

Prophetic Paradigms of Soteriological Healing in Isaiah 53:5 and its Ecclesial Applications in Contemporary Theological Discourse

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Abstract

The article investigates the soteriological (salvation-related) dimensions of healing as depicted in Isaiah 53:5 and its ecclesial applications within contemporary theological discourse. It clarifies the theological implications of this verse and its relevance to modern Christian practices. It provides a thorough exegetical analysis of Isaiah 53:5, focusing on its soteriological significance and how it informs the understanding of divine healing. The article employs an exegetical approach to analyze Isaiah 53:5, utilizing historical-critical methods to uncover the text's original meaning within its ancient context. It includes a review of scholarly interpretations, theological discussions, and historical background to provide a comprehensive understanding of the verse. Also, it integrates contemporary theological perspectives and examines how the prophetic paradigm of healing is applied in various ecclesial contexts. The analysis reveals that Isaiah 53:5 connects suffering, atonement, and healing within the discourse of soteriology. The findings reveal that the prophetic paradigm has significant implications for contemporary Christian practices, influencing how healing is perceived and practiced within ecclesial settings. The study recommends that churches and faith communities integrate the soteriological dimensions of healing into their theological education and pastoral care practices. The church should build a holistic and biblically grounded approach to healing that aligns with the prophetic vision of Isaiah 53:5.

Introduction

This article discusses the significance of Isaiah 53:5 and its relevance in Christian theology. The verse is part of the “Suffering Servant” passage, a part of the Old Testament’s messianic prophecy. It addresses the suffering and vicarious atonement of the Servant, who bears the consequences of the people’s sins. The imagery of being “pierced” and “crushed” conveys a sense of suffering and substitutionary punishment, with the promise of healing “by his wounds” signifies both physical and spiritual restoration. Isaiah 53:5 is usually referred to as a prophetic foretelling of Jesus Christ’s suffering and redemptive work. New Testament writers, particularly in the Gospels and the Epistle to the Hebrews, interpret this passage as a prophecy that Jesus fulfilled through His crucifixion and atonement.

The verse has become a cornerstone for understanding how Jesus’ suffering provides the basis for Christian beliefs in physical and spiritual healing. The phrase “by his wounds we are healed” encapsulates the belief that Jesus’ sacrifice has transformative power, not only forgiveness of sins but also the promise of healing and restoration. This belief influences various aspects of Christian life, including health doctrines and healing ministries. Understanding Isaiah 53:5 is crucial for grasping the theological implications of Jesus’ redemptive work and how it shapes Christian doctrines of healing and restoration. The passage’s interpretation impacts how Christians today approach and understand divine healing. The objectives of this study include conducting a comprehensive exegetical analysis of Isaiah 53:5, which involves a detailed examination of the Hebrew text to uncover the key terms and phrases used in the passage. Key elements of this analysis include lexical analysis, grammatical and syntactical analysis, historical context, messianic interpretation, concept of healing, contemporary application, and integration of faith and health.

Historical and Literary Context of Isaiah 53:5

The Book of Isaiah, attributed to the prophet Isaiah, is one of the major prophetic books of the OT and is traditionally dated to the 8th century BCE.¹ Isaiah's ministry is generally understood to span the reigns of four kings of Judah: Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah. This places his prophetic activity in a time of political and social upheaval in the ancient Near East. Isaiah's prophecies address the Kingdom of Judah during an unstable period marked by internal strife and external threats. The Assyrian empire, a dominant power of the time, threatened Judah, leading to political and military crises. This context of impending invasion and the internal decline of Judah provides the backdrop for much of Isaiah's message.

J. A. Motyer contends with the idea of single authorship of the Book of Isaiah. He sees it to be divided into three main sections, referred to as First Isaiah (chapters 1–39), Second Isaiah (chapters 40–55), and Third Isaiah (chapters 56–66).² According to John Oswalt, these divisions involved the book's composition stages and addressed various historical and theological aspects. First, Isaiah focuses on the immediate historical situation, including warnings of impending judgment and calls to repentance. Second, Isaiah is associated with the period of the Babylonian exile and the promise of redemption and restoration. Third, Isaiah addresses the post-exilic community and the rebuilding of Jerusalem. Isaiah 53:5 falls within the Second Isaiah (Isaiah 40–55), traditionally associated with the period of Babylonian exile and anticipates a future deliverance.³ This book section is characterized by a message of hope and

¹ Daniel K. Bediako, "Isaiah's New Heaven and New Earth," *Journal of Asia Adventist Seminary* (JAAS) 11.1 (2008): 6; H. C. Leupold, *Exposition of Isaiah* (Baker Books: Grand Rapids, 1983), 1135 – 1136.

² J. A. Motyer, "Isaiah as Author," *The Prophecy of Isaiah: An Introduction & Commentary* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1996), 2.

³ Motyer, "Isaiah as Author," 2.

comfort, promising the restoration of Israel and the coming of a deliverer.

The Socio-Political Environment of Isaiah's Time

Assyrian threats marked the socio-political environment. The Kingdom of Judah grappled with political challenges during Isaiah's prophetic ministry. The Assyrian empire's expansionist policies directly threatened the region, resulting in military campaigns and political turmoil.⁴ Judah's leaders faced the dilemma of seeking alliances with surrounding nations or relying solely on divine intervention.

The Assyrian empire's aggressive expansion placed Judah under constant threat. The Assyrians had already conquered the northern kingdom of Israel and were poised to exert further pressure on Judah. There was a growing sense of moral and social decay within Judah. The prophet Isaiah frequently criticized social injustices, idolatry, and corruption among the people and their leaders. The decline in religious observance and faithfulness was a concern for Isaiah. The prophet called for a return to genuine worship and adherence to God's laws. In this turbulent environment, Isaiah's message was a warning of judgment and a promise of hope.

