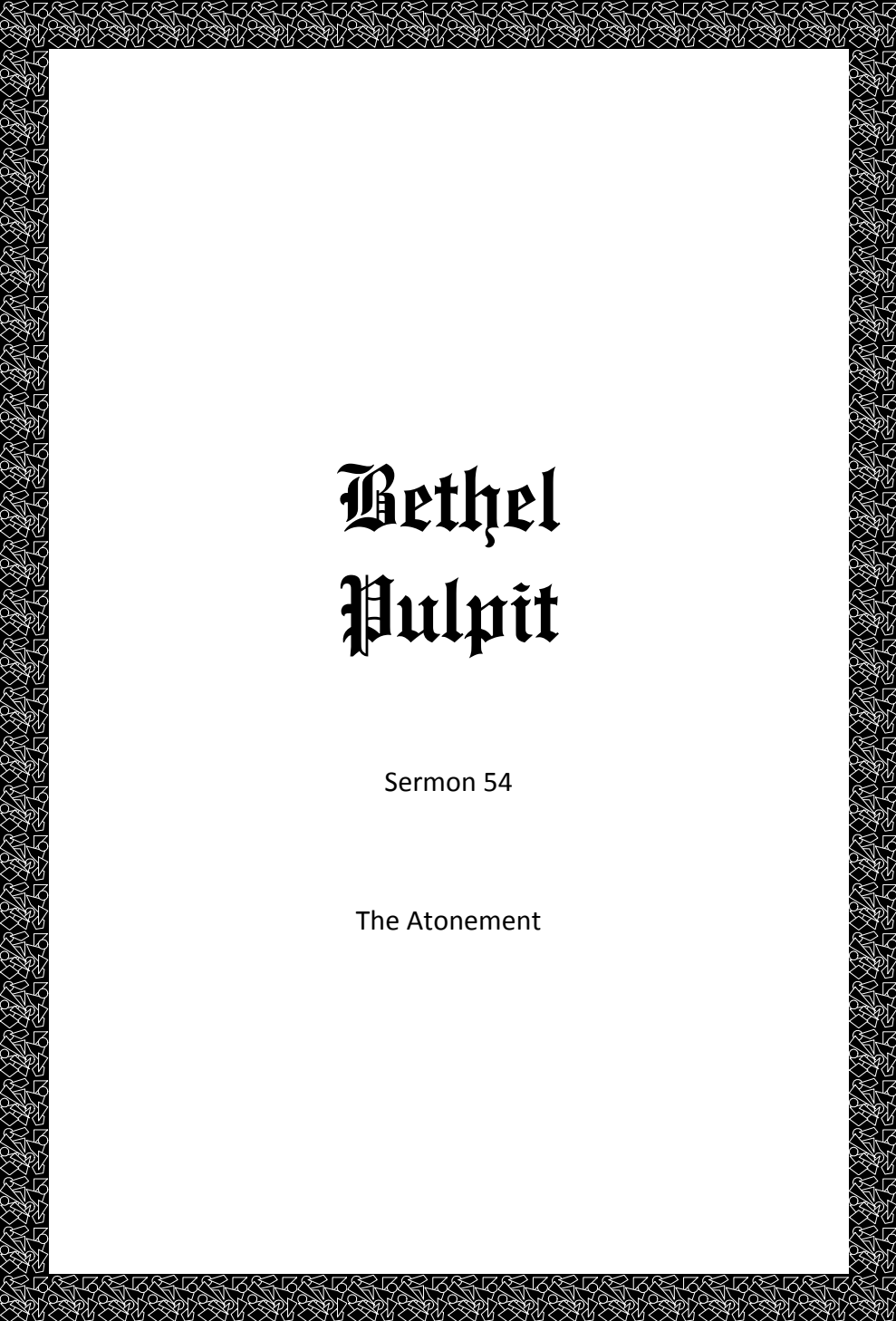




Bethel Pulpit

Sermon 54

The Atonement

**Sermon preached at Bethel Chapel, Luton,
by Mr. B. A. Ramsbottom,
on Thursday, 8th June, 1972**

Text: *“But He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon Him; and with His stripes we are healed” (Isaiah 53. 5).*

I have felt a desire that by faith you might be sweetly led into the sin-atoning sufferings of the Lamb of God. I thought of it last Sabbath evening when we were singing the closing hymn concerning the sufferings of Christ (476):

“His head, the dear majestic head,
That cruel thorns did wound”;

“Those soft, those blessed feet of His,
That once rude iron tore”;

and I wondered how many of you had been led by faith to view the sufferings of Christ and to see the reason for them, and to view the love in them and to feel your soul’s personal interest there. I would that tonight the blessed Spirit might take of these precious things of Jesus and show them to you, that you might be led by faith to Calvary to see the Lamb of God suffer and die, and that some of you might be sweetly persuaded of your soul’s personal interest here. For, beloved friends, really it comes to this – either we have an interest in the sufferings and death of Jesus, or we have not.

