

## 9. God's Response to Human Suffering

### Understanding that Jesus is both Sin and Pain Bearer

What was God's response to all the evil, all the injustice, all the suffering in the world? He came into the world in Jesus to become the greatest sufferer, to take the responsibility for everything even though He was not guilty, and to experience the greatest injustice ever. (This, of course, does not take away our responsibility to admit our guilt, take the blame and repent). He came to take it all onto Himself on the Cross, bear the guilt and punishment for all of it and make atonement for it. In doing this, He became both sin bearer and pain bearer.

#### 1) Jesus takes our pain as well as our sin

John the Baptist made the first public statement about Jesus at the beginning of His ministry, 'Look, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world' (John 1:29). The first public statement Jesus made about His ministry was when He took the scroll in the synagogue at Nazareth (Luke 4:14-21) and read from Isaiah 61. He said, 'He has sent Me to heal the broken-hearted'. If we only teach about Jesus coming into the world to take away our sin, we only teach half a gospel. Sinfulness is not our only problem. We are wounded not only by our own sins but also by the sins of others. If Jesus came only for sin, what would we do with our pain?

The glorious news of the gospel is that Jesus dealt with both sin and pain on the Cross. Isaiah 53:4 says, 'Surely He has borne our grief and carried our sorrows.' The Hebrew words used here mean pain and anguish. Jesus not only carried our sin on the Cross, he also carried all the consequence of sin being in the world. On the Cross, Jesus is saying, 'Count Me guilty. Give Me all the world's sin and sorrows. I will suffer in your place.'

#### *Jesus understands suffering*

Jesus experienced many sorrows throughout His earthly life. It was prophesied that He would be 'a man of sorrows, familiar with suffering' and would be 'despised and rejected' (Isaiah 53:3). When He came into the world there was no place for Him to be born and His parents had to receive Him in a filthy, stinking cowshed. When He was very young, He and his family had to flee as refugees to Egypt. The people in His home town of Nazareth considered Him to be illegitimate, and He grew up in poverty, doing menial work. During His earthly ministry, He was misunderstood by His own family, and was ridiculed and rejected by government and religious leaders.

It is clear, therefore, that Jesus understands suffering! Despite His love for His Son, God did not shelter Him from suffering. Hebrews 2:10 tells us that 'it was fitting that God ... should make the author of their salvation perfect through suffering.'

#### *Some of the sufferings Jesus went through:*

- He was betrayed by a friend
- He was rejected by his own people
- He was beaten, mocked, spat upon
- He was stripped naked
- He carried a heavy cross
- He was Crucified
- He was abandoned by his heavenly Father

Some still ask, 'How can Jesus possibly understand my suffering? He never lost His whole family in a genocide! He does not know what it feels like to be a raped woman!' It is true that in spite of all He went through, in His earthly life Jesus did not experience in a literal sense every form of human suffering, even on His journey to the Cross. But Jesus did something far greater on the Cross than identifying with human experience!

## **2) For Jesus, the Cross is a place of transfer not identification**

What happened on the Cross is more amazing than we can ever imagine. In 2 Corinthians 5:21, we are told that Jesus, although perfect without committing a single sin, was 'made to be sin for us.' In a way that we will never understand, *all* the sin of the world was transferred to Him on the Cross and He experienced the full horror of human sinfulness. In the same way, *all* our pain was transferred to Him too. The whole tragic human condition was there! As Jesus was hanging on the Cross, He carried the sin of the rapist, and at the same time He also carried the pain of the rape victim; He became both killer and victim; He became the thief and the one who was robbed. He became both the rapist and the rape victim. He felt it *all*! He even refused the gall that would numb the pain.

## **3) How to get rid of our pain**

We know how to help people with their sin – we tell them to confess it and take it to the Cross of Jesus. We do not say, 'Just forget about it and think of something else,' because we know they need to confess it to be rid of it. The same is true of pain, but we tend to tell people to just forget about the pain. But we'll never be healed this way. By bearing our grief and sorrow, Jesus is saying, 'Let me do the hurting instead of you.' If we hide our pain and wounding in our hearts, we cannot take it to Jesus to heal it.

Consider the story of Lazarus, the brother of Mary and Martha, who died and was placed in a tomb (John 11:1-44). Upon His arrival, Jesus asked for the stone to be removed from the tomb. Martha responded in protest, 'But Lazarus has been there for four days. It is going to stink if we remove the stone!' Nevertheless, Jesus insisted the stone be removed, and then He called Lazarus to come out of the tomb. Jesus knew there would be a stench behind the stone, but He could not call Lazarus forth unless the stone was removed. In the same way, Jesus knows the pain we have buried in our hearts and the 'stench' that is caused by the festering, unhealed wounds. He wants to heal our hearts, but unless we give Him access to the wounds and invite Jesus to come into the pain, He cannot heal us.

