

THE SUFFERING SERVANT

Isaiah 52:13 - 53:12

Note: Scholars generally agree that the well-known passage, Isaiah 53, actually begins with verse 13 of chapter 52. It is the fourth of the four "Servant Songs" in Isaiah (42:1-7; 49:1-6; 50:4-9; and 52:13-53:12. (Ken Morgan)

"Behold, my servant shall deal prudently; he shall be exalted and extolled and be very high." (Isa. 52:13)

Behold, my servant shall have prosperous success. After having spoken of the restoration of the Church, Isaiah passes on to Christ, in whom all things are gathered together. Some explain יִשְׁכִּיל (yāshkīl) to mean shall "deal prudently;" but, as it is immediately added that *he shall be exalted*, the context appears to demand that we shall rather understand it to denote "prosperous success," for שָׁכַל (shākāl) also signifies "to be prosperous." He speaks, therefore, of the prosperity of the Church; and as this was not visible, he draws their attention to the supreme King, by whom all things shall be restored, and bids them wait for him. And here we ought carefully to observe the contrasts which the Prophet lays down; for the mightiness of this king whom the Lord will exalt is contrasted by him with the wretched and debased condition of the people, who were almost in despair. He promises that this king will be the head of the people, so that under him as the leader the people shall flourish, though they be now in a state of the deepest affliction and wretchedness; because he shall have a prosperous course.

He calls Christ "his Servant," on account of the office committed to him. Christ ought not to be regarded as a private individual, but as holding the office to which the Father has appointed him, to be leader of the people and restorer of all things; so that whatever he affirms concerning himself we ought to understand as belonging also to us. Christ has been given to us, and therefore to us also belongs his ministry, for the Prophet might have said, in a single word, that Christ will be exalted and will be highly honored; but, by giving to him the title of "Servant," he means that he will be exalted for our sake.

"As many were astonished at thee, (his visage was so marred more than any man, and his form more than the sons of men;)" (Isa. 52:14)

As many. He makes use of an anticipation; for the exalted state of Christ was not visible at first sight, and on this pretense it might be rejected. On this account, he informs them that Christ must first be rejected and humbled, and anticipates that doubt which might have arisen from his singularly debased and unseemly condition. As if he had said, "There is no reason why men should be shocked at that unseemliness and disgrace which will be speedily followed by eternal happiness."

So marred by men. I have translated כֵּן (kēn) as meaning so; for it is a mistake to

suppose that it opens the second part of the comparison. I consider מַאִישׁ (*mēish*) to mean "by men;" for I do not consider מִן (*mem*) to be a particle denoting comparison, as others explain it; that is "more than" men, or "beyond" what is usually found among men; but I adopt a simpler meaning, which is, that Christ was disfigured among men, or that his beauty was defaced by the perverse judgment of men.

Were amazed. This "amazement" is considered by some commentators to denote the astonishment with which men were seized on account of the miracles performed by Christ, and next, that, when he must come to the cross, he was immediately rejected by them. But they have not caught the Prophet's meaning; for he says that Christ will be such that all men will be shocked at him. He came into the world so as to be everywhere despised; his glory lay hid under the humble form of the flesh; for though a majesty worthy of "the only-begotten Son of God" (John 1:14) shone forth in him, yet the greater part of men did not see it, but, on the contrary, they despised that deep abasement which was the veil or covering of his glory.

The cause of their astonishment was this, that he dwelt among men without any outward show; and the Jews did not think that the Redeemer would come in that condition or attire. When he came to be crucified, their horror was greatly increased. Paul describes this humiliation and subsequent exaltation of Christ when he says, "Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to make himself equal to God, but emptied himself, taking upon him the form of a servant, made in the likeness of man, and found in fashion as a man, humbled himself, being made obedient even to death, and the death of the cross. Wherefore also God hath raised him to the highest exaltation, and hath given him a name which is above every name; that at the name of Jesus should bow every knee of those that are in heaven and in earth and in hell; and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father." (Philip. 2:6-11.) It was therefore necessary that Christ should first be humbled and covered with shame, and that exaltation to which he was about to be raised was not all at once visible; but the shame of the cross was followed by a glorious resurrection attended by the highest honor.

"So shall he sprinkle many nations. The kings shall shut their mouths at him: for that which had not been told them shall they see, and that which they had not heard shall they consider." (Isa. 52:15)

So shall he sprinkle many nations. Some explain it, "Shall cause to drop," which they take to be a metaphorical expression for "to speak." But since נָזַח (*nāzāh*) signifies "to sprinkle," and is commonly found to have this sense in Scripture, I choose rather to adopt this interpretation. He means that the Lord will pour out his Word over "many nations." He next mentions the effect of doctrine, that *kings shall shut their mouth*, that is, in token of astonishment, but a different kind of astonishment from that which he formerly described. Men "shut their mouths" and are struck with bewilderment when the vast magnitude of the subject is such that it cannot be expressed, and that it exceeds all power

of language.

What they have not heard. He means that this astonishment will not arise merely from Christ's outward appearance, but, on the contrary, from the preaching of the Gospel; for, though he had risen from the dead, yet all would have thought that he was still a dead man if the glory of his resurrection had not been proclaimed. By the preaching of the gospel, therefore, were revealed those things which formerly had neither been seen nor heard; for this doctrine was conveyed to kings and nations that were very far off, and even to the very ends of the world.

