
² The LORD builds up Jerusalem; He gathers the outcasts of Israel.

³ He heals the broken-hearted, and binds up their wounds.

Psalm 147:2-3

In 1971 the Bee Gees released their song, "How Can You Mend a Broken Heart." This song was written after a period of alienation and separation among the brothers. In the compilation of this song (and another, Lonely Days') Barry Gibbs says, "Robin came to my place, and that afternoon we wrote 'How Can You Mend a Broken Heart' and that obviously was a link to us coming back together. We called Maurice, finished the song, went to the studio and once again, with only 'Broken Heart' as a basic structure, we went in to the studio with that and an idea for 'Lonely Days', and those two songs were recorded that night"

How can you mend a broken heart?
How can you stop the rain from falling down?
How can you stop the sun from shining?
What makes the world go round?
How can you mend this broken man?
How can a loser ever win?
Please help me mend my broken heart
and let me live again

A few years later British progressive rock band 'Yes' released a song called "Owner of a lonely heart." This particular song has layers of meaning, and one of those has to do with the paradox of loneliness. The thought is that once you've been hurt, loneliness is better than a broken heart.

Many of us are aware of the phrase "broken hearted". In our English language a "broken heart", also known as "heartbreak" is a metaphor for the extreme emotional and physical distress caused by the pain one feels at experience longing for someone you broke up with, and we may use the idiom "to break someone's heart."

When it comes to being 'brokenhearted' in this sense, someone has compiled a list of things that can cause 'heartbreak', such as:

Brokenhearted from rejection
Brokenhearted from abuse
Brokenhearted from disappointment
Brokenhearted from betrayal
Brokenhearted from the death of a loved one.

Brokenhearted from isolation
Brokenhearted from illness
Brokenhearted from divorce
Brokenhearted from the loss of a child
Brokenhearted from the damage drugs have done
to a child, parent, grand-child.

Brokenhearted from the waywardness of a child, parent, grand child, parent.

Brokenhearted from personal failure through sin.

Brokenhearted over the lostness of a soul

Are you brokenhearted? Have you ever felt a 'broken heart'? There are countless reasons for being brokenhearted. None unknown by God or unique to you or me or others... Tears cried, sleepless fuelled nights, loss of appetite. Days, nights, weeks, months even years of carrying intense sapping brokenhearted burdens for others that have caused the ache, pain. On the outside you or I may look "fine" but internally broken-hearted. None of us avoids a broken heart.

In Psalm 147, we read about the character of our God: He determines the number of stars and gives them their names; He is abundant in power and has understanding beyond all measure; He lifts up the humble but casts the wicked to the ground (vv.4-6). Our God has all power and all understanding, and He cares about our broken hearts; He longs to bind up our wounds. Psalm 147:3 says, "He heals the brokenhearted and binds up their wounds."

But there is something really important happening here in this Psalm, and it deals with so much more than how we often euphemistically use the expression "a broken heart".

Psalm 147 is part of a group of Psalms (146-150) which close the Psalter. These Psalms are known as "Hallelujah" Psalms as this expression "Hallelujah" (meaning "Praise the Lord") is repeated many times.

Psalm 147 begins with the highest praise. Hallelujah! It is a call for God's people to join together in praising God who not only deserves our praises, but takes joy in our genuine worship, praise and trust. The Psalmist then proceeds to give reasons for according the highest praise to God. Our text tells of God's healing action towards God's people. He heals the brokenhearted, and binds up their wounds.

But it is important to see that the word used for brokenhearted comes from the Hebrew '*shabar*', to break in pieces. The term brokenhearted therefore describes the heart broken in pieces by a sense of God's displeasure.

We very often assume that biblical brokenhearted conforms to the dictionary definition of grief. But one writer had described the "broken hearts" here in this

way: “Broken hearts are embodied in the Hebrew Scriptures as crippled legs that have walked deviant paths, stumbled, and fallen against the law.”

