

The Servant Works Salvation Isaiah 53: 7 – 12

Our sermon text this morning will be Isaiah 53, verses 7 to 12, through to the end of the chapter. We're going to read the whole of the Fourth Servant's Song, which starts at Isaiah 52:13, and we'll read from Isaiah 52:13 through to the end of Isaiah chapter 53. Before the reading, we will pray. Please join me in prayer.

Our Father in heaven, we pray that you would bless your word to us this morning. We pray that by your Spirit, you would give us ears to hear, eyes to see, and hearts that understand and obey. We ask these things in Jesus' name. Amen.

Isaiah 52, starting at verse 13, reading through to the end of Isaiah 53, the sermon text being Isaiah 53, verse 7, through to the end of Isaiah 53. Isaiah 52, verse 13. Give ear to the word of the Lord:

“¹³ Behold, my servant shall act wisely; he shall be high and lifted up, and shall be exalted. ¹⁴ As many were astonished at you—his appearance was so marred, beyond human semblance, and his form beyond that of the children of mankind—¹⁵ so shall he sprinkle many nations. Kings shall shut their mouths because of him, for that which has not been told them they see, and that which they have not heard they understand.

“¹ Who has believed what he has heard from us? And to whom has the arm of the LORD been revealed? ² For he grew up before him like a young plant, and like a root out of dry ground; he had no form or majesty that we should look at him, and no beauty that we should desire him. ³ He was despised and rejected by men, a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief; and as one from whom men hide their faces he was despised, and we esteemed him not.

“⁴ Surely he has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows; yet we esteemed him stricken, smitten by God, and afflicted. ⁵ But he was pierced for our transgressions; he was crushed for our iniquities; upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace, and with his wounds we are healed. ⁶ All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned—every one—to his own way; and the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all.

“⁷ He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth; like a lamb that is led to the slaughter, and like a sheep that before its shearers is silent, so he opened not his mouth. ⁸ By oppression and judgment he was taken away; and as for his generation, who considered that he was cut off out of the land of the living, stricken for the transgression of my people? ⁹ And they made his grave with the wicked and with a rich man in his death, although he had done no violence, and there was no deceit in his mouth.

“¹⁰ Yet it was the will of the LORD to crush him; he has put him to grief; when his soul makes an offering for guilt, he shall see his offspring; he shall prolong his days; the will of the LORD shall prosper in his hand. ¹¹ Out of the anguish of his soul he shall see and be satisfied; by his knowledge shall the righteous one, my servant, make many to be accounted righteous, and he shall bear their iniquities. ¹² Therefore I will divide him a portion with the many, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong, because he poured out his soul to death and was numbered with the transgressors; yet he bore the sin of many, and makes intercession for the transgressors.”
Amen, and may God bless that to us.

In his book, *The Cross of Christ*, John Stott believes that from Isaiah chapter 53, every verse except verse 2 is directly referenced in our New Testament. Basically, John Stott was arguing, Who else could possibly be the fulfillment of Isaiah chapter 53, or indeed, the whole Fourth Servant's Song, starting in Isaiah chapter 52, verse 13, other than Jesus Christ? How else could this passage find fulfillment? Who else could be the person who was the servant?

Remembering back to Isaiah 52, verses 13, 14, and 15, the servant was "high and lifted up," a phrase which Isaiah applies only to YAHWEH, only to JEHOVAH, only to his covenant God. And yet the servant is to be high and lifted up—the servant who was to be human, looking at verse 14, "His appearance was so marred, beyond human semblance, and his form beyond that of the children of mankind." And verse 15, His servant who was divine and human was to do priestly work. "He shall sprinkle many nations." "He shall sprinkle"—a priestly work, a work of sanctifying and setting aside and calling people into the presence of God.

Earlier, in the Third Servant's Song, we're told that we must listen to the voice of the servant, that if we won't receive the words of the servant, we're rejecting the very words of God. Who else can it be? We all, as Christians, immediately, the moment we read this, we know that this is speaking of our Savior, Jesus Christ.

I've heard the story told, and I believe it was a true story, of a man witnessing to a Jewish man, and the Jewish man basically said that Jesus was not the Messiah, He was not the Savior. And the Christian in his witnessing said, "I just want to read you something." And he read him the Fourth Servant's Song, Isaiah 52:13 through to the end of Isaiah 53:12. The Jewish man apparently said to him, "Don't read to me from the New Testament." Don't read to me from the New Testament. He was very shocked when the Christian passed him the Bible and said, "No. That's your prophet, Isaiah. That's from the Jewish Scriptures. That's from the Hebrew Bible." Eventually, that Jewish man was converted, because he was challenged with the thought, "Who else could it be but Jesus? Who else fulfills these words but Jesus?"