Isaiah 53 is a most blessed chapter. It is the chapter where I first found “the ground wherein my anchor, hope, shall firm remain, the wounds of Jesus for my sin.” Was it not one of the godly Puritans who used to say, “Send doubting Christians to the 53rd of Isaiah”? This chapter is one of the blessed proofs of inspiration. Here is an account of the death of Jesus at Calvary, written so many hundreds of years before He suffered, and yet written almost as an eye-witness account. It sweetly blends together two things: the sufferings of the Lord Jesus and the reason for them. The great point with the prophet is to show *why* the Messiah must suffer, to take away the scandal of His sufferings, to take away the

scandal of the cross; to show the blessed purpose, His accomplishments, His triumph in His sufferings; to show how willingly, how lovingly He went to the cross. May the blessed Spirit lead us through the rent veil into the holiest by the blood of Jesus.

“He was wounded for our transgressions.” The blessed Person set before us is the Son of God. O what an amazing thing that He, who is the Creator of all things, He, who is the Lord of life and glory, should die! But this is the blessed Son of God who in creation “spake, and it was done; He commanded, and it stood fast”; the blessed Son of God who from everlasting was in the bosom of the Father, co-equal, co-eternal with Him. But now the Son of God is seen in our nature, yet without sin. Here the dear Lamb of God is viewed in His spotless innocence, His holiness and perfection: “holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and made higher than the heavens.” I like that word in the Hebrews: “For *such* an High Priest became us.” There is such a suitability in Christ, in His glorious Person, in His sinless, sacred humanity. Apart from this He could not be a High Priest, could not be a Saviour. “For *such* an High Priest became us, who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and made higher than the heavens.” Here we view the blessed Mediator, God and Man in one glorious Christ; “Man to suffer, God to save.”

There is this emphasis upon His glorious Person: “*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.” There is this emphasis upon His sacred Person. It is because of who He is that there is such value, such efficacy in the death of Christ. Christ very God as well as Man, and although it was in His sacred humanity that He suffered, yet His eternal Godhead was united to His sacred humanity, and this gave the value to His sufferings, and the blood that He shed, and His sin-atonement death.

“*He* was wounded.” Now can you comprehend this, that He was wounded? “It pleased the Lord to bruise Him; He hath put Him to grief.” He was wounded by men, but also wounded and bruised by His eternal Father. The Lord Jesus, from His birth, was a Man of sorrows and acquainted with grief. He grew up “as a root out of a dry ground,” and He was “despised and rejected of men; a Man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief.” Throughout the whole of His holy life He was a Man of sorrows,

but you see it especially in Gethsemane and at Calvary. But who can understand the depth of this? “He was wounded.” It seems as if the Holy Spirit has drawn a veil over the deepest sufferings of the sacred body of the Lord Jesus. With what reverence do the evangelists who witnessed the crucifixion, speak of His death! But “He was wounded.” He was wounded by the crown of thorns. He was wounded as He was scourged before Pilate. He was wounded by the nails in His hands and feet. He was wounded by the spear that pierced His side. Have you ever had a glimpse by faith of the wounds of Jesus?

“Then beneath the cross adoring,
Sin does like itself appear;
When, the wounds of Christ exploring,
I can read my pardon there.”

You will not read your pardon anywhere else but in the wounds of Christ.

“He was wounded ... He was bruised.” It seems to me that here is not mere repetition. I take it in a special sense the wounding speaks of the sufferings of His body, and the bruising speaks of the greater sufferings of His soul. “He was bruised.” And what was the bruising of His holy soul? The load of sin that was laid upon Him, this bruised Him. Divine wrath which was poured upon Him from on high, this bruised Him. Especially the hiding of His Father’s face – “My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?”

“Many hands were raised to wound Him,
None would interpose to save,
But the awful stroke that found Him,
Was the stroke that justice gave.”