Historical Interpretations

The interpretation of Isaiah 53, particularly verse 5, has been a subject of debate and varying perspectives throughout history. This passage, called the "Suffering Servant" passage, has been interpreted differently within Jewish and Christian traditions. The divergence in interpretations has shaped theological understandings and doctrinal formulations over centuries. Historically, Jewish interpretations of Isaiah 53 have varied. However, a predominant view is that the "Servant" described in

⁴ Francis D. Nichol, "The Chronology of the Old Testament Prophets," *Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, Isaiah- Malachi, vol. 4 (Washington DC: Review and Herald, 1976), 17.

the text represents Israel as a nation or a righteous remnant within Israel rather than an individual Messiah, which is in the communal identity of the Jewish people and their historical experiences of suffering and exile.⁵ Brevard Childs observes, “The initial responsibility of an Old Testament commentary is initially and above all the attempt to hear Israel’s voice in the plain sense of the text.”⁶ In many Jewish traditions, the “Servant” is understood as a metaphor for Israel itself, which has been depicted as suffering unjustly at the hands of other nations.⁷

The idea is that Israel, through its suffering and perseverance, has a redemptive purpose for the world. The suffering of the Servant is seen as a collective experience, embodying the trials, tribulations, and dismissal of the Jewish people. The emphasis in Jewish interpretations is on the suffering of the Jewish people as a whole and their hope for future redemption. Marc Brettler and Amy-Jill Levine state, “We believe that Isaiah’s “servant” initially referred to an individual living in Babylon, whose vicarious suffering explains why Israel deserves forgiveness for the grievous sins that caused its exile.”⁸ The text reflects the historical reality of Israel’s suffering—in Egypt, Babylon or during other periods of persecution—and the expectation of eventual divine vindication.⁹ In this view, the suffering of the Servant is not necessarily redemptive in a

⁵ Elliott Horowitz, “Isaiah’s Suffering Servant and the Jews: From the Nineteenth Century to the Ninth,” in *New Perspectives in Jewish-Christian Relations in Honor of David Berger*, ed. Elisheva Carlebach and Jacob J. Schacter (Leiden: Brill, 2012), 429–36.

⁶ Brevard S. Childs, *Isaiah*, OTL (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2001), 410

⁷ Holly Beers, *The Followers of Jesus as the ‘Servant’: Luke’s Model from Isaiah for the Disciples in Luke-Acts* (LNTS 535; New York: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2015), 50.

⁸ Marc Brettler and Amy-Jill Levine, “Isaiah’s Suffering Servant: Before and After Christianity,” *Interpretation: A Journal of Bible and Theology* Vol. 73,2 (2019): 158.

⁹ Albert Barnes, “Introduction: The Times of Isaiah,” in *Notes on the Old Testament, Isaiah*, vol. 1 (Baker Books: Grand Rapid, 2005), 15- 25.

vicarious sense but is part of a narrative of endurance, faithfulness, and divine justice.

Rabbinic interpretations, such as those found in the Talmud and Midrash, describe the role of Israel as a “light to the nations” whose suffering has a purpose in God’s plan for humanity. Although S. R. Driver and A. Neubauer believe that early rabbinic texts generally understood the Servant as an individual rather than as a collective Israel.¹⁰ Medieval Jewish commentators like Rashi (Rabbi Shlomo Yitzchaki) also viewed the Servant as Israel, interpreting the suffering as a representation of the Jewish people’s trials and their ongoing relationship with God. Other Jewish thinkers, such as Ibn Ezra and Radak (Rabbi David Kimhi), express their communal perspective, focusing on the endurance and faith of Israel amidst suffering.¹¹ Michael L. Brown argues, “Isaiah 53 is the central prophetic text in the debate concerning Jesus the Messiah. ...The so-called ‘big three,’ Rashi, Ibn Ezra, and Radak (writing in the eleventh and twelfth centuries), all interpreted Isaiah 53a concerning the nation of Israel as a whole, or, more particularly, the righteous within the nation.”¹²

In contrast to the Jewish perspective, early Christians quickly adopted a Christological interpretation of Isaiah 53, particularly verse 5, viewing it as a prophetic foretelling of the life, suffering, and death of Jesus Christ. This interpretation became central to understanding Jesus’ role as the Messiah. Early Christian theologians and Church Fathers, such as Justin Martyr, Irenaeus, and Augustine, saw Isaiah 53:5 as a direct prophecy of Christ’s suffering and atonement.¹³ They interpreted phrases like “He was pierced for our transgressions” and “He was

¹⁰ S. R. Driver and A. Neubauer, *The Fifty-third Chapter of Isaiah According to Jewish Interpreters*, 2 vols. (New York: Ktav, 1969), 1.6–7; 2.7–9.

¹¹ G. Rawlinson, ed., “Isaiah Exposition,” in *The Pulpit Commentary*, vol. 10 (Peabody: Hendrickson Publishers, Nd.), 294.

¹² Michael L. Brown, “Jewish Interpretations of Isaiah 53,” *Chosen People Productions*, 2014.

¹³ D. Jeffrey Bingham, “Justin and Isaiah 53,” *VC* 53 (2000): 248–61

crushed for our iniquities” as specific references to Jesus’ crucifixion and the belief that He died to atone for the sins of humanity.¹⁴ This reading aligned with the NT writers’ frequent use of Isaiah 53 in portraying Jesus’ passion and crucifixion (e.g., Matthew 8:17, Acts 8:32-35, 1 Peter 2:24).

