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And by His Stripes We Were Healed

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There are things in life we cannot fix—try as we might. There are moments we cannot get back. There are words we cannot delete or say differently.

My wife, Chantal, and I had been married for a little more than a year when I decided to build my own desk for my office. Mind you, I did not actually have an office. We lived as married students in a one-room apartment at Helderberg College, South Africa, in a tiny living room (nearly filled with our bookshelves and some chairs) and one bedroom that fit our bed and my desk with a clunky computer sitting on top. While in school, I had never had the chance to learn carpentry, but I had made friends with the woodworking teacher at Helderberg High School. During summer break, he graciously took the time to initiate me into the mysteries of careful woodworking. We started from scratch—with raw planks that required cutting, planing, and finally, cutting to size.

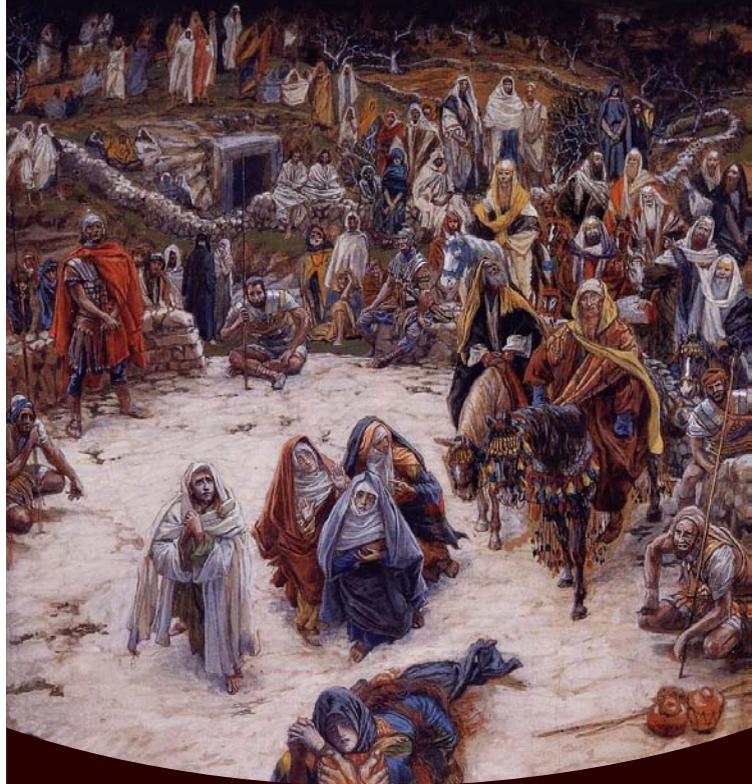
For two weeks I put in eight-hour days and enjoyed using my hands and learning new skills. It was late afternoon, and I had worked hard that particular day. I was about to finish a job that involved using a powerful electric bench planer. I was tired and did not concentrate—for a split second. My hand slipped off the plank, and two fingers hit the planer. Initially it didn't hurt, but there was lots of blood. My brother and the woodworking teacher rushed me to the hospital. After the hand surgeon had cleaned everything and looked at the damage, I was told that he had to take off the remainder of the tip of my little finger on the left hand, including the nail bed and bone fragments.

When I finally arrived home late that evening, it suddenly hit me: *there are things in life we cannot fix.*

The Healing Messiah

The last week of Jesus' public ministry started with a bang. People were lining the roads leading to Jerusalem. Jesus, the healer from Galilee, was coming to town, riding on a donkey. Crowds were shouting "Hosanna"; palm branches and spread-out garments covered the road leading from the Mount of Olives into the city. Jesus was the "Son of David"; prophecy was being fulfilled before the very eyes of the people (cf. Zech. 9:9; Ps. 118:26). All of Jerusalem seemed to be up and about (Matt. 21:10). The disciples were giddy with anticipation. Finally, Jesus would claim His rightful place.

Jesus moved purposefully toward the Temple. This was His Father's house (Luke 2:49)—yet the din of shouting moneychangers, yelling merchants of Temple-approved sacrificial animals, and thousands of people haggling over the best price enveloped everything. The outer Temple



And by His Stripes We Are Healed

By GERALD A. KLINGBEIL

court looked and smelled like a cattle yard. Everybody was absorbed in doing business; nobody anticipated the real Lamb entering the court.

