

**John 20:26-29**  
**“The Story of His Wounds”**

1. On May 9<sup>th</sup>, 2008, in East Baghdad, 20 year-old, Army private, Hunter Levine was behind the wheel of a Humvee when a roadside bomb exploded, and came through the windshield, hitting him directly in the face.
2. The hot steel cut his jaw in half, and a piece of shrapnel went in one side of his face and out the other. Levine awoke in the Army hospital in total darkness, discovering that both of his eyes, and much of his face were gone.
3. Some 10 months after the accident, Hunter said, “All my friends want me to tell the story, but really some people don’t have the stomach for it.” Levine *did* tell his story, through a website called *heartsforhunter.com*.
4. The response to the website was so overwhelming that Levine has made it his mission to help the more than 30,000 wounded Iraqi War veterans tell their stories as well. His foundation helps wounded soldiers establish their own websites where they can share their experiences with the world.<sup>i</sup>
5. Hunter Levine, and the 30,000 other wounded heroes are not the only ones whose wounds carry with them a story. In John chapter 20, we are told that on two separate occasions the Lord Jesus showed His wounded hands and side to His disciples.
6. The Apostle Thomas had been skeptical about the reports of Christ’s resurrection. When Jesus appeared to him a week after He rose from the dead, He said to the doubting disciple, “Reach hither thy finger, and behold my hands; and reach hither thy hand, and thrust it into my side: and be not faithless, but believing.”
7. Thomas did not have to physically examine the injuries to see that they were real. Just the sight of those wounds spoke volumes to his heart. Moved by the message of those wounds, Thomas passionately said, “My Lord and my God.”
8. I submit to you that for those who are willing to listen, the wounds of the living Lord Jesus are still speaking today. There is a message – a story in His scarred hands and pierced side.
9. What is the story of His wounds? I suggest that the message of the wounds of Jesus is threefold. First of all, I would say that:

**I. HIS WOUNDS INFORM US**

1. On the evening of the Sunday that Jesus rose from the dead, the Bible tells us that He appeared to His disciples while they were gathered together in a room.

2. At that first appearance, Jesus showed His hands and His side to His followers as evidence of His resurrection. In verse 24, of John 20, it says, "But Thomas, one of the twelve, called Didymus, was not with them when Jesus came."

3. When the other disciples tried to tell Thomas that the Lord was alive, he told them that he would not believe it until he could touch the scars left by the nails, and feel the hole opened by the spear.

4. For Thomas, the wounds of Jesus would provide the evidence and information that He needed to believe. The weakness of Thomas' faith aside, there is still a sense in which the wounds of Jesus provide us with some valuable information.

5. Those wounds are evidence of some important truths. For instance, I would point out that those wounds inform us of:

### **A. His suffering**

1. In Luke's gospel, the death of Jesus is recorded simply with the statement, "And when they were come to the place, which is called Calvary, there they crucified him..."

2. The people of the first century world would have understood that there is nothing simple or casual about death by crucifixion. Learned from the Persians, the Romans had perfected execution by crucifixion to the point that it was the preferred method of capital punishment.

3. In the case of Jesus, after having endured a brutal beating and scourging, He would have been laid on His cross, while it was flat on the ground. His arms were stretched and held in place as something akin to a railroad spike was hammered through the tendons and bones of His wrists, an inch or so below His palms.

4. This would have damaged a key, median nerve, causing violent, incessant, and severe pain through both of his arms. An additional spike was driven through the Achilles joint of His feet, sending equally sharp pains through his legs, and into His lower back.

5. While horrific, these wounds were usually not fatal. In fact, the victims of crucifixion died a slow death from suffocation, rather than their bodily injuries.

6. Truman Davis, a medical doctor who studied crucifixion, has described some of things our Lord likely suffered. Toward the end of the crucifixion, Davis says that Jesus would have felt, "A deep crushing pain in the chest as the pericardium (the sack around the heart) slowly fills with serum and begins to compress the heart."

