

# **Dr. Robert A. Peterson, Christ's Saving Work, Session 2, Introduction, Part 2, Theological Method, Key Books, Biblical Soundings, Isaiah 53**

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This is Dr. Robert Peterson in his teaching on Christ's Saving Work. This is session number two, Introduction, Part Two, Theological Method, Key Books, Biblical Soundings, Isaiah 53.

We continue our lectures on the Saving Work of Christ by turning our attention now to the Theological Method.

We have thought about the biblical storyline and salvation planned, accomplished, applied, and consummated. Theological Method, it is good to think about how we study the scriptures to understand their teachings. The famous inspiration passage in 2 Timothy 3 says all scripture is inspired by God, and it's profitable for teaching, reproof, correction, and instruction in righteousness.

I take that as a biblical warrant to study the Bible to understand its teachings or doctrine, and it is good to think about why we do what we do. Theological Method, it seems to me, involves exegesis, biblical theology, and historical theology, all leading toward the goal of systematic theology and even its fruits in different practical theological disciplines. The Theological Method begins with exegesis.

The foundation of all good theology is understanding the meaning of biblical passages, beginning with the biblical author's intention through the text. When studying a passage, we must note a particular literary genre, narrative, proverb, parable, gospel, letter, etc., and consider literary strategies appropriate to the genre. Literary context is also critical as the placement of any given passage assists us in interpreting what the biblical author means.

The meaning of a word often emerges through studying it in its surrounding phrases, clauses, and sentences. The meaning of a sentence appears in its paragraphs or scenes, and the meaning of a scene surfaces in the surrounding episodes, sections, or overall book. The historical setting is also formative because knowing the text occasion, recipients, author, and church context fosters good interpretation.

The foundation of the Theological Method is exegesis. I lament the decrease in the teaching of biblical languages not only in liberal schools but also in those who say they believe in the verbal inspiration of the Bible. I fear that Luther was right.

If we do not hold on to the biblical languages, we will ultimately lose the gospel. Biblical Theology Ultimately, the context of every biblical passage is not only its particular book but also the entire canon, which places the biblical texts into God's unfolding plan that moves, as we've already said, from creation and the fall to redemption and new creation. This biblical storyline frames, orders, and connects the doctrines.

Furthermore, it culminates in the person and work of Christ, which distinguishes what comes before and after the Gospels. It is wise, therefore, for us to locate passages within the biblical storyline and also to relate them to other passages on the subject. We look for how the Bible story develops through the biblical covenants in the Old Testament, in the Law, Prophets, and Writings, as well as in the New Testament, in the dawning of the new covenant in the Gospels, Acts, Epistles, and Revelation.

Our attention should be given not only to specific doctrines we are studying but also to the central themes of each book of the Bible and the central themes throughout the Bible – covenant, kingdom, atonement, glory, love, holiness, etc. This will enable us to see the connections of the doctrine being studied to these other major themes, which will enable us to understand and synthesize the teaching in its relationships, in proportion, and in light of Christ. Thus, good theology is grounded on biblical exegesis and rooted in biblical theology.

It also involves historical theology, although now we are no longer in a straight line. Biblical theology builds upon exegesis, and if we were diagramming this, we would bring in historical theology from the North because it does not flow from biblical theology the way biblical theology flows from exegesis. Nevertheless, our tendency might be to read the Bible individualistically, reading it privately to learn about God and how to follow him better personally.

While this is helpful, we should also consider the centrality of the Church to the interpretive process. The Church has been the historical interpreter of Scripture. While historical Church teachings and creeds are not authoritative over believers in the same way that Scripture alone is, *Scriptura*, one of the battle cries of the Reformation, means, in my understanding as a theologian, that we deliberately and consistently subordinate everything to the Scriptures.

