

# Born to Be Bruised

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*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.*

ISAIAH 53:5



Expectation mounted as God's people awaited their Messiah's arrival, just as we now await the celebration of his birth. Yet this fourth Servant Song in Isaiah reads much more like a eulogy than a birth announcement. It speaks of one who is not just coming, but of one who is *sent*. Each part of the servant's biography is imbued with purpose.

The servant's story is no mere tragedy. On the contrary, this song begins and ends by affirming the promised servant's triumph and exaltation. The middle of the song fleshes out *how* he will succeed: through suffering. Physically, the servant would be marred, pierced, crushed, and disfigured. Emotionally, his soul would be

weighed down with sorrow, suffering, and anguish. Socially, he would be rejected, despised, and oppressed. His body, spirit, and relationships would be broken. This inestimable yet unenviable life would be cut short, undervalued, and profaned. “Yet,” Isaiah says, “it was the Lord’s will to crush him and cause him to suffer.”

But why? For what purpose? Because “the punishment that brought us peace was on him.” His sorrow-sunk shoulders would carry the grief of the world, his crushing would remove our guilt, his welts would secure our healing, and his ostracization and judgment would purchase our peace. As messianic prophecies, these songs point to a set-apart king-priest who would one day rule and make offerings for God’s people. In the New Testament, both Philip and Peter see Christ as this song’s fulfillment. Philip explains the gospel to the Ethiopian eunuch using this passage (Acts 8:26–40). Peter uses this song to exhort persecuted Christ-followers to endure because their path of suffering was well trod by their Savior (1 Pet. 2:22–24).

As we reflect on Jesus as the Prince of Peace, this passage challenges the tranquil and idyllic images of peace we may conjure up in our minds. Our peace was won through gruesome violence against Jesus—it cost him a lifetime

punctuated by sorrow, being misunderstood, and rejection. This suffering is what awaited the peace-bringing baby of our carols.

Our image of the Christ child swaddled and held tenderly by his parents contrasts sharply with the difficult truth of this Servant Song—of the Father not only sending the Son to an early death, but purposing it. While most human parents hope and pray for bright futures for their children, here we see a love-driven death mission that will secure the survival of many. This song doesn’t only tell us about the servant sent to suffer, but also of the Father’s heart: eager to save his people at any expense, even at the gravest personal cost.

### *Contemplate*

Isaiah 52:13–53:12.

*Optional: Also read the third Servant Song in Isaiah 50:4–9.*

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How does the suffering described here contrast with your vision of peace? How does it change or enrich it?