

Sermon Notes & References

Wiping Out Sin
Isaiah 43:22-28

February 20, 2011

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^A Isaiah 43:20-21, Deuteronomy 7:6-8, Exodus 19:6, Romans

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^B Romans 2:4-5, 1 Corinthians 9:27, 1 John 1:6-10

^C Isaiah 1:11, 15; Malachi 1:11-13

^D Psalm 100:4

^E Revelation 20:12, Romans 8:33

^F Colossians 2:13-14, 2 Corinthians 5:21

^G Hosea 12:3

^H Numbers 15:30

A. Introduction

1. Israel is a privileged people

- a. in the verses immediately preceding today's text, God refers to Israel in these words: **20b ... My chosen people. 21 The people whom I formed for Myself ...**
- b. when Israel was about to enter the promised land, Moses in summing up the law for that land, said this to them: **'6 For you are a holy people to the Lord your God; the Lord your God has chosen you to be a people for His own possession out of all the peoples who are on the face of the earth. 7 The Lord did not set His love on you nor choose you because you were more in number than any of the peoples, for you were the fewest of all peoples, 8 but because the Lord loved you and kept the oath which He swore to your forefathers, the Lord brought you out by a mighty hand and redeemed you from the house of slavery, from the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt.'** (Deuteronomy 7:6-8)
- c. earlier, in Exodus 19:6, if Israel obeyed His voice and kept His covenant, God promised, **'... you shall be to Me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.'**
- d. or as Paul says in Romans 3:1-2, **'Then what advantage has the Jew? ... Great in every respect. First of all, that they were entrusted with the oracles of God.'**
- e. truly, they are a privileged people, intended to have an ongoing, living relationship, a fellowship, with the Almighty God

2. But today's text is a frightening passage

- a. because, as you see when you read verse 28
 - (A) God's privileged people was headed for dire consequences
 - (B) the removal of their blessings and privileges
 - (C) their punishment, and even their utter destruction
 - (D) and all on account of unrepented sin
- b. and if that could happen to this nation of Israel
 - (A) then it can happen to an individual Christian
 - (B) or to a church
 - (C) Jesus had this to say to the church of Ephesus, **'4 But I have this against you, that you have left**

your first love. 5 Remember therefore from where you have fallen, and repent and do the deeds you did at first; or else I am coming to you, and will remove your lampstand out of its place – unless you repent.’ (Revelation 2:4-5)

- (D) and Paul said concerning himself, ‘but I discipline my body and make it my slave, so that, after I have preached to others, I myself will not be disqualified.’ (1 Corinthians 9:27) – I do not know all that being disqualified means, but with Paul it is not something I want to happen to me; or to you
- c. you see, fellowship with God cannot co-exist with unrepented, and hence unforgiven, sin; that is the message of 1 John 1:6-10: ‘6 If we say that we have fellowship with Him and yet walk in the darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth; 7 but if we walk in the Light as He Himself is in the Light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus His Son cleanses us from all sin. 8 If we say that we have no sin, we are deceiving ourselves and the truth is not in us. 9 If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. 10 If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar and His word is not in us.’
- d. so we do well to heed the lesson for us in this passage

B. Wearying God with Worship

1. Israel was involved in lacklustre worship

- a. let me read verses 22-24 again, leaving out a few parts to which we will return in a moment: ‘22 Yet you have not called on Me, O Jacob; But you have become weary of Me, O Israel. 23a You have not brought to Me the sheep (lit. one out of the flock; i.e. a lamb) of your burnt offerings, Nor have you honoured Me with your sacrifices, ... 24a You have bought Me not sweet cane with money, Nor have you filled Me with the fat of your sacrifices; ...’
- b. in these verse the main elements of both informal and ritual worship are covered
- (A) the calling upon God in prayer
 - (B) the daily offering of a lamb each morning and evening as a whole burnt offering to the Lord
 - (C) the sweet, aromatic cane that was part of the incense that was to be burned as a symbol of thanksgiving to God
 - (D) the fat of the various sacrifices that was reserved for God as they were brought to the temple
- c. now it was not that all these things were not going on, which is what you might take from the verses,

for earlier in Isaiah we are told, “What are your multiplied sacrifices to Me?” Says the Lord. “I have had enough of burnt offerings of rams And the fat of fed cattle; And I take no pleasure in the blood of bulls, lambs or goats.” (Isaiah 1:11) and “So when you spread out your hands in prayer, I will hide My eyes from you; Yes, even though you multiply prayers, I will not listen. Your hands are covered with blood.” (Isaiah 1:15)