This was the bruising. “He was bruised.” Christ is the bread of life to hungry souls: “Bread corn is bruised.” There cannot be bread unless the corn is bruised and crushed and ground and then baked; then it is bread. “Jesus said, I am the bread of life.” To view Jesus just as the Son of God in His divine nature, there is no bread of life for sinners – but O to view Him wounded and bruised, crushed beneath His Father’s wrath against sin imputed to Him, and then the awful heat of it, now this is the bread of life. Hungering souls, this is where every desire will be satisfied, in the broken body, the shed blood of the dear Redeemer.

“He was wounded ... He was bruised.” We are not left in ignorance concerning the cause. As the dying thief so nobly testified: “This Man hath done nothing amiss.” But He was wounded, but He was bruised. What was the cause? “For our transgressions, for our iniquities.” This word embraces all the people of God. This chapter makes it very clear that the sufferings of Jesus were for His people. This is both stated positively and also implied. Stated positively: “For the transgression of My people was He stricken.” Implied: “He shall see of the travail of His soul, and shall be satisfied.” His blood was not shed in vain. All for whom He laid down His life shall one day be with Him in glory. He will not be disappointed. “He shall see of the travail of His soul, and shall be satisfied.”

“Wounded for our transgressions ... bruised for our iniquities.” The Lord Jesus suffered as His people’s Substitute. This is why He was wounded, why He was bruised. In the Garden of Gethsemane the bruising began. He took the bitter cup. “Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from Me.” Then on Calvary He emptied it, but He was His people’s Substitute. “Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God” In the mysterious transactions of Calvary, in fulfilling His eternal purposes in covenant, the Father laid all the sins of His people upon Christ, and as He was made sin, as sin was laid upon Him, the Father punished sin in the Substitute that He might not punish it in the sinner. O the mystery of substitution! The old preachers used to speak of it like this (and very truly): “In the room, place and stead of His people.” The sins of His people were laid upon Him. He suffered in the place of His people. Divine wrath fell upon Him that it might never fall upon them. As we sang just now:

“Behold a scene of matchless grace,
'Tis Jesus in the sinner’s place;
Heaven’s brightest glory sunk in shame,
That rebels might adore His name.”

The mystery of substitution. Transgressions, iniquities; or if you will, the sins of commission and omission. Transgressions, that is, actively doing wrong. Iniquities include the great mass of guilt but especially disobedience to God’s holy law and that not being done which should be done.

“He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities.” Pause here, friends, to consider the great love of the Lord Jesus in His sufferings and death. He came so willingly; so freely, so gladly He endured them. “I have a baptism to be baptized with; and how am I straitened till it be accomplished!” It was for the joy that was set before Him that He endured the cross, despising the shame. Was ever love like this? May the Holy Spirit lead you by faith to the cross, open wide that scene of suffering love, and there reveal to you the greatness of that love of Christ. “Was ever love like this?”

When they came to apprehend Him, He said, “I am He,” and they fell down in helplessness. When Pilate spoke of condemning Him, He said He could pray to His Father who would send down twelve legions of angels. But you see, now He suffers as the sinner’s Substitute, and His people’s guilt is laid on Him and divine wrath is to fall upon Him, and He willingly endures, in love. Love to whom? Those who deserved it? Those who were worthy of it? Love to sinners. “God commendeth His love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.” This is the gospel, His willingness to die for sinners:

“It were an easy part
For Him the cross to fly;
But love to sinners fills His heart,
And makes Him choose to die.”

How the apostle opens it up! For a righteous man few would die, and yet for a good man some would even dare to die, but “God commendeth His love toward us, in that, *while we were yet sinners*, Christ died for us.” O the love of Christ in dying for sinners, in so willingly enduring those sufferings! “Many waters cannot quench love.” “Having loved His own which were in the world, He loved them unto the end.” Then what think ye of Christ in His great love? Is there any sweet attraction in it, His dying love?