If we think about it a little bit, we all use our experience, certainly our reason, and I hope some tradition as we interpret the Bible, but *sola Scriptura*, employing the Bible alone as the ultimate authority, *sola Scriptura* means deliberately and consistently subordinating our experience, reason, and tradition to Holy Scripture. Scripture alone is authoritative over modern and postmodern approaches to interpretations, which have sometimes highlighted the individual interpreter, modern, or contemporary

communities of readers, postmodern, at the expense of historic Church teachings. We are not the first ones to read the Bible, but we stand in the stream of God's people throughout the centuries and can learn much from Church history's leading thinkers.

For example, Athanasius, Augustine, Thomas Aquinas, Luther, Calvin, John Owen, Jonathan Edwards, John Wesley, etc. We should diverge from the Church's historic stream of thought with great hesitancy and only when thoroughly convinced by Holy Scripture or evident reason. We should also read the Scripture in the context of our present Church community, realizing that Scripture guides our life together with other believers.

Thus, good theology is done by, with, and for the Church, with respect for historic Church teachings and in life together. Systematic theology, so exegesis yields, helps us understand biblical theology, the history of special revelation as Gerhardus Vos defined it. And historical theology doesn't flow from biblical theology the way biblical theology flows from exegesis.

Nevertheless, it comes in on a tangent because we surely want to learn from the pluses and minuses of our those who went before us. Based on our work in exegesis, biblical theology, and historical theology, we move toward a theological synthesis. We seek to incorporate primary biblical themes, address central theological topics, and show priorities and interrelationships among the doctrines.

Such theology is best organized and communicated in light of the biblical storyline. We also desire to express our theology in a way that is contextual, clear, and beneficial to others. I could add practical theology over here, exegesis, biblical theology, historical theology, and systematic theology, which is ultimately what we're heading for in this lecture series.

At the very end, we will have a systematic theology of Christ's saving work. But getting there will take us time and effort, and it's worth both of those things to understand the scriptural teaching and, in a lecture coming up soon, the way the Church has tried to understand Christ's saving work through the centuries. As a matter of fact, my little grid is too simple because none of these things are done in isolation.

That is, our exegesis is influenced by our systematic theology, and it is no surprise to me that the Reformed and Evangelical seminaries I'm talking about historical theology now that they have courses on figures like Calvin, Jonathan Edwards, maybe John Owen, and Arminian and Evangelical seminaries have lots of courses on Wesley and so forth. This is not a surprise. C.S. Lewis, although it could be at any seminary because he was such a great apologist, for his theological leanings, which were

decidedly Arminian, I've seen him on the curriculum of Arminian seminaries more than those of Reformed seminaries in that regard.

Having thought a little bit about the biblical storyline and salvation in a panorama and then at least in a cursory way looking at the theological method, I'd like to share with you briefly some of the key books that I have found most helpful in, well let me see, over 40 years of studying the doctrine of the atonement. My dissertation, well, first of all, my exams, and moving from seminary to doctoral studies were a relief in this way. Instead of frequent language quizzes and stuff, no tests for two whole years in which you did language exams, learning, demonstrating, reading knowledge of modern French and German from my own historical theology degree, plus courses in which you wrote papers and participated in class, but no test, at the end of which you then had tests like you never had before in your life.

They're called comprehensive examinations. In my degree program, PhD at the Graduate School of Drew University in Madison, New Jersey, there were four exams spread over two weeks, so you put one on the first day, one on the last day, one over here, one over here, and you try to sleep and eat in between and not be too grouchy to your friends. My period was the patristic period, the fathers of the church, before the medieval period.

We had to pick two figures outside of our period. I chose Emil Brunner, a neo-orthodox theologian whose book is actually on my list here. I'll talk about his famous book, *The Mediator*.

Calvin was my other figure, and then we had to pick a problem or doctrine. I took the doctrine of the atonement, and that launched me in a career of teaching systematic theology, using that historical theology as background. My seminary degree was really strong in biblical exegesis, which I value above all, but I put that to good use along with the historical theology background in teaching systematics for 35 years at two evangelical schools, graduate schools, and seminaries.

