

# The Wound

What is a wound? The online Merriam Webster Dictionary gives us four definitions.

**Definition 1.a** says "an injury to the body (as from violence, accident, or surgery) that typically involves laceration or breaking of a membrane (such as the skin) and usually damage to underlying tissues."

From this definition, we can infer that wounds come in different shapes and sizes. But there are other things we know from experience and observation beyond what this definition says. First of all, they are not what nature wants us to have. Nature intended our skin to be pure and unblemished, as well as all the parts wrapped inside it. As wounds are not natural, something bad must have happened to cause one. Every wound has a story behind it. But while nature does not want us to have wounds, it is capable of repairing them when they do happen. We also know that wounds are usually painful. It may be a nuisance pain from a paper cut to agony from a blistering burn. Still, sometimes enough nerves are destroyed that no pain is felt at all. Finally, wounds can affect our lives. Paper cuts, again, might only be a nuisance, but scraped knees can seriously reduce our mobility, and some wounds might even be fatal.

Now, I want to look at **definition 3**: "something resembling a wound in appearance *or effect*." (italics mine) I want to propose that sin does indeed resemble a wound to one's soul by its effects and causes. Just like wounds come in different shapes and sizes, sins can be venial or mortal. Just like nature does not want wounds to happen, God does not want us to sin. So, just like every wound has a story behind it, so, too, does every sin. Just as nature can repair damage caused by wounds, God can repair damage caused by sin. Just like most, but not all, wounds are painful, people usually, but not always, feel guilt when they sin. And guilt can be felt in different degrees, just like pain. Finally, sin affects our lives in different degrees. We may regret something we did for a few seconds and then forget it, or have sin adversely affect our emotions and actions to the point our own friends won't recognize us anymore.

The healing of wounds also resembles sin. Some wounds need little or no attention. The body is capable of dealing with countless small wounds with no special help, and many others only need the simplest care (such as a bandage or over-the-counter antiseptic). Venial sin, to some degree, is similar. Our relationship with God is damaged but not destroyed. While venial sin will not heal by itself like a wound (at least not until we go to confession or Purgatory), it does not require specialized attention for one to live a healthy life.

But some wounds do require specialized attention, as permanent and even potentially fatal harm will result otherwise. For these wounds, a doctor is necessary to begin some kind of therapy in order to reverse the damage. Mortal sin is like this. We have severed our relationship with God, and nothing we can do will prevent spiritual death. We need Jesus the Healer to mend this damage for us. It is during the Sacrament of Reconciliation, where Jesus is in the persona of the priest (*In persona Christi capitis*, literally "in the person of Christ the head"), that we meet Jesus the Healer. It is here that Jesus can begin the therapy to save our souls.

For my closing comments, there are things we can do to minimize or even avoid wounds. We generally don't touch things like cactus, or play with broken glass. If we must work with them, then we put on protective gear to avoid wounds. Many sports require certain gear to be worn to prevent wounds and other injuries. We know to use these protective measures because wounds have stories, and we can learn from these stories. These common sense measures we take to protect our bodies do have spiritual

equivalents to protect against sin, and for the same reason: every sin has a story. First and foremost, we can avoid situations that are likely to lead to sin. This is where the voice of experience, such as from a Bible, or an elder, is our greatest friend. If we still stumble into sin through ignorance, we can at least learn from the experience to prevent a second encounter. But it is also unrealistic to think we can avoid all sinful situations. If we must be in high-risk situations, we can exercise the Cardinal Virtue of prudence and plan ahead. For example, if it's date night but the parents are out, then reschedule the date. And even if all prudent measures have been taken and one still finds oneself in a tempting situation, we can pray at that time for a boost to one's Cardinal Virtue of fortitude.

I'm not promoting the idea that all one has to do is get out their cell phone and type in #godhelpme. There is something about an earnest prayer, no matter how simple or inarticulate, that strengthens fortitude. Speaking from experience, there have been many times when I prayed in the face of temptation. The urges remained as strong as ever, but my priorities changed. I've often said to myself, "I just talked to God. Maybe I'll give into temptation an hour from now, but I can't give into it now." Not only does prayer almost always get me through that hour, but by the time is up the urge to sin is usually gone. And even if the urge is still there, it is usually much weaker. I have just spent an hour successfully fighting it, so it rarely looks as formidable as it once did.

And I'm not the only one who thinks this way. Alcoholics Anonymous teaches a similar lesson, where members are told to begin their day by telling themselves that they can make it through this one day.

I believe that sin is very much a wound on the soul. I know a lot about bodily wounds, so I can apply this knowledge to soul wounds. I know how to avoid many wounds and sins, and I know how to treat those I do get.

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