This servant, who is a servant like no other, this servant whom God loves, whom the Father is pleased with, and yet if you look at verse 10 of our passage, "It was the will"—the ESV reads—"It was the will of the Lord to crush him." It could just as easily have been translated, "It was God's good pleasure"—God's good pleasure. God was pleased to crush Him.

Is there anything in life that hurts more, on a human level, than an unjust accusation, particularly if the accusation is of some kind of deep wickedness? Have you ever been on the receiving end of some kind of harsh accusation, based on hearsay, based on nonsense? In my experience, it's the most harmful or painful experience that you can ever have in the church—someone shooting that fiery arrow right into your heart, someone who up until that moment you trusted and thought was your friend, and they say something that really, really gets under your skin.

Well, this servant is one who is innocent, who does no violence, and there is no deceit found in His mouth. And we need to really think about verse 9: "He's done no violence and there's no deceit found in his mouth."

Think of the things that Jesus had to say about the words that come from our mouth, and where they come from. He said they come from the heart, the wickedness within. He says the words we speak are the fruit of the heart within, and that heart is wicked. If a person has no deceit coming from their mouth, what it's saying is that that person is innocent. That person has a pure heart.

The servant was judged, verse 8: "By oppression and judgment he was taken away." They're words of legal judgment. He was condemned. He was rejected out of hand. He was passed up, or handed over as a common criminal, as someone who deserves death. It was considered that the servant was actually hated by God, looking back at verse 4. "We esteemed him stricken, smitten by God, and afflicted." Verse 10 tells us that it was God's good pleasure to have Him crushed, to see Him destroyed. We're talking about Jesus. We're talking about our Savior. The one who was innocent was treated as though He were one of us, as though He had done our sins. The one who was truly righteous was rejected, the way that we should be rejected.

We long, in our human nature, for fellowship and companionship. We long for acceptance. Facebook, if you don't realize it, is all about that. It's all about that—"Likes, likes, likes." And if you manage to get something up on Facebook that attracts a bit of attention and, you know, you get the notification, you open it up and it says, "Your latest photo received 100 'likes'." Oooh—everybody likes what I've done. It's only natural; not necessarily good, but each and every one of us longs for acceptance and companionship.

Jesus, in His true humanity, was truly human. You know, it's easy to forget that. It's easy to think, "Well come on, He was God the Son of God. He sort of wore this suit of spiritual armour—nothing hurt Him. Nothing got to Him. Nothing cut Him deeply."

My friends, if nothing cut Him deeply, why was He sweating blood in the Garden of Gethsemane? If nothing cut Him deeply, why did He weep before the grave of Lazarus? If nothing cut Him deeply, why was He known as the suffering servant? In His humanity, He entered truly, fully, completely into our humanity. He suffered as we suffer.

There's a reason that we feel isolated. There's a reason that we don't feel like we're part of something. The reason is simple. It's sin. We're supposed to be united to God. We're supposed to be one with the God who created us. He created us in His image, to relate to Him as He was relating to us. The reason that we feel so isolated and separate in this world is that sin hardens our heart, and Jesus entered into our humanity.

Look at verse 6: "All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned—every one—to his own way." Who are the sheep? In verse 6, we are. We're the straying, dumb, foolish sheep that can't look after themselves, that won't stay where they're supposed to stay.

Now looking at verse 7: "He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth; like a lamb that is led to the slaughter, and like a sheep that before its shearers is silent, so he opened not his mouth." Who's the sheep now? Jesus is. The servant has become the sheep.

What He sought to rescue, that He became—the shepherd who is the sheep. He was oppressed, and he was afflicted and He opened not his mouth. Why do you think, in the gospels, in Matthew, Mark, and John, you find that phrase, “He was silent before them”? He was silent before them. As it speaks of His interrogation before the Jews and before Pilate, He held His peace. He was silent before them. “He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth; like a lamb that is led to the slaughter.” He was a suffering servant, as innocent and harmless as a lamb. So He opened not His mouth.

