

A GOOD FRIDAY MEDITATION AND PRAYER JOURNEY

Surely he took up our pain and bore our suffering, yet we considered him punished by God, stricken by him, and afflicted. But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was on him, and by his wounds we are healed. We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to our own way; and the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all.

Isaiah 53:4–6

This is a series of meditations and prayers based on the Isaiah 53 prophecies fulfilled in Jesus. Please take your time. Let the Holy Spirit speak to you and lead you into a deeper awareness of Christ's work on the cross and your need for it. The prayer sections would work best if you whisper them aloud. There is something powerful about truth when it is spoken and prayed.

NOTE: These are not chronological, so you may go to the stations in whatever order you chose, and stay however long you deem appropriate.

HE TOOK OUR PAIN

⁴ Surely he took up our pain and carried our sorrows, yet we considered him punished by God, stricken by him, and afflicted.

Jesus, you took my pain, sorrow and hurt in your physical body on the cross.

MEDITATION:

Since the first sin in Adam the human race has been marked by pain, sorrow, suffering, tragedy and loss. Pain entered the world because of sin. Families are broken because of sin. Lives are scarred, distorted, twisted and broken because of sin. Alienation, loneliness and division come because of sin. The root cause of the human problem is our alienation from God. As one person said, "We insist on our independence from Him" and when we do, we invite pain. The only way to deal effectively with pain is to deal with the root of it which is sin.

The Scriptures say that on the cross Jesus "took our pain and carried our sorrows." Yet, for many of us, pain still characterizes our lives. Pain and sorrow are still stored in the deepest parts of us. We must *let* Jesus take our pain. He took it on the cross nearly 2,000 years ago, but we must fully enter into what he has done by surrendering our pain to Him... and letting Him *take* it.

Take some time to let the Holy Spirit highlight pain within you that you need to now bring to him and lay it down before him... to offer it to him as a sacrifice... to surrender it to be absorbed into his physical body on the cross. Our pain has many faces...

Pain in the *loss of loved ones...* and in *rejection from others*

Pain in the *failure of significant relationships*

Pain in our *broken sexuality and bad choices*

Pain from *harsh words and actions of others*

Pain from our *families, our parents, our children*

Pain from *failures in life, work, careers, joblessness*

Pain through *physical pain and chronic illness*

Pain in *marriage relationships...*

These are just starting places for surrendering our pain to him. Be specific in bringing your pain, sorrow, hurts and griefs to him. This may take some time, so please do not rush through it.

PRAYER:

Lord Jesus, I believe that on the cross you bore my pain and carried my sorrows. Because I believe you and what you did on the cross, I am now bringing ALL my pain to you. I bring all my pain from _____ to you, and release it to you. I bring all of the sorrow I have been carrying from _____ to you, and surrender it all to you. I give them up, and let you take them. I renounce their grip on my life. I sever the distorting effects these have had on the way I think, feel, interact and behave. I bring them to the cross and the power of your work there. I ask that you would take them now.

NOTE: Take the time to deal honestly with each issue the Spirit of God brings up. You will not regret it.

HE DIED IN MY PLACE

⁵ *But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities;*

Jesus, you took all the punishment that was rightfully ours on the cross.

MEDITATION:

God is just, perfect and righteous *as well as* loving, compassionate and merciful. When someone sins, he cannot simply look away and say, “its okay.” With the perfect, holy God, there is but one consequence for sin: death. The Scripture says, “the one who sins is the one who will die.”

When someone commits a heinous crime we cry for justice, for the person to pay for their crime. There is a sense of indignation within us that is aghast at the act, and from our depths calls for a just penalty. If someone “gets off” without the appropriate punishment, we have a strong sense of alarm and injustice. With God, we were the criminals deserving justice.

The heart of God is without compromise. He could not simply ignore our sin. The just punishment had to be given. Justice must be done. His plan was to take the punishment that was rightly ours and lay it on someone else: his very own Son! The price would be paid, but not by us. The sinless one died in our place. He died instead of you. As the Apostle Paul writes:

For God made Christ, who never sinned, to be the offering for our sin, so that we could be made right with God through Christ. 2 Corinthians 5:21 NLT

This is love. Such love. A love that refuses to give up and consign us to death. A love that sees such value in its object: us! A love that saw us, loved us, made a way for us.

This is justice. Not one sin is overlooked. Justice is served, but not against us. The payment for our sin is paid. The full, just wrath of the righteous God is taken by the Son he loves. The prophet Isaiah continues...