The interpretation of Isaiah 53:5 as referring to Jesus Christ’s sacrificial death established a foundational element of soteriology (the study of salvation). The passage affirmed the belief that Jesus’ death was not just a martyrdom but a necessary, redemptive act that fulfilled OT prophecy and provided salvation for all humanity. This understanding became a cornerstone of Christian doctrine, particularly in developing theories of atonement, such as the substitutionary atonement theory, which posits that Christ took upon Himself the punishment for human sin. The interpretation of Isaiah 53 as a messianic prophecy has influenced Christian worship, liturgy, and hymnody. The image of the “suffering servant” became central to Christian reflections on the passion and crucifixion of Jesus, and it continues to be a powerful motif in Christian theology and spirituality.

In contemporary Christian theology, the interpretation of Isaiah 53:5 continues to be upheld as a prophecy of Christ’s suffering and its redemptive significance. However, modern theologians and biblical scholars see the passage in light of new theological insights and historical-critical scholarship. Some contemporary scholars question traditional Christological interpretations of Isaiah 53. They suggest alternative readings considering the text’s historical context and possible meanings for its original audience. These scholars emphasize the need to understand Isaiah 53 within the Book of Isaiah’s narrative and the time’s socio-political realities, such as the Babylonian exile and the hopes for restoration. Scholars debate whether the atonement

¹⁴ David D. Bundy, “Isaiah 53 in East and West,” in *Typus, Symbol, Allegorie: bei den östlichen Vätern und ihren Parallelen im Mittelalter: Internationales Kolloquium, Eichstätt 1981*, Eichstätter Beiträge 4 (Regensburg: Friedrich Pustet, 1982), 55, 66-67.

should be understood primarily in penal terms (as a substitutionary punishment for sin) or if it might also be viewed through other lenses, such as moral influence, Christus Victor (Christ's victory over evil), or other atonement theories. Amanda Dillon states that,

Anselm, through his theory of 'satisfaction', established an enduringly standard expression for Christ's redemptive work when understood as expiation. During his lifetime, European Christianity was moving away from the Christus Victor (Christ the Victor) model and towards the image of the Christus Dolens or "Man of Sorrows". When reflecting on the human proclivity for sinfulness and the need to somehow make reparation for that, Anselm argued using the highly stratified medieval feudal model as the basis for his proposition: 'Every sin must be followed either by satisfaction or by punishment' (*Cur Deus Homo*, 1. 15). Only Christ can freely offer the gift of his life as a work of reparation for the whole human race.¹⁵

These discussions help one understand how Christ's suffering relates to human salvation and divine justice.

Another critical debate in contemporary theology is how much Isaiah 53:5 applies to physical and spiritual healing. While some Christian traditions emphasize the passage's relevance to physical healing, others interpret it metaphorically, focusing on spiritual restoration and redemption. This has led to diverse views on the relationship between faith and healing, the role of prayer in physical recovery, and the extent to which the atonement of Christ includes physical health and well-being. Some contemporary scholars propose alternative readings of the Servant's role in Isaiah 53. For example, the Servant should

¹⁵ Amanda Dillon, "'I Am the Nail': A Multimodal Analysis of a Contemporary Reception of Isaiah 53," *Religions* 14, 370 (2023): 18. <https://doi.org/10.3390/rel14030370>

be understood as a symbol of faithful Israel or a figure representing the ideals of suffering and service without necessarily identifying the Servant as an individual messianic figure, according to Brettler and Levine.¹⁶ Most medieval Jewish interpreters understand the Servant as representing all of Israel.¹⁷ This approach opens up new possibilities for interpreting the text of justice, suffering, and divine presence in human hardship.

Literary Context

Isaiah 53:5 is part of the “Servant Songs” (Isaiah 42:1–4; 49:1–6; 50:4–9; 52:13–53:12), a series of passages that describe the Servant of the Lord, a figure who plays a central role in the redemption of Israel. These songs are crucial for understanding the nature and mission of the Servant, who is depicted as suffering and making atonement for the sins of others. Isaiah 53:5 falls within the Fourth Servant Song, the culmination of the Servant Songs.¹⁸ This chapter is notable for its detailed portrayal of the Servant’s suffering and theological implications. The passage starkly contrasts earlier images of the Servant as a triumphant liberator. Instead, it focuses on the Servant’s vicarious suffering and redemptive effects. Isaiah 52:13–15 introduces the Servant’s exaltation and suffering, setting the stage for a more detailed description of the Servant’s suffering in Isaiah 53. Isaiah 53:1–12 elaborates on the Servant’s suffering and its purpose. Verse 5 is a critical element of this depiction of the Servant’s role in bearing the punishment for others’ sins and providing healing through his wounds.

The Servant Songs contribute to the larger narrative of Isaiah on themes of judgment, redemption, and restoration. Each song

¹⁶ Brettler and Levine, “Isaiah’s Suffering Servant: Before and After Christianity,” 158–173.

¹⁷ Joel E. Rembaum, “The Development of a Jewish Exegetical Tradition regarding Isaiah 53,” *HTR* 75 (1982): 289–311.

¹⁸ Douglas J. Moo, *The Old Testament in the Gospel Passion Narrative* (Sheffield: Almond, 1983), 80.

builds upon the previous one, progressively revealing the nature and mission of the Servant. The first Servant Song (Isaiah 42:1–4) introduces the Servant as one who will bring justice and establish God’s covenant as the Servant’s mission to be a light to the nations and bring justice to the earth.¹⁹ The second Servant Song (Isaiah 49:1–6) expands on the Servant’s role in getting Israel back to God and being a light to the Gentiles as the Servant’s mission to restore Israel and extend salvation to the ends of the earth. The third Servant Song (Isaiah 50:4–9) describes the Servant’s obedience and suffering, portraying him as one who endures reproach and suffering while remaining faithful to God. The fourth Servant Song (Isaiah 52:13–53:12) describes the Servant’s suffering, atonement, and vindication. Isaiah 53:5 is central in this portrayal, illustrating the Servant’s suffering to achieve healing and reconciliation.²⁰ The literary placement of Isaiah 53:5 within this series of songs enhances its significance by situating it within a narrative of the themes of suffering, redemption, and divine intervention and the overall portrayal of the Servant as a figure who endures suffering to bring about restoration and healing.

