

Numbered With the Transgressors

By Henry Mahan

Bible Text: Isaiah 53:12

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Isaiah chapter 53. My subject is, “He was numbered with the transgressors” and my text is verse 10 of Isaiah 53, Isaiah 53:10. “Yet it pleased the Lord 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. He shall see the travail of his soul and be satisfied. By his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many for he shall bear their iniquities.”

Now note verse 12. “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, he was enrolled, he was registered with the transgressors and he bear the sin of many and he made intercession for the transgressors.”

Now most preaching and most religious talk today leads the average person to believe that Christ Jesus came into this world to save moral, good, righteous people. Most preaching today and most religion today leads people to believe that Jesus Christ came into this world to call to himself the godly, the obedient and the holy and to heal those who really have no spiritual sickness.

Now I don't associate with the man on the street very much, I don't work in the plants as you men do and the stores and the factories. I don't rub shoulders there much with the people on the streets, but I believe I know something about what they are thinking and what their attitude is. And this attitude is manifest, I think, by the man on the street. You take their attitude toward the Church. The Church is for old women and little children. That is what the average man on the street believes and that is what he feels. Religion is not for the he man. Religion is not for the strong man. Religion is not for the intelligent man. Religion is for the weak. Religion is for the sissy. Religion is for the goody, goody bunch. And the average man on the street is a little bit embarrassed to be identified with religion, to be identified with preachers, to be identified with the Church. Now that is a fact. The attitude of the average person on the street, in the factory is that he is a little bit embarrassed to be identified with religion because religion is a sign of weakness and a sign of fear. Religion is for women and children.

And then this attitude also that Jesus Christ ministers to and came to save the moral, the good people. This attitude is seen in the religious people themselves. They are severely critical, strongly critical of anyone who goes astray, anyone who sins. The religious

crowd is strongly critical, hyper critical of those who fall. The religious crowd, the church people manifest a strong pride in their own personal holiness. You have seen it. I have seen it. It is nauseating to be around. The religious crowd appoints themselves judges of the conduct of other people, the habits of other people of the way of life of other people. They don't want to be around what they call sinners because they might be contaminated.

The religious crowd has a religious jargon. They don't just speak the language of the Bible, they have a special language that no one but that crowd can speak. It is a peculiar to them, this religious language. And when they are around the man on the street, when they begin speaking this religious language he doesn't understand what they are talking about, that Jesus Christ came into the world to save moral people, good people, to associate with the good people is seen in the attitude of the average sinner, a man who is made aware of his guilt, who is made aware of his sin before God. He feels like God would never save him because he is too sinful. God would never receive him just like he is.

They say, "I am too sinful to be saved. I cannot hope to find mercy. I cannot hope to find grace because I am too great a sinner. And God...I have got no business in the church. I have got no business looking to Christ because there is nothing for me. I am too evil. I am too wicked." He thinks Christ came to save good people.

Now, this attitude is seen in the man on the street. It is manifested in the churches. It is manifested from the pulpit. It is seen in the attitude of even awakened sinners that Jesus Christ came into this world to associate with, to keep company with, to establish communion with and to take to heaven those who are good and those who are moral and those who are honest and those who are pure.

Now, if we would just think a little bit, if we would just open even one eye we would see how inconsistent this attitude is with the Word of God, how inconsistent these thoughts are with the Scripture, how contrary this supposition is with God's Word.

Listen to the Word of God. "The Son of Man is come to seek and to save the lost."

Listen to Christ. "I am not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance."

"Christ died," Paul said, "for the ungodly."

"God commended his love toward us in that while we were yet sinners Christ died for us."

"If we confess our sins he is faithful and just to forgive us and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."

"This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptance that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners of whom I am chief."

“The blood of Jesus Christ, God’s Son, cleanseth us from all S-I-N sin.”

We could understand the mission of Christ a lot better if we would consider three things. Number one, if we consider what sin is. I do not believe that the average preacher has the slightest conception of what sin really is. I do not believe that the average person, I don’t believe very many people in this congregation really know what sin is. I don’t believe that the man on the street has the foggiest notion of what sin is.

