

"Fixxxer": A Christian Perspective

Warning: This is NOT a feel good article

Yeah

Dolls of voodoo all stuck with pins/One for each of us and our sins
So you lay us in a line/Push your pins/They make us humble
Only you can tell in time/If we fall or merely stumble
But tell me

<refrain>

Can you heal what father's done?/Or fix this hole in a mother's son?
Can you heal the broken worlds within?/Can you strip away so we may start again?
Tell me, can you heal what father's done?/Or cut this rope and let us run?
Just when all seems fine and I'm pain free
You jab another pin/Jab another pin in me

Yeah

Mirror, mirror upon thy wall/Break this spell or become the doll
See you sharpening the pins/So the holes will remind us
We're just the toys in the hands of another/And in time the needles turn from shine to rust
But tell me

<refrain>

Jab it...

Here come the pins...

Blood for face/Sweat for dirt/Three X's for the stone
To break this curse/A ritual's due/I believe I'm not alone
Shell of shotgun/Pint of gin/Numb us up to shield the pins
Renew our faith/Which way we can
To fall in love with life again
To fall in love with life again
To fall in love with life again
To fall in love
To fall in love
To fall in love with life again
So tell me

<refrain>

No more pins in me, yeah!
No more, no more pins in me
No more, no more pins in me
No more, no more, no more
No, no, no...

I sometimes think, as Christians, we have a habit of feeling so good for ourselves because of our Faith that we fail to see the reality before our eyes. And often that reality is people performing heinous acts, either behind a facade of being a good Christian or in a perverted idea of what a good Christian is.

This depressing song was written by James Hetfield of the heavy metal band Metallica. It was the final song on the *RELoad* album, itself a rather bleak but powerful work of art. Metallica fans are very divided on this album, with the majority considering the back-to-back releases of the *Load* and *RELoad* albums being the band's low point (which sales reflect). Yet a strong minority consider *RELoad* to be one of the most underappreciated albums in the heavy metal genre. In particular, "Unforgiven II" (part of the popular "Unforgiven" trilogy) and "Low Man's Lyric" are much appreciated among fans in addition to this song.

The band never played this song in concert, although there is a video of the band rehearsing it before the recording. To the best of my knowledge, no interview has been done asking James about the song, although certain facts surrounding the *Load* and *RELoad* albums have led to amazingly consistent speculation among fans. The parents of James were strict Christian Scientists, and his mother died when he was very young from a cancer she refused treatment for. At the time this and other songs for the *Load* and *RELoad* albums were being written, his abusive father was dying as well. James became hostile to both his fellow band members and his own family, and relapsed into his old addictions. All of this and more shows so clearly in the lyrics of a man obviously screaming out in pain. Indeed, one of the few "controversies" of the song that I have been able to glean from fan pages is the significance of the shotgun: was he contemplating suicide, or was he seeking escape through his favorite sport of hunting? Of course, they need not be exclusive of each other. Just two songs before this one is "Low Man Lyric," a song portraying the final moments of a suicide (presumably from overdose).

I have always been my most empathetic with music, and this song has touched me in a very particular way. The music makes the experience both hypnotizing and unmistakable, and I find it commanding me to hang on every gut-wrenching word sung in the lyrics. And even before I felt compelled to investigate this song, I could tell just how wrong "Christianity" had been for him, and yet there he is, still begging God for mercy. I don't know how many times I have heard this song over the years, but even now I want to reach through the speakers and tell James that yes, God CAN make this happen for him. But the problem really isn't this man's Faith in God (he claimed he believes in God in an interview with *Clique* magazine), but rather a corrupted idea of what God is that came from a terrible "Christian" childhood.

Consider the vagueness of to whom this song is directed. At first glance, it seems to be God. But so many of the accusations deal with things God does not do, mainly causing pain. God does not cause pain; He allows it. Are the painful parts of this song actually directed at his Earthly father? The Devil? His own weaknesses? Some combination thereof? Does James even know for certain himself?

God does not punish in this way. God's punishment is letting one get one's way when one wants to leave Him. But one cannot leave God while begging for His help. So, how do we reconcile this?

It is easy for me to say "God isn't punishing you; He's letting you make your own mistakes now." But this is quite heartless. He has already admitted so much ("one for each of us and our sins"). I think we need to see beyond the superficial blaming of God for his pains. If we look a little closer, specifically at the refrains, we no longer see the prideful outbursts we might at first assume, but rather humble incredulity. When James is asking if God can fill the hole left from his lost mother and heal the wounds his father made, we are seeing a man who cannot understand how it is possible, yet somehow

finds Faith enough to ask. Although the circumstances are so tragically different, is this really anything less than when Mary asked, "How can this be?" (Luke 1:34) during the Annunciation? In the end, the real answer is between James and God. Yet, as Christians, are we not called to Hope it is true?

But perhaps the most heart-wrenching part of the song is not his past or his trial of Faith in the present, but the reality of how God's saving Grace actually manifests itself: "Just when all seems fine and I'm pain free/You jab another pin/Jab another pin in me" That, of course, is not God. It is the Devil trying to discourage James. I can only wonder why the Devil is trying so hard to turn James away from God, although I'm inclined to think that it must be because James is putting up such a strong fight.

C.S. Lewis observed that, quite often, when someone does return to God, that for a brief time the whole world seems right, but there almost invariably seems to be a massive reversal all at once. In Lewis's way of thinking, what is really happening is that God gives us a taste of what is to come if we remain Faithful. At some point, we must return to our old lives, but now with some idea of what we have to look forward to. I think this is the critical point, where one has a choice to remain Faithful or to separate even more. I also think this is the point where we, as Christians, fail so often.

It is so easy to avoid disagreeable people without asking ourselves why they are disagreeable. As C.S. Lewis suggested, if we saw the same disagreeable person doing the same disagreeable things, but now we also saw an imp with its teeth and claws dug into the person, then we would be moved to pity instead of resentment. This imp is real, just invisible. And that is what it is doing to this person's soul. I'm not suggesting that we need to make victims of ourselves, as our bodies are temples and we do have a responsibility to them. But rather than ignore, gossip, torment or take any other retaliatory action against this person, at the very least we can pray for God to help this person throw off the imp. Most of the time, we can help in other ways without hurting ourselves in the process. Some kind words, a little understanding, an offering of help, etc., might actually relieve some of the suffering, even if only for a little bit. It might teach them the theological virtue of Hope. James credited his continued belief in God to the actions of his Christian wife. Certainly, we all know someone in pain we might be able to help.

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