Paul quotes this passage and shows that it was fulfilled in his ministry, and glories on this ground, that he proclaimed the doctrine of the Gospel to those who had never heard of it at all. (Rom. 15:21.) This belongs to the office of an Apostle, and not to the office of every minister. He means that the kingdom of Christ is more extensive than merely to embrace Judea, and that it is not now confined within such narrow limits; for it was proper that it should be spread through all nations, and extended even to the ends of the world. The Jews had heard something of Christ from the Law and the Prophets, but to the Gentiles he was altogether unknown; and hence it follows that these words relate strictly to the Gentiles.

They shall understand. By this word he shows that faith consists in certainty and clear understanding. Wherever, therefore, knowledge of this kind is wanting [lacking], faith is unquestionably wanting. Hence it is evident how idle is the notion of the Papists about implicit faith, which is nothing else than gross ignorance, or rather a mere creature of imagination.

"Who will believe our report, and to whom has the arm of Jehovah been revealed?" (Isa. 53:1)

This division, or rather dismemberment, of the chapter ought to be disregarded; for it ought to have begun with the thirteenth verse of the former chapter, and these words ought to be connected with what goes before. Here the Prophet pauses, as it were, in the middle of his discourse; for, having formerly said that the name of Christ would be everywhere proclaimed and would be revealed to unknown nations, and yet would have so mean an aspect that it might appear as if these things were fabulous, he breaks off his discourse and exclaims that "Nobody will believe those things." At the same time he describes his grief, that men are so unbelieving as to reject their salvation.

Thus, it is a holy complaint made by one who wished that Christ should be known by all, and who, notwithstanding of this, sees that there are few who believe the Gospel, and therefore groans and cries out, "Who hath believed our report?" Let us therefore groan and complain along with the Prophet, and let us be distressed with grief when we see that our labor is unprofitable, and let us complain before God; for godly ministers must be deeply affected if they wish to perform their work faithfully. Isaiah declares that there

will be few that submit to the Gospel of Christ; for, when he exclaims, "Who will believe the preaching?" he means that of those who hear the Gospel scarcely a hundredth person will be a believer.

Nor does he merely speak of himself alone, but like one who represents all teachers. Although therefore God gives many ministers, few will hold by their doctrine; and what then will happen when there are no ministers? Do we wonder that the greatest blindness reigns there? If cultivated ground is unfruitful, what shall we look for from a soil that is uncultivated and barren? And yet it does not detract anything from the Gospel of Christ that there are few disciples who receive it; nor does the small number of believers lessen its authority or obscure its infinite glory; but, on the contrary, the loftiness of the mystery is a reason why it scarcely obtains credit in the world. It is reckoned to be folly because it exceeds all human capacities.

To whom (literally, on whom) is the arm of Jehovah revealed? In this second clause he points out the reason why the number of believers will be so small. It is because no man can come to God but by an extraordinary revelation of the Spirit. To suppose that by the word "Arm" Christ is meant, is, in my opinion, a mistake. It assigns the cause why there are so few that believe; and that is, that they cannot attain it by the sagacity of their own understanding. This is a remarkable passage, and is quoted by John and Paul for that purpose. "Though Jesus," said John, "had performed many miracles in their presence, they believed not in him, that the saying of Isaiah the Prophet might be fulfilled, which he spake, "Lord, who hath believed our report, and to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed?" (John 12:37, 38.) And Paul says, "but they do not all believe the Gospel; for Isaiah saith, Lord, who hath believed our report?" (Rom. 10:16.) Both of them declare that there will be no reason to wonder if that which was long ago foretold shall happen; and they do so for the purpose of removing offense which might have arisen from the revolt of that nation, which ought to have acknowledged Christ but obstinately resisted him.

Isaiah does not include merely the men of his own time, but all posterity to the end of the world; for, so long as the reign of Christ shall endure, this must be fulfilled; and therefore believers ought to be fortified by this passage against such a scandal. These words refute the ignorance of those who think that faith is in the power of every person, because preaching is common to all. Though it is sufficiently evident that all are called to salvation, yet the Prophet expressly states that the external voice is of no avail if it be not accompanied by a special gift of the Spirit. And whence proceeds the difference but from the secret election of God, the cause of which is hidden in himself?

"Yet he shall grow up before him as a twig, and as a root out of a desert land. He hath no form nor beauty; we will see him, and his countenance is not such that we should desire him." (Isa. 53:2)

This verse refers to what was formerly said, that Christ will at first have no magnificence or outward display among men; but that before God he will nevertheless be highly exalted, and will be held in estimation. Hence we see that we must not judge of the glory of Christ

by human view, but must discern by faith what is taught us concerning him by the Holy Scriptures; and therefore the phrase "before him" is here contrasted with human senses, which cannot comprehend that lofty greatness. Almost the same metaphor was used by the Prophet, (Is. 11:1,) when he said, "A branch shall spring out of the stock of Jesse;" for the house of David was like a dry stock, in which no vigor and no comeliness was visible, and on that account is there called not a royal house but "Jesse," a name which bore no celebrity. Only the Prophet adds here,--