My dissertation then was in Calvin's understanding of the work of Christ. Key books, Emil Brunner's *The Mediator*. Brunner, along with Barth, were perhaps the most famous neo-orthodox theologians.

Barth, was way more famous than Brunner, and of course, they had their famous row in which Barth lashed out at Brunner, and really it was a matter of his being uncaredful in his language, and Brunner was wounded and perhaps hurt the rest of his life by the one whom he called nastily, quote, the theological dictator of Germany. It's a reference to Hitler and a terrible one, but I get it. They both were gifted.

Were they neo-orthodox? Yes, in a sense they corrected many faults of the old liberalism. Was there a view of the Bible that of evangelical Christians? No, although

Barth's use of the Bible was good, neither one would confess anything like an errancy, and sadly, Brunner allowed the destructive liberal criticism of the Bible to take away more of the scriptures than Calvin. Then Barth did, although they both denied the historical fall.

You say, did they regard people as sinners, including themselves? Yes. Reading Emil Brunner, when I say he believed in Jesus as his Lord and Savior, yes. Does that make his epistemology sound? No, and I'm getting far afield.

Emil Brunner's *The Mediator* is really a good book. He presents Christ in his saving work chiefly as a penal substitute, which is really good and solid work in a time in which that was really needed to be broadcast by a world-respected theologian, Emil Brunner, *The Mediator*. Gustav Alain, a Swedish scholar, wrote the famous book *Christus Victor*, and it comes up in our survey of the historical views of the work of Christ.

But I'll just say now it is a remarkable book. I don't know many books whose titles became a nomenclature for theology, but we talk about how the *Christus Victor* view of the atonement. He tried to steer a middle course between the liberal moral influence theory, which said Jesus didn't die primarily to make atonement but to change our hearts, and the conservative penal substitution theory, which said Jesus died to pay the penalty for our sins.

He emphasized Christ as the great victor who overcame our enemies, especially the evil powers, and delivered his people. I'll give a detailed evaluation praising it in many ways, critiquing it in some other ways where it needs critique, but Gustav Alain's *Christus Victor* was a major, major work. In preparation for my doctoral exam on the history of the doctrine of atonement, I was responsible for knowing every significant historical figure and period.

We were still allowed at that time; it became illegal even by the time I graduated, but we were allowed to look at previous exams to get ideas. Every single doctoral exam on the work of Christ had a question on one book, and that was Gustav Alain's *Christus Victor*. So that was why I learned that book really well.

In the end, he isn't conservative, and his Lutheran propensities caused him to downplay the Old Testament, but he sees a good theme: Christ the victor, the champion. It's biblical. Both liberals and conservatives had neglected it, but then he overreaches and reads it into Church Fathers where it is there and into Luther where it is there, but Luther's thought is evenly divided between *Christus Victor* and penal substitution, and Alain only sees the former.

And furthermore, he does the same thing with the Bible. Yes, Hebrews 2:15 teaches Christ our champion, but no, that is not the major theme of Christ Saving Work in

Hebrews. Good grief is surely the sacrificial motif for which Hebrews are justly most famous.

Leon Morris, the Australian New Testament scholar, is a wonderful and godly man. A little anecdote I heard once was that he taught himself New Testament Greek while his wife was driving the car. I don't know where they were going in Australia, but it's a big country.

He taught himself Greek as his wife drove the car. Anyway, he made major contributions in biblical studies with commentaries on numerous books of the Bible and very helpful ones, I think, of his commentary on John, for example. He did much more than that, but also on the doctrine of the atonement.

His book, *The Apostolic Preaching of the Cross*, is justly famous for its treatment of the biblical words of salvation. You know, many times, studies based on words become distorted, but not so with him. He studied things like the Lamb of God, Redemption, Reconciliation, and two chapters on propitiation because it was under attack, which we'll talk about in perhaps the next lecture.