On the Cross, Jesus paid for our sins and our pain in full with His blood. He gave His life so we can be free of them. Isaiah 53:3 says that we despised Jesus and did not esteem Him. If I hold on to my pain and am unwilling to give it to Jesus, I am still not esteeming Him. He will have died in vain where this is concerned. It is as if I'm saying to Jesus, 'I do not need your sacrifice. I can carry my pain myself.' The way I can esteem Him is by giving Him what rightfully belongs to Him now – my sin and my pain.

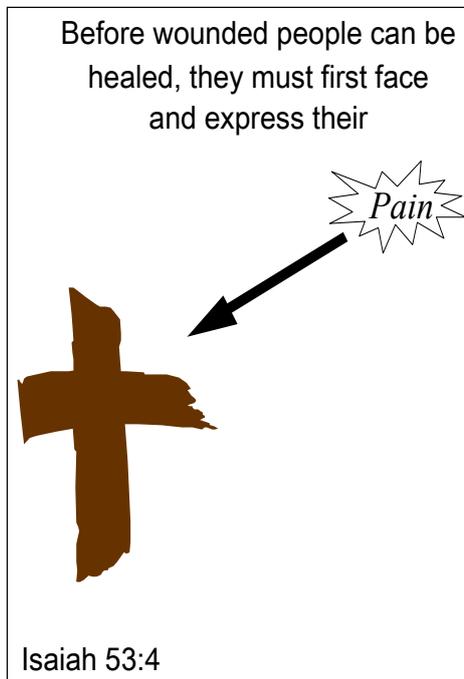
### ***Pouring out our hearts to God is scriptural***

The only way we can be healed of life's hurts is to bring all our pain to the Lamb of God, and let Him carry it all in our place. The Psalms encourage us to pour out our hearts to God:

- Psalm 142:1-2     David was very honest, he did not hide things in his heart.
- Psalm 62:8         All people are to pour out their hearts to God.

- Psalm 56:8 If we pour out our pain, the Lord receives our tears. Our suffering is precious to Him (Psalm 72:14; 116:15). He records all our tears and pain.

Lamentations 2:19 says, 'Pour out your heart like water in the presence of the Lord'.



As Christians, we can be eternally grateful that God provided a place where we can take our pain. For unbelievers, talking about it is the only thing they can do. Yet, while this will help, the more they talk about their pain the more they may dig themselves into a pit of self-pity. One Christian leader put it this way: it is possible to make an idol of our pain and worship at the altar of our own sufferings. For some, being a victim can even become part of their identity.

As believers, we have the privilege of knowing that Jesus is our pain bearer. We can be relieved of the heavy weight of the pain that we have been carrying. When we bring sin to the Cross, we need to repent, but there is no need to repent for being wounded. We may need to repent of bitterness or the desire for revenge, but there is no need to repent of feeling pain. God's heart is full of pain (Genesis 6:6), and there is enough room in the heart of God for all the pain of our country! Leaving our pain at the cross, we can identify and renounce the lies we have believed as a result of our

wounding. We are then free to move forward and start to live again.

But there is even more good news!

## 5) The Cross is also a place of exchange

We do not simply leave our pain, anger, shame and so on at the Cross. Jesus paid the full price so that He could give us something in exchange. Instead of our sin, He gives us His righteousness; instead of our pain, He gives us His joy; instead of our rejection, He gives us His acceptance; instead of our fears He gives us His peace; instead of our despair He gives us hope; instead of our anger He gives us the power to forgive; and so on.

### Making it personal

- When was the last time you struggled with guilt or pain and experienced Jesus as both your sin bearer and your pain bearer?
- Is there anything you have been carrying in your heart that you want to give to Jesus?
- What would help you pour out your pain into the heart of God? What prevents you?
- What do you think Jesus wants to give you in exchange?

### Keys

- Jesus is our pain bearer as well as our sin bearer.
- Transferring our pain to Jesus by faith relieves our hearts and sets us free.

## Healing the Wounds of Ethnic Conflict

By Dr. Rhiannon Lloyd  
with contributing author Pastor Joseph Nyamutera

Fourth Edition

Copyright © June 2016 by Mercy Ministries International

CP 442, 1215 Geneva 15, Switzerland

Email: [reconciliation@lerucher.org](mailto:reconciliation@lerucher.org)

All rights reserved.

This material may be printed for personal use or for use  
in reconciliation seminars, if it is not distributed for profit.

All Scripture quotations, unless otherwise indicated, are taken from *The Holy Bible, New International Version*® NIV®, Copyright ©1973, 1978, 1984 by International Bible Society. Used by permission from Zondervan Publishing House. All rights reserved.

If you would like to translate this teaching manual into another language,  
please email for permission.