



Links Players

HOLDING COURT: JESUS, VICTIM OF OUR SIN

He was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities... (Isaiah 53:5, NIV)

SIN IS LIKE THE CLOUD OF SMOKE that settles on your yard late into the evening on the Fourth of July. The fireworks have sounded and sparkled, and their collective residue is a vapor not good for any of us to breathe. Whether or not we contributed to this particular cloud as amateur pyrotechnicians, we all live with the aftermath. Inhale enough of it, and we die with it too.

This is the difficulty of considering a victim's dilemma. While it is easy to criticize those who may have a "victim's mentality," sometimes you can't outrun the cloud of smoke. Sometimes it comes pouring down from a volcano.

Maybe we shouldn't make light of all this in a golfing sense, but an example might be helpful. If you play golf, you come to expect a bad bounce here and there. The earliest course designers actually built in this possibility, testing the mental fortitude of their hickory-wielding enthusiasts. So you live with it when a good shot ends in an unfortunate result. But on those crazy occasions where you find yourself hitting three off-handed shots in a round or where every tree ball is spit out into trouble, you may go home thinking, *The course got me today.*

The Scriptures give lots of room to victimhood. The calls to justice are many, which means God saw the plight of people in a sin-clouded world. Many were getting beat up without having done any one thing to deserve it.

But there is a difference between those in God's word who are harmed *by* sin and the one, our Savior, who was harmed *for* it. If a thief comes to rob my house, I have no choice in the matter. If, in his connivances, he is dogged enough, he will get past my defenses and make off with what is mine. His sin sets me back. Jesus, though, came not to steal from me, but to give what only he could give: ultimate forgiveness and eternal life. To do this, he had to take on my sin, to be victimized for what I had done. He went to the cross.

Perhaps the most stunning fact about Jesus' death is that he did not see his own woe in it all. He said to the women mourning for him, "Do not weep for me; weep for yourselves." Jesus knew how wickedness sets its hooks in us and how we are incapable of escaping it on our own. We must have him. In the deadly hour of his victimhood, we were saved.

Opening questions Recall the worst break of your last round and tell the story. Did you have a part to play in this "bad luck," or were you a victim all around?

READING Isaiah 53:2-9; Luke 23:32-43; 1 Timothy 1:15-17

Our sin, Christ's burden (Isaiah 53)

What are several aspects of Jesus' victimhood depicted here? To what degree does this passage cause you to recognize your role in Christ's death?

Two thieves (Luke 23)

How did the thieves separately view their predicament? How did the repentant thief assess his sin and the victimhood of Christ? What reward awaited this humble thief?

Jesus' purpose (1 Timothy 1)

Why did Jesus come? Where did Paul place himself on the hierarchy of sinners? What praises did Paul give to Jesus for the Savior's work?
