

THE DAMAGE WROUGHT BY SIN

"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." Isaiah 53:5.

When a disease is mild the remedy is meager. If we have a mild view of human sin, we shall have a very meager view of the cross of Christ. The disease of sin has never been mild, and that is why the Bible declares that the remedy for it is not meager. This profound chapter of Isaiah 53 sets forth two things, namely, the sickness of the soul, which is not mild, and the sufferings of the Saviour, which are not meager.

I. The Sickness Of The Soul.

Let us focus our attention upon the sickness of the soul, so that we may see sin as God sees it; for only as we see sin as God sees it shall we understand in any measure the remedy which God has provided for it. Our text contains a very inclusive statement of the damage wrought by sin.

1. A Broken Law.

That is the first part of the damage wrought by your sin and mine. We have broken God's holy law. This damage needs to be repaired, and only the sufferings of our Saviour could repair that damage. "He was wounded for our transgressions." Transgression means stepping or going over the mark. Man cannot break God's law and go scot-free. There is another word used in the New Testament which is akin to this word "transgression" and that is the one which means to fall short of the mark. The former is going across the standard and the latter is failure to reach the standard. These two words give us a double picture of our failure in the sight of God. What God has forbidden each of us has done, and what God has required each of us has failed to do. Each of us in honesty must admit, I have transgressed, I have fallen short, I have broken God's holy law.

How serious is the damage in your life? There are three splendid statements of the law of God in the Bible which are tied together so delightfully. The first is the ten commandments in Exodus 20, where God's law is stated negatively in terms of "Thou shalt not." If we would judge ourselves by His law, we would be forced to admit that we have transgressed. Secondly, in the Sermon on the Mount, Matthew 5, 6 and 7, God's law is stated positively in terms of what we should do and how we should live. Here the negative statements of the old law in Exodus 20 are underlined by positive requirements. If we would examine our lives in the light of that positive requirement, we would be made aware of the fact that we have fallen short. Thirdly, in I Corinthians 13 God's holy law is stated in terms of Christian love, for love is the fulfilling of the law. Set your life alongside I Corinthians 13 and you will realize that you have transgressed and fallen short.

At the heart of all law-breaking there is rebellion. I want my way, I want to go as far as I like, and I refuse to go beyond what I want. Thus I transgress beyond, and I fall short before the standard of God's holy law and will. Behind all our failures is the refusal to let God have His way, and to acknowledge that He knows best, and to do what He has prescribed for me. This is the damage wrought by sin -- a broken law.

Isaiah prophesied that the Son of God would be "wounded for our transgressions." According to the definition of the surgeon, wounds are divisions of the soft parts of the body by a mechanical force applied externally. They are classified as contused, lacerated, penetrating, perforating and incised. It is remarkable that in the simple statement of our text, "He was wounded," there is included each of these characteristics.

A contused wound is produced by a blunt instrument. "They took the reed, and smote him on the head" (Matthew 27:30). A lacerated wound is produced by a tearing instrument. Laceration of the tissues was the result of scourging. "Then Pilate therefore took Jesus, and scourged him" (John 19:1). A penetrating wound is a deep one caused by a sharp-pointed instrument. Such wounds were produced by the crown of thorns which was pressed down upon His head by the soldiers, and they were deepened by the blow of the reed when they smote Him. A perforating wound is one which pierces through, as when the spikes were driven between the bones in His hands and feet. "They pierced my hands and my feet" (Psalm 22:16). An incised wound is a cut produced by a sharp-edged instrument. "But one of the soldiers with a spear pierced his side, and forthwith came there out blood and water" (John 19:34), the water flowing from the pericardium and the blood flowing from the heart. This wound was inflicted by the experienced hand of the Roman soldier, to make certain that every vestige of life had been extinguished. It was positive proof to all observers that death had actually occurred, as well as a fulfillment of the scripture, "They shall look on him whom they pierced."