How much does it hurt when you suffer false accusation, when someone speaks wickedly of you, when someone shoots that fiery arrow? If you’re anything like me, when that happens you want to argue. I want to argue. I want to open my mouth. There are things I want to say. I want to vindicate myself. I want to speak out. I want to tell the truth. The servant didn’t get to do that. He was not complaining of His lot. Though He suffered—though He suffered, He opened not His mouth. There was no rebellion to be found in Him.

Verse 8: “By oppression and judgment he was taken away; and as for his generation, who considered that he was cut off out of the land of the living, stricken for the transgression of my people?” Now there’s a question there. I know some of you read the New King James, and they put the question at a slightly different spot in the verse, but it’s still a question. Basically, Isaiah is saying, “Who understood? Who understood how alone was this Man? Who understood these things?” No one. No one.

It’s amazing, isn’t it? Think of the twelve disciples. How often did Jesus tell them that He was going to the cross? There He would be spat upon, He would be crucified, He would die, He would be raised on the third day. He told them that He would be paying the price of sin. He told them that He was dying for the sins of those whom He came to save. What did they understand? Apparently, nothing. It’s amazing.

Now when I say it’s amazing, I’m not saying that I would’ve done any better. We stand here at the long end of 2,000 years of Christian teaching, interpreting Scripture. To us, it seems perfectly obvious that Jesus died for our sins. And you read about the apostles and their blindness, and you wonder, How could they not have understood? Jesus told them. He spelled it out for them. He spoke clearly to them of these things. And yet, they didn’t understand. Jesus was alone. He’s praying in Gethsemane and sweating drops of blood, and they’re falling asleep.

He “was stricken for the transgression of my people.” Verse 9: “And they made his grave with the wicked and with a rich man in his death, although he had done no violence, and there was no deceit in his mouth.” Look at the phrase, verse 8, “He was cut off.” To be cut off, if you read the law, what happens to those against whom God pours out His wrath, those whom God is judging? He cuts them off. They’re cut off. What does it mean? It means they’re killed without mercy. They’re separated from the people, and they’re separated from God. They’ve been cut off. The phrase always means put to death, always. He was cut off.

How thoroughly, how completely was He cut off? “And they made his grave with the wicked and with a rich man in his death.” He was put to death. He was to die, “although He had done no violence, and there was no deceit in his mouth.” We could think of this as the great injustice.

It's not really. I'll try and explain this, but we could think of this as the great injustice. "The wages of sin is death." The promise made to Adam was that "in the day that you eat of that tree, dying, you will die. You will die the death."

There has been absolutely nothing wrong, or unjust, about every person that ever walked the earth, dying—absolutely nothing. There's no accusation that you can lay at the foot of God. Now I'm not saying that people weren't killed by murderers and that the murderers weren't guilty of their wickedness. What I'm saying is that in terms of God's dealings with humanity, God has never done anything wrong. And in that people die, that is just. Why? Because they're sinners, born of a sinner. They're born sinners, which makes them sinners.

God did not have to give breath to anyone. He did not have to give life to anyone. The very fact that Adam and Eve were not killed on the day that they ate of the fruit is actually mercy. It's mercy. Because God had a plan to save sinners. They were left alive. They were given promises—there would be a seed of the woman. Imagine that! The one who was first deceived, who coveted the fruit of the tree and ate thereof, she receives the promise that there will be a people of God, and the people of God will be called "the seed of the woman." Adam had that in mind, I think, when he named her Eve, "the mother of the living"—the promise of a saved people of God, the seed of the woman. And they will always be at enmity with the serpent. Those who are the people of God are the enemies of the serpent. Even so, as their parents were sinners, they were sinners, and they died.

We as Christians have to be careful. We're not prophets. We don't have prophetic insight. Someone suffers an illness, someone suffers a misfortune. Don't shoot off at the mouth, "God is punishing you." Don't think that way. You don't have the right to think that way. None of us does. How do you know God is punishing them? God might be growing them. Sometimes trials are the way by which God brings the heaviest blessings, the most powerful blessings. Sometimes He tests people through misfortune, or harsh providences, for their benefit and for His glory. We don't have the right to judge.

But—*But*—over all of humanity, the Bible's clear: The reason people die is that people sin. The wages of sin is death. In a general way, everything that's wrong in this world is our fault, and it's the fruit of our sin—sickness, death, suffering, evil, wickedness. And God is just. And He is right.

