

“The Arm of the Lord”

Isaiah 52:13-53:5

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

In the fourth and final Servant Song of Isaiah, the Messiah is identified as “the arm of the Lord.” To whom has the arm of the Lord been revealed? To the entire world as He hung upon the cross “stricken, smitten by God and afflicted.” God has extended His arm into the world in the person of His Son, Jesus Christ. He has reached out to gather His people—all those who believe in Jesus as their salvation—under His salvific protection, just as Psalm 136:12 proclaims, “with a strong hand and an outstretched arm, for His steadfast love endures forever.” Our Lord and Savior is indeed the Lord’s arm with which He redeems His people and rescues them from sin, death, and the devil.

Isaiah says that the Servant shall be “high and lifted up” in a manner that most would look upon and see horror and disgust. His physical appearance so marred that it was unrecognizable as human flesh, completely alien to the form which God created at the beginning of all things. He will hang before the world as a testament to the destructive power of sin, and show that there is only one way to defeat it. The Messiah, having no sin of His own to bear, will take the sins of every man, woman, and child, and destroy the power it holds over them. And yet, sin will not be gone. It is still for each and every one of us, a constant and never-ending battle in this life. While we bear the sinful flesh, we can look upon the Lord’s arm as the answer to our sin, but we will never be able to be without sin as His children while our flesh remains marred and unrecognizable.

Even as we battle the sin which the devil seeks to destroy us with, even in the face of certain failure as we fight again and again, we have the hope of salvation in Him. We may be marred and unrecognizable in our sinful flesh, but in our rebirth of water and the Spirit, we are clearly and undeniably marked as His holy children. He has done that for us. Despite the appearance with no form or majesty or beauty that we should desire Him, Jesus loved us to the point of death. Those who do not believe in this world despise and reject Him still, the same as the pharisees and the Jews who called out for His crucifixion. And so, He is a man, the God-man, who is acquainted with our grief and sorrows.

Every pain and suffering moment in our lives is one that Jesus knows intimately. He bore that very pain, that very moment of grief upon His shoulders as He took it as His very own. What a treasure it is to know that Jesus is not disconnected from who we are in our sinful nature. Though He Himself was without sin, He knows our sin and the pain

it causes us. When He took the sins of the world to the cross, He felt the weight of each and every one of them. No man could stomach such a burden. But He did, and He did it for us. He did it so that we might live as His children with the assurance of the forgiveness of our sins. That is why He subjected Himself to shame, allowing Himself, by the will of the Father, to be stricken, smitten by God and afflicted.

The pain and suffering He endured upon the cross in the fulfillment of Isaiah's prophecy was all done so that we might be healed of the pain and grief that we bear—that our sin would cease to condemn us to eternal grief and shame. He has borne our grief and sorrow because of His great love for us, and for that reason He became the perfect Lamb of sacrifice. And we need that in our imperfection. We need the blood of Jesus which cleanses us from all sin. When He is pierced upon the cross we are given the blood and water of life, and it is in that flowing fountain that we are washed clean of the filth of our flesh. It is now in Spirit that we live our lives as those who have been baptized into the death of Christ, and sin is no longer our master because of His great victory over it.

With His mighty arm, the Father reaches out into the world to bring freedom from sin and faith in His Son who died for the sins of the whole world. All have been offered forgiveness by the blood of Jesus, and those who are in the faith, receive that treasured gift with joy. We know that He has not just been lifted up in agony, pain, grief, and sorrow, but in glory as He is exalted before the Father as the all-atoning sacrifice for sinners. Every single sin was taken upon Him as He was pierced for our transgressions—taken upon Himself as if they were His very own. The chastisement that should have been ours was endured by our Lord so that we might have peace. Not peace in the world, but peace with our God who loved us and gave Himself up for us.

The arm of the Lord stretched forth from the cross as the arms of Jesus were stretched beyond their limit upon that tree. He suffered and died in our place, taking the punishment that should have been borne by us for our iniquities. Allowing Himself to be crushed for our benefit, our Lord Jesus has given us consolation and peace with our Father. Truly, by His wounds we have been healed—healed from every spiritual illness and malady because our sin has been destroyed by His blood. The cross is not some mere talisman or good luck charm with which to ward off the devil. The devil is defeated in its shadow, because the Lord of all things gave His own life to satisfy the payment the devil knew we couldn't pay.

And so, we do not grieve in sorrow at the sight of our stricken, smitten, and afflicted Lord Jesus. We rejoice that He loves us so much that He carried our burdens to

Calvary, experienced the weight of those sins, and paid the price our just Father demands. His death has destroyed death, and therein lies our joy as those who believe in Him. As we dwell in this world of sin, we seek the Lord and His mercy, not the approval of this world. We repent, and by faith, receive the gift of forgiveness He freely gives. Our eyes are ever fixed on Jesus, and our trust is in Him alone. Verse 13 of our hymn today, which we will sing shortly, sums this up perfectly.

Whate'er of earthly good this life may grant me,
I'll risk for Thee; no shame, no cross, shall daunt me.
I shall not fear what man can do to harm me
Nor death alarm me.

Where the world sees failure and death, we see victory and eternal life. Where Satan receives fear and destruction, we receive joy and perseverance. By the blood Christ has shed upon that cross where He bore our shame and paid our debt, we are ransomed from sin which would otherwise condemn us. Thanks be to God for the Arm of the Lord that has purchased and won us from the power of sin, death, and the devil. In the light of faith, we live our lives knowing that we will see the exalted Christ in the flesh, no longer marred and unrecognizable, but glorified at the right hand of God in perfect bliss. There in His heavenly home, we will spend eternity in the light of His glory, dwelling in the presence of our God as His holy children forever. Amen.