Yet it was the LORD's will to crush him and cause him to suffer, and though the LORD makes his life an offering for sin, he will see his offspring and prolong his days... Isaiah 53:10

At the cross, love and justice meet in Jesus.

PRAYER:

Lord Jesus, I was in the prison of my own sin. A captive with a death sentence. I deserved it. Your Word says, “No one is righteous. Not one.” That was me. You stepped in. You took my place. You died for me, instead of me. The full wrath of God that was rightly mine was taken by you. You were so loved by the Father, and yet voluntarily took my death penalty. ***I cannot take my eyes off the one who died for me.*** In

taking my place, I see the justice of God more clearly. I see the righteousness and severity of God on our rebellion and sin. I am in awe of your uncompromising nature. God, the just judge, gave the full punishment to his own Son. And, I see love. Incalculable love. Love reaching into our world with redeeming purpose. Love, from before the foundation of the world, that took on flesh, became a servant, and died for me. Your nail-pierced hands and feet, your wounded side. This is love. This is forgiveness. This was enough to save me! Thanks be to God!

Take some time to appreciate the enormity of God taking on flesh in Christ, of living a sinless life, of knowing that it was all headed in the direction of the cross, and following through with it. Amazing grace!

PEACE THRU SACRIFICE

the punishment that brought us peace was on him,

Jesus, you are my peace. You made the way of peace.

MEDITATION:

Even though we may not have felt it, there was a wide chasm between ourselves and God. Sin separates. Sin alienates. Sin stiff arms God. And because of sin we were not at peace with Him. The Bible uses many images to describe this state... hardened hearts, rebellion against him, a calloused conscience; in many ways our sins have made God our enemy. The prophet Isaiah wrote...

...your iniquities (sins) have separated you from your God; your sins have hidden his face from you...
Isaiah 59:1–2

We are responsible for this, not God, yet we could do nothing about it. God did something for us that we could not do for ourselves. He bridged the chasm that separated us. He sent his Son, God in the flesh, to live the holy life we could not live, and then die in our place. On the cross, Jesus cried, “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?!” He is taking our place, being forsaken instead of us. God put our offenses upon his Son, and when Jesus died, God’s justice was satisfied. The just judgment that separated us from God was taken by Jesus. Our offense taken away, and the way of peace with God paved for us. The Apostle Paul writes:

...since we have been made right in God’s sight by faith, we have peace with God because of what Jesus Christ our Lord has done for us. Romans 5:1 NLT

Take the time to come to Jesus with humble gratitude. He took your punishment. He took the full wrath of the Father for you. The cruel death Jesus endured says “I love you.” Peace has come at a tremendous price.

PRAYER:

Oh Lord Jesus! I am amazed by you. I was alienated. I was lost. My sins caused it. My sins created the chasm. I could do nothing to remedy the distance and didn’t even have the desire to bridge it. Yet you would not leave it that way. Through your physical death on the cross, the cause of the alienation—my sin—was taken by you. The sinless One paid for the sinner. Incredible. Unfathomable love. I am now at peace with God ONLY because of your work on the cross. It is a very expensive peace. A hard-won peace. It is peace that came through punishment. Thank you for taking my punishment and that I have peace with God because of your blood shed on the cross.

REFLECTION:

And, because of Christ’s death, this peace we now have *with* God, paves the way for God’s transcendent peace to be ours all the time! Peace with God pours God’s peace into every area of life. The Scriptures are full of promises of God’s peace to us. Peace in the midst of trial. Peace in our hearts and minds, in our

families, our relationships, . . . into our world. The cross and peace . . . peace with God, leading to peace within, leading to peace with others. Amazing love!

Then, take some time to claim the Peace of God in the verses below . . . (verses on small pieces of paper throughout station to take with them)

HEALING CAME THRU HIM

and by his wounds we are healed.

Jesus, you are our healer. Healing comes from you, is in you and flows from your sacrifice on the cross.

MEDITATION:

Sin breaks us. We are busted to pieces because of sin. Our own choices, coming from a heart and mind polluted by selfishness, brings brokenness. Sin breaks us. Sin stains us. In our families sin has shown itself in anger, self-centeredness, abuse, jealousy, bitterness, resentment, competition, immorality, divorce and alienation. Sin breaks us. Sin marks us. In our communities, our cities and our nation these same dynamics are pervasive. We continue to hope that societies will evolve beyond it, but over and over again, sin rears its head as strong as ever. Sin breaks us all. Sin infects us.

