wonderful Teacher He is, who Himself learned the lessons which He would have us learn! Let us take His yoke upon us, and learn of Him. Let us study His precepts, but also imitate His example. His track I see—I have not merely a map of the road, but His footsteps show me which way I am to go. Watch in all things that you follow Christ, for He still says to His redeemed ones, “Follow Me.”

Now put the whole text together, and think of Jesus Christ in all those various views which I have so feebly set before you, and I think the result will be—at least, to God’s people—that they will say, “This God shall be our God forever and ever! And it shall be our delight to do His bidding at all times.” It is a high honor to serve God—and Christ is God! It is a great thing to be the servant of a wise teacher—and Christ has the tongue of the learned! It is a very sweet thing to walk in the steps of a perfect Exemplar—and Christ is just that! And, last and best of all, it is delightful to live for Him who suffered and died on our behalf. Those wounds of His have marked us as His own. That scourge, those bleeding shoulders, and that face so marred, have won us altogether to Him, and, henceforth, for us to live shall be Christ, that to die may be eternal gain! The Lord grant that it may be so, for Jesus’ sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON: *ISAIAH 53.*

This is one of the chapters that lie at the very heart of the Scriptures. It is the very Holy of holies of Divine Writ. Let us, therefore, take off our shoes, for the place whereon we stand is especially holy ground.

This fifty-third of Isaiah is a Bible in miniature. It is the condensed essence of the gospel. I thought that our beloved friend, Mr. Moody, answered with extreme wisdom a question that was put to him when he came to London some years ago. A number of ministers had come together to meet Mr. Moody, and they began to discuss various points, and to ask what were the evangelist’s views upon certain doctrines. At last, one brother said, “Would Mr. Moody kindly give us his creed? Is it in print?” In a moment the good man replied, “Certainly. My creed is in print, it is the 53rd of Isaiah.” It was a splendid reply. How could a man come closer to the very essentials of the faith than by saying, “My creed is in the 53rd of Isaiah”? I trust that many of you, dear friends, cannot only say, “This is my creed,” but also, “This is the foundation upon which I have built all my hopes for time and for eternity. This is the source of my sweetest consolation. This is the sun that makes my day, and the star that gilds my night.” In these 12 verses there is everything that we need to teach us the way of salvation. God, the infinitely-wise Teacher, has revealed to us, within this short compass, all that is necessary to bring peace to troubled spirits.

First, the prophets speak—

Isaiah 53:1. *Who has believed our report, and to whom is the arm of the LORD revealed?*

This is a cause for sorrow upon sorrow—for the prophets to have God’s message to deliver, and yet for men to reject it—for them to have to tell it, but to tell it in vain. Yet, dear friends, this has been the

lot of some of God's most faithful servants in all ages, and we must not complain if it should be our lot, also. I should not have voluntarily chosen to be Jeremiah, the weeping prophet, yet, I think not one of God's servants deserves greater honor than he does, for he continued to bravely deliver his Master's message even when none believed him, and all rejected his testimony. Isaiah links himself with all the other prophets who had been rejected, and he says, "Who has believed our report? And to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed?"

2. *For He shall grow up before Him as a tender plant, and as a root out of a dry ground.*

This is why Christ was not received by those to whom He came—and why the testimony of the prophets concerning Christ was rejected by those to whom it was delivered—because He was not revealed to them as a towering palm tree, or widely-spreading cedar, but, like the humble yet fruitful vine, He was "as a tender plant, and as a root out of a dry ground."

2. *He has no form nor comeliness; and when we shall see Him, there is no beauty that we should desire Him.*

To carnal eyes there was no apparent beauty in Christ—nothing of the aesthetic, as men call it, and nothing of the pompous, nothing outwardly attractive. He came here in the utmost simplicity. Remember the angel's message to the shepherds—"And this shall be a sign unto you; you shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger." There was nothing of pomp or show about Him—"no form nor comeliness." He made no display of scholarship, no presence of deep philosophy, nothing that the carnal mind hunts after. But the all-glorious Deity, revealed in human form, spoke simple but sublime truth, and, therefore men rejected Him.

3. *He is despised and rejected of men.*

This was written long before He came to earth—"He is despised and rejected of men" and, truly, though He is now in heaven, I need not alter the tense of the verb. I do not say, "He *was* despised," though that would be true, for, alas, it is still true, "He is despised and rejected of men"!