Well, here we have a servant who has done no violence, and there is no deceit to be found in His mouth. And He suffers death. He's the one who dies. So fully does He enter into our humanity that He comes to the same end that our humanity will come to. He dies. The wages of sin come to Him, and He accepts those wages. We could say that this is a terrible injustice. We could say that. And surely those who put Him to death were certainly wicked. Those who judged Him guilty were certainly wicked.

And how about Pilate—Pontius Pilate? Turn to John chapter 18. We'll start reading at verse 33. I want you to notice something. Pilate says something three times.

John 18, verse 33: “So Pilate entered his headquarters again and called Jesus and said to him, ‘Are you the King of the Jews?’³⁴ Jesus answered, ‘Do you say this of your own accord, or did others say it to you about me?’³⁵ Pilate answered, ‘Am I a Jew? Your own nation and the chief priests have delivered you over to me. What have you done?’³⁶ Jesus answered, ‘My kingdom is not of this world. If my kingdom were of this world, my servants would have been fighting, that I might not be delivered over to the Jews. But my kingdom is not from the world.’³⁷ Then Pilate said to him, ‘So you are a king?’ Jesus answered, ‘You say that I am a king. For this purpose I was born and for this purpose I have come into the world—to bear witness to the truth. Everyone who is of the truth listens to my voice.’³⁸ Pilate said to him, ‘What is truth?’

“After he had said this, he went back outside to the Jews and told them”—here’s the first time: “I find no guilt in him.³⁹ But you have a custom that I should release one man for you at the Passover. So do you want me to release to you the King of the Jews?’⁴⁰ They cried out again, ‘Not this man, but Barabbas!’ Now Barabbas was a robber.”

Chapter 19: “¹ Then Pilate took Jesus and flogged him. ² And the soldiers twisted together a crown of thorns and put it on his head and arrayed him in a purple robe. ³ They came up to him, saying, ‘Hail, King of the Jews!’ and struck him with their hands. ⁴ Pilate went out again and said to them, ‘See, I am bringing him out to you that you may know’”—here’s the second time—“‘that I find no guilt in him.’⁵ So Jesus came out, wearing the crown of thorns and the purple robe. Pilate said to them, ‘Behold the man!’⁶ When the chief priests and the officers saw him, they cried out, ‘Crucify him, crucify him!’ Pilate said to them, ‘Take him yourselves and crucify him,’”—here’s the third time—“‘for I find no guilt in him.’”

Three times—what has John done there? John has used Pilate as a vehicle. A vehicle to do what? A vehicle to proclaim the innocence of the Savior, to proclaim the righteousness of the Savior. Three times—“I find no guilt in Him. I find nothing wrong with this man. He’s not guilty.” Even though He was not guilty, Pilate has Him flogged. Pilate has Him mocked. In the end, Pilate has Him crucified. He had done no violence and there was no deceit in His mouth.

Our Savior volunteered. He volunteered. When did He volunteer? When did He volunteer for this work? When did He volunteer for this suffering? Before time even began. Theologians call it the Covenant of Redemption. Go back into time before time, when there’s nothing other than God—God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. There you have God the Father, God the Son, God the Holy Spirit, covenanting to work salvation, to save people from their sins.

We can’t get our heads around those things, I honestly don’t believe it. When I say I don’t believe it, I mean I don’t believe that we can get our heads around it. We can use the words, we can understand the words one word at a time—you put the whole lot together into a concept, and we really don’t understand it. We really don’t get what’s involved in this.

The eternally begotten Son of God, from before the time of creation, chose freely and willingly to be the Savior of humanity by becoming this suffering servant—by becoming this suffering servant. And I point out to you that He, as God the eternally begotten Son of God, lacked nothing, He needed nothing. He didn’t do this for need; He didn’t do this out of loneliness; He didn’t do this because He just wasn’t quite complete without me in heaven—or you.

Don't ever imagine that heaven wouldn't be quite right if you didn't get there. The presence of God, and God Himself, is perfectly happy. He has set His love upon us. The Apostle John tells us, "God is love." He loves us. And for that reason, He has made us His own, and He takes us to be with Him for all of eternity through Jesus Christ our Lord. But don't ever imagine that He needed us. Jesus, voluntarily, suffered these things.