7. He went on to say, "...the compressed heart is struggling to pump heavy, thick, sluggish blood into the tissues – the tortured lungs are making a frantic effort to grasp in small gulps of air."<sup>iii</sup>

8. Some 8 days after this agonizing death, as Thomas gazed at those still-open wounds he would have been reminded of the torture our Lord experienced on the cross.

9. Think carefully about His wounds! They remind us that the old, rugged, cross was the scene of a horribly violent, torturous, death. Notice not only that His wounds inform us of His suffering, but also, they inform us of:

### **B. His success**

1. As Jesus stood before Thomas, with His scarred hands outstretched, His wounds not only spoke of His death, but the fact that He was able to display them also spoke of His resurrection!

2. That these wounds were exposed and able to be examined was a testimony to the fact that on the third day, those wounded hands seized death by the throat and crushed it beneath the feet of Him who had said, "I am the resurrection and the life..."

3. Thomas was finally convinced of the resurrection by the sight of these wounds. These wounds were not sealed up in a dead man's tomb. They were being revealed and displayed on the body of the living Lord!

4. Charles Spurgeon said of this scene, "Heard ye ever such a story as this? – a man with a death-wound gaping wide inviting another to thrust his hand therein." He said, "The opening was still there...and yet Jesus lived."<sup>iii</sup>

5. Think about those wounds. Imagine the holes in His wrists and the spear-sized opening in His side. Think about looking at them and studying them, as Thomas did.

6. What do these wounds say to us? They inform us that while He suffered a terrible, horrible death on a Roman cross, He succeeded in conquering that death, and getting up out of the grave!

*What are those holes in Your hands and Your side?  
Those are the wounds of someone who died,*

*I read You were killed, nailed to a tree,  
And yet now you live, and by faith I see*

*Those wounds are the scars of all You endured,*

*And yet they are tokens of what You secured.*

*Though Friday you breathed a seeming last breath,  
On Sunday you broke the cold chains of death!*

7. What is the story of His wounds? What do they say to us? They inform us of His death, as well as His resurrection. Notice something else about the story of His wounds.

8. Notice not only that His wounds inform us, but notice also secondly that:

## **II. HIS WOUNDS INDICT US**

1. Thomas had been a skeptic. He had stubbornly refused to believe the testimony of 10 of his closest friends. He had missed the meeting, and he stubbornly refused to believe the Lord was alive unless he could see for himself.

2. Then, a week after the resurrection, Thomas found himself looking directly at the living, breathing body of Jesus, His wounds serving as the marks of His identity.

3. No doubt, as Thomas struggled to see through tears of mixed emotion, there was a tinge of conviction in His heart for failing to believe. Those wounds, as glorious as they were, were no doubt indictments upon the hard heart of Thomas.

4. Likewise, there is a sense in which the wounds of Jesus convict us as well. Though we celebrate His death and resurrection, we also view those wounds with a bit of prick in our hearts.

5. Notice a couple of reasons why His wounds indict us. First of all, they indict us because of:

### **A. Our role in them**

1. Perhaps as Thomas looked at the holes in Christ's hands, he remembered how he and the rest of the disciples had abandoned the Lord when He was arrested.

2. Maybe Thomas viewed the open side of Christ, and remembered the part he had played in our Lord's death.

3. The reality is that all humanity must view the wounds of Jesus with a sense of responsibility. 700 years before His death, the prophet Isaiah said, "But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed. All

we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the LORD hath laid on him the iniquity of us all (Isaiah 53:5-6).”

4. If we understand that Jesus died for our sins, then we must know that His wounds should have been our wounds. He was executed for the laws of God that we broke; therefore the cross on which He died was actually ours.

5. The great pastor from Dallas, W.A. Criswell, once told about a dream he had. He said, “In a dream I saw the Savior. His back was bare and there was a soldier lifting up his hand and bringing down that awful cat-o-nine-tails. In the dream I rose and grabbed his arm to hold it back. When I did, the soldier turned in astonishment and looked at me. And when I looked at him, I recognized myself.”<sup>iv</sup>

6. There is a sense in which the wounds of Jesus indict us, because we understand that by our sins, we each individually played a role in causing them.