All wounds are not the same. Some are not serious; they are only surface wounds and they heal quickly. Even if they are inflicted by hostile hands and malicious intent, they cause but temporary pain, and within a short time every trace of them has disappeared. Other wounds are far more serious. Some of them are deadly. They are inflicted with the purpose of trying to kill. Before death comes the victim often suffers intense pain and excruciating agony. Some seem to take delight in the suffering of others, subjecting them to extreme torture before putting them to death.

Christ was wounded for our transgressions. His wounds tell us about the overwhelming and crushing weight of sin. They also speak to us about love. If you want to know the limits to which love will go, look to the wounds of Christ on Calvary. Can you think of the wounds of Christ for your transgressions without being affected and moved deeply?

A Twisted Character.

"He was bruised for our iniquities." Iniquity is guilt which fastens upon the soul because of transgression. Like the English word wrong, it means wrung or twisted, for sin makes the character crooked. "Is he not rightly named Jacob, crooked, twisted? He took away my Birthright, and now he has taken away my blessing." Call him Jacob, that is his name, it fits him well, he is crooked." You do not enter into the full bliss and blessing of full forgiveness by piling up sin that God may pile up grace, but it is important that you know what you are.

Was it not this which tugged at the heart of Simon Peter when, falling down at the knees of Christ, he cried, "Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord"? Was it not just the same at the heart of the apostle Paul when he wrote, "Mine iniquities have taken such hold of me that I am unable to keep the commandments of the law?"

to look up?" Was it not exactly the same, though in a more profound utterance that Peter or the Psalmist ever gave, when Paul wrote, "When I would do good, evil is present with me. O wretched man that I am!?" It is not only what we have done, but what we have become by doing. Not only do we have to confess, "Father, I have sinned," but we are bound to add, "and am no more worthy to be called thy son." Oh, how extensive is the damage wrought by sin!

Christ "was bruised for our iniquities." All bruises are not the same. Some bruises are on the outside only. The word which is used here for bruises means that Christ was crushed under the assaults of the enemy. So brutal were their attacks that His body was crushed and broken. He was crushed by the heavy burden of our sins, which He took upon Himself. We lived in iniquity and He bore the stroke for it. His life was crushed out under the weight of our iniquities.

3. A Shattered Peace.

"The chastisement of our peace was upon him." The man who knows not God through Christ never knows peace with God. It was not only to heal and to bring the peace of God to the sinner, that Jesus Christ was wounded for our transgressions and bore the chastisement of our peace; but it was to maintain the peace of God in the life of the saved man that He bore the chastisement of our peace.

Chastisement is usually administered in love, to correct a person. Frequently parents have to correct their children. Christ did not need any correction. What Christ bore in our behalf was punishment. His sufferings were penal. He bore the penalty of sin. All punishment is not the same. It is not always the same in severity. It is not always the same in form. It is not always the same in purpose. No punishment could ever have been more severe than that of Christ. "The punishment which brings us peace was upon Him." The purpose of the punishment which He bore was to bring peace to us.

This word "peace" can be understood in two senses. In the narrower sense it means the opposite of enmity. Fallen people and the offended God were at enmity. Christ has brought us peace. He has restored the right relationship. He made reconciliation. But, this reconciliation is the foundation of so many other blessings. Peace brings with it real joy. In a wider sense peace with God gives us the joy of forgiveness, the favor of the Lord, the gift of His Spirit and the assurance of eternal life. The word "peace," therefore, can be taken to include all the blessings, temporal and eternal, which we enjoy. Moreover, it is well to remind you that all of these are the fruit of Christ's suffering and death.

Some of us are faced with the fact that in our experience there is a shattered peace. A lovely peace once filled our hearts, for there was nothing between our souls and the Saviour. Since that time something has intervened and we know what the hymn-writer meant when he wrote, "Where is the blessedness I knew when first I saw the Lord?" You have known it, and enjoyed it, and thanked God for it, and lived in the bliss of it, and served in the power of it, but now you do not have and enjoy that peace. The peace is shattered and gone. Shattered peace is the mark of broken fellowship.