I noticed during the week, terrible hailstorms up in Queensland, and a lady was driving along the highway. She had a baby in the car, and every window in the car got blown out by this storm. Hailstones the size of cricket balls were blasting into her car, and she laid herself across her baby. If you've seen any of the photos, you can barely recognize her back. It's been beaten black and blue. It looks like she basically turned her back to the fastest fast baller in the world of cricket today, and let him bowl a hundred overs at her. Smashed—smashed by these hailstones. But the baby was barely injured. That's salvation. On a human level, that's salvation.

My friends, as sinners, we deserve the judgment and the wrath of God. We deserve the punishment that fell upon Jesus. We deserve it—each and every one of us. We deserve it. Don't think that only murderers deserve the death penalty, or rapists. We deserve it. All, all who do not give glory to God, all who are not worshipers in spirit and truth, deserve it. And what were we, apart from the salvation of Jesus? What would we be, apart from the work of God's Holy Spirit in our lives, even now? Wicked sinners, selfish people, serving ourselves, glorifying ourselves. This fell upon Jesus.

Let's have a look at verse 10. "Yet it was the will"—or as I've already said, the good pleasure—"of the LORD to crush him; he has put him to grief; when his soul makes an offering for guilt, he shall see his offspring; he shall prolong his days; the will of the LORD shall prosper in his hand." It was the will of the Lord to crush Him. It was His "good pleasure" to crush Him. He has put Him to grief.

Jesus suffered the righteous judgment of God, His Father. He cried out upon the cross, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" Why? Because He was being treated the way we deserve to be treated. Because He was being put on the other side of that chasm of sin that separates us from our God. And that pleased God the Father. God the Father was pleased with the work that God the Son did upon the cross. It pleased Him. It satisfied Him.

Finally, God the Father saw a man doing perfect, willing obedience. Finally, God the Father saw a man doing exactly that for which He created humanity—worshiping God in spirit and in truth, without reservation, holding back nothing, claiming nothing for Himself, giving all glory to God, obeying even to the very last beat of His heart—obeying, no matter what.

Think about that. In every situation that you've ever found yourself in in your life, have you ever really, truly been in a situation where you could not obey? The answer's No. In all things, in all things, we could obey, but like Adam and Eve, we're excuse-finders. "I was tired. I was stressed. I'd had a bad week. I just needed a distraction. I just needed something different." We're all excuse-finders for our wickedness. Each and every one of us does it. Whatever we're talking about, we come up with an excuse.

But the truth is, there's no excuse. We are guilty of our sins. We are guilty. To say that I was born sinful, therefore I sin, is no excuse. You still have a conscience that tells you that you were sinning. God has every right to find us guilty for our sins. He makes an offering for guilt. "When his soul makes an offering for guilt, he shall see his offspring; he shall prolong his days."

The offering that He made for guilt was His death. He died. He shed His blood. He's the Lamb that is led to the slaughter. He's dead. He's been laid in a grave, in the grave of a rich man. And yet, "He shall see His offspring; he shall prolong his days; the will of the LORD shall prosper in his hand." How can that be, other than the one who is dead comes to life?

This Servant's Song, as we interpret it from what we have received in the New Testament, tells us all that we need to know about Jesus. It tells us that He's divine; it tells us that He's human; it tells us that He's our High Priest; it tells us that He's the sacrifice for sins; it tells us that He died; it tells us that He was raised again; that "he shall see his offspring; he shall prolong his days," and that "the will of the Lord shall prosper in his hand." That tells us that He reigns even now.

God's will is mediated to all the earth and to all humanity through Jesus Christ. What was His claim in Matthew chapter 28? "All authority, all power, all dominion, has been given to me. I rule and reign over all things," He's saying. "I rule and reign over all things. Therefore, go out into the nations and make disciples of them, baptizing them, teaching them all the things that I have commanded you, in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit."

All things are in His hand. He's the one. Remember in the book of Revelation, the people have gathered, the angels have gathered. They're worshiping God, and God has a scroll to be passed into the hand of somebody. The call goes out, "Who can open the scroll? Who can break the seals on the scroll?" Now almost every commentator I've ever read basically agrees that the scroll is the title deed to creation. It's the scroll of ownership. "Who can open the scroll?"

Well, who takes the scroll? The one who looks like a lamb that has been slain. I don't want to get into an argument of whether or not what you read there is a chronological recounting of human history, but I do want you to understand something—the thing that the Apostle John wants us to understand, I think, more than anything else—the one who had the authority to take the scroll and break the seals is Jesus. The one through whom God is mediating His will to all humanity is Jesus.

