



Then we focused on the question Jesus fired at his opponents. ‘Which is the easier to say to the paralytic “Your sins are forgiven” or to say “Stand up and take up your bed and walk”’.

A new member in our group, called Grace, exclaimed ‘It’s easier to say “your sins are forgiven” because you cannot prove that it has happened unlike telling a man who cannot walk that he can.’

What flashed through my mind as Grace spoke was another question ‘Which was the easier for Jesus? To forgive or to heal?’

I pointed our group to the story of Jesus healing the women with the haemorrhage (Mark 5.30) and explained ‘When Jesus healed people energy flowed from him leaving him tired, exhausted and weak. Removing physical sickness is a costly activity; spiritually, mentally and physically.’

I then asked the group how costly it would be for Jesus to remove the moral cancer of sin?’ An answer came. ‘It would cost him much more’.

I replied ‘It would cost him everything. His very life!’

Being drained of all life on the cross is the cost of your forgiveness and mine.

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**REFLECTION 5 – 31<sup>st</sup> March**

## **Bounce Back**

I have been a Methodist Preacher for 60 years. I have preached in tiny rural chapels, large suburban churches, Anglican and Roman Catholic Cathedrals, city centre churches, small struggling congregations, black churches, charismatic churches, churches in this country and churches overseas. I am fairly confident of communicating in most situations.

I know when I have preached well, when its been mediocre and when it has been a disaster. I can usually tell if the message has been well received or not. What I still find bewildering is when my message hits a brick wall and bounces back. This does not often happen. When it does I have to ask myself, is it me or is it the message?

The other Sunday it happened. I wanted to abandon the sermon and run for cover. Afterards I sat drained and broken. I felt that I never wanted to preach again. Was it me or was it the message? I did not preach well but it was not that. I concluded that it was a message the congregation did not want to hear.

This series of reflections arises from my conviction that today’s Church needs to hear the message of the cross. On that particular Sunday I preached on Psalm 51 with the aim of showing how ‘the cross of Christ exposes sin’. The congregation did not want to hear it. I did not want to preach it.

Just before leaving a lady in her 40 came up to me and with a radiant smile to announce that during the sermon she had at last given her life to Christ and become a Christian.

I am reflecting on Paul's words 'My speech and my proclamation were not with plausible words of wisdom but with a demonstration of the Spirit and of power' (1 Cor.2.4f). Yes I will preach on the cross again even though I fear to.