No, later on in this one, I would think, when we talk about taking biblical soundings, because that impacts Romans 3:25, and 26 tremendously. Anyway, Morris defended the traditional view, the Reformation view, of propitiation. Just a wonderful book.

Sacrifice, Jesus Our Priest. He also wrote *The Cross in the New Testament*, which, instead of studying those words and pictures, went through corpus by corpus, through all the New Testament corpora, summarizing their teaching on what Jesus did, and even did more books on the atonement besides that. I think I forgot the name of the one with Intervarsity, but perhaps it's called *The Atonement*.

Anyway, Leon Morris made a significant contribution and convinced famous scholars like C. E. B. Cranfield, whose magisterial two volumes Romans commentary for the great critical series, said that Morris wins the debate on propitiation in Romans 3:25, 26. He's convincing, and over C. H. Dodd, whose name I have occasionally been slipping here, who argued in that context, no, it does not mean propitiation. That's a pagan notion imported into the New Testament.

Rather, it means expiation. I'm going to argue, indeed, Jesus' death accomplishes both expiation and propitiation, but in the context of Romans 3:25, 26, in the bigger context of Romans 1-3, it certainly speaks of propitiation. G. C. Berkouwer's magisterial series, *Studies in Dogmatics*, I was sad to have an Erdmann's representative in my office some years back telling me, oh, we're not that crazy about those books anymore.

It made me sad because Berkouwer's series was wonderful and so strong in historical theology. I know some fellow students who said, yeah, but I don't like it. He doesn't make up his mind.

I like that for that very reason. You have to make up your own mind, but he surveys the historical theology so beautifully, and he does it as well for the atonement for the book, *The Work of Christ*, G. C. Berkouwer, the famous Dutch theologian.

H. Dermot McDonald wrote a book that really helped me, and indeed, for the next lecture after this one, *The Atonement of the Death of Christ* has a section on the biblical materials, and that's good, but then he has an extensive treatment, maybe a few hundred pages, on the historical theology of the atonement, and it is outstanding.

It is so helpful. It provided the quotations that I needed to make those lectures sparkle, because it's one thing if I tell you that Anselm taught satisfaction, and he did, but it's something else when you hear his own words. It's just so beautiful.

McDonald did a great job in that regard. H. Dermot McDonald, a solid evangelical Christian who, among other books, he also has a gigantic book on the history of the study of the revelation of God, not the book of Revelation, but God revealing himself, especially in the 19th and 20th centuries, something like that, just marvelous scholar in that way. John Stott's magnum opus is, by the consensus I have heard of different friends and scholars, is *The Cross of Christ*, a wonderful book.

It combines his two horizons, his detailed study of the Bible, and his addressing the teaching of the Bible in the modern world. The book becomes an apologia for the penal substitutionary theme of the scriptures. Could he possibly overestimate that? Yes, he could, but in a day and age in which not only liberals but conservatives are attacking penal substitution, I rejoice in the book, and again, the writing and illustrations are just wonderful.

*The Cross of Christ*. I suppose if I had somebody recommending a book to somebody, a layperson who wanted to learn and get into these things, that is really a good one. Robert Lethem wrote a book in the Inner Varsity series, *Contours of Christian Theology on the Work of Christ*, and it is an outstanding book.

Robert Lethem has returned to his native Great Britain, I want to say Wales, but I'm not sure, and he teaches now in a school there. For years, he pastored a church in Delaware and taught courses on the person of Christ and the work of Christ at Westminster Theological Seminary in Philadelphia. Bob Lethem's work is good.

Recently he published *The Systematic Theology*. It is outstanding. It is both solidly orthodox and interacts with contemporary thought in a way that I need since I don't interact with contemporary thought so well.

