

JEHOVAH RAPHA

How many here have ever broken a bone? How many here have broken more than 5 bones? When was the last time you had to receive stitches for a wound? You can tell a lot about a person from their scars. Every scar tells a different story. If every scar tells a story, then my life is a big book.

When I was in grade 2 I crushed my finger. A friend and I were building a ramp for our bikes in my back yard. For some reason we figured it would be a good idea to build a bridge from the roof of my house to his. We were hammering wooden stakes into the ground with a baseball bat, and I said 'wait' so that I could wiggle the stake to see if it was in far enough. The bat came down and my finger needed a whole lot of stitches and healing for the crushed bone.

In grade 3 I had to get stitches over my right eye when I was running in the house and ran headfirst into the stair posts. In grade 10 I was in a car accident and had to have 20 stitches in my head. The year I graduated university I fell on a trampoline and broke the 2 bones in my arm – needing 2 metal plates and 16 screws to fix. On the Doulos I broke my kneecap in 2 places. The list goes on and on...

Every scar has a story. Today we want to talk about healing, but primarily I am talking about wounds that may not leave visible scars. Our God is a God of healing. We are continuing in our series called Revealed looking at the names of God. One of the names He told us to call Him by is Jehovah Rapha;

Exod 15:22 Then Moses led Israel from the Red Sea and they went into the Desert of Shur. For three days they traveled in the desert without finding water. 23 When they came to Marah, they could not drink its water because it was bitter. (That is why the place is called Marah.) 24 So the people grumbled against Moses, saying, "What are we to drink?" 25 Then Moses cried out to the LORD, and the LORD showed him a piece of wood. He threw it into the water, and the water became sweet. There the LORD made a decree and a law for them, and there he tested them. 26 He said, "If you listen carefully to the voice of the LORD your God and do what is right in his eyes, if you pay attention to his commands and keep all his decrees, I will not bring on you any of the diseases I brought on the Egyptians, for I am the LORD, who heals you."

Everyone gets wounded in life. You may not have ever broken any of your bones, but everyone gets hurt in some way in life. There are things that can happen in life, things which we do and sometimes things that are done to us, that hurt us. There is physical abuse, spiritual abuse, sexual abuse and emotional abuse.

I have been a pastor for a while now, and I have spoken with a lot of people over the years and I have learned two truths about life. One is that everyone has hidden wounds. You may be masking it but everybody has at least one hidden wound. It is an emotional scar from somebody in the past who hurt you. The second thing I have learned is that emotional scars always take longer to heal than physical wounds. Physical wounds often heal quite quickly. The bones fuse together, the skin mends and the bandages come off. That is the easy part. Hidden wounds take much longer to heal.

The good news is that Jesus wants to heal our wounds. We see this in the bible. When Jesus walked the earth he spent time laying His hands on people and healing them. He wants to set us free from past hurts. We have a God that longs to heal us if we will let Him. He is Jehovah Rapha, the God who heals.

So how can we find healing for our hidden wounds?

1. REVEAL YOUR HURT

You're never going to get well until you face your feelings straight on. The Bible talks about the problem of stuffing it down inside and not talking about it.

Psalms 32:3 When I kept silent, my bones wasted away through my groaning all day long. 4 For day and night your hand was heavy upon me; my strength was sapped as in the heat of summer. 5 Then I acknowledged my sin to you and did not cover up my iniquity. I said, "I will confess my transgressions to the LORD" -- and you forgave the guilt of my sin.

Holding on to hurts does not help us, it destroys us. Pushing a hurt aside just makes it worse. Some of you are tired all the time. One of the causes of constant fatigue is because you are using up all your emotional energy on resentment, grudges, guilts and griefs of your past. You use up so much energy dealing with those things that you have no energy for the present, so you are tired all the time.

Because we live in a sinful world, people abuse other people. I have no doubt that many of you here today have been abused in some fashion by someone else. It's amazing how people respond to abuse in different ways.

Some people try to respond to abuse by just forgetting it - out of sight, out of mind. Some people try to run from it. They try to escape through alcohol or drugs or sleeping around. Some people try to pass it off to somebody else by blaming others. Some people try to cover up their abuse because they do not want to look wounded. They push the hurt down deep so that they are like a can of coke that has been shaken up. It is about ready to explode. One day the top is going to come off, and there is going to be a mess – just like the can of coke we left in our car on our honeymoon!

None of those ways work. Step one is to be honest about your pain, about your fear, about your anger, about your resentment and bitterness over what people did to you. About the way you felt when you were abandoned or abused, ridiculed, the shame that maybe you felt. You've got to start by revealing your hurts. You've got to be honest. Honest with who? Three different people:

First you have to be honest with yourself. You have to own up to "This hurts! I'm ashamed of this or I still hurt over this." Be honest with yourself.

