

# How Deep Are Those Wounds?

## Psalm 38:1-9, 15 (Lent 4)

Lord, do not rebuke me in anger. Do not discipline me in wrath. Indeed, your arrows have stuck in me. Your hand has come down on me. There is no health in my flesh because of your rage. There is no wellness in my bones because of my sin, because my guilt has gone over my head. Like a heavy burden, it is too heavy for me. My wounds stink and ooze because of my folly. I am drooping. I am completely bent over. All day long I go around mourning. Even my back burns with pain. My whole body is unhealthy. I have become numb. I am totally crushed. I groan loudly because of my anxious thoughts. Lord, all my needs lie before you. My sighs are not hidden from you....Yet I wait for you, Lord. You will answer, O Lord my God.

First Aid kits usually have all that you need to take care of wounds, at least small ones. When you cut your finger with a knife in the kitchen or skin your knee while playing outside, you wash the wound really well. Then going into that first aid kit, you reach for the antiseptic wipes to further clean the wound. After the wound has been cleaned, you find the right kind of bandage to keep the open wound covered so that it stays clean while it begins to heal. For small nicks, cuts, and minor scrapes, you pull out the right size of band-aid. If you're in my house, you would pick out which Disney princess band-aid you want. For larger scrapes, you might need a gauze pad and tape to cover the wound.

Wounds can be small surface abrasions or deep, deep cuts. Wounds bleed. They can be very painful. They might need a lot of care depending on how bad the wound is. Either way the wound needs to be cared for. If you don't take care of those wounds, they can become infected. That infection often leads to more pain where the wound just doesn't heal.

In Psalm 38, David paints a picture of a deep, infected wound that not even the most stocked first aid kit could care for. It isn't a wound on the skin, but a wound on the heart, a wound of guilt over sins committed, wrong actions done or right actions left undone. As he sees and feels those wounds, David pleads with God to not deal with him in wrath and anger recognizing that it was God's Law that pierced his heart creating those wounds of guilt. **"Indeed, your arrows have stuck in me. Your hand has come down on me." (vs. 2)**

God's Law summarized in the Ten Commandments, which we read last Sunday, shows us what he wants us to do not to do. It creates that line of what is sin and what isn't sin, what is right and what is wrong. Yet that Law also shows us how we have crossed that line with what we have done or left undone. Like that arrow which comes flying in on the battlefield, it creates a wound, a deep wound of guilt in the heart of a sinner feeling the pains of shame, fear, regret, and remorse. They are wounds that are heavy burdens on the heart. Listen to how David describes that guilt. **"There is no health in my flesh because of your rage. There is no wellness in my bones because of my sin, because my guilt has gone over my head. Like a heavy burden, it is too heavy for me." (vs. 3-4)**

Notice what David doesn't do. He doesn't shift the blame to someone else for his guilt. He doesn't try to make himself feel less guilty over the sins he has committed by comparing them to actions of others.

He stares right at that wound and he sees its bleeding. He feels its pains. He understands his own guilt. He admits it is a deep wound that he can't do anything about. He can't put a bandage on it. He can't take the throbbing pain away. He can't do anything to make the pain feel any better. Feeling every bit of that wound, that guilt over what he had done, it was a burden too heavy for him to carry.

How deep are the wounds of your guilt? How much do you so often struggle with guilt in your life over the wrong that you have done or the right you have left undone? Guilt is a powerful feeling. When shown just what we have done or not done to God and those around us, we feel the guilt. It cuts deep feeling the shame, the fear, the regret, and the remorse. Seeing that wound in our heart bleeding uncontrollably, we think that we can just slap a bandage on it. We think that we can make ourselves feel less guilty by just making up for what you have done in some way, but that doesn't take care of that wound. We really don't feel any better as our conscience continues to feel that wound of guilt. We cannot heal that wound. So we struggle with that guilt and feel the depth of its burden upon our heart.

