

STRICKEN, SMITTEN AND AFFLICTED

Text: Isaiah 53:4: "Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted."

As we come deeper into the Easter season, I am drawn toward one of the most famous prophecies describing the passion of our Lord. Isaiah 53 was written over 700 years before our Lord took our place on the cross of Calvary. Every verse is brimming with redemptive truth. I want to focus more particularly on one verse, i.e., Isaiah 53:4. It begins with, "Surely he hath borne our griefs...." The Word of God is emphasizing this truth by saying "Surely...." In other words, let there be no doubt. Whatever can be interpreted in life as "grief," Christ received our load of burden! Then it says, He "carried our sorrow," literally meaning He carried them away. Everything that breaks the human heart, He carried to His cross and, in turn, carried those heartbreaks away. Whatever breaks our heart broke His heart. Is there any wonder that the Bible would also prophesy in Psalm 22:14, "I am poured out like water, and all my bones are out of joint: my heart is like wax; it is melted in the midst of my bowels"?

In the middle of the Isaiah 53:4 it says, "...yet we did esteem him...." This means that is the way humankind saw Jesus on the cross the day He died. Over 500 years before Christ walked this earth Daniel prophesied in Daniel 9:26b, "...Messiah (shall) be cut off, but not for Himself...." We see the vicarious atonement being set up. "Vicarious" means to suffer in the place of another. "Atonement" means satisfaction or reparation for a wrong or injury. Christ was punished for our sins. I Peter 3:18, "For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit." Let us examine these three piercing words from Isaiah 53:3,4, "stricken, smitten and afflicted":

I. Conquered – "Stricken"

The word "stricken" is translated from the Hebrew word, "naga", which means to strike violently as from above. Brown-Driver-Briggs translates this word "prostrated by conquest." An example of this is found in Isaiah 16:7, "Therefore shall Moab howl for Moab, every one shall howl: for the foundations of Kirhareseth shall ye mourn; surely they are stricken."

As a result of the fall we became a conquered people. The power and willingness to do right on a perpetual basis was no longer ours. The Bible says in Ephesians 2:1-3, "And you hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins; Wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world,

according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience: Among whom also we all had our conversation in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others." God is explaining to us before He made us alive through the new birth that we were dead, unable to conquer our sins. We were walking according to the dictates of satanic domination.

The Bible says in Philippians 2:8, "And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross."

There is a very touching story of John Leonard Dober and David Nitschman.

They were men who left the security of their jobs and families in Copenhagen to become the first Moravian missionaries in 1732. Three thousand slaves from the jungles of Africa had been brought to an island in the Atlantic, there to live and die without hearing of Christ. These men said, "We shall work as slaves among the slaves." As they left the comforts of home to reach these thousands of people in human bondage, they were heard to have said, "May the Lamb that was slain receive the reward of His suffering!"

The willingness of any mere mortal man to sacrifice all for a worthy cause pales in comparison to our Lord, the Prince of Glory, the High King of Heaven who became a man to live under the conquered curse of man in this fallen world and die the most disgraceful death on earth, just because He loved us and wanted to set us free. And even more than free, for the Bible says in Romans 8:37, "Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us."

Christ was stricken for us. He became conquered, only to conquer death and make us, who were slaves, under the bondage of sin more than conquerors!

II. Crippled -- "Smitten"

The word "smitten" is translated from the Hebrew word, "nakah" which is also translated to be beaten, give stripes, punish or to be crippled. We see this word used in II Samuel 9:3, "And the king said, Is there not yet any of the house of Saul, that I may shew the kindness of God unto him? And Ziba said unto the king, Jonathan hath yet a son, which is lame on his feet." One of the most beautiful stories in the Bible is the story of David, Jonathan and Jonathan's crippled son, Mephibosheth. King David searched high and low until he finally found the crippled, fallen prince who was virtually living with a death sentence on his head. David found him and exalted him to become his adopted son.

We like Mephibosheth are lame though a fall: "...He fell, and became lame. And his name was Mephibosheth" (II Samuel 4:4b). The fallen prince was given grace. II Samuel 9:7a: "And David said unto him, Fear not: for I will surely shew thee kindness for Jonathan thy father's sake...." He was restored! II Samuel 9:7b: "...and (I) will restore thee all the land of Saul thy father...." Mephibosheth was even brought him into the intimate fellowship of the king's family. II Samuel 9:7c: "...and thou shalt eat bread at my table continually."

The story of Jesus coming to earth to die for our sins is even more moving, for the only way He could redeem us is not only extend His grace to us who are crippled through the fall (Romans 5:12), He became one of us, clothed in our crippled flesh to give us healing and the ability to "...walk and not faint." (Isaiah 40:31c). Matthew 9:6, "But that ye may know that the Son of man hath power on earth to forgive sins, (then saith he to the sick of the palsy,) Arise, take up thy bed, and go unto thine house."

III. Contaminated -- "Afflicted"

The word "afflicted" comes to us from the Hebrew word, "anah" which means to be humbled, depressed, cast down or defiled. The main definition is "defiled." In II Chronicles 26 we see the very sad story of King Uzziah who became a leper "...and dwelt in a several (separate) house, being a leper; for he was cut off from the house of the LORD" (II Chronicles 26:21b).

The Bible gives this command in Leviticus 13:45, "And the leper in whom the plague is, his clothes shall be rent, and his head bare, and he shall put a covering upon his upper lip, and shall cry, Unclean, unclean." In Isaiah 64:6, the Word of God declares, "But we are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags...." Christ became defiled and contaminated for us! II Corinthians 5:21, "For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him." I Peter 3:18: "For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit." Isaiah 53:5: "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."

Conclusion:

There are not enough verbs and adverbs, nouns and adjectives, there are not enough descriptive powers of any language in earth that would or could sufficiently thank the Lord Jesus for becoming stricken, smitten and afflicted for us.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Johnny Pope". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a long horizontal line extending to the right.