Exegetical Analysis of Isaiah 53:5

וְהוּא מְחַלֵּל מִפְּשָׁעֵינוּ מִדָּפָא מִעֲוֹנוֹתֵינוּ מוֹסֵר שְׁלוֹמֵנוּ עָלָיו וּבְחֻבְרָתוֹ נִרְפָּא-לָנוּ:

“But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was on him, and by his wounds we are healed.”

¹⁹ John Goldingay, “Servant of Yahweh,” in *Dictionary of the Old Testament Prophets* (ed. Mark J. Boda and J. G. McConville; Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2012), 706.

²⁰ Bo H. Lim, “The Lynching of the Suffering Servant of Isaiah: Death at the Hands of Persons Un- known,” *ExAud* 31 (2015): 114.

Textual Analysis

וְהוּא מְחֻלָּל "But he was pierced"

The phrase וְהוּא מְחֻלָּל is a critical element in understanding the nature of the Servant's suffering and the concept of divine healing and redemption. This conjunction and pronoun combination translates to "but he" or "and he" is a contrast or continuation from previous statements and focuses attention on the Servant's condition. מְחֻלָּל is derived from the root חָלַל, which generally means "to pierce," "to wound," or "to profane."²¹ The term מְחֻלָּל denotes explicitly a state of being pierced or wounded. This choice of word is for several reasons: מְחֻלָּל suggests a form of severe and penetrating physical suffering. Using this term shows the depth of the affliction endured by the Servant.²² It denotes surface-level wounds and injuries that imply serious, possibly life-threatening harm. This describes extensive suffering and physical pain suffered by the Servant. The depiction of the Servant as "pierced" is a strong image of sacrificial suffering. In the context of Hebrew sacrificial practices and prophetic literature, piercing or wounding is associated with atonement and substitutionary sacrifice.²³

מִפְשָׁעוֹ "for our transgressions"

The phrase מִפְשָׁעוֹ presents the purpose and nature of the Servant's suffering. This term translates to "for the sake of," "on account of," or "because of." It indicates the purpose or reason behind an action. In the context of this verse, it connects the Servant's suffering directly to the transgressions of the people, signaling that his suffering is not arbitrary but is intended as a response to specific offences. The word פֶּשַׁע refers to

²¹ Jeff Coleman, "ISAIAH 53 Suffering Servant," *Firm Foundation* (2022): 1. https://www.firmfoundation.org.nz/site_files/16948/upload_files/Isaiah53.pdf?dl=1

²² Edgar W. Conrad, "The Royal Narratives and the Structure of the Book of Isaiah," *JSOT* 41 (1988): 67–81.

²³ Ellen G. White, *A New Life [Revival and Beyond]*; (Washington DC: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 2002), 20, 7.

“transgression” or “rebellion.” It signifies a willful deviation from divine law or authority. **פְּשָׁעֵנוּ** is the possessive form, meaning “our transgressions” or “our rebellions” to the personal and collective nature of the offences for which the Servant suffers.²⁴

פֶּשַׁע implies more than mere errors or mistakes; it denotes a deliberate rebellion against God’s laws. This term shows the gravity of the offences committed by the people and the need for atonement. The use of **פֶּשַׁע** is a severe breach of divine justice and indicates that the suffering Servant is addressing a moral and spiritual crisis. The phrase **מִפְּשָׁעֵנוּ** links the Servant’s suffering directly to the transgressions of the people, the concept of substitutionary atonement. The Servant suffers not for his sins but for the sins of others, a central theme in the atonement theology of Isaiah 53. This substitutionary role is the sacrificial system in which a sacrificial animal bears the sins of the people.

מִדָּכָא "he was crushed"

The term **דָּכָא** helps to clarify the depth of the affliction described. The root of this term, **דָּכָא** generally means “to strike,” “to touch,” or “to afflict.” The form **מִדָּכָא** is a passive form, translating to “he was crushed” or “he was bruised.” This term is used to convey a state of severe and impactful suffering. It conveys a sense of extremeness and suffering. Being “crushed” implies more than superficial injury; it indicates a severe impact. It suggests that the Servant’s suffering was physical but also emotional and spiritual. It shows the intensity of the affliction endured and the idea of intense and overwhelming suffering. In the context of Isaiah 53, it reveals the sacrificial nature of the Servant’s afflictions. The depth of his suffering is portrayed as a necessary component of his role in providing atonement and healing. This aligns with the sacrificial system in which suffering and death are seen as essential for redemption. The Servant’s being

²⁴ Coleman, “ISAIAH 53 | Suffering Servant,” 2.

“crushed” shows the weight of the sins and transgressions he bears on behalf of others.

