

TO BIND UP THE BROKENHEARTED



By Georges A. Bonnet

In the 1990s my employment with the Church took our family to Africa, where I was assigned to help with relief efforts in Burundi, Rwanda, and Somalia. This was during a devastating period of famine, brutality, and war, and the suffering was overwhelming.

Thousands were in refugee camps. Hundreds of orphaned children lived in rudimentary shelters they constructed themselves. Cholera, typhoid, and malnutrition were ever present. The stench of waste and death added to the hopelessness.

I felt driven to offer all the help I could. The Church worked with the International Committee of the Red Cross and other organizations, but I couldn't help wondering sometimes if our efforts were making a difference in the face of such widespread atrocity and tragedy. It was hard to shake feelings of helplessness and discouragement, and often when I retired for the night, I cried.

It was during this discouraging time that a familiar passage took on a deeper dimension for me. Citing Isaiah, it tells us that the Savior was “anointed to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that were bound” (D&C 138:42).

I had seen and spoken with many people who were “brokenhearted” in the most striking ways. They had lost their loved ones, homes, and peaceful way of life.

All of us can have the sure hope that through the Atonement of Jesus Christ our hearts can be bound up and made whole.

And yet many of them showed signs of having been “bound up.” For instance, often when we approached a makeshift home, its inhabitants would ask, “Will you pray with us?” The people seemed to find happiness and peace in making supplications to the Lord.

Of course, we cannot look for the impact of the Atonement only in this life. It also comes after. I know there is redemption for the dead and resurrection for all because of the Savior. The pain we experience in this life—however extreme—will be removed and healed through the Atonement.

Mormon and Moroni, who lived in times of great slaughter and death, wrote about having hope anchored in a loving God whose mercy and justice surpass all understanding (see, for instance, Moroni 7:41–42). Studying these prophets' statements bolstered my own faith. When I wondered if our efforts were making a difference, I felt assurance that the Savior's grace is the ultimate redemptive power. Our best efforts may be limited, but His are infinite and eternal.

There's no doubt that the world's conditions create many forms of despair, but none are beyond the reach of the Redeemer to heal. All of us can have the sure hope that through the Atonement of Christ our hearts *can* be bound up and made whole. With this knowledge, I could go on in my work, knowing that His efforts *always* succeed. ■