Suddenly all eyes turn toward Him. In a split second, unexpectedly, Jesus is not just the carpenter from Nazareth standing in the Temple court. “Divinity flashed through humanity, investing Christ with a dignity and glory He had never manifested before,” writes Ellen White.¹ As He moves around the court, Jesus quotes Scripture (Isa. 56:7; Jer. 7:11), amplifying the prophetic voices of past generations. The house of prayer, turned into a den of thieves, is rapidly emptying (cf. Matt. 21:12, 13). Tables are overturned, coins spill all over the ground, and animals escape their pens. No one questions the authority of this Man. No one can stop the Son of God.

I imagine, after the rush of stampeding feet, there was silence—then the sound of tentative steps. The curious note in Matthew 21:14 points us to Jesus’ true mission: “Then the blind and the lame came to Him in the temple, and He healed them.”

The location of this dense one-verse miracle was most likely the court of the Gentiles. Jewish tradition prohibited any person with a disability from offering a sacrifice “before the Lord.” The texts of the Jewish community at Khirbet Qumran went even further and excluded those individuals from the congregation and the future messianic kingdom.² Those who were lame, blind, or deaf were not allowed into the inner courts, because they would introduce impurities and imperfection into God’s realm.

Jesus makes short work of this notion. His healing ministry invites all into His Father’s presence. He has time for the marginalized, the sick, the unworthy, the outsider—and the children (verse 16). By cleansing the Temple and healing the sick, He points beyond the stunning beauty and architecture of a building to its ultimate purpose. Sinners in need of forgiveness and restoration are redeemed by the sacrifice of the true Lamb of God.

By His Stripes

Days later, the crowds shouting “Hosanna” have modulated their shouts to “crucify Him.” Three crosses dot the road leading to Jerusalem. The mighty Healer has died; most of His disciples have fled or stand distraught at the foot of the cross. Messiah rests in His grave. Hopeless, yet determined, some of the women following Jesus are on their way to the tomb. They don’t know it yet, but Jesus does not need the embalming spices they bring for Him.

The empty tomb makes their hearts pound faster. Their hopes, their dreams, their expectations are reignited by angels announcing Jesus’ resurrection. Can you see them

running back to the city to tell their friends and families—the entire world? No more sacrificial Lego-style illustrations in the temple. The true Lamb of God has carried the burden of an entire world—and lives!

We Are Healed

Suddenly texts such as Isaiah 53 make sense. “Surely He has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows. . . . He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities; . . . and by His stripes we are healed” (verses 4, 5). The disciples, and those following in their footsteps throughout the ages, finally get it. The Healer was not just interested in restoring our eyesight, our hearing, our ability to walk, or our capacity to speak. No, He looked beyond the *apparent* problem and focused on the *real* problem. He took care of our sins—the ugly, dirty acts and thoughts and motives, both great and small. He took upon Himself our iniquities and “[justified] many” (verse 11)—all those who, first with trepidation, but then rushing into His wide-open arms, come as they are to be truly healed.

Resurrection morning is a good reminder of Jesus’ healing ministry. My little finger on my left hand still lacks a nail, and sometimes when the weather changes, I feel some pain. While it is a great conversation starter with kids, it also reminds me of my need for *true* healing and restoration. Like those who were lame and blind and crippled, who rushed to Jesus after He had cleansed the Temple, I, too, keep running into His arms. My tangled sense of righteousness needs the constant reminder that His sacrifice is sufficient; that the Healer does not need my feeble attempts at self-medicated remedies.

And, yes, while there are things in life we cannot fix, we know the One who can.

His grace is bountiful;
His forgiveness unconditional;
His restoration complete.
His call means surrender;
His claims are absolute
His victory is magnanimous—
and changes everything. ■

¹ Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Pub. Assn, 1898), p. 591.

² D. A. Carson, “Matthew,” in *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary*, ed. Frank E. Gaebelin (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1984), vol. 8, p. 442.



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