

What Jesus Endured for Our Sake

Pastor and author Aiden Wilson Tozer

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Some thoughts from these texts, these verses from the 53rd of Isaiah. Surely He hath borne our griefs and carried our sorrows, yet we did esteem Him stricken, smitten of God and afflicted. But He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities. The chastisement of our peace was upon Him, and with His stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray. We have turned everyone to his own way and the Lord hath laid on Him the iniquity of us all.

Now, it is characteristic of fallen men to busy themselves with trifles and to avoid the settling of important matters. I suppose that there will be 40,000 to 45,000 people at the White Sox game today. A few years from now, a few days from now, it won't matter to one lone human being whether the White Sox win or not today. But for the hour, for the two hours that they will watch, it will be the biggest thing in the world. But it is only a trifle as seen against the backdrop of important matters. Yet it is characteristic that we habitually busy ourselves about things that don't matter and refuse to think about the things that do matter.

We avoid the settling of important questions and preserve a sort of silence by consent. You can talk religion as they did at Evanston by the hour. You can talk on almost any subject, anything up from the latest style, on up to Plato, up and down the scale. People will talk about anything they're familiar with to anybody they happen to get into social fellowship with. But there is a strange silence, a conspiracy of silence if you like. It is that nothing vital as touching our souls will ever be discussed. We may talk about wanting peace. We may talk about the good the church is doing. We may even talk freely about the church being a bulwark against communism, and you'll hear a lot of that now. And our leaders may appeal to us to pray and go to church in order that we must preserve our moral strength to stand against the attacks of the enemy. All that, we can hear and nobody's embarrassed. There's no silence about that. That's freely discussed.

But when it comes to my sins and judgment and a dying Savior and an outraged God and hell, there's a silence over all mankind. People do not want to discuss that anywhere, not even in many religious circles is it discussed. And where it is discussed, it is discussed theoretically, but not personally. My friend there is only one thing that really ought to matter today. And that is, that He was wounded for our transgressions, that He was bruised for our iniquities, that the chastisement of our peace was upon Him. And with His stripes we are healed. Now that's what what's important. That's what's important.

If as a result of a great game of baseball, worldwide as it's repercussions may be temporarily, if in that one man should lose his soul, then we have been guilty as human beings of sacrificing gold for

ashes and giving diamonds for glass and focusing our attention upon that which doesn't matter and neglecting that which does. I don't say that because I am against baseball. I listen sometimes to the games because, more or less, the boredom of it sort of takes my mind off of my troubles. But I've never been to see a game but once in 18-20 years, and don't plan to go back because I'm too busy. I don't have time to waste my time sitting down there and getting a tan and listening to them selling beer.

But apart from that, I don't claim that you're going to go to hell if you like baseball, but I do say those things just don't matter. They really don't matter. Neither does the color of your car. Neither does whether it has floating power or not. That doesn't matter. Neither does whether that new shirt of yours is Dacron or nylon or all gone. It doesn't make any difference. It simply isn't important. But it is important whether the man under that shirt is right with God or not. That does matter. That matters whether the heart that beats under that Dacron shirt is clean or not. That does matter.

Now it says here, He was wounded for our transgressions. And we have here the wounding of Christ. We have lying upon us as a great shadow the fact that for the human race our Lord was wounded. Let us not evade the responsibility. Let us not eloquently blame Judas nor Pilate nor the Jews. Let us not curl our lips to Judas and say he sold Him for money. Let us not curse the Jews for killing Him. Neither let us pity Pilate, the weak-willed because he didn't have character enough to stand for the innocency of the man he knew had done no wrong. All they weren't guilty certainly, but they were our accomplices in crime. They and we put Him on that cross. Not they alone but they and we.

That anger that burns in your breast this morning. That dishonesty that you were guilty of in your income tax returns. That turning back of the speedometer on your car 10,000 miles to get a better trade in. That put him on the cross. The evil, the hatred, the suspicion, the jealousy, the lying tongue, the carnality, the flesh, the pleasure-loving. That put Him on the cross. And we might as well admit it, we all had a share.

Now, it says here transgressions and iniquities, two terrible words. And they were not his, they are ours or were ours. Transgression means a breaking away or revolt from just authority. All the moral universe except man and the fallen angels have kept faithful to the authority of God. But men are in violent rebellion against that authority. Twisted and deformed and perverted and crooked, all those words are found in the original language. I don't put them in here. There is nothing in the English that can carry the weight of terror that is in these words.

So we use one word or two and hope, but we don't get all this vast charge of concentrated misery and pain and the heinousness that lie in these words, transgression and iniquity. There they are, a perversion and twistedness and deformity and crookedness and rebellion, they're all there. And

this is undeniably the consequence, or the reason that He went to the tree. That word "iniquity," it's not a good word. God knows how we hate it, but the consequences cannot be escaped.