In all this carnage, God has not been silent. The Gospel looks our sin directly in the face with a bold honesty. It names sin as the offense to God that it truly is, acknowledges the full gravity and evil within us, and points us to the cross. On the cross the root cause of our brokenness was deal with. On the cross our sin's breaking, staining, imprisoning power was broken. On the cross, God's forgiveness and healing are released to us. The Apostle Peter writes:

"He himself bore our sins" in his body on the cross, so that we might die to sins and live for righteousness; "by his wounds you have been healed." 1 Peter 2:24

Healing from sin's damage was released through Jesus' death on the cross. His redeeming power now pours into our darkest depths with healing light. At the cross heaven's power was released into all the areas where sin has long reigned, breaking its grip upon us. During his earthly life, Jesus healed the sick, delivered those under demonic bondage, raised the dead and performed amazing miracles. When Jesus took his final breath on the cross, enormous power was released from God's throne. Power that brings life and healing. The earth shook. The tombs of many dead people were opened and they walked around Jerusalem and were seen! Really! (Matthew 27:51-53). Jesus is still doing this work today in us! Healing has come to us because of the complete work of Christ on the cross. Healing sin's damage, its relational damage, and even physical illness through the cross.

PRAYER:

Lord Jesus, I acknowledge that my sins have brought profound brokenness into my life. I confess that my sins have polluted me, stained me, hurt me and crippled me. They have driven me to my knees in need of healing . . . in need of you. I come to you now with great gratitude for your sacrificial death on the cross and the healing that has come to me through your complete work. I invite you into all the areas of my life that need healing. I invite you into all the places in my heart where it has been broken. Bring your healing. I invite you into my family and my friendships as the healer. I invite you into my physical body to bring your healing, restoration and wholeness. Bring your healing. I welcome you into my mind, the way I think, the way I relate to others, and even the way I see the heavenly Father. Bring your healing and restoration. By faith I receive the healing that was released through your shed blood on the cross. I pray the Scripture back to you . . .

“Christ carried my sins in his body on the cross so that freed from my sins, I can live a life that has God’s approval. His wounds have healed me!.” 1 Peter 2:24 GW

RECONCILIATION:

Jesus’ death not only released healing to us, it released healing power for our relationships. Forgiveness in us must work its way outward into our relationships. Who do you need to forgive? As you reflect on the price that was paid for your forgiveness, take the time to forgive those who have sinned against you. Let go of the offenses, bringing them to the cross and leaving them there.

OUR WAYWARD & SELFISHNESS

⁶ We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to our own way;

Jesus, our sins put you on the cross...

MEDITATION: Our condition apart from Christ.

It is easy to look at the world around us and see why things are so bad and broken. People are selfish. People want their own way. Back in the biblical days of the Judges, it concludes, “in those days there was no king, *everyone did what was right in their own eyes...*” a fitting summary of modern society. It is easy to look outward at what is wrong with the world, but more difficult to look within and see our own selfishness and sin.

Over the centuries well-meaning Christians have sought to avenge Christ’s death by going to the holy land and battling the “people responsible for his death.” They have completely missed the point! The Romans physically put Jesus on the cross. The Jews orchestrated it. But it was *our* sins that put Jesus on the cross.

Our sins are the reason for his atoning death. A.W. Tozer’s great question: “Who Put Jesus On The Cross?” is answered with a definitive, “we did!” A modern hymn sums it up, “It was my sin that held him there.”

The Isaiah prophecy pinpoints two core reasons that made Jesus’ atoning death necessary. The first is that we have strayed from God. This has more to do with our inner nature than our actions. We naturally walk away from God. We follow our appetites. We have no affinity for being under his care. Our nature is to wander away. The biblical term is we walk in the flesh, the sin-nature. Its infection is complete within us. On our own, we simply do not want God.

The second indictment is that we willfully choose our way instead of God. We insist on being our own god, rather than coming under God’s care and reign. The temptation of Genesis 3 to “be like God” saturates our being. While waywardness has to do with our wandering nature, this has to do with deliberate rebellion against him. “I will do it my way” is the deep motive in our hearts. Scripture talks plainly of how God will give us over to our desires and lusts... what we want most. And, we will become slaves to it.

These heart-conditions put us in a dire position with God. Guilty. Damned. Estranged. Alienated. Spiritually dead. Deserving God’s justice. Paul writes to the Christians in Rome:

“There is no one righteous, not even one; there is no one who understands; there is no one who seeks God. All have turned away, they have together become worthless; there is no one who does good, not even one.”
Romans 3:10–12

We could not, nor would we even want to remedy this! But God, who is rich in mercy, moved on his own. He took on flesh. He bore our sins in his body. His death released forgiveness to purify us, make us clean, acceptable, right with Him, new!

