

SCRIPTURE | Isaiah 53:4–11, 54:1–5, 11–14 (NIV)

⁴ Surely he took up our infirmities and carried our sorrows,
yet we considered him stricken by God,
smitten by him, and afflicted.

⁵ But he was pierced for our transgressions,
he was crushed for our iniquities;
the punishment that brought us peace was upon him,
and by his wounds we are healed.

⁶ We all, like sheep, have gone astray,
each of us has turned to his own way;
and the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all.

⁷ He was oppressed and afflicted,
yet he did not open his mouth;
he was led like a lamb to the slaughter,
and as a sheep before her shearers is silent,
so he did not open his mouth.

⁸ By oppression and judgment he was taken away.
And who can speak of his descendants?
For he was cut off from the land of the living;
for the transgression of my people he was stricken.

⁹ He was assigned a grave with the wicked,
and with the rich in his death,
though he had done no violence,
nor was any deceit in his mouth.

¹⁰ Yet it was the LORD's will to crush
him and cause him to suffer,
and though the LORD makes his life a guilt offering,
he will see his offspring and prolong his days,
and the will of the LORD will prosper in his hand.

¹¹ After the suffering of his soul,
he will see the light of life and be satisfied;
by his knowledge my righteous servant will justify many,
and he will bear their iniquities.

54:1 "Sing, O barren woman, you who never bore a child;
burst into song, shout for joy,
you who were never in labor;

because more are the children of the desolate woman
than of her who has a husband," says the LORD.

² "Enlarge the place of your tent,
stretch your tent curtains wide,
do not hold back;
lengthen your cords,
strengthen your stakes.

³ For you will spread out to the right and to the left;
your descendants will dispossess nations
and settle in their desolate cities.

⁴ "Do not be afraid; you will not suffer shame.
Do not fear disgrace; you will not be humiliated.
You will forget the shame of your youth
and remember no more the
reproach of your widowhood.

⁵ For your Maker is your husband —
the LORD Almighty is his name —
the Holy One of Israel is your Redeemer;
he is called the God of all the earth ..."

54:11 "O afflicted city, lashed by
storms and not comforted,
I will build you with stones of turquoise,
your foundations with sapphires.

¹² I will make your battlements of rubies,
your gates of sparkling jewels,
and all your walls of precious stones.

¹³ All your sons will be taught by the LORD,
and great will be your children's peace.

¹⁴ In righteousness you will be established:
Tyranny will be far from you;
you will have nothing to fear.
Terror will be far removed;
it will not come near you.

FOR REFLECTION

Some churches stress truth, others experience, others justice and service. But gospel ministry includes all three. A gospel-centered church is not, strictly speaking, a classic fundamentalist, charismatic, or mainline church. God is a God of holiness, grace, and justice.

Isaiah writes to an ancient people about God's promises of a rich and full life. He speaks of justice and service to the poor, abundance to those who lack, beauty and goodness — with the cost of it all paid by one who sacrificed himself. In light of what the gospel proclaims, we know that the one God chose to crush was Jesus, his Son. For those who accept him as Lord, the final verses of Isaiah 53 involve a particular burden, as they see themselves as the “transgressors” for whom he intercedes.

1. Is there anything about this suffering servant — who was intentionally crushed and sacrificially died — that was a new idea or a surprise to you? Did you find anything else in this passage new or surprising?
2. Why is this intentional sacrifice necessary? Does it offend you? Have you heard others say they are offended by it? Why is it offensive?
3. In Isaiah 54 the prophet summons the people of God to see the aftermath of the Messiah's sacrifice. He offers both specific and general descriptions of what it is to be the redeemed people of God. From what you see in this passage, what personal and corporate characteristics identify the people of God? Why do you think these characteristics come at such a cost?
4. What response is asked of those who receive the good things the servant brings? What difference should it make in a person's relationship with God and with others? How would it change your life?