And it says "our." I want you to hear the word our, our, our iniquities. The fingerprints of mankind are every place. We deny it and say no, but like the awkward burglar who enters a home and robs it and leaves his fingerprints on the mirror and on the dresser and on the knobs of the doors and on the table tops, is easily picked up because they've got his record. So, men will find their fingerprints down every dark cellar and in every alley and everyplace around over the world. And every man's fingerprints are recorded and God knows man from man. And we can't escape it nor blame it on somebody else, but it's there, our iniquities, the possessive, personal, it's our iniquities.

And then it says here, He was wounded. He was wounded for this. And that word wounded, I don't even like to tell you all that it means. It means profane and broken and stained and defiled. And He was all that, like some beautiful shrine. He was profaned and broken, and they stained Him and plucked out his beard and stained with blood, and defiled with the grime, the wounded one, Jesus Christ, the wounded one. Israel's great burden and great blunder was that she felt that this wounded one on the hillside there was being punished for His own sin. We thought, says the Jew, in confession, we thought He was smitten of God. We thought that God was punishing Him for His iniquity, but we didn't know then that God was punishing Him for our iniquity. We didn't know that. And we know it now. It was for our transgressions. He himself was God, the second person of the Trinity and yet He was wounded. It was not only the physical wounding, but it was a profanation. He was profaned for our sake, as when they might go into some beautiful church and profane it. They profaned Him for our sakes. He was wounded and bruised for our transgressions.

And it says the chastisement of our peace was upon him. And that peace is that which restores us to God, the health and the prosperity and the welfare and the safety of the individual. The chastisement was upon Him. Rebuke and discipline and correction, these words are found there, the chastisement.

Now you know, when He was chastised, He was chastised in public, He was whipped in public by the decree of the Romans. And they lashed Him in public as they later lashed Paul. They lashed him and punished him there. And His bruised and beaten and swollen form was the answer to the peace of the world and to the peace of the human heart. He was chastised for our peace.

Now, the truly penitent man wants to be punished openly. Have you ever felt this, or did you feel this sometime in your life, that you rebelled and turned against yourself. You revolted against yourself in that awful hour of your repentance. You revolted against yourself so violently that you wanted to be punished for your sin. You didn't feel that you could dare ask God to let you off. You wanted as it were, to impale yourself and suffer and feel the disgrace and the shame, and you didn't want to hide it up and say, I haven't done it or even asked God to hide it from the angry eyes of the multitude.

I guess there is no more humiliating punishment ever devised by mankind than that of publicly whipping men in the public place, they whipped and chastised. They used to do that. They could put a man in jail and he might feel himself a hero. They could fine him heavily and he'd boast about it. But when he had been taken out before the laughing, jeering crowds, stripped to the waist and soundly whipped like a child, a bad child, he lost face and he was never able again to boast and never was the bold, bad man he'd been before. Whipping does that. It breaks the spirit and humbles and humiliates. The chagrin is worse than the lash that falls on the back. And there are some of us who in the days gone by, have felt the personal sense, the pointed pinch of iniquity so terribly that we felt the only fair thing to do would be to take us out in public and chastise us.

Well, that's what happened, my brothers and sisters, the chastisement of our peace fell upon Him. And He was chastised in public, publicly humiliated and disgraced like a common horse thief. Like a common chicken thief, He was lashed until His bruised and bleeding body, open to the public, quivering and stinging under the lash, dragged itself away. He did that. And it says, with His stripes we are healed. Stripes is not a pleasant word either. It means to be hurt until you're black and blue. I'm giving you actually what is found in the words as they were originally written.

Now, this punishment was corrective, not punitive. The only punishment that man knows is more or less punitive. You punish a man for his sin. He does wrong, you punish him. You'll fine a man if it's that kind of crime. Or they put him in prison if it's that kind of crime. Or they send him to the gallows, if it's that kind of crime. But always, it's punitive. It's revenge, it's society taking vengeance against the individual who dared flout the rules. But the suffering of the Savior was not punitive. Nobody was being punished as an end in itself. The sufferings of Jesus were corrective, not punitive. He let Him suffer in order that He might correct us, in order that His suffering might not begin and end in suffering, but that it might begin in suffering and end in healing. That's the glory of the cross. That's the glory of the sacrifice that was offered for our sins. It began in His suffering and it ended in our healing. It began in His wounds and ended in our purification. It began in His bruises and ended in our cleansing.

There's a word coming back now. A word that had been out of favor for a long time while quasi-fundamentalism or Calvinistic fundamentalism held its grip upon the world, upon the evangelical church. You didn't dare breath the word unless you want it to be branded as a holy-roller. But it's coming back now. It's the word sanctification. It's coming back into the usage of the evangelicals. As I told you, a Baptist preacher in this city has written quite a book called "Holiness for our Times." And he's arguing again, even for the purity of heart of Wesley. You run into it in the magazine articles occasionally. The word is coming back. I hope what the word stands for comes back too. For it was for this that Jesus Christ allowed Himself to be thus maltreated. He was bruised and wounded chastised in order that we might have pure hearts and clean hands, in order that our minds might be pure and our thoughts pure. It began in His suffering; it ends in our

cleansing. It began with open bleeding, twitching wounds, and ended in peaceful hearts and calm demeanor.