דכא contrasts with other terms in the passage, such as מִחֻלָּל for “pierced” and סָבַל for “bore” (in the sense of bearing burdens). While מִחֻלָּל talks about physical injury, עָנָה reveals the severity and depth of the suffering. This combination of terms provides a comprehensive picture of the Servant’s affliction and its physical, emotional, and spiritual dimensions. The Servant’s “crushing” is integral to the process of redemption. By bearing such intense suffering, the Servant makes possible the healing and restoration of others.²⁵

מִעֲוֹנוֹתֵינוּ **"for our iniquities"**

In Isaiah 53:5, the phrase מִעֲוֹנוֹתֵינוּ reveals the nature of the sins or transgressions for which the Servant is afflicted, and it underscores the connection between sin, suffering, and redemption. The root עָוָה denotes “iniquity” or “guilt” and is translated as “sin” or “transgression.” It shows a state of moral failure or a breach of divine law. The term describes actions or behaviors contrary to God’s commands and deserving punishment. The prefix לְ means “for” or “on account of,” indicating the reason or cause. The term עֲוֹנוֹתֵינוּ is the plural form of עָוָה, meaning “our iniquities” or “our sins.” The use of the plural form for the collective nature of human wrongdoing.

The term עָוָה conveys more than individual acts of sin; it encompasses the concept of iniquity, which includes systemic and ongoing moral failures. It implies a deep-seated state of guilt and rebellion against God’s standards. The text shows that the Servant’s suffering addresses isolated sins and human moral failure. The Servant suffers not for His faults but for the transgressions of others. This concept of vicarious suffering is central to the understanding of atonement. The Servant’s

²⁵ John A. Martin, “Isaiah,” in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures*, ed. J. F. Walvoord and R. B. Zuck, vol. 1 (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1985), 1106.

affliction is seen as a substitutionary act where He bears the consequences of humanity's sin, thus providing a means for redemption and reconciliation. The connection between מְשׁוֹמְתֵינוּ and the Servant's suffering is pivotal for the concept of redemption. Bearing the iniquities of others, the Servant makes possible the forgiveness and cleansing of sin.

מִדָּסָר שְׁלוֹמֵנוּ **“The punishment that brought us peace was on him.”**

The phrase plays a crucial role in conveying the nature and significance of the Servant's suffering and how the Servant's affliction relates to the concept of atonement and peace. It denotes the act of enduring or shouldering a burden. The term implies that the Servant experiences suffering and actively carries the burden of punishment and affliction on behalf of others. The suffix –נוּ means “our” or “us,” indicating that the suffering is on behalf of the people. At the same time, the term indicates the Servant's role as a bearer of punishment that the Servant endures suffering not for His own sake but as a substitute for others.

The phrase is linked to the concept of peace, as the punishment borne by the Servant brings about peace. This peace is understood in several dimensions: the suffering and punishment carried by the Servant lead to reconciliation between humanity and God. According to John Calvin, the Servant's atoning work addresses the breach caused by sin, restoring harmony in the divine-human relationship.²⁶ The atonement provided through the Servant's suffering also brings inner peace to individuals. This peace is the assurance of forgiveness and the removal of guilt, resulting in spiritual wholeness and tranquility.

שְׁלוֹמֵנוּ **“the punishment that brought us peace.”**

²⁶ John Calvin, *Commentary on the Book of Isaiah*, Calvin's Commentaries, Vol. III (Baker Books: Grand Rapids, 2005), 115-117.

The term reveals the nature of the Servant's suffering and its impact on achieving peace for the people. לְהַכּוֹת typically means "priest," but in this context, it is used in the sense of "chastisement" or "punishment" as a disciplinary action intended to correct or reform. The prefix מִ generally means "from" or "out of," so מִלְּהַכּוֹת is understood as "from the chastisement" or "through the punishment." The term conveys the idea of suffering as a corrective or disciplinary purpose. In the context of Isaiah 53:5, this chastisement is not arbitrary but is intended to lead to a positive outcome—peace and reconciliation. It implies that the punishment endured by the Servant is purposeful, aiming to restore the broken relationship between humanity and God. According to this view, the Servant's suffering is not merely a punitive measure but a necessary act for achieving reconciliation between God and humanity.²⁷ The punishment is the price paid to address the moral and spiritual debt incurred by sin, thereby restoring harmony.

וְשָׁלוֹם indicates that the peace obtained is a direct result of the Servant's chastisement. This peace is understood in several dimensions: Peace with God through chastisement endured by the Servant facilitates reconciliation with God. The atonement through this suffering addresses the breach caused by human sin, allowing for a restored relationship with the divine. Inner Peace, achieved through the Servant's suffering, also translates into inner tranquility for individuals. The assurance of forgiveness and removing guilt brings a sense of peace and spiritual well-being.

וּבְהִבְרָתוֹ "and by his wounds"

The phrase וּבְהִבְרָתוֹ shows the nature and effect of the Servant's suffering. חַוָּת typically translates to "wound" or "bruise," indicating physical injury. The prefix וְ means "and," connecting

²⁷ Ellen G. White, *God's Amazing Grace* (Washington DC: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 2002), 177

this term to the previous description of the Servant's suffering. **קַמּוֹם** refers explicitly to the bodily injuries or bruises suffered by the Servant and the severity of the suffering endured. The term **חַוָּה** denotes more than superficial injury; it implies penetrating wounds that cause pain and distress. Joseph Prince links the Servant's suffering directly to the healing of others.²⁸ In Isaiah 53:5, the Servant's physical wounds are not just marks of personal suffering but are redemptive. They show how others receive healing.

נִרְפָּא־לָנוּ: "we are healed"

The term **נִרְפָּא־לָנוּ** is from the root **עָפַר**, which generally means “to be sick” or “to be ill,” and in its verb form, **עָפַר** means “to be healed” or “to be restored.” The term **נִרְפָּא־לָנוּ** implies “we are healed” or “we are made whole,” the restoration and wholeness resulting from the Servant's suffering. **נִרְפָּא־לָנוּ** signify comprehensive healing or restoration. This term indicates alleviating physical ailments and a sense of being made whole. This healing encompasses physical, emotional, and spiritual dimensions. It suggests that the Servant's suffering brings complete restoration for those affected. It is a holistic view of healing. It implies that the suffering Servant's afflictions result in comprehensive restoration for humanity. This idea aligns with the perspective that the Servant's suffering is not limited to addressing physical ailments but also includes spiritual and emotional healing. It conveys that the Servant's suffering addresses all aspects of human brokenness.