When the Bible speaks about God healing our broken hearts, the Bible is speaking about much more than God coming to us in times of emotional pain. The Bible is speaking to hearts that are broken on account of sin.

In Psalm 51 we have a reflection from King David after he was confronted of his sins in terms of adultery with Bathsheba, and the murder of her husband Uriah so that David could take Bathsheba as his wife. After being confronted by Nathan the prophet, and truly realising the enormity of what he had done, David said (Psalm 51:17, “The sacrifice acceptable to God is a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart, O God, you will not despise.”

So often we do not recognize our true condition before God. Like the lukewarm Laodicean church, we forget that in God’s sight we are wretched, miserable, poor, blind, and naked (Rev. 3:17). The truth is, we are dependent on God to form the clouds and bring the rain necessary to grow the crops for our food. We even depend on Him to govern the orbits of the stars and planets, so that none crash into the earth.

Spiritually, we depend on God to come to us as outcasts and heal our hearts that are broken by sin. We depend on Him to bind up our wounds and relieve our affliction. We wait on Him to show us His lovingkindness. We are dependent on Him to reveal His word to us, telling us how to know Him and how to live.

Isaiah says, in chapter 53 and verse 5: “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.” As Christians, we know that God has brought us healing through the cross and the empty tomb. God’s Son, Jesus Christ, brought us healing at the cross where He died for our sins. He brought us healing through an empty tomb where death was overcome and the gates of heaven opened wide.

If we needed a demonstration that God is near the brokenhearted, Jesus was that demonstration. God came into our existence and entered into our brokenheartedness. He became “a man of sorrows, acquainted with grief.” When He began His ministry, Jesus quoted from Isaiah 61 as His mission statement. Part of it was “The Lord has sent Me... to bind up the brokenhearted.”

None of us avoids a broken heart. We walk through life getting wounded. Some of us are wounded severely in childhood. From a very early age, we learn the defence mechanism of building walls to protect our hearts. Nevertheless, even guarded hearts get broken. Broken hearts are part of life in this fallen world. But as the Psalmist also says (Psalm 34:18): “The LORD is close to the brokenhearted and saves those who are crushed in spirit.”

Jesus spent most of His ministry doing powerful works of physical and emotional healing. And once He ascended to heaven He passed on the ministry of healing to his disciples and empowered them to do even greater works (John 14:12). God has never stopped His pursuit of healing the ailments and hearts of those He loves.

Too often we allow the wounds of this world to settle in our hearts and dictate the way we live our lives. We agree with the lie that the pains of our past are just part of life and that true courage is taking what has hurt us, pulling ourselves up with our own strength, and pressing forward. The heart of our God is for the healing of those wounds. Psalm 147:3 plainly says, "He heals the brokenhearted and binds up their wounds." God longs to meet you at the place of your wounds and provide healing today. He longs to reveal to you His heart for your pain, fill you with His loving presence, and walk with you through the process of healing.

Our God is a God of transformation. He loves us where we are, but cares for us too deeply to let us live with the lies, perspectives, and pursuits that rob us from the abundant life Jesus died to give us. Romans 12:2 says, "Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect." God longs to renew your mind to the truth of His love, nearness, power, and grace. He longs to transform you into a better reflection of Jesus that you might live to the fullest. He longs to fill you with longings and passions that will guide you to a life of purpose and eternal impact. God longs for you to live this life freed from the sins and ways of this world.

You have heard it said, "Time heals!" Not so. "Time" distances, "time passes," but time does not heal! God heals! In His loving concern for you, He heals. He gives "grace," He imparts healing. He draws us closer to Himself.

Too often we as believers settle for lives less than what God intends for us. God has the desire and ability to do far greater than we could ever ask or imagine (Ephesians 3:20). He longs for us to live healed, transformed, and set free from the bonds of sin and slavery to the world. As we look at God's plans for healing, transformation, and freedom today, I pray that you will be filled with a hunger for the fullness of life available to you in Christ Jesus. Amen.