He goes back to Calvin and before him to the church father Eusebius in using the three-fold office of Christ, the prophet, priest, and king. That fell out of disfavor as liberals attacked that idea, and that was a shame because we should listen to what everybody says, but we should be governed by the Bible, so a scripture again, and not by reacting to attacks so much. Lethem treats Christ as a prophet, priest, and king.

A significant danger in that approach is that it encompasses much of what the scripture says about what Jesus did for us, but Christ's saving work is so monumental that I am again searching for adjectives that it doesn't, the three-fold office or the three offices, doesn't take all of the data into account. So, what does he do? He organizes the book along with the prophet, priest, and king, but then he has additional chapters, which is exactly what is needed to treat those areas that are not subsumed under the three offices of Christ. I will, without shame, speak of my own two books in this regard.

Calvin and the Atonement is the second edition of my dissertation, and right away, I'll say it's not about limited atonement. Everybody asks that question. As a matter of fact, I just mentioned Lethem, and I can't avoid people.

Did Calvin teach limited atonement? Well, no, but he didn't teach unlimited atonement, either. Here's what I found, and I'm going to talk about the book, but here's what I found. People read into Calvin their view of the extent of the atonement.

So, a lot of reformed people, a lot of five-point Calvinists read limited atonement in, and you can do it. However, those who believe in unlimited atonement read that into Calvin, and they can do it, too. He seems not to have been very careful, but I would say particular redemption or particular atonement is a legitimate development.

All theology and all theological systems develop. It is a legitimate development of Calvin's own thought, but I agree with Robert Lethem. Apparently, he and I are the only two in the world who think this; everybody else is taking sides and saying it seems to be a later development.

His successor, Theodore Beza, did teach it plainly, but I just don't think it's what Calvin was about. What was he about? He was about these biblical pictures of the work of Christ. I had gone to doctoral studies and took courses on Lutheran Calvin and English Reformation, among others, and if you asked me what Jesus did to save



us, I would say he made the great sacrifice for our sins, and he paid the penalty for our sins, and those are both true.

Those are both biblical themes and truths of the work of Christ. Do they comprehensively summarize? No, they do not comprehensively summarize what he did, and here, sitting in Luther's class, I learned about Christus Victor. Luther rejoiced to present Christ the way the Bible does, defeating our enemies of sin and death and the grave and demons and hell.

Christ is the victor, and then in Calvin I saw even more themes so that started me off in this direction, which culminated in my book, *Salvation Accomplished by the Son, the Work of Christ*, and that book has two major sections, which are reflected in these lectures or will be, Lord willing. Half of the book deals with Christ's nine saving events, which I've already just summarized in a brief compass, and I'll wait till I get to them. We'll do them in more detail, showing from passage after passage in both Testaments and every part of the New Testament how Jesus, everything from his incarnation, the second coming, save us, saves us, especially his death and resurrection.

The second part of *Salvation Accomplished by the Son* is in the biblical pictures. Events are not self-interpreting, not even God's events. People in the ancient Near East who heard of Yahweh's delivering the Israelites from Egyptian bondage wouldn't say, oh, he's the living and true God; there's no other.

No, they wouldn't say that. They would probably say something like, wow, Yahweh is greater than the gods of Egypt, at least at that time he was, or something like that. And would they really give up their Assyrian or Babylonian deities? Don't get me wrong, I think Yahweh was the only true and living God, but no, their worldview would not lead them to such a conclusion.

It is remarkable some Egyptians came out with the Israelites. Can you imagine giving up your whole culture, maybe your family? That is astonishing to me and shows the greatness of that revelation. However, events are not self-interpreted, and God gave word revelation along with the deed revelation of the Exodus.

Think of the song of Miriam, the song of Moses, interpreting many of the Psalms. Good grief, the Exodus event is celebrated throughout the whole Old Testament. God gives words to interpret his deeds.

The supreme example in my mind of how deed revelation necessitates word revelation for its interpretation and intelligibility is the cross. People stood at the foot of Jesus' cross and misinterpreted it. He saved others. Let him save himself.