In a desert land; by which he means that Christ's power of springing up will not be derived from the sap of the earth, as in trees, but contrary to the ordinary course of nature. They who in this passage speculate about the virgin Mary, and suppose that she is called a desert land because she conceived by the Holy Ghost and not by ordinary generation, speak beside the purpose; for the present subject is not the birth of Christ but his whole reign. He says that it will resemble a twig springing out of a dry soil, which looks as if it could never become large. If we take into account the whole method of establishing his kingdom, and the agency which he employed, and how feeble were its beginnings, and how many foes it encountered, we shall easily understand that all these things were fulfilled as they had been foretold. What sort of men were the Apostles that they should subdue so many kings and nations by the sword of the word? Are they not justly compared to offshoots? Thus the Prophet shows by what means the kingdom of Christ must be set up and established, that we may not judge of it by human conceptions.

He hath no form nor comeliness. This must be understood to relate not merely to the person of Christ, who was despised by the world and was at length condemned to a disgraceful death; but to his whole kingdom, which in the eyes of men had no beauty, no comeliness, no splendor, which, in short, had nothing that could direct or captivate the hearts of men to it by its outward show. Although Christ arose from the dead, yet the Jews always regarded him as a person who had been crucified and disgraced, in consequence of which they haughtily disdained him.

"Despised and rejected among men, a man of sorrows, acquainted with infirmity. We hid, as it were, the face from him; and we did not at all esteem him." (Isa. 53:3)

This verse conveys the same statement as the preceding, namely, that Christ will be "rejected" by men, in consequence of their beholding in him nothing but grief and infirmity. These things needed to be often repeated to the Jews, that they might not form a false conception of Christ and his kingdom; for, in order to know his glory we must proceed from his death to his resurrection. Many stumble at his death, as if he had been vanquished and overwhelmed by it; but we ought to contemplate his power and majesty in the resurrection; and if any one choose to begin with the resurrection, he will not follow the order laid down by the Prophet nor comprehend the Lord's strength and power.

We hid the face from him. Not without reason does he use the first person, *we*; for he declares that there will be a universal judgment; and no man will ever be able to comprehend it by his own understanding till the Lord correct and form him anew by his

Spirit. Although he appears chiefly to censure the Jews, who ought not to have so haughtily rejected the Son of God promised and offered to them, and therefore reckons himself as one of the number, because he was an individual belonging to that nation; yet let us learn from this passage that all men are accursed and condemned for ingratitude in despising Christ, because they do not even consider him to be worthy of being looked at but turn away their eyes as if from something detestable.

"Surely our sicknesses he bare; and our sorrows he carried; and we thought him to be smitten, wounded by God and afflicted." (Isa. 53:4)

The particle אָכֵן (*ākēn*) is not only a strong affirmation, but is likewise equivalent to *for*, and assigns a reason of something which went before, and which might have been thought new and strange; for it is a monstrous thing that he to whom God has given supreme authority over all the creatures should be thus trampled on and scorned; and if the reason were not assigned, it would have been universally pronounced to be ridiculous. The reason, therefore, of the weakness, pains, and shame of Christ is that "he carried our sicknesses."

Matthew quotes this prediction after having related that Christ cured various diseases; though it is certain that he was appointed not to cure bodies, but rather to cure souls; for it is of spiritual disease that the Prophet intends to speak. but in the miracles which Christ performed in curing bodies, he gave a proof of the salvation which he brings to our souls. That healing had therefore a more extensive reference than to bodies, because he was appointed to be the physician of souls; and accordingly Matthew applies to the outward sign what belonged to the truth and reality.

We thought him to be smitten, wounded by God, and afflicted. In this second clause he shows how great was the ingratitude and wickedness of the people, who did not know why Christ was so severely afflicted, but imagined that God smote him on account of his own sins, though they knew that he was perfectly innocent, and his innocence was attested even by his judge. (Matt. 27:24; Luke 23:4, 14, 22; John 18:38.) Since therefore they know that an innocent man is punished for sins which he did not commit, why do they not think that it indicated some extraordinary excellence to exist in him? But because they see him wounded and despised, they do not inquire about the cause, and from the event alone, as fools are wont to do, they pronounce judgment. Accordingly, Isaiah complains of the wicked judgment of men in not considering the cause of Christ's heavy afflictions; and especially he deplores the dulness of his own nation, because they thought that God was a deadly enemy of Christ, and took no account of their own sins, which were to be expiated in this manner.

"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." (Isa. 53:5)

He again repeats the cause of Christ's great afflictions in order to meet the scandal which might have arisen from it. The spectacle of the cross alienates many persons from Christ, when they consider what is presented to their eyes and do not observe the object to be accomplished. But all offense is removed when we know that by his death our sins have been expiated, and salvation has been obtained for us.

The chastisement of our peace. Some think that this is called "the chastisement of peace," on account of men being careless and stupified amidst their afflictions, and therefore that it was necessary that Christ should suffer. Others view "peace" as relating to the consciences, that is, that Christ suffered in order that we might have peaceful consciences; as Paul says that, "being justified by faith through Christ, we have peace with God." (Rom. 5:1.) But I take it to denote simply reconciliation. Christ was the price of "our chastisement," that is, of the chastisement which was due to us. Thus the wrath of God, which had been justly kindled against us, was appeased; and through the Mediator we have obtained "peace," by which we are reconciled.