Everything is happening through the mediation of King Jesus, who is enthroned at the very right hand of God. "The will of the LORD shall prosper in his hand." Verse 11: "Out of the anguish of his soul he shall see and be satisfied; by his knowledge shall the righteous one, my servant, make many to be accounted righteous, and he shall bear their iniquities." And there it is, the gospel—the gospel of the imputation of the righteousness of Christ.

What's been the problem with the people of Judah and the people of Israel? What's been the problem with all of humanity? What's been the problem? Wicked, evil, sinful, idolatrous hearts that go through the routine of religious worship, but their hearts are not given over to God. What do we lack? Why can't we enter into the presence of God?

What was Isaiah's problem when he was given a vision in the very throne room of heaven? What did he say? "Woe is me, for I am a sinful man of sinful lips, dwelling in the midst of a sinful people of sinful lips. I don't belong here. I shouldn't be here. I can't enter into the presence of God. I'm being unmade, I'm being destroyed." What did he lack? Righteousness. He had no righteousness. There was no reason why God should look upon him with favor.

What do we lack? What have we lacked? Righteousness. We have no righteousness. "But from the anguish of his soul, this servant who makes an offering for guilt, "he shall see and be satisfied; by his knowledge shall the righteous one, my servant, make many to be accounted righteous, and he shall bear their iniquities."

Go back to Isaiah 53, verse 1: "Who has believed what he has heard from us?" Faith. Who has believed? What are we to believe? We're to believe that the servant is the Savior. We're to believe that the servant is salvation. We're to believe that His works are satisfaction to the Lord our God. We're to believe that He died in our place. We're to believe that He bore our iniquities. We're to believe that He, being innocent, death had no grip over Him, and so He was raised again to life on the third day.

And by this, we, sinners that we are, are accounted righteous in the sight of God. We're accounted righteous in the sight of God. We're justified, declared innocent. God looks upon us, and He sees the works of His servant, and He declares that all who have put their faith in the servant, all who have believed the report—they're righteous! They're righteous.

People can once again come into the presence of the living God. God can once again dwell in the midst of His people, through the person of this suffering servant, the Lord Jesus Christ, truly God, truly man—we behold His face, we behold the face of our God. We know Him, we know our God. We hear Him, we hear our God. We love Him, we love our God—this perfect Savior whom God has provided, who bears our iniquities.

Looking now at verse 12: "Therefore I will divide him a portion with the many, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong, because he poured out his soul to death and was numbered with the transgressors; yet he bore the sin of many, and makes intercession for the transgressors." "Therefore I will divide him a portion with the many, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong." Hard to understand; doesn't seem to make a whole lot of sense to us. But it's basically saying that Jesus has an inheritance, and that Jesus will divide that inheritance with the strong.

Now I think in this instance, the strong is referring to His people, to His church. He shall divide that as He so desires. He shall give to each according to His own will, according to the will of God. Why? "Because He poured out his soul to death and was numbered with the transgressors." He was identified with the people that He came to save. "Yet he bore the sin of many, and makes intercession for the transgressors." Notice the tense there of that last line: He makes intercession for the transgressors. He makes intercession for us now. He intercedes even now.

This justification that we have received, this righteousness which has been accounted ours, it's not a one-time-only thing. If we go back to the fifth century, the 400s, it was fairly common for Christians to get baptized at the last possible moment of their life. Why? Well, bad teaching, a poor understanding of Scripture. They would get baptized at the last possible moment of their life because they believed that in being baptized, their sins were washed away. If you were baptized a second before your death, you had no time to sin again. Bad teaching, false teaching, incorrect teaching.

Even now, the servant makes intercession for us. And God, who is outside of time, can at any time look upon the work of the servant and be pleased with it—at any time. We think of Jesus dying on the cross and we say, well, it's 2018 A.D. He died in around about 33 A.D. You know, do the math, and what's that—1,985 years ago? We say it happened a long time ago. God, outside of time, can look upon the crucifixion at any time. Time is irrelevant to God. Not to us, but to God. He makes intercession for us *now*. When He, in heaven, speaks of His sacrifice, He saves us now.

My friends, we are saved. We have been granted life in Christ. We will be saved. On that day of judgment, we will be set apart from God's judgment. We will be saved. We will be claimed as God's own and named as God's own. But even now, even now as we live this life in this world, struggling with our sins, battling with temptation, falling, scraping our knees, getting up, starting all over again, repenting, being convicted, getting up, starting all over again—even now, He is interceding for us. Even now, the death that He died is applicable to us. The things that He has done are saving us. We are saved; we will be saved; right now, my friend, we are *being* saved. We are being saved. We are being upheld. We are being made faithful.