Second, you've got to be honest to God. You say, "God, this is how I feel!" and you vent, you let it all out. God can handle that. God already knows how you hurt because He saw it when you got hurt. And He hurt with you and He grieved with you. It's not going to surprise God when you're honest to God about the pain in your life and the shame in your life. You are not going to surprise Him. He already knows. He already cares. He already loves you. He just wants you to be honest with Him. It's for your own benefit – kind of a catharsis. Getting it out.

The third thing you've got to do is be honest with at least one person you trust. Tell somebody with skin and bones. There's something healing about revealing your feeling to one other person.

Job 18:4 You who tear yourself to pieces in your anger, is the earth to be abandoned for your sake? Or must the rocks be moved from their place?

Translation – you are only hurting yourself. When you stuff it down, you are only hurting yourself. If you don't have anybody you trust, we have lay counselors called Stephen Ministers here at the church who you can share with in a trusted situation. You need to start getting this out and getting it off your chest. You are never going to get well until you reveal your hurts.

2. RELEASE THOSE WHO HURT YOU

You can't get well as long as you harbor resentment. For your own sake, you have to let go of the right to get even. The fact is, you only have a fixed amount of emotional energy and you are going to spend it in one of two ways. You have to choose, "Do I want to get well or do I want to get even?" You cannot do both. You have to decide between getting well and getting even.

The fact is that getting even will not take away your pain. Some of you have tried that. You have been able to get back at the person who hurt you and it did not help. You still feel the pain. There is only one way to get rid of hurt in your heart, and that is through forgiveness.

You say, "But they don't deserve to be forgiven!" You're right, they don't. Neither did you when God forgave your sin. You do not forgive others for their sake, you do it for your sake. You simply cannot move forward in life so long as you are stuck in the past. Why are you allowing the person who hurt you to keep hurting you? Why are you giving them such control?

Years ago, Time magazine had an article entitled "Should all be forgiven?" It started by saying, "Giving up that grudge can be good for your health. Researches are pioneering a new science of redemption based on the old form of grace." In other words, people are only now realizing something that God has been telling us for thousands of years.

Rom 12:17,19 Do not repay anyone evil for evil... 19 Do not take revenge, my friends, but leave room for God's wrath, for it is written: "It is mine to avenge; I will repay," says the Lord.

The reason why we get in such a mess is that we forget this fact. We forget that God saw all the hurt that was done to us. We think that for justice to be done, we have to take care of it. We have to settle the score. We need to let Jesus settle the score, trust God to balance the books.

Psa 56:8 Record my lament; list my tears on your scroll-- are they not in your record?

Did you know that God has kept a record of every one of your tears, the times that you have been abused, the times that you have felt injustice, or if you have experienced prejudice or you have experienced hurt or rejection? God has kept a record of every tears. He will settle the score one day because He is a God of justice. Nothing has ever slipped His watchful eye.

The reason most people hold on to your resentment is that they subconsciously think that they have to remember it so that the person who hurt them will not get away with it. You are only hurting yourself and accomplishing nothing. Stop rehearsing the hurt. Let it go. God has got this.

Jesus understands abuse. When he suffered he did not threaten to get even. He gave it to God and left it there. He was wounded physically when they crucified Him. He was beaten and whipped and tortured. However, the deepest wounds were the hidden ones. He was betrayed by the people He trusted. Still he said, "Father, forgive them. They don't know what they're doing."

Heb 12:15 See to it that no one misses the grace of God and that no bitter root grows up to cause trouble and defile many.

Resentment ruins your life, but it also poisons everybody around you. When you get bitter, you hurt all kinds of other innocent people and you perpetuate the pain. What you resist, persists. Bitterness forces you to become the person who hurt you. Bitterness can be passed from generation to generation. You need to break the cycle. Reveal your hurt and release those who hurt you...

3. REPLACE OLD TAPES WITH GOD'S TRUTHS

Your brain is like a computer. It records everything your five senses have experienced – everything you have smelled, seen, heard, touched and tasted. It is all in there. Everything people have said. It has recorded it all – the good, the bad and the ugly. The right and wrong, true and false.

The problem is that your brain does not distinguish between things that are true and things that are false, especially when you were a little kid. There were some things that were said to you that were flat-out lies but you believed them. And if you believed them, you acted on them.