We ought to draw from this a universal doctrine, namely, that we are reconciled to God by free grace, because Christ hath paid the price of "our peace." This is indeed acknowledged by the Papists; but then they limit this doctrine to original sin, as if after baptism there were no longer any room for reconciliation through free grace, but that we must give satisfaction by our merits and works. But the Prophet does not here treat of a single species of pardon but extends this blessing to the whole course of life; and therefore it cannot be thus undervalued or limited to a particular time without most heinous sacrilege. Hence also the frivolous distinction of the Papists between the remission of punishment and the pardon of sin is easily refuted. They affirm that punishment is not remitted to us, unless it be washed out by satisfactions. But the Prophet openly declares that the punishment of our sins was transferred to him. What, then, do the Papists intend but to be Christ's equals and companions, and to lay claim to share with him in his authority?

In his wound (or, in his medicine) we have healing. He again directs us to Christ, that we may betake ourselves to his wounds, provided that we wish to regain life. Here the Prophet draws a contrast between us and Christ; for in us nothing can be found but destruction and death; in Christ alone is life and salvation. He alone brought medicine to us, and even procures health by his weakness, and life by his death; for he alone hath pacified the Father, he alone hath reconciled us to him. Here we might bring forward many things about the blessed consequences of Christ's sufferings, if we had not determined to expound rather than to preach; and therefore let us be satisfied with a plain exposition. Let everyone, therefore, draw consolation from this passage, and let him apply the blessed result of this doctrine to his own use; for these words are spoken to all in general and to individuals in particular.

"We all, like sheep, have gone astray, we have turned every one to his own way; and the LORD [Yahweh] hath laid on him the iniquity of us all." (Isa. 53:6)

In order to impress more deeply on our hearts the benefit of the death of Christ, he shows how necessary is that healing which he formerly mentioned. If we do not perceive our wretchedness and poverty, we shall never know how desirable is that remedy which Christ has brought to us, or approach him with due ardor of affection. As soon as we know that we are ruined, then, aware of our wretchedness, we eagerly run to avail ourselves of the remedy, which otherwise would be held by us in no estimation. In order, therefore, that Christ may be appreciated by us, let everyone consider and examine himself so as to acknowledge that he is ruined till he is redeemed by Christ.

We see that here none are excepted, for the Prophet includes "all." The whole human race would have perished if Christ had not brought relief. He does not even except the Jews, whose hearts were puffed up with a false opinion of their own superiority, but condemns them indiscriminately, along with others, to destruction. By comparing them to sheep, he intends not to extenuate their guilt, as if little blame attached to them, but to state plainly that it belongs to Christ to gather from their wanderings those who resembled brute beasts.

Every one hath turned to his own way. By adding the term *every one*, he descends from a universal statement, in which he included all, to a special statement, that every individual may consider in his own mind if it be so; for a general statement produces less effect upon us than to know that it belongs to each of us in particular. Let "every one," therefore, arouse his conscience, and present himself before the judgment-seat of God that he may confess his wretchedness. Moreover, what is the nature of this "going astray" the Prophet states more plainly. It is, that every one has followed the way which he had chosen for himself, that is, has determined to live according to his own fancy; by which he means that there is only one way of living uprightly, and if anyone "turn aside" from it, he can experience nothing but "going astray."

He does not speak of works only, but of nature itself, which always leads us astray; for, if we could by natural instinct or by our own wisdom bring ourselves back into the path, or guard ourselves against going astray, Christ would not be needed by us. Thus, in ourselves we all are undone unless Christ (John 8:36) sets us free; and the more we rely on our wisdom or industry, the more dreadfully and the more speedily do we draw down destruction on ourselves. And so the Prophet shows what we are before we are regenerated by Christ; for all are involved in the same condemnation. "There is none righteous, none that understands, none that seeks God. All have turned aside, and have become unprofitable. There is none that does good; no, not one." (Ps. 14:3.) All this is more fully explained by Paul. (Rom. 3:10.)

And Jehovah hath laid upon him. Here we have a beautiful contrast. In ourselves we are scattered; in Christ we are gathered together. By nature we go astray and are driven headlong to destruction; in Christ we find the course by which we are conducted to the harbor of salvation. Our sins are a heavy load; but they are laid on Christ by whom we are freed from the load. Thus, when we were ruined and, being estranged from God, were hastening to hell, Christ took upon him the filthiness of our iniquities in order to rescue us from everlasting destruction. This must refer exclusively to guilt and punishment; for

he was free from sin. (Heb. 4:15; 1 Pet. 2:22.) Let every one, therefore, diligently consider his own iniquities that he may have a true relish of that grace, and may obtain the benefit of the death of Christ.

"He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth; he is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he openeth not his mouth." (Isa. 53:7)

He was punished. Here the Prophet applauds the obedience of Christ in suffering death; for if his death had not been voluntary, he would not have been regarded as having satisfied for our disobedience. "As by one man's disobedience," says Paul, "all became sinners, so by one man's obedience many were made righteous." (Rom. 5:19.) And elsewhere, "He became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross." (Philip. 2:8.) This was the reason of his silence at the judgment-seat of Pilate, though he had a just defense to offer; for, having become answerable for our guilt, he wished to submit silently to the sentence, that we might loudly glory in the righteousness of faith obtained through free grace.