Now I may get shot between the eyes while I am standing up here this morning but I am going to say what I really believe. Sin is an attitude more than an action. Sin is an attitude more than an action. Sin is a condition more than a committal. Sin is an offense of the heart rather than the hand. Christ taught that.

Turn with me to Matthew 15. Now you listen to me. The average person—and I am talking about people right here in this congregation—and the average, what we call Grace Church, average fundamental church, doesn’t have the foggiest notion what sin is. That is the reason they think they are good people when the Scripture says there is none good. No, not one. When the Word of God declares all have S-I-N-N-E-D sinned. “If any man say he hath not sin he is a liar and the truth is not in him.”

We think when we quit certain habits and quit certain customs and quit going to certain places and quit associating with certain people and quit saying certain words that we no longer sin.

Our master says...and do you know the people, the people our Lord condemned more than any other people when he was on this earth, those for whom he had the hardest words, the sharpest rebuke, certain damnation he pronounced upon them were the cleanest, most moral, most righteous people that lived in his day. Those were the people our Lord pronounced anathema upon, the cleanest, most moral, righteous, religious leaders of his day. When our Lord spoke to a harlot he spoke with compassion and kindness. When he spoke to a Pharisee he spoke with the sharpest rebuke. He called them a generation of snakes. He told them they could not escape the damnation of hell. When our Lord spoke to a publican or to a drunk he spoke with the sweetest compassion and he deepest understanding. When he spoke with this crowd of religious leaders our Lord spoke to them in this way. “You generation of hypocrites. You shut the kingdom of God up to men. You won’t enter in yourself and you shut it up to everybody around you.”

That’s the fact. And our Lord gave a parable here in Matthew 15. And the disciples came to him in verse 13, verse 12 and they said to him... Listen to Matthew 15:12. “Then came his disciples and said unto him, ‘Knowest thou that the Pharisees, the religious people, were offended after they heard this saying?’”

And our Lord answered and said, “Every plant which my heavenly Father hath not planted shall be rooted up. Let them alone. They are just blind leaders of the blind and if the blind lead the blind they both shall fall into the ditch.”

Then answered Peter and said unto him, "Declare unto us this parable."

And Jesus said, "Are you also yet without understanding? Do you not yet understand that whatsoever entereth in at the mouth goeth into the belly and is cast out into the draught?"

These Pharisees were so particular about their religious customs and ceremonies and hand washings and all of these outward ceremonies. They were particular about all these outward customs and habits and requirements and laws and commandments and all of these things. And Christ said, "That which you put in your mouth it goes in your belly, is cast out into the draught."

Look at verse 18. "But those things which proceed out of the mouth come forth from the heart. They defile the man. That is where sin is. For out of the heart, that is the tap root. That is the fountain of evil. That is the source of corruption. Out of the heart proceeds evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, false witness, blasphemy. These are the things which defile a man. This is sin. This is sin. Sin is an attitude. It develops into an action.

The Scripture says, "God seeth not as man seeth. Man looks on the outward countenance. God looks on the heart." Sin is an attitude which results in an action. Sin is a condition, a condition of the heart that results in a crime. Sin is an offense of the heart rather than the hand. The hand just is directed by the thoughts and attitude and intent of the heart.

And I will tell you. If people understood what sin is they would know Christ had to come to save sinners because there is none good. There is none righteous. There is none that seeketh after God. They are altogether become unprofitable. There is none that doeth good, no not one. The work of Christ has to be for sinners because that is all there is down here.

And then we consider the second thing, consider what salvation is. What is salvation? Salvation is not just leaving one denomination and going to a more accurate denomination. Salvation is not just deciding to go to heaven when we die. Salvation is not just deciding to be aligned or allied with moral people, good people, religious people. What is salvation? Salvation is redemption from the penalty of sin. That is what it is.

Turn to Matthew chapter one. Let's look at this a moment. When the angel came down and announced to Joseph that Mary would bring forth a son, this was the announcement to Joseph about the birth of the Lord Jesus Christ, the Redeemer. And the angel said to Joseph, verse 21 of Matthew one, "And she shall bring forth a son and thou shalt call his name Jesus, that is Savior, for he shall save his people from their sins, their sinful condition."

