

**BY HIS
WOUNDS
WE ARE
HEALED**

Devotions for Lent



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Ashes to Ashes

You are dust, and to dust you shall return. **GENESIS 3:19**

An ancient Christian ritual imposes ashes on our foreheads with these words, reminding us forcefully that we all are born to die. Without exception, the wounds of sin are terminal.

Except, the gospel of the cross proclaims a new future for us. Jesus was wounded for our transgressions, and by his wounds, we are healed. Our sinfulness offends our holy God and deserves the judgment of death. Jesus died to offer healing grace to all who believe in him. Let this be our goal for Lent: to receive again the healing power of the cross and to live as healthy children of God.

REFLECT: How have sin's toxic wounds distorted and disrupted my life? How can the wounds of Christ bring healing to my soul?

PRAY: Lord Jesus, apply the healing power of your wounds to my inmost nature. Amen.

THURSDAY AFTER ASH WEDNESDAY

Blasphemy or Gospel Truth

The Jews answered [Pilate], "We have a law, and according to that law he ought to die because he has made himself the Son of God." **JOHN 19:7**

Jesus had broken the commandment (Exodus 20:7), they said; he was guilty of blasphemy, of taking the name of God in vain. The gospel truth is that Jesus was on the way to the cross *because he was* the Son of God! His mission as Son of God was to be wounded for our transgressions so that we doomed sinners could be healed.

Because of our blasphemous, toxic sinfulness, we deserve the judgment of God. Because the Son of God was willingly wounded, we receive what we do not deserve—the healing grace of God. Thanks be to God!

REFLECT: How often do we abuse the name of God without even thinking about it? Sin is in our DNA.

PRAY: Heal me, Lord Jesus, so that my attitude and words may honor your holy name. Amen.

FRIDAY AFTER ASH WEDNESDAY

The Glory of God's Love

Jesus ... lifted up his eyes to heaven, and said, "Father, the hour has come; glorify your Son that the Son may glorify you ..." JOHN 17:1

God's glory is shown not by spectacular displays of celestial fireworks but by Jesus' giving himself into death to heal the fatal sinfulness of doomed sinners. Fireworks are easy ... loving is hard! God is glorified by his grace, his godly love for ungodly humans.

In our sinful sickness, we place our own will ahead of God's. Jesus' death fulfilled the Father's will for us. He loved us to death, and by his wounds, we are healed. Trust him completely and rejoice, for your wounds are being healed by his godly love. Glory be to God!

REFLECT: How does my will conflict with God's?

PRAY: Empower me, Lord, by your godly love to glorify your name by loving those around me. Amen.

SATURDAY AFTER ASH WEDNESDAY

To Heal Our Brokenness

I and the Father are one. JOHN 10:30

There was no conflict between Jesus and his heavenly Father. Their very nature was identical. Jesus' mission meshed perfectly with the Father's purpose: to rescue lost sheep, to heal our broken lives, to preserve us for eternity.

Our natural nature does conflict with God's. To be human is to be sinful, selfish, self-centered, me-first. The cross proclaims God's nature—to love, to forgive, to heal, to give new life to dying sinners such as ourselves.

Jesus' wounds apply healing power to our natural nature, changing us from the inside out. At the cross we see what we should be, and we become

what we can be. It's a lifelong, blessed process of being healed and made whole.

REFLECT: Consider the subtle ways your nature is in conflict with your Lord's.

PRAY: Heal my soul, Lord; create in me a new heart. Amen.

THE FIRST SUNDAY OF LENT

Obligation or Opportunity

Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy ...

The LORD blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy. **EXODUS 20:8, 11**

A commandment, of course, is an obligation, not an option. It is our human nature to look for loopholes in laws, to find excuses to do what we prefer, not what God expects. Even when we obey, we resent being forced to “do our duty.”

Can we view the commandment as opportunity instead of obligation? After all, God “blessed the Sabbath,” intending it to be a gift for our benefit. We are blessed, are we not, to enter into the presence of our gracious God, to be renewed as his children to continue our journey through life?

We dishonor the Sabbath by feeling forced to worship. We honor the Father and the Son by gratefully receiving God's healing grace and responding with joyful praise.

REFLECT: Consider ways to honor the Sabbath today.

PRAY: Heal my stubborn heart, Lord Jesus, and fill me with the joy of your salvation. Amen.

MONDAY, THE FIRST WEEK OF LENT

The Lord of the Sabbath

Some of the Pharisees said, “Why are you doing what is not lawful to do on the Sabbath?” ... He said to them, “The Son of Man is lord of the Sabbath.” **LUKE 6:2, 5**

Jesus was criticized for allowing his disciples to work, to do “what is not law-

ful” on the Sabbath. Their mistake was confusing the rule for the blessing the rule was intended to reinforce. Our mistake is not so much breaking a rule as it is neglecting the blessing God wants to give us. His desire is to renew and reinforce our relationship with our gracious, loving heavenly Father.

Jesus is the Lord of the Sabbath from whose wounds we receive healing and new life day after day, week after week, throughout our often difficult journey through earthly life to life eternal. What a blessing!

REFLECT: Think of ways to accept the blessings of God more fully.

PRAY: Touch my sinful heart, Lord Jesus, with your daily, forgiving love. Amen.