Now my brethren, repentance is mainly remorse for the share we had in the revolt that wounded Jesus Christ our Lord. That's mainly what repentance is really. A truly repentant man never quite gets over it. And you know that penitence is not something that comes and then leaves when you're forgiven and cleansed. The acute conviction leaves and a sense of peace and cleansing come. But sometimes even the holiest man when he thinks back over his old part in the war wounding of the lamb, a sense of shock comes over him, a sense of wonder that the Lamb that was wounded should turn His wounds into the cleansing of the one who wounded him. That the Lamb that was bruised, should by His bruises heal the one the bruised Him. And he cries out amazing grace, how sweet the sound. Amazing wonder that this should take place, that this should be true.

Brethren, if you've got so snug and so smug in your little nest that you never have periods of wonder in the mystery of it, something's wrong and you need to have your stony ground broken up again. For Paul, the holiest men that ever lived, would have spells of remembrance. He knew God didn't remember it against him forever, and he knew it was gone and his own happy heart told him that all was well. At the same time, he'd shake his head and say, I am unworthy to be called for I did it. If that sense of perpetual penance ever leaves the human heart, we're on our way to backslide.

Charles Finney, one of the greatest of them all. Said occasionally, he'd get cold in his heart. He didn't excuse it. He said, I took a half day off, fasted and prayed and plowed up until I struck fire again and met God. I recommend it brethren. I recommend that we keep upon us two things, positive knowledge that were clean through His wounds, and have peace through His stripes and are healed through His bruises, and all is right inside. You never ought to excuse sin. You never ought to excuse wrongdoing. You never ought to excuse evil, never.

Having said that, then I would say this too. The second thing we always ought to keep upon us is a sense of great gratitude for the bruised One, the wounded One. Oh, the mystery of redemption, that the bruises of One healed the bruises of many. That the wounds of the One healed the wounds of the millions. That the stripes of the One healed the stripes of the many. And the wounds and bruises that should have fallen upon us, fell upon Him. And we're saved for His sake.

Sometimes I don't want to sail or soar very high. I just want to rest and quietly say over and over again, He was wounded for me. And He was bruised from my sins. And all my old putrid past put Him where He was. But He came back from the grave again and was alive forevermore. And all the healing power of that dying Lamb is now available to you and me. We can have it this morning. We can have it this morning. Don't take communion this tell morning in a state of half-backsliding. Don't do it. Don't take communion this morning in a state of coldness. Don't do it. If you're sulking,

mad at somebody, for God's sake, bow your head and confess and let a tear trickled down your nose this morning and tell Jesus Christ what a poor heal you are for daring ever to feel that way in the presence of the wounded Savior.

If you've been so busy with the cares of this world that your heart is overcome, for God's sake, bow your head now and ask Him to forgive you for Jesus' sake and plead the promise, if we confess our sin, He'll cleanse us. Get delivered and cleansed and then take communion. Don't touch a holy thing carelessly. Don't slide through. Don't say what's the difference? There is a difference and it does matter. Let a man examine himself. Let him see. The old Presbyterian set three weeks aside, three weeks, and they said, these three weeks, we'll walk softly, we'll search our hearts, we'll wait on God, we'll seek His face. Then they took communion, every three months for them. I think it's not often enough. They said we'd rather have it every three months and come up prepared than let it become a careless thing. I believe that all right. Better to have it once a year if we enter into it in the right spirit, and never be careless about brethren.

So today, we go on into the communion service. It can all be explained, all be explained. You can explain it all. Just as you could explain the bush. Any botanist could have told you more about that bush than Moses knew. Any botanist, ask any botanist in the University of Chicago to talk to you about the acacia bush of Arabia. He will tell you more about the acacia bush than Moses knew for all he's learned. For they've had several thousand years to study such things. But the trouble is, the botanist can explain the bush, but there's no fire in the bush. And so, the scientists can explain the communion service, the bread, the wine. Historically we go back and we find they did it this way and they did it this way. We know more about the bread and wine now than the apostles did. But the danger is that we'll only have bread and wine. That the fire will not be in the bush and the glory will not be in service. So, it's not important that we know the historic facts or the scientific facts. It's vastly important that we know God and that we come with reverent spirits to this service. Let us pray.

O Lord Jesus, we're not worthy, but we're eager to deport ourselves worthily. We're not worthy, but we're very anxious that we should be so in our inward moods, reverent and loving and trusting that Thou would pronounce us worthy. Now Lord, bless us as we wait through Christ our Lord. Amen.