They mocked and scoffed, ironically, in fulfillment of their own scriptures. I understand that one of the two thieves believed, and apparently, the centurion believed, but God was not only active in the cross and resurrection of Jesus, but he also gave words to interpret those important events. And I count, there are many pictures of Christ's death and resurrection in the New Testament, but the two, but the six, excuse me, most comprehensive ones are redemption, he's our redeemer, reconciliation, he's our peacemaker, penal substitution.

He paid the penalty that we could never pay. What I call the second Adam's new creation, he overcomes where Adam failed and restores what Adam lost. Sacrifice and purification is the fifth one, and I need one more.

Redemption, reconciliation, penal substitution. Oh, Christ is victor, of course. Victory, the victory motif.

Christ in his death and especially his resurrection. Scripture ascribes victory to his death. John and his resurrection triumph over his foes and ours.

Those are some key books that have influenced me and that I commend to you. Biblical soundings. As we work through the events of Christ, especially his death and resurrection, and the biblical pictures that I just enumerated in detail, we will look at passage after passage.

Okay, but for the majority of these lectures, in fact, but there are two passages so outstanding and so important that I would like to take what I call biblical soundings, kind of judging the depths of the waters, if you will, and they are Romans 3:25, 26, the great propitiation passage. But first of all, Isaiah 53. Isaiah 53 begins in Isaiah 52.

You know the chapter and verse divisions are not inspired. If you'd like to see how they came about, it's a delightful little book. Beryl Smalley, *The Study of the Bible in the Middle Ages*, or *The Making of the Bible in the Middle Ages*, I think it's the study.

Beryl Smalley, in *The Study of the Bible in the Middle Ages*, tells how the medieval schoolmen in Paris jostled with each other, and one of them won. And we have his chapter and verse divisions. Not always the best chapter and verse division.

And Isaiah 52 really begins in 53, begins in 52:13. There were four servant songs, Isaiah 42, 49, 50, and then this 52:13 to 53:12. And sometimes a servant plainly is Israel.

Here, the servant is one Israelite who acts on behalf of the nation, not only the nation but also the peoples of the nations. In some ways his work has a universal significance already revealed here in the Old Testament. As a matter of fact, what just astonishes me about this passage is that it is so wonderful and powerful.

I don't know of any passage in either testament, and I never say this, I hardly ever say this, that presents a New Testament picture as clearly as this one. You cannot beat Isaiah 53:4, 5, and 6 as you bow your head and meditate at the Lord's Supper. It is so astonishing.

My pastor, Van Lees, and I recently co-authored a book called *Jesus in Prophecy, How the Life of Christ Fulfills Biblical Predictions*. And Pastor Van is much better at illustrations than I am. A true illustration of his life has to do with this chapter.

He was once doing door-to-door evangelism, I think that was the context, and a man said to him, I recently, I'm no longer a Christian; I've recently become a Jew, so if you want to talk to me about what you call the gospel, you can only stay in the Old Testament. He said, okay, that'll be fine. If you know Dr. Lees, you know that was fine.

So he reads these words. Surely, he has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows. But he was pierced for our transgressions.

He was crushed for our iniquities. Upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace. And with his wounds, we are healed.

The guy protested, wait a minute, I said you can't use the New Testament. And Van said I'm not using the New Testament. And the guy, obviously, he knew the word spoke of Jesus so plainly that he said, well, maybe we better talk about this another time.

I've got more thinking to do. Yeah, I think that's a good idea, my friend. Isaiah 52:13 through the end of 53.

Behold, my servant shall act wisely. He shall be high and lifted up and shall be exalted. Those words are so ironic in terms of what follows.

As many were astonished at you, his appearance was so marred beyond human semblance and his form beyond that of the children of mankind. So shall he sprinkle many nations. Kings shall shut their mouths because of him.