As painful as wounds on your body can be, not taking care of those wounds can lead to infection and even more pain. Struggling with those wounds of guilt, unable to clean them, bandage them, and heal them they become infected with hopelessness that can affect our whole life. Listen again to how David speaks of the infection his wounds of guilt caused him. **“My wounds stink and ooze because of my folly. I am drooping. I am completely bent over. All day long I go around mourning. Even my back burns with pain. My whole body is unhealthy. I have become numb. I am totally crushed. I groan loudly because of my anxious thoughts.” (vs. 5-8)**

What a picture David poetically paints for us! A stinking, oozing wound is one that is deeply infected. David feels an emotional infection as it affects how he goes about his day. He droops like he is walking with his head down in shame. When he sits, he bends completely over like someone would to place their head in their hands. All day he wears his sorrowful emotions on his sleeve mourning over what he has done. That infection affects him physically. There is no health in his body that feels numb. He feels a psychological infection crushed under the burden of his guilt as anxious thoughts fill his mind. This infection brought about by guilt stinks and oozes with hopelessness as his wound of guilt bleeds.

Struggling with unresolved and unhealed guilt, our whole life is affected with that stinking, oozing infection of hopelessness. It affects us emotionally as we go about our days. It affects us physically in what we do or how we do things. It affects us psychologically crushing us under the burden of our guilt as anxious thoughts fill our minds. “Will I ever find relief? Will there ever come a time when I won't feel guilty. Can my guilt ever be taken away? My guilt just runs so deep into my heart.”

Guilt can be hidden on the inside. We can sometimes do a pretty good job of hiding those wounds from those around us. Yet those wounds don't go unnoticed by God. God sees your wounds of guilt and the infection of hopelessness it has caused. He knows exactly what will heal that infection and the wound which caused it. **“Lord, all my needs, lie before you. My sighs are not hidden from you,” (vs. 9)** David declares. Knowing that God sees and knows how to heal, David expresses trust in God to provide the answer to his guilt, the healing from his wounds because there is nowhere else to turn. **“Yet I wait for you, O Lord. You will answer, O Lord my God.” (vs. 15)**

God sees you lying there bleeding from guilt. He hears your pleas for help. He bends down with his “first aid kit” to provide the answer to your guilt and healing for your wounds. He comes not to press down even harder on them in anger, but to care for those deep wounds touching them with healing in his saving grace, that undeserved love of God for a world of sinners. The Apostle Paul wrote, **“Indeed, it is by grace you have been saved, through faith - and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God - not by works, so that no one can boast.” (Ephesians 2:8-9)** How do we see that love? We see it in Jesus who spoke of what God’s love gave. **“For God so loved the world that he gave his only-begotten Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish, but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him.” (John 3:16-17)**

In love for you and for me desiring to save and heal our guilt, Jesus endured his own wounds. They were not wounds caused by his own sin. They were the wounds of your sins, your sins, your sins, and my sins. As the nails pierced his hands and feet and his blood flowed down the cross, there we see the wounds of grace, wounds that bring hope and healing to our deeply infected wounds of guilt.

When you struggle with guilt and wonder if those wounds could ever be healed, look no further than the cross of Jesus and his even deeper wounds of grace. No matter how deep your wounds of guilt may look or feel, there is no sin that Jesus’ wounds didn’t heal, no guilt he didn’t bear. The prophet Isaiah spoke of Jesus’ healing wounds of grace. **“Surely he was taking up our weaknesses, and he was carrying our sufferings. We thought it was because of God that he was stricken, smitten, and afflicted, but it was because of our rebellion that he was pierced. He crushed for the guilt our sins deserved. The punishment that brought us peace was upon him, and by his wounds we are healed.” (53:4-5)**

The wounds of grace are God’s answer to your wounds of guilt. Those wounds run deeper. How deep are those wounds of such undeserved love for you and for me? So deep that God gave his only Son to bear the guilt of every last sin and bring healing to every last wound of guilt. No matter how deep your wounds of guilt feel, there is healing for those wounds. There is hope even when your guilt weighs so heavy on your heart. How do you know that? Look to the cross of Jesus, the Lamb of God who took away the sins of the world. See his wounds. Then look to your baptism where your sin and the painful wounds of guilt you feel have already been washed and healed by those deeper wounds of grace. So with the hymn writer we say, “O Lamb of God, sweet Lamb of God, I love the holy Lamb of God! Oh, wash me in his precious blood, my Jesus Christ, the Lamb of God.” (CWS 748) Amen