Also pause to consider the beauties of Christ in His sorrows. Godly Sibbes said, “Christ is never more beautiful to His people than when He was most deformed for them.” For “His visage was so marred more than any man.” But here you see the Rose of Sharon and the Lily of the valleys, Christ in His sufferings. “Thine eyes shall see the King in His beauty”: I know it speaks of heaven, but it also speaks of Calvary. You

see the King in His beauty here, even if the crown that He wears is a crown of thorns. “Thine eyes shall see the King in His beauty.” Then tell me, friends, tell me, do you view any beauty in a suffering Saviour? Isaiah says (verse 2), “When we shall see Him, there is no beauty that we should desire Him.” O this is the condemnation of every natural man: “When we shall see Him, there is no beauty that we should desire Him.” Now how many of you have had that Scripture reversed in your souls’ experience? You can go before a holy, heart-searching God, and you can say, “Lord, this word can never be written against me. It can never be said of me that I see no beauty in a suffering Saviour that I should desire Him.” Well, on which side do you stand? Is there any beauty in Christ that you should desire Him? Any beauty in His sufferings?

“So fair a face bedewed with tears;
What beauty e’en in grief appears!
He wept, He bled, He died for you;
What more, ye saints, could Jesus do?”

Pause also to see the accomplishments of His sufferings. “He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities.” And in His sufferings and death He for ever took away the transgressions and iniquities of His people. There is one point I have often admired, and I have spoken to you of this: as if the Holy Ghost would strain human language to the utmost to set forth the complete removal of sin in the atonement. Some of the clearest, some of the strongest scriptures are on this point, the removing of transgressions, the removing of iniquities in the atonement. “Thou wilt cast all their sins into the depths of the sea,” that is, the ocean of His grace. “As far as the east is from the west, so far hath He removed our transgressions from us.” “In that day and at that time shall the sins of Jacob be sought for and there shall be none, and the sins of Judah and they shall not be found.” The complete putting away of sin in the atonement. “He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities.”

This point was most beautifully opened up typically on the day of atonement. On the day of atonement there were two goats taken. The lot was cast, one for the Lord, one for the people. One goat was taken and slain, its blood was shed, its body was burnt without the camp, its blood was taken by the high priest into the most holy place and sprinkled there.

Now the other goat, the high priest confessed Israel's sins upon its head, and then it was taken by the hand of a fit man and led away into the wilderness, never to be seen again. Typically it spoke of the complete and absolute removing of the sins of the Israel of God. Now that was a dark dispensation; it was but the shadow. These things are done away in Christ. But you can imagine the faithful Israelite, so conscious of his guilt, seeing the high priest laying sin, the sin of all Israel, upon the scapegoat, and with what delight he saw that goat led away out of sight to be seen no more for ever. O the complete removing of sin in the sufferings and death of the Lord Jesus!

You know, it is a beautiful word this, "the atonement." Is not this what some of you want, what some of you long for? You feel your unworthiness, your guilt, your sin, your transgressions, your iniquities, and there is such a suitability in the atonement. "The blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth us from all sin." But what of the accomplishments of His sufferings and death? The fountain was opened for sin and for uncleanness, and that precious fountain of the dear Redeemer's blood has the same efficacy today as when He suffered. The vilest sinner, feeling his guilt, is welcome to Calvary to wash in the blood of Christ. These are the precious accomplishments of His death. "The law made nothing perfect," either the moral law or the ceremonial law with all its types and shadows and all the lambs and bulls and goats that were slain; "the law made nothing perfect, but the bringing in of a better hope did." This is the bringing in of a better hope, and if the law made nothing perfect, "by one offering He hath perfected for ever all them that are sanctified." Now these are the precious accomplishments of His sufferings and death. "He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities." An end made of sin, the work of redemption finished, the ransom price paid, eternal justice satisfied, the veil rent in twain from the top to the bottom, a new and living way made into the holiest of all by the blood of Jesus, and the people of God saved with an everlasting salvation. These are the accomplishments of His death. O the value of the sufferings of Jesus, what He endured and what He accomplished!

"But He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon Him." That means: the chastisement that we deserved because of sin fell upon Christ, that through His bearing it we may be blessed with everlasting peace.

“The chastisement of our peace was upon Him.” Peace is a sweet word, an attractive word, even naturally, but how much more so spiritually! There is no peace between a fallen, guilty sinner and a holy God. Then how can peace be made? “Having made peace through the blood of His cross.” The Lord Jesus died. There would have been no peace for guilty sinners apart from His death, but He bore their just desert; that was the chastisement, the wrath of God falling upon Him. But He bore it that His people might be blessed with peace – in both senses. There are two ways in which the blood of Christ procured peace. One, there was reconciliation for guilty sinners, “Now in Christ Jesus ye who sometimes were far off,” enemies, aliens, “are made nigh by the blood of Christ.” Peace! And that peace is a state. Then also, peace of conscience; because the sinner under a sense of his guilt has no peace. But as the Holy Spirit shows him something of the value of that peace-making, peace-speaking blood of Jesus, it is there that his guilt disappears and there he finds his peace.