You woke up this morning, and you hadn't changed your mind in your sleep. You didn't wake up this morning and think, "You know, I'm tired of this Christian thing. I won't believe in God anymore." Why? Because you are *being* saved. By God's Holy Spirit, you are *being* upheld. If God withdrew His blessing, we would all fall, each and every one of us. If God were to withdraw His blessing from us, if the Holy Spirit were to depart from us, my friends, we would fall immediately into wickedness and sin.

But the promise of God is, that's not going to happen. That's not going to happen. He has given us life in Jesus Christ. None, none, will be lost by the shepherd. The promise of the shepherd is, He will take His sheep home. Full stop. It's not a possibly, maybe, if-but. It's an "I will do this thing. I will do it." He makes intercession for us even now, and so we pray. And we feel that our prayers are feeble, and we feel that our faith is feeble, and we feel that we're nothing that we ought to be. And He makes intercession. He makes intercession for the transgressors.

The great difference between Judas and Peter is that Jesus interceded for Peter. "Satan has asked to sift you as wheat, but I have prayed for you." I have prayed for you. Jesus interceded for Peter. He never interceded for Judas. Judas goes to the place which was prepared for him. Judas is the one who would do the betraying, and Jesus did not intercede for Judas. Yet they committed, in a way, exactly the same sin. They denied the Savior of the world in the presence of witnesses. They failed to own up to God incarnate; indeed, they rebelled against Him and did not accept His promise.

But Jesus was merciful to Peter. Peter was of His elect. In John chapter 16, Jesus speaks of the fact that He has chosen them. “I chose you. You did not choose me. I chose you, that you may go out and bear fruit.” He has chosen them. All whom He has chosen, He intercedes for.

My friends, your Christian security is not actually based upon your performance, it’s based upon the performance of Jesus. Christians can lose the assurance of salvation through sin. We can feel that we are so far from God, we can lose all the joy of our salvation through sin. But we who are saved are saved, because Jesus makes intercession for the transgressors.

Let’s read from Hebrews chapter 7, and then we’ll close. So if you’d turn to Hebrews 7, I want to read from verse 23 to verse 28.

“²³ The former priests were many in number, because they were prevented by death from continuing in office, ²⁴ but he holds his priesthood permanently, because he continues forever. ²⁵ Consequently, he is able to save to the uttermost those who draw near to God through him, since he always lives to make intercession for them.

“²⁶ For it was indeed fitting that we should have such a high priest, holy, innocent, unstained, separated from sinners, and exalted above the heavens. ²⁷ He has no need, like those high priests, to offer sacrifices daily, first for his own sins and then for those of the people, since he did this once for all when he offered up himself. ²⁸ For the law appoints men in their weakness as high priests, but the word of the oath, which came later than the law, appoints a Son who has been made perfect forever.”

“²⁵ Consequently, he is able to save to the uttermost those who draw near to God through him, since he always lives to make intercession for them.” Do you hear the echoes of Isaiah 53 in that? “Innocent, unstained.” It says our Savior is a high priest, exalted above the heavens. “My servant shall be high and lifted up and shall be exalted.” Isaiah 52:13. This God-man-priest-servant, who speaks the words of God, to whom we must give the glory—He is our security for our salvation. “He has purchased the church with God’s own blood.” Acts 20:28. Amazing thing, to say that. Jesus, man and God, died for our sins, and so the Apostle could say, “As the blood of Jesus was shed, God has purchased the church with His own blood.” Imagine that.

That’s our security, my friends. That’s our safety. That’s how we become the people of God, who dwell in the presence of our God. That’s how we get cleansed of the sins of idolatry and wickedness, those covenant-breaking curses that destroy our relationship with God. The servant did the things that God required. And by His righteousness we are accounted righteous. Let’s close in prayer.

Father in heaven, we do indeed thank you that you sent your Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, into the world, that He took upon Himself flesh, that He lived in your sight a perfect pleasing life, that He died in your sight a perfect pleasing death, that He has paid the price for our sins, that we may know that we are your people, and that our salvation in Him has been secured. It has been paid for. Father in heaven, may we truly rejoice in your goodness to us. May you indeed bless these words to us. We ask in Jesus’ name. Amen.