3. *A man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief.*

What an amazing expression that is! Our blessed Lord had made the acquaintance of grief. He knew it, understood it, was familiar with it—slept with it—rose with it—walked the livelong day with it, and, therefore, my brothers and sisters, He knows your grief, and He can meet it! He is such a master Comforter because He was such a mighty Sufferer.

3. *And we hid, as it were, our faces from Him.*

Shame upon us that we, who have been redeemed by Him—we, who He has loved from eternity—we, who now delight in Him—"we hid, as it were, our faces from Him."

3. *He was despised, and we esteemed Him not.*

Even we, to whom now He is all our salvation, and all our desire—we, unto whom He is now most precious—"we esteemed Him not."

4. *Surely He has borne our griefs.*

Can all of you say this? Can every one of us unite in the reading of this sentence, "Surely, He has borne *our* griefs"? If you have truly learned that He bore your griefs, you may indeed bless His name, for it is the best news that ever reached your ears! Go and tell it to your fellow sufferers—"Surely He has borne our griefs."

4. *And carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem Him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted.*

They thought that God had smitten Him, and so He had, but they wrongly supposed that there was something of sin in Him that caused God to strike Him, whereas He was "holy, harmless, undefiled," and He was only stricken and smitten because He was bearing the sins of His people.

5. *But He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon Him; and with His stripes we are healed.*

Milton, Shakespeare, Cowper and the whole of the poets that were ever or are, all put together, could not write four sentences like those in this verse! There is more meaning, more deep philosophy, more music, more to charm and satisfy the human heart in those four sentences, than in the sweetest of merely human language. Let me read them again—and as I do so, let everyone of us take each line to himself—"But He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon Him; and with His stripes we are healed."

6, 7. *All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned everyone to his own way; and the LORD has laid on Him the iniquity of us all. He was oppressed, and He was afflicted, yet He opened not His mouth: He was brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so He opened not His mouth.*

These words have been the means of the conversion of multitudes. You recollect in the Acts of the Apostles, what that rich Ethiopian said to Philip when he read these words—“I pray you, of whom speaks the prophet this? of himself, or of some other man?” If we read this chapter over and over again, and so read it as to find Christ, it will, indeed, be a blessed thing for us!

8, 9. *He was taken from prison and from judgment: and who shall declare His generation? For He was cut off out of the land of the living: for the transgression of My people was He stricken. And He made His grave with the wicked, and with the rich in His death; because He had done no violence, neither was any deceit in His mouth.*

All that He suffered was not because He was guilty, but because He was innocent! The only crime which I have ever heard rightly laid to His charge is that which the poet sweetly describes as “found guilty of excess of love.” It was indeed so. He loved us beyond all measure, and because of that love He died for us.

10. *Yet it pleased the LORD to bruise Him; He has put Him to grief.*

The Lord was at the back of it all. Not Pilate, nor Herod, nor Judas, nor Jew, nor Roman, but Jehovah bruised Him!

10. *When You shall make His soul an offering for sin, He shall see His seed. He shall prolong His days, and the pleasure of the LORD shall prosper in His hand.*

Here the strain changes altogether. From the depths of woe, we begin to rise with hopes of a glad result of all the suffering, and sorrow, and shame. Glory be to the name of Christ, He has a mighty right hand into which God has placed that work which is according to His own good pleasure—even the work of saving guilty men—and that work, in His prolonged days, until the end of time, shall prosper in the hand of the Christ of God!

11. *He shall see of the travail of His soul, and shall be satisfied.*

Christ did not die at haphazard, as some seem to think. A sure and glorious result must come of “the travail of His soul.” Such precious blood as His could not fall to the ground at a chance. Whatever the design of His cross was, it shall be accomplished. I could imagine failures in creation, if so it pleased God, but never in redemption!

11. *By His knowledge shall My righteous servant justify many; for He shall bear their iniquities.*

That is the top and bottom of it all—“He shall bear their iniquities.” The red line of substitution runs through the whole chapter.

12. *Therefore will I divide Him a portion with the great, and He shall divide the spoil with the strong; because He has poured out His soul unto death: and He was numbered with the transgressors; and He bore the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors.*

HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—282, 269.

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