Ecclesial Applications in Contemporary Theological Discourse

The passage is fundamental to comprehending important ideas like redemption, atonement, and supernatural healing. It is read as a prophecy of Jesus Christ's suffering and atonement.

²⁸ Joseph Prince, “By His Stripes You Are Healed,” *Daily Grace Inspiration* (January, 2015) Accessed September 13, 2024. [Http://www.josephprince.org](http://www.josephprince.org)

Isaiah 53:5 is about the notion that Christ's atoning death reveals how humanity is redeemed from sin and restored to spiritual health. Also, this chapter shapes Christian beliefs about the nature of salvation, confidence in divine healing, and attitudes toward suffering. Beyond doctrinal differences, the theological significance of Isaiah 53:5 affects Christians' daily lives and spiritual activities as they strive to imitate the suffering servant's compassionate and redeeming power.

Messianic Prophecy and Atonement

Isaiah 53:5 is one of the verses in the OT concerning Messianic prophecy and atonement. The verse encapsulates the suffering and redemptive work of the Servant, which Christians interpret as a prophecy of Jesus Christ's sacrificial death.²⁹ However, other authors suggest that it is referring to Darius.³⁰ This interpretation plays a crucial role in understanding Jesus' role in salvation history and provides a theological foundation for the concept of atonement. It is part of the Servant Songs, which describe a figure known as the Servant of the LORD. These songs depict the Servant's mission and suffering, which is believed to foreshadow the life and work of Jesus Christ. In the context of Isaiah, these passages were initially interpreted as referring to Israel or a righteous remnant. However, biblical exegetes interpret these passages as prophetic descriptions of the Messiah, whose suffering and death were central to God's redemptive plan. Christian doctrine holds that Isaiah 53:5 prophetically describes the suffering and vicarious atonement of Jesus Christ.³¹ The passage's reference to the Servant's wounds leading to the healing of others is seen as a direct allusion to Christ's sacrificial death on the cross. This interpretation is supported by NT passages that explicitly link

²⁹ James B. Coffman, *Commentaries, the Major Prophets, Isaiah*, vol.1 (Abilene Christian University: ACU Press, 1990), 511..

³⁰ Bruce Metzger, ed., *Word Biblical Commentary*, vol.25, Isaiah 34- 66 (Waco: Word Books, 1987), 227 – 230.

³¹ Leroy Andrew Huizenga, "The Incarnation of the Servant: The 'Suffering Servant' and Matthean Christology," *HBT* 27 (2005): 35.

Jesus to the Servant of Isaiah 53.³² For example, in 1 Peter 2:24, Peter quotes Isaiah 53:5 to show that Christ's suffering was for healing and redemption.

The term מְחַלֵּל has been interpreted as a prophecy about Jesus Christ's crucifixion. The Gospel writers, particularly in the context of Jesus' Passion, draw on this imagery to depict Jesus' suffering and death. Jesus is described as being pierced in His hands and feet, fulfilling the prophecy of Isaiah 53:5 and the Messianic interpretation of this passage within Christian thought. Beyond its immediate physical meaning, מְחַלֵּל carries symbolic weight. The piercing of the Servant is an invasive suffering that extends beyond mere physical pain to encompass spiritual and emotional dimensions. This imagery contributes to the narrative of redemption and healing, suggesting that the Servant's suffering is not just for physical wounds but also for healing spiritual brokenness.

The verse shows the nature of Christ's sacrifice and that Jesus' suffering and death were not random but were explicitly aimed at addressing the collective sinfulness of humanity.³³ This understanding encourages believers to see the gravity of sin, the magnitude of redemption offered through Christ, and the importance of repentance and faith in receiving forgiveness and healing. Also, the use of חַיִּי in this passage invites reflection on the nature of sin and the need for moral and ethical transformation and that dealing with sin involves acknowledging its severe nature and the necessity of addressing it through divine intervention.

³² Morna D. Hooker, "Did the Use of Isaiah 53 to Interpret His Mission Begin with Jesus?," in William H. Bellinger Jr. and William R. Farmer, eds., *Jesus and the Suffering Servant: Isaiah 53 and Christian Origins* (Harrisburg, PA: Trinity, 1998), 88–89.

The atonement refers to the reconciliation between God and humanity achieved through the sacrifice of Jesus Christ. According to Calvin,

He again draws us to Christ, that we may betake ourselves to His wounds, provided that we wish to regain life. Here the prophet draws a contrast between us and Christ; for in us nothing can be found but destruction and death; in Christ alone is life and salvation. He alone brought medicine to us and even procures health by His weakness and life by His death; for He alone had pacified the Father, He alone hath reconciled us to Him.³⁴

Isaiah 53:5 is central to this concept because it describes how the Servant's suffering is a means of bearing the penalty for sin. The verse's depiction of the Servant being "pierced" and "crushed" for the transgressions of others aligns with the understanding of Jesus' death as a substitutionary atonement. According to John N. Oswalt, while "pierced through" is not always specifically said to result in death, it is typically used in contexts with death (22:2; 51:9; 66:16; Ps. 69:27 [Eng. 26]).³⁵ This means that Jesus suffered in place of sinners, satisfying the requirements of justice and providing a means for forgiveness and reconciliation. The idea that the Servant's suffering is a substitute for the punishment due to others is a foundational element of soteriology. The notion that Jesus took upon Himself the punishment for humanity's sins and thereby achieved atonement is in the interpretation of Isaiah 53:5. This understanding is reflected in various Christian creeds and theological formulations, which affirm that Jesus' sacrifice was necessary for the redemption of humanity.