You know how it is between yourself and a friend. You do not look one another in the face when things are not right between you. You stare anywhere and gaze into space rather than look straight in the face. When the peace that flooded your soul in unclouded fellowship with God was broken, you no longer see His face. Has your peace been shattered by the domination of the flesh? The carnal mind is enmity against God. Perhaps your peace has been shattered by the things of the world, for as James has told us, "There is no peace between the things of the world and God." Has the world been dropping anchor in your heart? Then do not be surprised if the smile of God has drifted from your soul.

4. A Gaping Wound.

"With his stripes we are healed." Sin inflicts a wound which only the wounded hand of Christ can heal. If we have set our feet on the Jericho road which leads down from our appointed place in Jerusalem, let us not be surprised if we have fallen among thieves, who have stripped us, wounded us and departed from us. I wonder what your wound is, and where it is? Perhaps your wound is in your feet: you cannot walk. Like the lame man you have to be carried, a constant burden to the church. Perhaps your wound is in your hands: you cannot work. It has been a long time since you lifted a finger in the service of Christ. Once you lifted ten fingers, but now you do not even lift one, for your hands are wounded, and you cannot work for Christ. Perhaps the wound is in your eyes: you cannot see, for Satan has thrown dust in your eyes, to blind your vision of Christ. What you need is that Christ should touch your eyes afresh, as He touched the eyes of the blind man in the long ago. Perhaps your wound is in your lips: you cannot speak. You are like the deaf-mute who cannot speak because he cannot hear. You never hear the voice of the Saviour and the world never hears your voice of testimony. The wound is in your lips: they are sealed now. Perhaps your wound is in your spirit. Once you journeyed like a motor car in good condition and under complete control. Now the brakes have gone, and the steering is all out of place. Now you are just puffing out a lot of black smoke to the annoyance of the other users of the road. Your spirit is wounded, and you are not under control. Perhaps the wound is in your heart: you have left your first love, and there is a gaping wound. "If one member suffer, all the members suffer with it." What a picture of the damage wrought by sin, and of the sinner thus damaged. Thus many are described in terms of a broken law, a twisted character, a shattered peace and a gaping wound.

II. The Sufferings Of The Saviour.

Here we shall see the remedy for the tremendous damage that has been wrought

1. "He was wounded for our transgressions."

In the literal Hebrew that means Christ was pierced when He was slain by violence. In Psalm 22:16 we are told, "They pierced my hands and my feet." Because I broke God's law, they pierced His hands and His feet, and thrust the spear into His side, and the crown of thorns tore that lovely brow. Oh, horrid transgressions that would do this to my Lord.

2. "He was bruised for our iniquities."

Literally the word is "crushed." All bruises are not the same. Some bruises are on the outside only. When Christ was "bruised for our

iniquities," it was not a bit of a bruise such as one of us would get if a hand were knocked against something. That is very light and simple, and makes only a dark spot for a brief while. The word which is used here means that Christ was crushed under the assaults of the enemy. So brutal were their attacks that His body was crushed and broken. No wonder He staggered under the weight of the cross. It was not just the weight of the wood of the cross that made Him stagger, for when that was passed to another, the other carried it. Was Simon stronger than Christ? Oh, no. That lovely form that bowed in physical suffering was bowed lower because He was crushed by the heavy burden of our sins, which He took upon Himself. His life was crushed out under the weight of our iniquities.

3. "The chastisement of our peace was upon him."

The chastisement He bore was something we shall never know, for He took it from us and bore it all alone. Christ took the broken law and nailed it to the cross. Christ bore the chastisement which should have fallen upon us.

4. "With his stripes we are healed."

He was not only beaten, but scourged also. The scourging left "the stripemarks" on His back. He willingly submitted His back to His enemies. He could have destroyed them, had He so desired. He willingly gave His back to the smiters. He permitted the cruel scourging. Every stroke of the scourge, which was made of leather cords and weighted with jagged pieces of bone and metal, ripped open the quivering flesh and drew blood. Christ's being wounded and our being healed go together. Wounding, bruising and chastising were experienced by Him in order that healing might be known by us now and forever.