As a lamb shall he be led to the slaughter. We are here exhorted to patience and meekness, that, following the example of Christ, we may be ready to endure reproaches and cruel assaults, distress, and torture. In this sense Peter quotes this passage, showing that we ought to become like Christ our Head, that we may imitate his patience and submissiveness. (1 Pet. 2:23.) In the word *lamb* there is probably an allusion to the sacrifices under the Law; and in this sense he is elsewhere called "the Lamb of God." (John 1:29, 36.)

"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." (Isa. 53:8)

From prison and judgment. There are various ways in which this passage is expounded. Some think that the Prophet continues the argument which he had already begun to treat, namely, that Christ was smitten by the hand of God and afflicted on account of our sins. The Greek translators render it, "In his humiliation his judgment was taken away." Others, "He was taken away without delay." Others explain it, "he was taken away to the cross;" that is, as soon as Christ was seized, he was dragged to "judgment." I rather agree with those who think that the Prophet, after having spoken of death, passes to the glory of the resurrection. He intended to meet the thoughts by which the minds of many persons might have been troubled and distressed; for when we see nothing but wounds and shame we are struck with amazement, because human nature shrinks from such a spectacle.

The Prophet therefore declares that he was *taken away*; that is, that he was rescued "from prison and judgment" or condemnation, and afterwards was exalted to the highest rank of honor; that no one might think that he was overwhelmed or swallowed up by that terrible

and shameful kind of death. For, undoubtedly, he was victorious even in the midst of death, and triumphed over his enemies; and he was so judged that now he has been appointed to be judge of all, as was publicly manifested by his resurrection. (Acts 10:42.) The same order is followed by the Prophet as by Paul, who, after having declared that Christ was abased even to the cross, adds that on this account he was exalted to the very highest honor, and that there was given him a name to which all things both in heaven and in earth must render obedience and bend the knee. (Philip. 2:9,)

Who shall relate his generation? This exclamation has been stretched and (I may say) tortured into various meanings. The ancients abused this passage in reasoning against the Arians when they wished to prove by it Christ's eternal generation. But they ought to have been satisfied with clearer testimonies of Scripture that they might not expose themselves to the mockery of heretics, who sometimes take occasion from this to become more obstinate; for it might easily have been objected that the Prophet was not thinking about that subject. Chrysostom views it as relating to the human nature of Christ, that he was miraculously, and not by ordinary generation, conceived in the womb of the virgin; but that is a wide departure from the Prophet's meaning. Others think that Isaiah kindles into rage against the men of the age who crucified Christ. Others refer it to the posterity which should be born; namely, that Christ's posterity will be numerous though he die.

But, as דֹר (*dōr*) signifies "age" or "duration," I have no doubt that he speaks of the "age" of Christ, and that his meaning is, that Christ, though almost overwhelmed by sicknesses, shall not only be taken from them, but that even his age shall be permanent and eternal; or, in other words, that he shall be unlike those who are indeed rescued from death, but shall afterwards die; for Christ rose from the dead, to live forever, and, as Paul says, "cannot now die; death shall no longer have dominion over him." (Rom. 6:9.) Yet let us remember that the Prophet does not speak of Christ's person alone, but includes the whole body of the Church, which ought never to be separated from him. We have therefore a striking proof of the perpetuity of the Church. As Christ lives forever, so he will not permit his kingdom to perish. The same immortality shall at length be bestowed on each of the members.

For he was cut off. This might indeed, at first sight, appear to be absurd, that the death of Christ is the cause and source of our life; but, because he bore the punishment of our sins, we ought therefore to apply to ourselves all the shame that appears in the cross. Yet in Christ the wonderful love of God shines forth, which renders his glory visible to us; so that we ought to be excited to rapturous admiration.

For the transgression of my people. He again repeats that the wound was inflicted on him "for the sins of the people;" and the object is, that we may diligently consider that it was for our sake, and not for his own, that he suffered; for he bore the punishment which we must have endured if he had not offered this atonement. We ought to perceive in ourselves that guilt of which he bore the accusation and punishment, having offered himself in our name to the Father, that by his condemnation we may be set free.

"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." (Isa. 53:9)

And he laid open to wicked men his grave. Jerome renders it, "And he gave wicked men for burial;" as if the Prophet spake of the punishment by which the Lord took vengeance for the sin of wicked men, who crucified Christ. But he rather speaks of the death of Christ, and of the fruit of it, and says nothing about that revenge. Others think that the particle **תַּחַת** (*ēth*) denotes comparison, in the same manner as the particle **כִּי** (*caph*). "He gave his grave *as* of wicked men." Others interpret **תַּחַת** (*ēth*) to mean *with*, and explain "the rich man" to be Joseph of Arimathea, in whose sepulchre Christ was buried. (Matt. 27:60; John 19:38.) But such an interpretation is too unnatural. I rather think that the real meaning is, that God the Father delivered Christ into the hands of wicked men.