Redemption, what is salvation? It is redemption from the penalty of sin. In the fulness of time God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem us from the curse of the law. That is why Christ came, to save people from the curse of the law. You have never been under the curse of the law. You have never been saved. You have

never been lost. You have never been found. You have never been a sinner. You have never met the Savior. You have never been stripped. You have never been clothed. You have never been dead. You have never been raised. You have never been blind. You have never had sight restored. Salvation is redemption from the penalty of sin. Salvation is redemption from the power of sin. Salvation is redemption from the practice of sin. That is what it is all about. Your sins have separated you from God. That is why Christ came. He came down here not to be ministered unto, but to minister and to give his life a ransom for many.

When you consider what sin is that is the first place. If you miss out there you have missed out all the way. If you don't know what sin is, if you don't know the depths of sin, the exceeding sinfulness of sin, the awfulness of sin, the filth and guilt of sin, you don't know what sin is. If you can't identify what sin is, you can't identify with sinners. And if you can't identify with sinners you can't identify with Christ because he came to save sinners. And that is what salvation is. It is not to establish a social order down here. It is to save people from sin. It is not just to come down here and recruit an army for the Lord to take them to heaven so that heaven will be populated. It is to save people from sin.

Now, consider the work of Christ in salvation. This is the third thing. If you consider what sin is you will have to say Christ came to save sinners. If you consider what salvation is you have to say Christ came to save sinners. If you consider the work of Christ in salvation you will be persuaded that he came to save sinners.

What is his work?

Number one, it is two fold. Number one the work of Christ Jesus, the work of our Lord and Savior was to bring in a perfect righteousness. Isn't that right? He came to bring in a perfect righteousness, God's righteousness. Christ is God's righteousness. He came to bring in a perfect holiness. For whom? For those who already have one?

Pick all the good Baptists you know, the good, clean, moral, outstanding, upstanding Baptists and Methodists and Pentecostals and Nazarenes and Presbyterians. Get all these fine, moral, outstanding holy people and Christ came down here to establish a perfect righteousness for that crowd that has already got one? That is the reason the Pharisees rejected him. They didn't need a righteousness. They had one. Who needs a righteousness if he already has one?

Did Christ come down here to weave a robe of righteousness for folks that were already clothed for those who were naked?

“Why does your master associate with publicans and sinners?” That was the question asked then.

I'll tell you why. Because he came to save sinners. They were his people. They were his sheep. They were his brethren. You are going to see in a minute how he was numbered with them.

But I said the work of Christ in salvation is two fold. He came, first of all, to bring in a perfect righteousness. Secondly, he came to effect and atonement. For whom? Who needs an atonement? Do you need an atonement? Huh? The only folks I know who need an atonement are those who are enemies of God. The only folks I know who need to be reconciled are those who are at war with God. Huh? The only people I know who need a sacrifice are sinners, bonafide, self confessed, unadulterated, no excuse, no alibi sinners. Christ died for those who deserve to die. Christ bore hell for those who deserve hell. The sinless became sinful that the sinful might be made sinless. The wages of sin is death. The soul that sinneth it shall die. That is why he came.

Now, salvation needs a sinner and salvation seeking sinners and salvation goes to look for sinners. And unless salvation finds a sinner, salvation won't save. The blood of Christ needs a sinner. The blood of Christ seeks the sinner. The blood of Christ looks for a sinner. And if the blood of Christ cannot find a sinner it will not cleanse. The atonement needs a sinner. The atonement looks for a sinner. And if the atonement cannot find a bonafide, genuine sinner it won't atone. It won't reconcile. The high priest needs a sinner. And if the high priest can't find a sinner the high priest won't represent. Only sinners.

Come ye sinners poor and needy weak and wounded sick and sore. Jesus, ready, stands to save you. He is full of pity, love and power. Let not conscience make you linger. Be thankful you have got one. Thank God he gave you one. Thank God it is smitten and broken. Thank God it is disturbing you. Nor of fitness fondly dream. All the fitness he requireth is what? To feel your need of him.

"Well, I am coming to Jesus, preacher, when I...but I got some things I got to get out of my life."

You will never come.

"Well, I am coming to Jesus, preacher, but I got some things to straighten up. I have got some things to clean up."