Some of you are still operating on faulty data. When you do that what happens is you build a self-defeating life style. You set yourself up for failure, pain and hurt. Some of you are still operating under the belief that you are what people said you are; you are dumb ... you are ugly ... you are never going to amount to anything ... you are uncoordinated. Even though they said that maybe 50 years ago you are still operating under that belief, and that belief has changed your behavior. It is time to delete those old tapes and replace them with God's truths.

Rom 12:2 Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is-- his good, pleasing and perfect will.

How does God change us? How does He transform us? By changing the way we think. How?

First, you have to pray and ask God to heal those old memories. As I have already said, you need to identify those areas where you have been wounded.

Second, you need to fill your mind with God's word, the Bible. The more you fill your mind with this book, the more it will erase those old tapes and replace them with truth. Maybe you have heard before that old saying, "A Bible that is falling apart usually belongs to a person who isn't." That is true. The more time you spend reading and memorizing the bible the more it's truth will change you.

How does that work? We need to learn to see ourselves the way that God sees us. We do not focus on how we see ourselves or on how others see us, we focus on how God sees us. This is so important. I remember that in Seminary I had to write a paper on who we are in Christ. I wrote page after page of material, and then I went back to proof read it before printing it. I remember as I sat there reading it back on my computer that my eyes filled with tears that just ran out onto my keyboard. God was erasing old tapes and replacing them with His truths.

Psychologists have proven over and over again that the way we see ourselves – our self-esteem, our self worth, our self-concept – is largely determined by what you think the most important person in your life thinks about you. So let me ask you a question, who is the most important person in your life? If it is Jesus, then you will believe what He has said about you.

Reveal your hurt, release those who hurt you and replace the old tapes with God's truth...

4. REFOCUS ON THE FUTURE

Get your attention off your past and look to God's plan for your future. This is one of the real problems with a lot of counselling and therapy that occurs today. There is way too much focus on dealing with the healing of memories, regression into your past and things like that. By the way, this is why it is so important to always go to a Christian counsellor.

You can find understanding in the past, but true healing is only found in the future. Stop saying, "I am a victim!" Start saying, "I am not a victim any more." Start looking ahead.

Job 11:16-17 You will surely forget your trouble, recalling it only as waters gone by. 17 Life will be brighter than noonday, and darkness will become like morning.

The Apostle Paul said it like this;

Php 3:13-14 ... But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, 14 I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus.

Forgetting begins by refocusing. You do not forget the past by saying, "I am going to forget the past! You do it by refocusing on the future. You focus on Jesus Christ and His plan and purpose for your life. You become so consumed and committed to God's plan for you that you do not have time to think about the past.

My past is not my future. I want you to say that with me. **MY PAST IS NOT MY FUTURE.**

Reveal your hurt, release those who hurt you, replace the old tapes with God's truth and refocus on the future...

5. REACH OUT TO HELP OTHERS

God heals us so that we can be agents of healing in this world. Your deepest wounds can become your area of greatest ministry if you give them to Jesus.

2Co 1:3-4 Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of compassion and the God of all comfort, 4 who comforts us in all our troubles, so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves have received from God.

God wants us to help one another. He can use your pain for good. He can redeem any sorrow.

Rom 8:28 And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose.

Again, we have people at this church who are doing just that. They are using their lives to help bring healing and hope to others. They are taking what God has done in their lives and using it to help others. Here is an old poem that goes;

It does not matter who you are. It does not matter where you've been.
It does not matter what the scar. It does not matter what the sin.
It does not matter how you fell, somewhere along the way.
There is healing for your life ... Today.

I started out sharing my story about when I was in third grade that I had crushed my finger. It was the index finger on my right hand. Because of the damage the last joint on it was fused. The bone grew back much stronger. When I had my accident a few years ago, it was the one finger that was not really affected. The bone was so strong from the damage that had been done to it years ago that it was fine. God used a hurt from the past to save me from hurting in the present. God wants to do that with you. He wants to heal you and then make you a blessing to others.

I need to add one condition to everything that I have said this morning. This only works if you have received Jesus into your life. Without the healing presence of the Holy Spirit within us, none of this is really possible.

You may be listening to me this morning, and you are saying to yourself that you would like to be healed. You want to reveal your hurt, release those who hurt you, replace the old tapes with God's truth, refocus on the future and be ready to reach out and help others, but you are stuck. You cannot give what you do not have. You have to first receive something in order to give it. Likewise, you cannot extend forgiveness to others until you have first found forgiveness yourself.

You can find healing today. No matter your past, God loves you and has a plan for your life. The first step of healing begins by receiving Jesus to be your savior. Our God is Jehovah Rapha, the God who heals. You can begin a relationship with Him today. All you have to do is ask.