And to the rich man his death. I consider the singular **עשיר** (*gnāshīr,*) "the rich man," to be put for the plural **עשירים** (*gnāshīrīm,*) as is frequently done by Hebrew writers. I see no reason why Ecolmpadius rendered it "high places." By "rich men" he means "violent men;" for men grow haughty and disdainful on account of their riches, and abuse their wealth to savage cruelty. And thus by the terms "wicked men" and "rich men" the same thing, in my opinion, is denoted. He means, therefore, that Christ was exposed to the reproaches, and insolence, and lawless passions of wicked men. For, on the one hand, the Pharisees and priests (Matt. 26:66) rush upon him with unbridled rage and foul slander; on the other hand, Pilate, though well aware of his innocence, (Mark 15:14,) condemns him in opposition to law and justice; and again, on another hand, the Roman soldiers, ready for every kind of barbarity, cruelly and wickedly execute the cruel and wicked sentence. (John 19:16.) Who would not conclude that Christ was crushed and "buried" amidst those impious and bloody hands?

I consider the word *grave* to be here used metaphorically, because wicked and violent men might be said to have overwhelmed him. If it be objected that Christ had an honorable burial, I reply, that burial was the commencement of a glorious resurrection; but at present the Prophet speaks of death, which is often denoted by "the grave." I consider this, therefore, to be the real meaning, though I wish to leave every person free to form his own opinion.

Though he did no iniquity. **על** (*gnāl*) signifies "because;" but sometimes it is used in the sense of "though," as in this passage. Here the Prophet applauds the innocence of Christ, not only in order to defend him from slander, but to speak highly of the benefit of his death, that we may not think that he suffered by chance. Though innocent, he suffered by the decree of God; and therefore it was for our sake, and not for his own, that he suffered. He bore the punishment which was due to us.

Neither was there deceit in his mouth. In two words he describes the perfect innocence of Christ; namely, that he never offended either in deed or in word. That this cannot be said of any mortal man is universally acknowledged, and hence it follows that it applies to Christ alone.

"Yet it pleased the LORD [Yahweh] to bruise him; he hath put him to grief. When thou shalt 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." (Isa. 53:10)

Yet Jehovah was pleased to bruise him. This illustrates more fully what I formerly stated in few words, that the Prophet, in asserting Christ's innocence, aims at something more than to defend him from all reproach. The object therefore is, that we should consider the cause in order to have experience of the effect; for God appoints nothing at random, and hence it follows that the cause of his death is lawful. We must also keep in view the contrast. In Christ there was no fault; why, then, was the Lord pleased that he should suffer? Because he stood in our room, and in no other way than by his death could the justice of God be satisfied.

When he shall have offered his soul as a sacrifice. אָשָׁם (*āshām*) denotes both sin and the sacrifice which is offered for sin, and is often used in the latter sense in the Scriptures. (Exod. 29:14; Ezek. 45:22.) The sacrifice was offered in such a manner as to expiate sin by enduring its punishment and curse. This was expressed by the priests by means of the laying on of hands, as if they threw on the sacrifice the sins of the whole nation. (Exod. 29:15.) And if a private individual offered a sacrifice, he also laid his hand upon it, as if he threw upon it his own sin. Our sins were thrown upon Christ in such a manner that he alone bore the curse.

On this account Paul also calls him a "curse" or "execration:" "Christ hath redeemed us from the execration of the law, having been made an execration for us." (Gal. 3:13.) He likewise calls him "Sin;" "For him who knew no sin hath he made to be sin for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him." (2 Cor. 5:21.) And in another passage, "For what was impossible for the law, inasmuch as it was weak on account of the flesh, God did, by sending his own Son in the likeness of flesh liable to sin, and for sin condemned sin in the flesh, that the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us." (Rom. 8:3,4.) What Paul meant by the words "curse" and "sin" in these passages is the same as what the Prophet meant by the word אָשָׁם, (*āshām*.) In short, אָשָׁם (*āshām*) is equivalent to the Latin word *piaculum*, an expiatory sacrifice.

Here we have a description of the benefit of Christ's death, that by his sacrifice sins were expiated, and God was reconciled towards men; for such is the import of this word אָשָׁם (*āshām*.) Hence it follows that nowhere but in Christ is found expiation and satisfaction for sin. In order to understand this better, we must first know that we are guilty before

God, so that we may be accursed and detestable in his presence. Now, if we wish to return to a state of favor with him, sin must be taken away. This cannot be accomplished by sacrifices contrived according to the fancy of men. Consequently, we must come to the death of Christ; for in no other way can satisfaction be given to God. In short, Isaiah teaches that sins cannot be pardoned in any other way than by betaking ourselves to the death of Christ. If any person think that this language is harsh and disrespectful to Christ, let him descend into himself, and, after a close examination, let him ponder how dreadful is the judgment of God, which could not be pacified but by this price; and thus the inestimable grace which shines forth in making Christ accursed will easily remove every ground of offense.

He shall see his seed. Isaiah means that the death of Christ not only can be no hindrance to his having a seed, but will be the cause of his having offspring; that is, because, by quickening the dead, he will procure a people for himself, whom he will afterwards multiply more and more; and there is no absurdity in giving the appellation of Christ's seed to all believers, who are also brethren, because they are descended from Christ.