You will never come. He is not looking for folks that are cleaned up. He is looking for folks to clean up. That's right.

"Oh, I'm coming. I am going to come to church. I just...I want to get my life straightened out."

No. Christ is not looking for folks with their lives straightened out. He is looking for folks to straighten out their lives. You will never come.

Come ye weary, heavy laden, bruised and mangled by the fall. If you tarry till your better that is this world's philosophy. That is the average preacher's philosophy. That is the man on the street's philosophy. That is the philosophy of people right here in this congregation. You will never come at all.

Look at Isaiah 53 again, verse 12b. "And he was numbered...and he was numbered with whom? Transgressors."

What is a transgressor? That is a sinner. That is a real sinner. That is a genuine sinner. That is a bonafide sinner. That is a thief on a cross. That is a Magdalena with seven devils. That is a Saul of Tarsus spewing out hatred for the Church. That is a Simon Peter with all of his blasphemy. That is a sinner.

"He was numbered with the transgressors."

Now, to the man and woman in this congregation and thank God to this preacher who is deeply conscious of sin and that sin is not connected with a bunch of silly outward actions. That sin is connected with a deep seated, deep rooted, adamic nature which hates God and hates God's will and loves my will and wants my will and desires my will and God can go to and stay put. That is sin. It is that selfish nature, that egotistical nature, that proud nature, that covetous nature, that envious nature, that malicious nature, that lustful nature, that fleshly nature. That is what I am talking about. I am not talking about going to a picture show. I am not talking about eating at a restaurant where they serve beer. Phooey on you. You don't know what you are talking about.

To the man or woman who is conscious of sin this is going to be a great comfort right here. Christ is identified with, Christ is registered with. Christ is enrolled with sinners. He is one of them. He is one of them.

The reason he understands me is because he is one of me. The reason he can represent me is because he is one of me. Now, he is not one of you religious Pharisees, you little goody goody moral self righteous outfit. He is not one of you. He wasn't numbered with you. He wouldn't even associate with that outfit when he was here on this earth. He is numbered with sinners. He is enrolled with sinners. And do you know where it started? Turn to Luke chapter two. I will tell you where it all started down here on this earth. I know it started in the covenant of grace, but I am talking about right here in experience.

In Luke chapter two, now listen to this, Luke two, verse one through five. "It came to pass in those days there went out a decree from Caesar Augustus that all the world should be taxed." That word T-A-X-E-D is what? Look in the margin of your Bible. Enrolled, a census. That is what it was.

I want the name of every descendant of David. You go to Bethlehem. I want the name of every descendent of Levi, every descendent of Judah. I want the name. You go to your town. That's right.

“And this taxing, this enrollment, was first made when Cyrenius was governor of Syria and all went to be enrolled, everyone to his own city. And Joseph went up from Galilee out of the city of Nazareth unto the Judea, unto the city of David which is called Bethlehem because he was of the house and lineage of David.”

That is where our Lord was born and that was where he was enrolled. His name was on the list of people subject to the Roman government, subject to Roman bondage, subject to Roman slavery. He was enrolled in Bethlehem in sinners, numbered with them. Identified with them, registered, officially.

He was numbered with the sinners in public opinion. What did they say about him? “Why, he is a devil. He is crazy.” That is what they said. “We know who you are,” they said. “You are nothing but a carpenter. Do you teach us? Why you are not 50 years old. Where did you go to school? You are nothing but a carpenter. We know your daddy and we know your momma and we know your brothers and sisters. You came out of Nazareth. Can anything good come out of Nazareth?” Public opinion numbered him with the transgressors. “You are a wine bibber. You are a gluttonous man. You are a friend of publicans and sinners. We know who your crowd is.” He was called a friend of sinners.

He was numbered with the transgressors in the ecclesiastical court. Anyone caught associating with him was excommunicated from the synagogue. That bunch of high priests and leaders of the religious ecclesiastical court met together, slapped him on the face and said, “You are a blasphemer. That is the verdict of this court.”

You are registered, you are enrolled, you are numbered as a blasphemer.