³⁴ Calvin, 117.

³⁵ John N. Oswalt, *The Book of Isaiah 40-66* (The New International Commentary) (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1998), Kindle Edition 363.

Healing and Redemption

Isaiah 53:5 has implications for understanding divine healing and its relationship to redemption. The passage's references to suffering and healing offer a comprehensive view of how spiritual and physical healing are interrelated in Christian theology. The phrase "by His wounds we are healed" in Isaiah 53:5 suggests a holistic view of healing that encompasses both physical and spiritual dimensions. This means that Jesus' suffering provides physical healing and spiritual restoration. This holistic approach shows the belief that the effects of sin and brokenness extend beyond mere physical illness to include spiritual alienation and moral corruption. For instance, Matthew 8:16-17 quotes Isaiah 53:4, linking Jesus' healing ministry with the prophecy of the Servant's suffering. This connection indicates that Jesus' miracles and healings fulfilled the promise made in Isaiah 53:5, that His suffering brought about physical healing and the possibility of spiritual renewal and redemption.

The integration of physical and spiritual healing in Isaiah 53:5 is the comprehensive nature of the Servant's work. The belief is that Jesus' atonement addresses both the physical consequences of sin and the spiritual consequences. The healing provided through Christ's suffering is seen as a restoration to wholeness, addressing physical ailments and the alienation from God caused by sin. Many Christians pray for both physical and spiritual healing, believing that the atonement of Christ has implications for their overall well-being. This view influences practices such as intercessory prayer, laying hands, and anointing with oil, all seen as means of seeking the healing and restoration promised in Isaiah 53:5.

Identifying the Servant's suffering as being "for our transgressions" is the theological concept of vicarious suffering. The Servant's pain and affliction are necessary for addressing humanity's rebellion against divine law. Jesus Christ's suffering and crucifixion are viewed as fulfilling this prophecy, providing

atonement for humanity's sins. The notion that the Servant suffers "for our transgressions" implies that the redemption offered is not merely an act of physical deliverance but a restoration of the relationship between humanity and God. Oswalt opines that,

What the Servant does in bearing the undeserved results of his people's sin brings about positive results for the people. He is not merely participating in their suffering; he is bearing it away for them so that they may not labor under its effects anymore. He took the punishment that made it possible for us to have well-being, and he has taken the infected welts so that ours could be healed.³⁶

The Servant's suffering is integral to reconciliation, bridging the gap created by human rebellion for divine forgiveness and healing by recognizing sin's personal and collective nature and the need for repentance. It also the belief in the effectiveness of Jesus Christ's sacrificial death in addressing the problem of sin.

Faith, Prayer, and Healing

Faith and prayer are central to contemporary Christian healing practices, and Isaiah 53:5 influences this understanding. The healing through the Servant's suffering is invoked in discussions about the power of faith and the effectiveness of prayer in seeking divine healing. Faith is considered essential for experiencing divine healing in Christian theology. Isaiah 53:5 provides a foundation for this belief, suggesting that the suffering of Christ has made healing available to believers. The verse implies that faith in Christ's redemptive work is a prerequisite for receiving healing. This belief is reflected in various Christian traditions that faith is essential in seeking and receiving healing. Faith is a critical factor in the effectiveness of prayer for healing. The belief is that trusting in

³⁶ Oswalt, *The Book of Isaiah 40-66*, KE, 364.

Christ's atoning work allows God's healing power to manifest. According to Oswalt, "Someone must take the disease and give back health, must bear the blows and give back wealth (in its original sense of "well-being")."³⁷

Prayer is a primary means through which Christians seek divine healing. Intercessory prayer, where believers pray on behalf of others, is informed by the belief that Christ's suffering has established a basis for healing. Isaiah 53:5 says prayer is a powerful tool for invoking God's healing power. On a personal level, individuals may use Isaiah 53:5 as a focus for their prayers for healing. The verse provides reassurance and hope, encouraging believers to pray confidently that Christ's suffering has made healing possible. Personal prayer practices involve meditating on the verse, requesting healing in alignment with its promises, and expressing faith in the efficacy of divine intervention.

Understanding Suffering and Redemption

The suffering of the Servant is believed to be a prophetic reference to Jesus Christ. Through His suffering, healing and forgiveness are made available to humanity. This message is central to the idea that suffering, especially Christ's, is not pointless but a divine purpose in the plan of salvation. This understanding should encourage the re-evaluation of experiences of pain and hardship. Rather than seeing suffering as merely a negative experience or a form of punishment, believers are to view it through faith. In doing so, suffering is understood as a means of drawing closer to God and participating in the redemptive work of Christ. Apostle Paul's teachings in Romans 8:17 state that Christians are "heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, if indeed we share in his sufferings so that we may also share in his glory." In this way, suffering is not only a consequence of living in a fallen world

³⁷ Oswalt, *The Book of Isaiah 40-66*, KE, 364.

but also a pathway to spiritual growth and communion with God.

