

Repair of a Broken Heart 12-15-19 AM

Psalm 34:18

The LORD is near to those who have a broken heart, and saves such as have a contrite spirit.

Bad things happen. Sometimes bad things mark us for all of our lives. Studies on emotional trauma identify things such as an accident, injury, or a violent attack, especially if it was unexpected or happened in childhood as leaving a lifelong mark. It is not just physical though; experiences such as the sudden death of someone close, the breakup of a significant relationship, or a humiliating or deeply disappointing experience, especially if someone was deliberately cruel can do as much as physical trauma. Many of us have experienced horrible things that scarred us. Close to half of all marriages end in a divorce. Nearly 1 in 5 women in the U.S. are sexually assaulted at some point in their lives¹. Negligent spouses or parents have deeply wounded us. Many of us have buried parents, siblings and even children. Horrible experiences like these leave us damaged for life.

When it is a bad experience of circumstances we are left to put out lives together from that damage. But when it was the actions (or omissions) of others, we are left with questions to answer. It is remarkable that what is a simple, sometimes thoughtless sinful act on another's part leaves tremendous damage to the lives of others. Suddenly the questions speak more to the nature of people. Scriptures are not silent regarding the evil; consider these Biblical examples of evil deeds:

Neglectful parents

- Eli (a spiritual leader of Israel) failed to raise his children properly
- Manasseh murdered his children
- David's poor parenting
- Lot's offer up of his daughters

Unfaithful spouses

- Israel's adultery against God was one of constant unfaithfulness
- Abigail's marriage to Nabal is a dramatic example of being married to a terrible person

Abusive family members

- Cain's murder of Abel
- Joseph's brothers
- Amnon's rape of Tamar

Betrayal by close friends

- David loved Saul (1 Samuel 16:21), but Saul repeatedly sought to kill David
- David's friend Ahithophel (Psalm 41:9) sought his destruction in rebellion

To be hurt by others is bad; to be wounded by those we should have been able to trust is far worse. This is the mark that leaves the greatest scar; the wounds of those we love. Parents who

¹ <https://www.helpguide.org/articles/ptsd-trauma/recovering-from-rape-and-sexual-trauma.htm>

failed us, children who abandoned us, spouses who betrayed us. Neglect. Abuse. Abandonment. Wounds like this cause us to doubt our value and to mistrust others. How are we supposed to deal with the evil things men have done? How do we reconcile their actions in our minds? How do we overcome these things?

1. Understanding the nature of sin

Jeremiah 17:9-10 *"The heart is deceitful above all things, And desperately wicked; who can know it? I, the LORD, search the heart, I test the mind, Even to give every man according to his ways, According to the fruit of his doings"*

What it is like to be God, to see the hearts of men, must be a terrible thing. Even the best of us envy, hate and lust. God offers to dwell by faith in men, and it must be trying for God to be present in a place as terrible as our heart.

Why are we this way? The Bible tells us that it is not because we are created or born evil. *"Truly, this only I have found: That God made man upright..."* (Ecclesiastes 7:29). There is no sinful nature that marks us evil from conception. But there are two characteristics that are built into our flesh, something that even Jesus had to control (Romans 8:3). One of these characteristics that we are born with, if uncontrolled always leads us to sin: selfishness. And secondly, there is a condition that our minds are in from birth: ignorance. We might say that on these two pillars all sin stands.

Romans 2:5-8 teaches us that at the heart of the disobedient lost is selfish ambition. Consider the nature of God and selfishness. God is utterly unselfish; His mind is on man. Yet consider man. Since we are flesh from birth, we are selfish from birth. But our innocence is in the idea that we have no mind to pursue selfishness. But at the moment we are aware of ourselves, and we choose to seek for ourselves, selfishness begins. The greatest of sins are committed in selfishness. At the same time, the slightest of sins are often committed in selfishness too. All works of the flesh are formed in selfish desire. Selfishness is the heart of evil.

The other half of the nature of sin is ignorance. Paul himself testified that the greatness of his sins were the result of his ignorance (1 Timothy 1:13). Peter testified that the population of Jerusalem was guilty of the murder of Christ by their ignorance of His truth (Acts 3:17). Here we have some of the greatest crimes in history, and they are rooted in ignorance, a darkened mind (Ephesians 4:18). If the heart of all sin is selfishness, the mind of all sin is ignorance.

Thus all evil deeds, from the least to the greatest, the most heinous and impactful in our lives, come from a place we all know, the heart of selfishness or the mind of ignorance.