And then he was numbered among the transgressors in the civil court. Both Herod and Pontius Pilate with two pens at once sentenced him to die. The court said, “Release Barabbas and let it be the verdict of this court that Jesus of Nazareth shall be nailed to a cross and stay there until he dies.” He is enrolled with the transgressors.

He was numbered with the transgressors in punishment. He bore the transgressor’s scourging. They tied him to a pole and they took the robe off his back and there they whipped him and scourged him, 39 lashes till his back was completely lacerated from the top of his spine to the bottom of his spine to the nape of his neck. He carried the transgressor’s cross. He was nailed to the transgressor’s cross. He died, written down in the calendar of crime.

And do you know that just a few years after Israel became a nation in 1948 I saw this in the *Louisville Courier Journal*, Brother Edgehill Moore sent it to me, a clipping several years ago that a young Jewish lawyer called on the Jewish court to go back and do away with the verdict of the last Jewish court that met before Christ was crucified and declare Jesus Christ to be innocent of all charges and they wouldn’t do it. They wouldn’t do it. This young Jewish lawyer said, “This is the first Jewish court to be seated since that court held session back yonder in 33 AD and I demand that you go back and review the case and declare him innocent.”

And they said, “We don’t have that power. We don’t have that authority.”

He is still guilty.

He was numbered with the transgressors. He was enrolled with them in public opinion, in the ecclesiastical court, in the judicial court, in the civil court, in the punishment, in death. And watch it. He was numbered with the transgressors in the courts of heaven. When all mankind had turned their back on him and rejected him and spat upon him and nailed him to a cross he was forsaken of all men. He lifted his eyes to heaven and cried, “My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?” And the only answer from heaven was silence, silence. The holy God must forsake transgressors.

“Thou art numbered with the transgressors. I have forsaken thee.”

Now, my dear friend, I am ashamed of my sin, but I am not ashamed to be a sinner. I am ashamed of my rebellion, but I am not ashamed to be a rebel. I am ashamed of my ungodliness, but I am not ashamed to be ungodly because my Lord was numbered with the transgressors. He wasn’t numbered with the faithful. He wasn’t numbered with the pure. He took not on him the nature of angels. He came down here and was numbered with the transgressors. And there isn’t a sinner so low and there isn’t a soul so black and there isn’t a heart so wretched and there is not a man so far from God that he cannot be identified with the Lord Jesus Christ who was numbered with the transgressors.

Look at the next line in our text, Isaiah 53. “He was numbered, enrolled, identified, registered with transgressors. He bare the sin of many.”

Now, here is the gospel as clear as the noon day sun. Christ did really, Christ did literally, Christ did truly take our sins in his body on the tree. He who knew no sin actually became our sin bearer. It was no fantasy. It was no myth. It was no supposition. He was made sin. That is what Scripture says. He bare the sin of many. He took our sins. He actually, in his body and in his soul took our sins. That is what Scripture says. He bore our sins in his body on the tree. He made his soul an offering for sin.

Comprehend this, you have the gospel. He actually bore my sin away. Listen to me. There is therefore now, since Christ suffering, there is therefore now, since Christ’s death, there is therefore now, since Christ’s sacrifice, no condemnation to them who are in Christ. Scripture says, “Behold the Lamb of God that what? Taketh away the sin of the world.”

“I will forgive their sins.” And God says, “I will remember their sins no more. I will cast them behind my back. As far as the East is from the West so far hath he removed our transgressions from us.” And there is now no sin upon those for whom Christ died.

Now, my friends, I wouldn’t offend you if I could help it. But if this offends you, you will just have to go out offended. Our Lord Jesus Christ when he died on that cross

didn't make an effort to save anybody. He actually, literally saved some people. Our Lord Jesus Christ didn't bear sin in general. He bore sin in particular. Our Lord Jesus Christ didn't die on that cross for people who are already in hell and who were going to hell anyway. Our Lord effectually, successfully took our sins in his body and paid the debt. And payment God's justice cannot twice demand, first at my bleeding surety's hand and then again at mine. What kind of God do you know?