7. I wasn’t there to swing that whip upon His back, or drop that hammer onto the nails that pierced His hands. I didn’t drive that spear through His side and into His heart.

8. Nevertheless, it was my lust and my lies, my greed and my gossip, my selfishness and my sinfulness that crucified the Lamb of God. There is conviction in those wounds because of our role in them.

9. Notice not only that these wounds indict us because of our role in them, but also because of:

### **B. Our response to them**

1. Rather than celebrating the atonement of His death, and the victory of His resurrection, Thomas had become disillusioned and discouraged. His faith in the Messiah was drowned in a sea of doubt as he heard of His Lord’s death.

2. No doubt, mixed with the joy of seeing Jesus alive, there was in the heart of Thomas that night, a shadow of conviction for how he had initially responded to the wounds of Jesus.

3. Like Thomas, there is sense in which all of us are convicted by the wounds of Jesus because we have never responded to them to the degree that they deserve. In some measure, all of us have disgraced His sacrifice.

4. I heard Matt tell a story to the teenagers the other night that spoke to my heart. During the Vietnam War, a young private was shot during a battle, and lay in the middle of battlefield dying.

5. Hearing his cries for help, a lieutenant rushed out of the bunker, and ran onto the battlefield to save that young private. He carried him to safety, but just as they arrived back at the bunker, the lieutenant was shot and killed.

6. When the family of that fallen lieutenant heard of his bravery and sacrifice, they decided to hold a party in honor of the young private their son had saved. The entire community gathered for the celebration, but when the young man arrived, he was drunk.

7. Throughout the night, he cursed and railed, and made a fool of himself. After everyone had left, the mother of that lieutenant sat down and began to weep. She said, "Why would my son die for a man like that?"

8. When we look at the wounds of Jesus, and we think about our lives and how we have lived, we should ask ourselves, "Why would God's Son die for someone like me?"

9. His wounds indict us all, because it our sin for which He died; and none of us have lived worthy of His sacrifice! Notice a further truth we draw from the story of His wounds. Notice not only that *His wounds inform us*, and *His wounds indict us*, but notice also lastly that:

### **III. HIS WOUNDS INSURE US**

1. Look back at our text, and notice the words of Thomas once He saw those wounds. In verse 28 it says, "And Thomas answered and said unto him, My Lord and my God."

2. The sight of those wounds "sured-up" the once doubtful heart of Thomas. There was something assuring in the message of those wounds.

3. Likewise, the wounds of Jesus insure us today. Though we cannot see them as Thomas did, they are none the less an assuring thought for our hearts, and they serve a unique purpose in our salvation.

4. Let me explain what I mean. His wounds insure us for a couple of reasons. First of all, they insure us based on:

#### **A. The place His wounds are seen**

1. Look again at the text, and notice what Jesus said to Thomas in verse 29. Though He was speaking to Thomas, what He says here is meant for us. Verse 29 says, "Jesus saith unto him, Thomas, because thou hast seen me, thou hast believed: blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed."

2. You and I today do not have the same opportunity that Thomas had. We cannot examine the wounds and scars of Jesus Christ.
3. However, just because we can't see them, doesn't mean they aren't still visible. In fact, there is a place where the wounds of Jesus are still seen this very morning.
4. The Bible tells us in Hebrews 10:12, that Jesus, "...after he had offered one sacrifice for sins for ever, sat down on the right hand of God." Right now, Jesus is seated at the right hand of His father, on the throne of heaven.
5. Right now, the angels of glory, and the saints who have died in the Lord, as they sing songs of praise to the Lamb of God, can still clearly see the holes in His hands, and the opening in His side.
6. No, we can't view the wounds of Jesus *yet*, but we are blessed to be able to believe even now that they *are* real, that He is still alive, and that one day, we will get the privilege to kiss those wounded hands, and hug that precious side!
7. Because of the hope of heaven, those who have trusted Christ are insured by those wounds which are presently on display in glory! Thomas saw them here, with human eyes. We will see them there with perfect eyes!
8. Someone has rightly noted that the only things in heaven that are man-made are the scars on the body of Jesus. Those wounds are still seen in that place that He has prepared for them that love Him.
9. We are insured by His wounds, not only because of the place His wounds are seen, but even more so by:

### **B. The purpose His wounds are serving**

1. In John 20, Jesus presented His wounds to His disciples as evidence of His resurrection. I submit to you that Jesus is still presenting those wounds, but for a different reason, and to a different audience.
2. As we have already seen, the book of Hebrews tells us *where* Jesus is – seated beside the Father. In Hebrews 7:25, we are told what He is doing while He is seated by the Father.
3. Hebrews 7:25 says, "Wherefore he is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them."
4. Did you catch that? It says that "...he ever liveth to make intercession for them." That simply means that Jesus speaks to God on our behalf.

5. Right now the wounds of Jesus are seen by the Father, and our Lord bares those marks in His body as evidence of the price He paid on our behalf.

6. The devil, the accuser of the brethren, comes to God and says, "See that Terry Trivette down there. Look how sinful he is. Look at how unworthy he is. Your righteous Law says that he must die for his sins."

7. God the Father turns to His Son, and Jesus simply shows Him His hands, or pulls back His robe of light and shows that wounded side. The Father then accepts me based on the death-wounds of His Son, and then the accuser of the brethren has to flee.

8. You say, "It is too bad that we can't see those wounds down here, as Thomas did." I assure you, you would much rather have the insurance of His wounds displayed in heaven, than the experience of examining them down here.

9. The story is told of a Roman soldier, maimed in battle, who returned home to find that his only brother was on trial for his life. Entering the courtroom, the soldier simply held up the stumps where his arms used to be. The judge's heart was touched, and the brother's life was spared.

10. When Jesus holds up those wounded hands, our lives are spared, and insured against the condemnation that we deserve. His wounds insure us!

1. The great Christian songwriter, Fanny Crosby, was permanently blinded as an infant. Though she could not see with her physical eyes, the Spirit of God gave her a unique insight into spiritual truths.

2. One day, near the end of Fanny's life, a friend asked her if she thought we would be able to recognize our loved one's in heaven. Fanny's answer surprised and moved her friend.

3. Fanny said, "John, that's now what you really want to know. You wonder how an old lady who has been blind all of her life could even recognize one person, including her Lord and Savior."

4. She went on and said, "Well, I've given it a lot of thought...when I get to heaven, I'm going to look around and when I see the one who I think is my Savior, I'm going to walk up to Him and say, 'May I see your hands?' When I see the nail prints in the hands of my Savior, then I will know that I have found my Jesus."

5. Based on that conversation, Crosby wrote the hymn "I Shall Know Him". The song says:

*When my life's work is ended and I cross the swelling tide,  
When the bright and glorious morning I shall see,  
I shall know my Redeemer when I reach the other side,  
And His smile will be the first to welcome me,*

*I shall know Him, I shall know Him,  
When redeemed by His side I shall stand,  
I shall know Him, I shall know Him,  
By the print of the nails in His hand*

6. One day, those who have repented and come to Christ will see Him face to face. When we do, we too will have the privilege of seeing those wounds. At that moment, they will speak to us again, even as they do today.

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<sup>i</sup> Reece, Kevin, Blinded soldier from The Woodlands helps others find hope, 4/1/2009, *khou.com*, accessed 4/9/09, [http://www.khou.com/news/local/stories/khou09030331\\_mp\\_wounded\\_soldier.8e84a50b.html](http://www.khou.com/news/local/stories/khou09030331_mp_wounded_soldier.8e84a50b.html)

<sup>ii</sup> Davis, Truman, quoted in The Murder of Jesus, (Word Publishing, Nashville, 2000), p. 201-202

<sup>iii</sup> Spurgeon, Charles, Spurgeon's Expository Encyclopedia – Vol. 6, (Baker Book House, Grand Rapids, MI, 1985), p. 499

<sup>iv</sup> Swindoll, Charles, The Tale of the Tardy Oxcart, (Word Publishing, Nashville, 1998), p. 314