Isaiah 53:5 reminds believers that Christ's suffering was not in vain but was undertaken for their salvation. It offers hope and meaning in their struggles, suggesting that just as Christ's suffering had a redemptive purpose, their suffering can be meaningful and transformative. Leslie F. Church believes that

Our sins were the thorns in His head, the nails in His hands and feet, the spear in His side... (5) The consequences of this to us is our peace and healing... Christ was in pain that we might be at ease, knowing that through Him our sins are forgiven us. Hereby we have healing; for by His stripes we are healed. Sin is not only a crime, for which we were condemned to die, but also a disease, which tends directly to the death of our souls and for which Christ provided the cure... and to put our souls in good state of health, that they may befit to serve God.³⁸

This should provide immense comfort and strength, particularly during intense hardship or crisis. It encourages Christians to trust that their trials refine their character, increase their reliance on God, and lead to spiritual maturity. This understanding also urges Christians to embrace God during difficult times. When faced with trials, believers should trust in God's plan and purpose, even when those plans are unclear. This trust is not passive but active, faith that seeks to see God's hand at work in every situation. James 1:2-4 advises, "Consider it pure joy, my brothers and sisters, whenever you face trials of many kinds because you know that testing your faith produces perseverance. Let perseverance finish its work so you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything."

³⁸ Leslie F. Church, ed., *Matthew Henry Commentary on the Whole Bible* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House), 908.

Here, the idea is that faith is tested and strengthened through trials, leading to spiritual completeness.

In practical terms, understanding the redemptive power of suffering can change how Christians respond to their pain and the pain of others. Instead of being overcome by despair, believers are to see suffering as an opportunity to experience God's grace and to grow in spiritual maturity. This outlook provides a sense of purpose and hope, even in the darkest times. It also challenges Christians to be more compassionate and supportive towards those suffering, seeing them as fellow participants in the journey of faith. Therefore, Isaiah 53:5 teaches that suffering, while challenging and difficult to understand, has spiritual significance. It calls Christians to trust in God's sovereignty, to embrace suffering as a means of growth and transformation, and to find solace in the fact that Christ Himself endured suffering for their sake.

The Power of Divine Healing and Atonement

Isaiah 53:5 is foundational for believing in divine healing and Christ's atoning sacrifice. This dual aspect of healing is an essential component of Christian faith and practice, the comprehensive nature of salvation that encompasses both the soul and the body. The reference to being "healed" by the wounds of the Servant calls for a holistic understanding of salvation that goes beyond mere spiritual renewal to include physical restoration and wholeness. Kenneth E. Hagin opines that "Jesus actually—literally—took the cause of our sickness and disease. He took our infirmities and bared our sicknesses. We know that Jesus was made to be sin for us. The object of His sin-bearing was that we might be free from sin, and the object of his sickness-bearing was that we might be free from sickness."³⁹ This interpretation allows believers to consider the full scope of Christ's redemptive work, which is not limited to

³⁹ Kenneth E. Hagin, *Seven Things You Must Know about Divine Healing*, Accessed, 13 th September, 2024. [Http//www.rhema.org](http://www.rhema.org).

the forgiveness of sins but extends to the healing of physical ailments and the restoration of brokenness in all its forms.

The idea is that Christ's sacrifice on the cross has made provision for the total well-being of believers, which includes spiritual, emotional, and physical health. Christians should actively seek God's healing in every area of their lives. Recognizing that Christ's atoning work offers forgiveness and the possibility of wholeness encourages believers to turn to God in times of sickness or distress, confident in His ability to heal and restore. Collins notes that "helped open the door to a sad version of redemption: Christ as a penal substitute who was personally burdened with the sins of humanity, judged, condemned, and deservedly punished in our place. He satisfied the divine justice through his death, paid the required price, and propitiated an angry God."⁴⁰ Various NT passages where Jesus' ministry of healing is portrayed as a sign of God's kingdom breaking into the world. Matthew 8:16-17, Jesus heals all sick to fulfil what was spoken through the prophet Isaiah: "He took up our infirmities and bore our diseases." This continuity between the Old and New Testaments is the belief that divine healing is integral to God's redemptive plan.

Also, this belief in divine healing should encourage a commitment to prayer and faith in God's healing power. Christians are to trust that God's miraculous intervention brings healing and restoration. This trust is not merely theoretical but expressed through communal and individual prayer, anointing with oil, and other acts of faith that tap into God's healing power. In James 5:14-15, the early church is instructed to pray for the sick and anoint them with oil in the name of the Lord, with the promise that "the prayer offered in faith will make the sick person well; the Lord will raise them." At the same time, the power of divine healing requires a balanced perspective that recognizes God's sovereignty and will.

⁴⁰ Gerald O'Collins, *Jesus Our Redeemer: A Christian Approach to Salvation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007).

While Christians are encouraged to seek healing and believe in God's power to restore, they also trust in God's wisdom and plan, even when healing does not occur in the expected manner or timeframe. This understanding should help believers maintain a sense of hope and faith, even in the face of unanswered prayers or suffering, trusting that God's purposes are good and that His grace is sufficient for every situation. Also, the emphasis on divine healing in Isaiah 53:5 is an active pursuit of spiritual and physical well-being in alignment with God's will. This means that Christians are to pray for healing and take practical steps towards maintaining their health and well-being.

Conclusion

The article provides a detailed analysis of Isaiah 53:5, a messianic prophecy on the transformative suffering of the Servant, which leads to holistic healing for others. It is integral to the Christian understanding of Jesus Christ's redemptive work, as it positions Jesus as fulfilling the Servant role described in Isaiah. The concepts of atonement and healing suggest that the Servant suffers as a means of atoning for sins and a source of physical and spiritual healing. The relationship between faith, prayer, and healing is in the passage, with the belief that faith in Christ's suffering leads to healing, a central theme in Christian healing practices. The implication is that healing is accessible through the suffering of the Servant, which is the importance of faith and prayer in seeking divine intervention. It informs holistic health approaches, faith-based healing ministries, and personal prayer practices that healing encompasses physical and spiritual dimensions.

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