PRAYER:

Jesus, the reason you had to suffer and die was because of my sinful selfishness and wandering from you. I own my propensity to wander from you to my own ways, and my own selfish tendency to want my own way.

When I honestly own these and come to the cross, the power is there to break these and release new life in me. I humbly acknowledge that my sin was what put you on the cross. I also acknowledge that your work on the cross released a flood of forgiveness that has washed me clean. Because of your redemptive work, I am no longer under the tyranny of sin. Its grip has been broken. Thank you for your forgiveness. Thank you that you did not give up on me, nor give me over to life apart from you.

For Christ also suffered once for sins, the righteous for the unrighteous, to bring you to God. He was put to death in the body but made alive in the Spirit. 1 Peter 3:18

REFLECTION:

Take some time to remember who you were without Christ. Reflect on how he got your attention. How he became real. How his forgiveness became real. And thank Him, and keep thanking him.

HE TOOK OUR SINS INTO HIMSELF

and the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all.

Jesus, you absorbed all my sin & its eternal consequence on the cross.

MEDITATION:

Each of us comes into this world with a fractured self because of sin. We are literally born with it and into it. In ourselves we are fragmented without any course to rid ourselves of this condition. Guilt plagues and characterizes many of us. A strong sense of our failures and sins haunt our consciences, and many turn to practically anything to lessen or numb it... alcohol, drugs, various substances, sex, television, isolation, music, secular therapy and even some forms of religion. But it is there. Sin and guilt have a tremendous stickiness, an imprisoning effect that grips us tightly.

The Bible uses slave imagery to explain our condition. Sin and guilt enslaved us. Jesus said it plainly...

"...everyone who sins is a slave to sin." John 8:34

Another descriptive biblical image is that of a courtroom. We have committed the crime and have been found guilty. The sentence is just and the verdict true, "Guilty!" Condemned. Sentenced to die. No defense. This was our state apart from Christ: the slave, the convicted.

With these images in mind, God sends his very-loved Son as the "Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world." On the cross, Jesus took into his physical body all our wrongs and sin. He absorbed it, breaking guilt's staining embrace, and freeing us from sin's prison. Using the slave-market imagery, we were redeemed from slavery, a price was paid to free us: the blood of Jesus.

"Christ Jesus gave himself as a ransom for all people" 1 Tim. 2:6

"he has died as a ransom to set them free from the sins" Heb. 9:15

Our ransom price is paid by Jesus in blood, to free us from sin's captivity! The root cause of our captivity was *taken away* by the Lamb of God, Jesus.

The guilty verdict that weighed so heavily on us was taken from us, placed on another, who went to death in our stead. Our sentence was commuted onto Jesus. He literally took it into himself on the cross. We are acquitted, let off, declared clear of guilt, pardoned. Forgiveness has replaced condemnation. Our debt has been forgiven. "Paid in Full" by Jesus himself. We are free!

More than that, all this comes to us completely free of charge! Jesus did this *for* us, and then offers all this to us as a gift! We have done nothing to deserve it at all. The Apostle Paul writes:

"For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God" Ephesians 2:8

PRAYER:

Jesus, you carried these things yourself. You took them. You are the “Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world.” All my transgressions and sins were laid upon you. Not some, but all. I was guilty of sin against you, and in the prison of my own guilt. You came and paid the ransom price for me. You came and liberated me. You released me from sin’s prison and freed me to live with and for you. But, it was at a very high price. On the cross you took it for me. You took my sins into yourself. You took the Father’s just punishment for me. You suffered. You were beaten. You died for me. Such love. And on the cross you took upon yourself the verdict that was rightly mine: Guilty. The guiltless one, took all the guilt of the guilty one. You were innocent, yet you got punished. I go free. I am now acquitted because you died. I am now forgiven, cleansed, purified and free. Oh, Lord Jesus! I am eternally grateful to you. I am awed and inspired by what you have done. Let my life be a living testimony of a prisoner set free! Let your praise be always on my lips. I am forever grateful.

REFLECTION:

Take some time to recount what you were enslaved to before Jesus freed you. If you’ve fallen back into slavery, the cross is still the power to free you! Bring it the cross, to him. Lay it down. If you need to get some prayer, please feel free to ask.