“The chastisement of our peace was upon Him.” Friends, beware of false peace. Have you peace of conscience as you think of eternity, as you think of the judgment day, as you think of the hour of your death? Can you contemplate these solemn realities and have peace in your heart? Then it is either a false peace or a true peace. How did that peace come? Did it come through a saving knowledge of Christ? Then all is well. But can you not say how that peace came? Then beware, great is your danger. Did you just drift into it? Do you not know how it came? Do you just take things for granted? Do you just hope all will be well? Do you just leave it until later? How do you think of death, the grave, the judgment day, a never-ending eternity, heaven and hell? Is it with peace? And how did your peace come? Blessed characters who have found peace in Jesus.

“Peace, perfect peace, in this dark world of sin?
The blood of Jesus whispers peace within.”

“The chastisement of our peace was upon Him; and with His stripes we are healed.” His stripes – that is, His scars, His wounds. As Bunyan says, “He has given me rest by His sorrow and life by His death.” Now this is the mystery of divine healing. It is through His stripes that your malady is dealt with. So sin here is spoken of as a dreadful malady.

O we need healing. “Is there no balm in Gilead; is there no physician there?” Jesus suffered and bled and died that with His stripes His people might be healed. As Staupitz said to Luther, “Brother Martin, look to the wounds of Christ!” Now this is the place of healing.

“Seek, my soul, no other healing,
But in Jesus’ balmy blood;
He, beneath the Spirit’s sealing,
Stands thy great High Priest with God.”

“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.”

Just one or two words of application. It has been my desire that the blessed Spirit might lead you to Calvary, lead you into the awful sufferings of the dear Lamb of God. Now if He brings you here, you will find that this is the place of repentance. You will hate your sins and repentance will flow. You will see that it was sin that caused the Lord of life and glory to suffer; sin that wounded, that bruised Him, that chastised Him, that caused His stripes. And then you will see it was the sin of the people of God that caused Him to suffer, and as you are led to a sweet hope that you are amongst the people of God, you will see that it was your sins that caused the Lamb of God to groan and to cry, that caused His bitter anguish. That will be the place of repentance. “I will pour upon them the spirit of grace and of supplications, and they shall look upon Me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for Him.” You will find it to be the place of humility. You will be nothing; Christ will be everything. You will find it to be the place where Christ is made truly precious to your soul. You will find it to be the place of love. If ever a sinner loves the dear Redeemer, it is at the foot of the cross. You will find it is the place of sanctification. I know especially the Word of God speaks of the Holy Ghost’s work in sanctification, but it is not separate from Calvary. When is it the sinner most hates sin? When is it the sinner most longs to be holy? When is it the sinner most finds his affections set on things above? It is when the Holy Spirit leads him to Calvary. It has a sanctifying effect to see the Redeemer die, and to ask the reason why. And you will at times look beyond the cross, beyond the grave, to see the Lamb of God exalted, “a Lamb as it had been slain in the midst of the throne,”

and to hear the everlasting song, “Worthy is the Lamb that was slain, and hath redeemed us unto God by His blood,” and you will begin to learn it on earth as the sweet foretaste of heaven. It is the place of sanctification.

Then the great question, Have I an interest in the sufferings and death of Christ?

Well, beloved friends, sin must be punished, the wrath of God must fall upon sin, and our sin must be punished. Your sins, my sins, the wrath of God must fall upon them, either upon Christ as our Substitute or upon ourselves personally. It is either one or the other. If Christ did not suffer for you and me, then eternally we must ourselves suffer. And a thousand years in a lost eternity suffering the torments of the damned will never make atonement for one sin. It is unspeakably solemn, but sin must be punished and will be punished either in the sinner or in the sinner’s Substitute. That is what we mean by a hiding place. God’s people shelter in Christ. Divine wrath which must fall on the sinner fell upon Christ that it might never fall upon His people. Thus He became their hiding place.

It will be a solemn thing to meet the Redeemer on the day of judgment if He did not suffer for our sins, if we have to bear the suffering ourselves eternally. Then may it be the great exercise, the great concern, and O that the blessed Spirit might convince you of your sin and lead you to Calvary and show you His sufferings and death and make known to you your personal interest in the atonement.