He shall prolong his days. To this clause some supply the relative אֲשֶׁר, (*ăshĕr,*) "which:" "A seed which shall be longlived." But I expound it in a more simple manner, "Christ shall not be hindered by his death from prolonging his days, that is, from living eternally." Some persons, when departing from life, leave children, but children who shall survive them, and who shall live so as to obtain a name only when their fathers are dead. But Christ shall enjoy the society of his children; for he shall not die like other men, but shall obtain eternal life in himself and his children. Thus Isaiah declares that in the head and the members there shall be immortal life.

And the will of Jehovah shall prosper in his hand. The word "hand" often denotes "ministry," as the Lord proclaimed the law "by the hand of Moses." (Num. 36:13.) Again, the Lord did this "by the hands of David;" that is, he made use of David as his minister in that matter. (Ezra 3:10.) So also "in the hand of Christ shall prosper the will of God;" that is, the Lord will cause the ministry of Christ to yield its fruit, that it may not be thought that he exposed himself fruitlessly to such terrible sufferings.

These few words contain a very rich doctrine, which every reader may draw from them; but we are satisfied with giving a simple exposition of the text. "Will" is taken in the same acceptation as before; for he makes use of the word חָפֵץ, (*chăphĕtz,*) by which he means a kind and generous disposition. Two views of God's kindness are held up for our admiration in this passage; first, that he spared not his only-begotten Son, but delivered him for us, that he might deliver us from death; and secondly, that he does not suffer his death to be useless and unprofitable, but causes it to yield very abundant fruit; for the death of Christ would be of no avail to us if we did not experience its fruit and efficacy.

"He shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied. By his knowledge shall my

righteous servant justify many, for he shall bear their iniquities." (Isa. 53:11)

From the labor of his soul he shall see. Isaiah continues the same subject. He declares that Christ, after having suffered, shall obtain the fruit of his death in the salvation of men. When he says, "he shall see," we must supply the words, "Fruit and Efficacy." This is full of the sweetest consolation; for Isaiah could not have better expressed the infinite love of Christ toward us than by declaring that he takes the highest delight in our salvation, and that he rests in it as the fruit of his labors, as he who has obtained his wish rests in that which he most ardently desired; for no person can be said to be *satisfied* but he who has obtained what he wished so earnestly as to disregard everything else and be satisfied with this alone.

By his doctrine, or by the knowledge of him. He now points out the way and method by which we experience the power and efficacy of the death of Christ, and obtain the benefit of it. That method is "the knowledge of him." I acknowledge that the word דעת (*dāgnāth*) may be taken either in an active or a passive sense, as denoting either "the knowledge of him" or "his knowledge." In whichever of these senses it is taken, we shall easily understand the Prophet's meaning; and the Jews will not be able to practice such impudent sophistry as to prevent us from extorting from them a reluctant acknowledgment of what is here asserted, that Christ is the only teacher and author of righteousness.

Shall justify many. By the word "*justify*" he points out the effect of this teaching. Thus, men are not only taught righteousness in the school of Christ, but are actually justified. And this is the difference between the righteousness of faith and the righteousness of the Law; for, although the Law shows what it is to be righteous, yet Paul affirms that it is impossible that righteousness should be obtained by it, and experience proves the same thing; for the Law is a mirror in which we behold our own unrighteousness. (Rom. 3:20; Gal. 2:16, 21, and 3:10, 11.) Now, the doctrine which Christ teaches, as to obtaining righteousness, is nothing else than "the knowledge of him;" and this is faith, when we embrace the benefit of his death and fully rely on him.

Philosophers have laid down many excellent precepts, which, as they imagine, contain righteousness; but they never could bestow it on any man; for who ever obtained by their rules the power of living uprightly? And it is of no advantage to know what is true righteousness if we are destitute of it. To say nothing about philosophers, the Law itself, which contains the most perfect rule of life, could not (as we have said) bestow this; not that there was any defect in it, for Moses testified (Deut. 30:19) that "he had set before them good and evil, life and death;" but that the corruption of our nature is such that the Law could not suffice for procuring righteousness. In like manner Paul teaches (Rom. 8:3) that this weakness proceeds "from our flesh," and not from the Law; for nature prompts us in another direction, and our lusts burst forth with greater violence, like wild and furious beasts, against the command of God. The consequence is that "the law worketh wrath," instead of righteousness. (Rom. 4:15.) The law therefore holds all men as convicted, and, after having made known their sin, renders men utterly inexcusable.

We must therefore seek another way of righteousness, namely, in Christ, whom the law also pointed out as its end. (Rom. 10:3.) "The righteousness of the law was of this nature: He who doeth these things shall live by them." (Lev. 18:5 Gal. 3:12.) But nobody has done them, and therefore another righteousness is necessary, which Paul also proves (Rom. 10:8) by a quotation from Moses himself, "The word is nigh, in thy mouth and in thy heart; that is, the word of faith which we preach." (Deut. 30:14.) By this doctrine, therefore, we are justified; not by the bare and simple doctrine, but inasmuch as it exhibits the benefit of the death of Christ, by which atonement is made for our sins and we are reconciled to God. (Rom. 5:10.) For, if we embrace this benefit by faith, we are reckoned righteous before God.