For that which has not been told them, they see. And that which they have not heard, they understand. Who has believed what he has heard from us? And to whom has the arm of the Lord been revealed? For he grew up before him like a young plant and like a root out of dry ground.

He had no form or majesty that we should look on him and no beauty that we should desire him. He was despised and rejected by men, a man of sorrows and acquainted

with grief. As one from whom men hide their faces, he was despised, and we esteemed him as not.

Surely he has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows. Yet we esteemed him stricken, smitten by God, and afflicted. But he was pierced for our transgressions.

He was crushed for our iniquities. Upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace. And with his wounds, we are healed.

All we like sheep have gone astray. We have turned everyone to his own way. And the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all.

He was oppressed and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth. Like a lamb that is led to the slaughter and like a sheep before its shearers is silent, so he opened not his mouth. By oppression and judgment he was taken away.

And as for his generation, who considered that he was cut off out of the land of the living, stricken for the transgression of my people? And they made his grave with the wicked and with the rich man in his death, although he had done no violence and there was no deceit in his mouth. Yet it was the will of the Lord to crush him. He has put him to grief.

When his soul makes an offering for guilt, he shall see his offspring. He shall prolong his days. The will of the Lord shall prosper in his hand.

Out of the anguish of his soul, he shall see and be satisfied. By his knowledge shall the righteous one, my servant, make many to be accounted righteous, and he will bear their iniquities. Therefore, I will divide him a portion with the many, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong, because he poured out his soul to death and was numbered with the transgressors.

Yet he bore the sin of many and makes intercession for the transgressors. It's hard to do this, but if you pretend you never heard this before and you heard it for the first time, what is the major theme? Many of my students over the years would say, oh, substitution, and there's no doubt that that is a major theme, but I don't think that would be your first response. If you never heard of it, I think you would be saddened by the tremendous suffering of the servant.

Oh my, his appearance was so marred, 52:14, beyond human semblance. It's like a parent being called into the morgue to identify the body of a child. It's unrecognizable.

It's so sad. It's hideous. It's horrible.

His form was marred beyond that of the children of mankind. The servant is abused. The suffering is enormous.

He's despised and rejected by men. A man of sorrows, acquainted with grief, and one from whom men hide their faces. He was despised.

We esteemed him not. The poor servant suffers alone. All of us when we suffer, how comforting it is to have others with us who care.

He's got no one. The second question I'd like to ask is, and it's a trick question, is this suffering just or unjust? Well, the first thing you say is it's unjust. I mean, good grief.

Verse 8, by oppression and judgment, he was taken away. This is nasty. And verse 9 says, calls him, it says, he had done no violence.

There was no deceit in his mouth. How many people can you say that of? None. The servant appears to be without sin.

As a matter of fact, verse 11 calls him my righteous servant or the ESV renders, the righteous one, my servant. So, the suffering is horrific. The servant is beaten, or whatever is done to him, so he's beyond recognition.

And he's crushed. He has wounds. He's oppressed and afflicted.

And yet he is the righteous servant who hasn't sinned with violence or in his mouth. Matters are complicated for us, and we must say the punishment is just. How can you say that after what you just said? We have to say it's just because of verse 10.

Yet it was the will of the Lord to crush him. He has put him to grief. Wait a minute.

If God is punishing the servant, there must be a sense that it is just. Why do we say that? We say it on the basis of God's character. The Bible doesn't tell us everything we might want to know, but it gives us reams of information about who God is and the fact we can trust him.

And that is by design because that is what we need to know above all. How do we put these things together? Let me say this. Even if we couldn't put them together, I think we should live with the apparent injustice of the servant's suffering and justice.

It must be just if God does it. Along these lines, I'll give an illustration. If late at night, a car pulled up to our front door and a woman was driving and dropped me off, and my wife was standing at the open door, what would her response be? Would an explanation be forthcoming from me? Of course.