2. Acceptance of things that happened in the past

Someone once asked me if I had ever made a fundamental change of my principles. That is an important question: have I ever been convicted of being wrong on a world-view principle? Paul, that great and terrible sinner and destroyer of faithful people before conversion, must have had some terrific guilt and conflict after his change in life. How could he deal with this guilt? *"Brethren, I do not count myself to have apprehended; but one thing I do, forgetting those things*

which are behind and reaching forward to those things which are ahead, I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus” (Philippians 3:13-14).

What is the value of this mindset for those of us who have suffered at the hands of a Paul (who acted in ignorance) or others who have hurt us in selfishness? Consider that Paul is both a model of the man who does great evil AND the model of a man who suffers great evil. Paul was wounded both by those who were once his friends (Paul was the focus of repeated assassination attempts by his former colleagues) as well as those to whom he devoted himself. Paul suffered often at the hands of Christians: his dear friend Barnabas turned against him several times (Galatians 2:13, Acts 15:39); brethren for whom he risked his life wrote terrible accusations against him (2 Corinthians 10:10, Galatians 4:16). Even Paul’s thorn in the flesh mentioned in 2 Corinthians 12 was given to him by Christ.

There are certain things we need to understand about suffering in this life. First of all, suffering is not the same as punishment. Romans 6:23 says *the wages of sin are death*. This means that the various trials we suffer in this life are not punishment for sin. It is not uncommon for victims of abuse or assault to take a mindset that their trauma was deserved. This is not a Biblical idea; we are told that we suffer for various reasons (sometimes as a trial or test as James 1 says, sometimes as a means to produce in us something profitable, as declared in 2 Corinthians 4:17). Bad things don’t happen in life because God is punishing us; we will either be punished in eternity, or be free from punishment through Christ.

So why do bad things happen? Bad things happen because of free will. God does not stop evil because evil is born in the heart of men, and sometimes those men turn to God. Paul did, as did Manasseh. We need to understand that God desires ALL men to be saved (1 Timothy 2:4), even those who have hurt us terribly. It must have been hard for the brethren in Acts 9 to receive Saul of Tarsus in their church when only recently he had terribly wounded their church. We who are righteous suffer for the sake of God’s desire to save; we ourselves are saved in this desire, and it becomes important for us to know that God does not strike out evil men because His patience is because He is, in His perfect unselfishness, unwilling that ANY should perish (2 Peter 3:9).

3. Learning how to let go of hurt

Isaiah 61:1 *"The Spirit of the Lord GOD is upon Me Because the LORD has anointed Me To preach good tidings to the poor; He has sent Me to heal the brokenhearted, To proclaim liberty to the captives, And the opening of the prison to those who are bound"*. When Jesus opened His ministry as recorded in Luke 4, He began by reading Isaiah 61, and then declaring that this passage was fulfilled in Him. Take note of the work of the Christ here: to heal the brokenhearted. The Gospel was written with the broken hearted in mind. The Lord is near those who have a broken heart and broken spirit; indeed, His message is most particularly written for them.

First, consider that at the heart of the Gospel is the adoption by Grace. God has declared that His love for us is so great that He desires that we should be His children. *"For you did not receive the spirit of bondage again to fear, but you received the Spirit of adoption by whom we cry out, "Abba, Father."* (Romans 8:15). Whatever damage has been done by bad fathers, husbands, mothers,

brothers or friends can be repaired by the loving favor of a heavenly father who is, by His very definition, neither selfish nor ignorant. Jesus offers a friendship and a brotherhood that encompasses this too.

The Fatherhood of God and the Fellowship of Christ have the ability by love to repair and restore even the most ravaged of hearts if given the chance.

How do we overcome the great wounds in life? It seems that many wounds do not heal. Paul may have carried his marks until his death (Galatians 6:17). But at the heart of being in Christ is the only means to overcome: by growing. This was the meaning of Philippians 3; Paul overcame his great ordeals by moving forward and becoming more in Christ.

Emotional wounds, once left, do not grow. But what if we can? What if we can, by exercising the Gift of the Father in our adoption we begin to grow, what happens to that wound? It does not go away, but as we grow, it becomes less in proportion to the person we are becoming. If I strike a nail in a sapling, that nail does great damage to that small tree. But imagine that same tree growing up, multiplying a thousand times more. The nail remains the same, but its place in the tree is reduce in proportion to the size of the tree.

So it is with the broken heart. God offers to us the opportunity to overcome all broken hearts. We must reach out to Him first to accept the adoption and second to purpose to grow ourselves in Him. The terrible scars of life may never go away, but the person God purposes for us to become is someone to whom those scars become less damaging to our lives.