Now, last of all, it says he was numbered with the transgressors. He was identified with them. He was enrolled with them. He was one of them. He was one of them. He was one of them in the eyes of the ecclesiastical court. He was a blasphemer. He was one of them in the eyes of the civil court. He was a law breaker. He was one of them in the eyes of the courts of heaven, a sinner. And he bore their sins. He paid their debt. He put away their guilt. There is therefore now no condemnation to them who are in Christ. Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect? Who is he that condemneth?

Last of all watch this. "And he made intercession for whom? For sinners, transgressors." Our Lord, first of all, he prayed for us before we came to faith. That's right. We see that in the parable of the fig tree. The feet of justice approached that tree. You can hear the feet of justice. He feels the sharp blade and a voice says, "Lo, these years I have sought fruit on this tree and I have found none. I will cut it down. Why cumbereth it the ground." But the voice of the intercessor speaks and says, "Spare it a little while. I will dig about it and I will dung it. And if it bear not fruit cut it down. I pray for this tree. This tree is going to bear fruit because I am going to dig about it and I am going to dung it. And if it doesn't you can cut it down. But if it does, let it live."

The Lord Jesus prayed for you before you ever came to faith. While you were out there trying to bust hell wide open he was praying for you. While you was out there trying to get away from God he was praying for you. While you were living for self and for sin and for the world and for the devil and for the flesh the Lord Jesus...don't... "That tree has got no fruit on it, but don't cut it down yet. Don't cut it down yet. It will bear some fruit. I am going to work on that. I am going to work on that."

"God," Paul said, "who separated me from my mother's womb and called me by his grace was pleased one day after putting up with me. He stood at my heart's door amid sunshine and rain. He patiently waited an entrance to gain for shame that so long he entreated in vain. He is precious. He prayed for me before I was ever saved. And then he prayed for me when he died on that cross. I was there in that crowd hollering, "Crucify him."

And he looked down and said, "Father, forgive him. He doesn't know what he is doing. He doesn't know what he is doing."

The Lord Jesus Christ prays for our comfort. He said, "I will pray the Father and he will give you another comforter. The Lord Jesus prays for our preservation. He says, "Father, keep them. Keep them which thou hast given me. Keep them through thine own

name those that thou hast given me. Keep them. I pray not that the Father should take you out of the world, but that he should keep you from the evil one.”

He prays for our glorification. He says, “Father, I will that those whom thou hast given me be with me where I am.”

I am going to tell you something. There is enough...there has been enough sin committed by me right here in this pulpit this morning to send me to hell if I didn't have a high priest praying for my soul. There has been enough sin since you came in this auditorium and sat down here, the very identification you have with Adam, the identification you have with the Christ crucifiers, the thoughts that have gone through your mind, the attitude which you have toward other people sitting right here in this congregation, the lack of complete love for God with all your heart, mind, soul and strength, the lack of the ability to concentrate on worship, to stand before the throne of God with fear and adoration and awe and reverence, the lack of love. You don't love people as you love yourself. There has been enough sin to send you to hell, to damn your soul eternally, to disassociate and separate you from God for always. If it weren't for Christ being identified with you, being one with you, being numbered with you and bearing your sins and interceding for you and for me. I am talking about me. I am talking about you. Oh, what a great Savior, what a great salvation.

We don't have...you talk about being holy. You don't have enough holiness to concentrate on God for 30 minutes let alone live a life time without sin. That is what makes me so weary of all this so called professed holiness and bragging holiness and righteousness. We don't have enough to come in the house of God—and I am talking about me—and sit for one hour and think on that which is above, that which is holy and pure and righteous and above reproach. My relationship with the living God.

Thank God for Christ. Isn't that what you say? I'm glad he came down here and numbered with me. He was tested in all points as I am yet without sin. I thank God I have a Savior. If one sheep of Christ could fall away I would fall 1000 times a day. I am a bonafide sinner...the genuine, I am the real article. But Christ was, too. He was numbered with me and he bore my sins and right now he is praying for me. He is praying for me.

Our Father in heaven, through Christ our Redeemer, through Christ our sacrifice, Christ our substitute, through Christ our great high priest we come into thy presence having no business there without Christ and having no opportunity to be there without Christ. But thank you, Father, for loving us and sending the Savior to die for us. It is in him that we have life and that more abundantly. In his name we pray. Amen.