"Therefore will I divide him a portion with the great, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong, because he hath poured out his soul unto death, and he was numbered with the transgressors, and he bare the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors." (Isa. 53:12)

Therefore will I divide to him a portion. Isaiah again declares what will be the result of the death of Christ. It was necessary that he should add this doctrine as to the victory which Christ obtained by his death; for what was formerly stated, that by his death we are reconciled to the Father, would not have sufficiently confirmed our hearts. Here he borrows a comparison from the ordinary form of a triumphal procession held by those who, after having obtained a signal victory, are commonly received and adorned with great pomp and splendor. Thus also Christ, as a valiant and illustrious general, triumphed over the enemies whom he had vanquished.

And he shall divide the spoil with the strong. This statement is the same as the preceding, and it is a customary repetition among Hebrew writers. Those whom he formerly called "great" he now calls mighty or "strong." Those who translate רבים (*rābbīm*) by the word "many," torture, in my opinion, the Prophet's meaning. In these two clauses there is only this difference, that in the former God testifies what he gave to Christ, and in the latter he adds that Christ enjoys that benefit. He enjoys it not on his own account, but on ours; for the fruit of this victory comes to us. For us Christ subdued death, the world, and the devil. In a word, the Prophet here applauds the victory which followed the death of Christ; for "although he was crucified through the weakness of the flesh, yet by the power of the Spirit" he rose from the dead, and triumphed over his enemies. (2 Cor. 13:4.) Such is the import of the metaphor of "Spoil," which the Prophet used; for "he ascended on high, that he might lead captivity captive and give gifts to men." (Psalm 68:18; Eph. 4:8.)

For he poured out his soul to death. He now adds that Christ's humiliation was the beginning of this supreme dominion, as Paul also declares that Christ, "after having blotted out the handwriting which was opposed to us, triumphed on the cross." (Col. 2:14.) So far, then, is the shame of the death which Christ died from making any diminution of

his glory, that it is the reason why God the Father exalted him to the highest honor.

And was ranked with transgressors. He describes also the kind of death; as Paul, when he magnifies "the obedience" of Christ and says that "he abased himself even to death," likewise adds that it was no ordinary death but the death "of the cross," that is, accursed and shameful. (Philip. 2:8.) So in this passage Isaiah, in order to express deeper shame, says that he was ranked among malefactors. But the deeper the shame before men, the greater was the glory of his resurrection by which it was followed.

Mark quotes this passage when he relates that Christ was crucified between two robbers; for at that time the prediction was most fully accomplished. (Mark 15:28.) But the Prophet spoke in general terms in order to show that Christ did not die an ordinary death. For the purpose of disgracing him the more, those two robbers were added; that Christ, as the most wicked of all, might be placed in the midst of them. This passage is, therefore, most appropriately quoted by Mark as relating to that circumstance.

He bore the sin of many. This is added by way of correction, that, when we hear of the shame of Christ's death we may not think that it was a blot on the character of Christ, and that our minds may not, by being prejudiced in that manner, be prevented from receiving the victory which he obtained for us, that is, the fruit of his death. He shows, therefore, that this was done in order that he might take our sins upon him; and his object is, that, whenever the death of Christ shall be mentioned, we may at the same time remember the atonement made for us. And this fruit swallows up all the shame of the death of Christ, that his majesty and glory may be more clearly seen than if we only beheld him sitting in heaven; for we have in him a striking and memorable proof of the love of God, when he is so insulted, degraded, and loaded with the utmost disgrace, in order that we, on whom had been pronounced a sentence of everlasting destruction, may enjoy along with him immortal glory.

I have followed the ordinary interpretation, that "he bore the sin of many," though we might without impropriety consider the Hebrew word רַבִּים (*rābbīm*) to denote "Great and Noble." And thus the contrast would be more complete, that Christ, while "he was ranked among transgressors," became surety for every one of the most excellent of the earth, and suffered in the room of those who hold the highest rank in the world. I leave this to the judgment of my readers. Yet I approve of the ordinary reading, that he alone bore the punishment of many, because on him was laid the guilt of the whole world. It is evident from other passages, and especially from the fifth chapter of the Epistle to the Romans, that "many" sometimes denotes "all."

And prayed for the transgressors. Because the ratification of the atonement, with which Christ has washed us by his death, implies that he pleaded with the Father on our behalf, it was proper that this should be added. For as in the ancient Law the priest, who "never entered without blood," at the same time interceded for the people, so what was there shadowed out is fulfilled in Christ. (Ex. 30:10; Heb. 9:7.) First, he offered the sacrifice of his body and shed his blood that he might endure the punishment which was due to us;

and secondly, in order that the atonement might take effect, he performed the office of an advocate and interceded for all who embraced this sacrifice by faith; as is evident from that prayer which he left to us, written by the hand of John, "I pray not for these only, but for all who shall believe on me through their word." (John 17:20.) If we then belong to their number, let us be fully persuaded that Christ has suffered for us, that we may now enjoy the benefit of his death.

He expressly mentions "transgressors" that we may know that we ought to betake ourselves with assured confidence to the cross of Christ, when we are horror-struck by the dread of sin. Yea, for this reason he is held out as our intercessor and advocate; for without his intercession our sins would deter us from approaching to God.