TUESDAY, THE FIRST WEEK OF LENT

Every Day He Heals Us

The scribes and the Pharisees watched [Jesus], to see whether he would heal on the Sabbath, so that they might find a reason to accuse him. LUKE 6:7

Jesus’ opponents hoped to trap him; would he work on the Sabbath by healing a cripple? Jesus turned their trap into a teaching moment—he never took a day off from his mission of mercy.

Jesus always used every opportunity to extend God’s healing to the sick, forgiveness to the guilty, comfort to the sorrowing. He fulfilled the mission Isaiah spoke of: “He was pierced for our transgressions ... and with his wounds we are healed” (Isaiah 53:5).

His mission continues today for you. However sin and life have caused you pain, he is prepared to provide the mercy you need. Turn to him in faith, confessing your sin and sickness, and receive his healing mercy.

REFLECT: When did you feel the healing power of God today?

PRAY: Lord, you know my sin and my needs. As you were wounded for me, hold me in your healing hand. Amen.

It's Right to Do Right

Jesus said to them, "I ask you, is it lawful on the Sabbath to do good or to do harm, to save life or to destroy it?" LUKE 6:9

The critical question for Jesus was not "What does the Sabbath law require?" but rather "What is God's will?" He knew his Father's will, and he did it perfectly, deliberately going to the cross to sacrifice himself for the salvation of all us sinful humans. He did the right thing.

He still does the right thing. By his wounds, he is healing the toxic effect of sin in our lives. We can now be sure that it is always a blessing to do the right thing, even when common sense tells us something different. Healed and made new by his wounds, let us strive always to do the right thing, to live lovingly and generously as followers of our gracious Savior.

REFLECT: How will you follow God's will today?

PRAY: I need healing again today, Lord Jesus. Touch my heart with forgiving and changing grace. Amen.

An Unexpected Blessing

[Jesus] said to him, "Stretch out your hand." And he did so, and his hand was restored.

LUKE 6:10

The man with a crippled hand received an unexpected blessing at the synagogue on the Sabbath. Jesus was there to heal his hand; no doubt his heart was changed as well.

Jesus still offers to heal us "with his wounds"; his wounds on the cross continue to give you new life. Reflect on the healing you have received over the years. Your heart is more loving, less greedy and more generous, less fearful and more hopeful. No, you're not perfect yet, but then, God isn't through with you yet.

Jesus gave his life to give you life. Expect him to renew that life when next he meets you in worship, for "By his wounds we are healed."

REFLECT: Think of all the blessings you have received from God.

PRAY: Lord, I do need continued healing. Heal my stubborn heart again today. Amen.

FRIDAY, THE FIRST WEEK OF LENT

Spiritual Amnesia

[Jesus] said to them, “The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath. So the Son of Man is lord even of the Sabbath.” **MARK 2:27-28**

Spiritual amnesia is a common problem for us Christians. Amid the conflicting demands of daily life, we focus on our struggles and lose sight of God’s promises and his presence in our lives. The Sabbath day of rest and restoration was made for imperfect people like us so we can be reminded of God’s never-ending grace and care for us.

By his wounds, Jesus heals us. He is the Lord of the Sabbath who comes to our rescue time and time again. He redirects us when we wander off course, refreshes us when we grow weary, picks us up when we stumble and forgives us for our frequent failures. Remember to turn to him regularly for the healing you need.

REFLECT: Ponder how to keep remembering the Lord of love.

PRAY: Thank you, Jesus, for being there for me at all times. Amen.

SATURDAY, THE FIRST WEEK OF LENT

Walk in Christ

Therefore, as you received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in him, rooted and built up in him and established in the faith ... **COLOSSIANS 2:6-7**

If Sunday is not connected to Monday, we have missed the point. Our worship must help us “walk in Christ” all week long. He is the Lord of the Sabbath by whose wounds we are healed. With our roots firmly in him, we are established in faith and enabled to withstand the dangers of life in a world hostile to Christian living.

Let this be the goal of your Lenten journey, to be renewed and healed by the wounds of Christ Jesus, so that your daily living has new energy and positive purpose. Eliminate some bad habits and take steps to walk more faithfully as a person rooted in Christ. Your Lord will bless you from his cross.

REFLECT: What can you do to keep connected to Christ throughout the week?

PRAY: Lord Jesus, forgive my frequent failures and guide me in the way of righteousness. Amen.

THE SECOND SUNDAY OF LENT

Commandment with Promise

*Honor your father and your mother, that your days may be long
in the land the LORD your God is giving you. EXODUS 20:12*

This is the only commandment with an explicit promise. All of them have implied benefits: Living within the will of God makes life much more enjoyable, and even longer! When our sin causes us to rebel against God's will, we forfeit the promised blessing.

How blessed we are that Christ came to our rescue! He fulfilled all the Father's will, even offering his own body and blood for our salvation. How blessed we are when we are healed by his wounds and follow God's loving commandment: Honor the authorities God has given us for our welfare ... and respect those whom God has given us to love and care for. As promised, the more we do that, the better life is.

REFLECT: What can you do to honor those in authority over you?

PRAY: Thank you, Lord Jesus, for taking away my sin. Renew in me the desire to live in your love. Amen.

These daily Lenten devotions delve into the woundedness we have experienced because of sin in the world. The commands of God from of old reveal how we have broken the Law of God by wayward behavior. But Christ came to fulfill the Law of God, living a sinless life and enduring the cruelty of the cross in our stead that we would receive forgiveness, everlasting life and salvation. It is by his wounds that we are healed forevermore.



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