And it would be expected. But would she be upset or jealous? No. Why? We've been married for 47 years.

That patient woman has been my wife. And vice versa. If a man dropped her off late at night, yes, I'd be looking for her if something was unexpected here.

This wasn't planned. And I'd expect an explanation, but I wouldn't doubt my wife could agree. In a similar way, even if we had no more information, we would trust God in a seeming anomaly.

How could these things work out? But of course, they do work out. The resolution of this seeming justice and injustice simultaneously is that not only is a servant's death voluntary, but in verses 7 and 12b, 7, he doesn't open his mouth. He's silent.

He goes along with this judgment. And then, in verse 12, 12 in the middle, he poured out his soul to death. The servant willingly suffers.

We'll see that's a significant theme in the New Testament. No one takes my life from me, John 10. I lay it down of my own accord, Jesus said.

Even more important, the simultaneity of justice and injustice is resolved by the fact that the servant's death is substitutionary. There's no chapter in the Bible that teaches substitutionary atonement as strongly as this one. He has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows, verse 4. He was pierced for our transgressions.

This must be the most loaded verse in the whole Bible on substitutionary atonement. He was pierced for our transgressions. He was crushed, it's a strong word, for our iniquities.

Upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace, and with his wounds, we are healed. All we, like sheep, have gone astray. We've each turned to his own way, and the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all.

He was stricken for the transgression of my people, end of verse 8, Isaiah says, for the Jews. He bore the sin of many, the end of 12. Substitution is all over this wonderful servant song.

Something else is quite remarkable in light of the New Testament revelation, or I got things backward. The New Testament picks up this amazing thing. There is so much gore in this chapter again I start this 53 at 52:13.

There's so much gore and suffering and penalty enduring that we could miss the fact that the gore is surrounded by glory. It is so remarkable, 52 13, my servant shall act wisely. He shall be high and lifted up and shall be exalted.

We almost want to say no, Lord, he'll be low, trodden down, and step on. No, but that's what God says, and it ends in a similar way with a different language. I will divide him a portion with the many.

He shall divide the spoiled with the strong. He's the victor, and he's sharing in the spoils. This is indeed the source of, say, the Gospel of John's picture of the Son of Man being lifted up.

In chapter 12, John says, with an editorial comment, Jesus had just spoken about being lifted up. By this, he indicated the manner of death he was going to die, crucifixion. Oh, but it has a double meaning in John.

He's playing with his readers. The worst Jesus' enemies could do is put him up on a cross, but that merely sent him on his way back to the Father. Thus, the glory and the suffering are intertwined in this chapter.

The suffering is surrounded by the glory, and as a matter of fact, the chapter itself more than hints at the resurrection of Jesus. John Oswalt, a justly famous Old Testament scholar who did my two famous commentary volumes on Isaiah, is written by an Armenian Old Testament scholar. Why do you say that? Because he gets it right.

He loves Isaiah. He exalts in the glory and greatness of Isaiah. No, I don't agree with every expression of libertarian freedom of the will he might give in that book, but it's beautiful.

It's a life's work, and he rightly says that although the chapter focuses on Jesus' death, in verse 10, we have the language of resurrection. It was the will of the Lord to crush him. There's that strong word again to put him to grief.

When his soul makes an offering for sin, offering for guilt, Jesus died as a guilt offering, as a sacrifice. He shall see his offspring. He shall prolong his days.

The will of the Lord shall prosper in his hand. In the midst of the presentation of the suffering servant, Isaiah gives the language that is ultimately fulfilled in the resurrection and exaltation of the Son of God. It is good for us to break, and in our next lecture, I will go into more detail as far as the wonder and the blessing of Isaiah 53.

This is Dr. Robert Peterson in his teaching on Christ's Saving Work. This is session number two, Introduction, Part Two, Theological Method, Key Books, Biblical Soundings, Isaiah 53.