

Battle Scars

Christianity is a religion of contradictions. In order to live for him, we must die to self. In order to be strong, we must be weak. In order to be the greatest, we must be the least.

Most people don't get it. It isn't logical. Paul said Gentiles regarded it as "foolishness."¹

Maybe it is.

It's foolishness for God to love such rebellious, stubborn creatures as us. It's foolish for him to give up his only son -- his perfect, spotless lamb -- for us. But he did.

Foolishness. To die that man may live. Foolishness. That the King would wash our feet. Foolishness. That His blood could appease God's righteous wrath.

But it did.

On the night of his crucifixion, Jesus felt the contradictions. Felt the turmoil. Dripped the sweat. Prayed the prayer. For deliverance. For help. For a change of God's plan.

His voice cracked as he said, "I have eagerly desired to eat this Passover with you . . ." ²

It cracked again as He pleaded that His suffering would not have to occur. "My Father, if it is possible, may this cup be taken from me." ³

Did you catch the contradiction in those two statements?

On one hand, Jesus "earnestly desired" for the day of his suffering to come. On the other hand, he wanted with every ounce of his being not to taste the bitter wine that was The Cup of Suffering.

Contradictions.

Foolishness.

It doesn't make sense.

¹ 1 Cor. 1:24.

² Luke 22:14.

³ Matt. 26:39.

Until you read the last part of his prayer: "Yet not as I will, but as you will."⁴

The key for Jesus was to put everything in God's hands. "Your will, not mine." To live -- and to die -- for God. To be a servant; to His Father's will. To request relief; to accept The Path. The Path of God's will.

Even if it led to Golgotha.

The disciples felt the contradictions, too. From the triumphal entry, to the jeering crowds. Told to take up a sword, then to put it away.⁵ From grief to joy. They were Dazed and Confused.

Maybe you're feeling dazed and confused, too. The world doesn't make sense to you. You thought that you were doing God's will, then your ministry collapsed. You thought God led you into the perfect marriage, then it crumbled into dust. You longed to cuddle the child of your womb . . . before the miscarriage.

Welcome to the world of contradictions. Where the pain and turmoil keeps you awake at night, crying on your pillow, sweating drops as of blood.

Others have felt the pain. Others have felt the turmoil. Others have felt compelled to cry out in hopeless despair: "My God, My God, why have you forsaken me?"⁶

For David, it was the terror of unseen, ever present enemies.⁷ For Jacob, the loss of his son.⁸ For Joseph, a Promise sold into slavery. For Joshua, the charge to conquer Canaan with an army that had been routed by little Ai.⁹

What did David and Joshua do? They called out in their grief to God. They accepted that they didn't understand -- but He did. They knew that there was one place to turn in their hour of trial; and it wasn't before their wise counselors. It was before the throne of the living God. A God whose foolishness is wiser than all of man's wisdom.¹⁰

A God whose fingers touch every crumb of the bread of our lives.

⁴ Matt. 26:39.

⁵ Luke 22:36-38; Matt. 26:52.

⁶ Mark 15:34.

⁷ Ps. 22.

⁸ Genesis 37:34-35.

⁹ Joshua 7:4-9.

¹⁰ 1 Cor. 1:25.

They accepted: "Not my will, thine be done."

We are to examine ourselves as we partake. We are to look inside our being for the sin that so easily besets us. We are to let the Spirit roam free to search our inmost parts and convict us.

Maybe you're as Joshua's defeated troops after Ai. Bloodied, bleeding and dishearten. Once, when I was bleeding a wise woman shared some wisdom with me. The frayed note still rests in my Bible: "Never mind being knocked to your knees. This is where we learn to pray."

We pray for strength. We pray for help. We pray that it will all work out. That our suffering will not be long. That we can understand God's purpose in our woe. But, if we are wise, we also pray as Christ did: "Not my will, but thine be done."

Hymn below is not to be shared -- the message is already too long and I haven't had the tune transcribed.

Isaiah 53

(A hymn)

Dennis L. Dunn

He took the cup of suffering
He will the taste the wine of pain,
For it's God's own will to deliver Him
to suffer for our stain
and his friends will all be scattered,
Mary's heart cut in two,
for by his wounds he healed the sins of me and you.

Like a lamb before the slaughter
He was crushed for iniquity,
For God desired to smite him,
that through him we are set free.

despised and rejected
full of sorrows, full of grief,
that through his blood,
man come find relief.

And the lamb will reign for ages,
for God has lifted him on high,
for he took the cup that was offered him
in humility to die,

and the world stands in wonder

and he draws us to him
for limited up, the savior
forgives our sins.

yes lifted up
he draws the whole world to him.