- d. but rather that they were not being done for God; listen to these phrases from these verses ‘... not called on Me ... weary of Me ... brought to Me ... honoured Me ... bought Me ... filled Me ...’
 - e. the point is that what they were doing was not done with a view to honouring God: they had become weary of God; their attitude the same as those against whom Malachi spoke some centuries later, ‘11 “For from the rising of the sun even to its setting, My name will be great among the nations, and in every place incense is going to be offered to My name, and a grain offering that is pure; for My name will be great among the nations,” says the Lord of hosts. 12 “But you are profaning it, in that you say, ‘The table of the Lord is defiled, and as for its fruit, its food is to be despised.’ 13 You also say, ‘My, how tiresome it is!’ And you disdainfully sniff at it,” says the Lord of hosts,...’ (Malachi 1:11-13a)
 - f. they found the worship of God burdensome
2. but worship was never intended to be burdensome
 - a. let's pick up the part of verse 23 that we omitted: ‘... I have not burdened you with offerings, Nor wearied you with incense.’
 - b. God never intended that His worship be a hardship; that word burdened is, more literally, ‘I have not enslaved you’ or ‘I have not compelled you to labour as slaves’ in your offerings, worship
 - c. worship was intended to be joyous thanksgiving in approaching the Creator Redeemer God with gifts
 - d. as the Psalm 100:4 puts it, ‘Enter His gates with thanksgiving And His courts with praise. Give thanks to Him, bless His name.’
 - e. but that could not take place when Israel lost their love for God
 - f. nor when we have lost our first love for Jesus Christ our Saviour
 3. what was the root cause of all this?
 - a. let's read the rest of verse 24: ‘... Rather you have burdened Me with your sins, You have wearied Me with your iniquities.’

- b. Israel thought worship to be a burden, but the real burden was that put upon the Lord by their sins and iniquities
- c. and God uses that same word 'burdened' – you have compelled me to labour as a slave bearing the load of your sins and your iniquities – how can I accept your so-called worship?
- d. worship, part of fellowship with God, cannot co-exist with sin
- e. but all is not hopeless; let's go on with the ...

C. Nature and Reason that God Forgives

1. verse 25: 'I, even I, am the one who wipes out your transgressions for My own sake, And I will not remember your sins.'

2. the Nature of God's forgiveness

- a. God says He does two things when He forgives sin
- b. the first is that He wipes out transgressions
 - (A) another translation is blots out or obliterates
 - (B) there are references in the Bible to a number of heavenly books, one being the Lamb's book of life, but there is another more fearsome record
 - (C) 'And I saw the dead, the great and the small, standing before the throne, and books were opened; and another book was opened, which is the book of life; and the dead were judged from the things which were written in the books, according to their deeds.' (Revelation 20: 12)
 - (D) transgressions are the deliberate acts of rebellion, of crossing the line which has been marked, Do Not Pass
 - (E) sins are the times of missing the mark, failing to do right or to avoid wrong
 - (F) these are all written down in the books, standing there and confronting us with accusation; and not one is missing
 - (G) BUT, God says that He will wipe out the writing, blot it out so that the accusation is indecipherable, the record missing, and it cannot be produced in the court of judgement
- c. the second is that God will remember them no more
 - (A) this is not that God is forgetful
 - (B) but that in an act of His divine will, they will never be recalled and cast back in the face of the one

forgiven

(C) we talk of forgiving and forgetting – but God really does it!

(D) Paul revels in this truth: 'Who will bring a charge against God's elect? God is the one who justifies;' (Romans 8: 33)

3. the Reason for God's forgiveness

a. the first part of this verse has been translated, 'I, even I, am he that blotteth out ...'^{3}. and this pinpoints the reason

b. the reason lies in God Himself

(A) who He is; His very being

(B) what He is like; His nature

(C) you have heard, 'to err is human, to forgive divine;' but really

(D) forgiveness is a sovereign act of His own absolute freedom^{4}.

(E) God forgives because He chooses to forgive

(F) and that I find very reassuring, because it is dependent upon the nature of God and not chance or circumstance

(G) it depends upon a God who has shown Himself faithful; One in whom we can most confidently put our trust

c. the second part of the verse gives another reason

(A) 'for my own sake'

(B) its foundation is in God's free grace, His love, His kindness

(C) it's motivation is in His own purposes and for the dignity and integrity of His own Name

(D) God forgives, because He has said that He will forgive, and because He cannot lie, He will carry it out

(E) as you read through the books of Moses, in particular, note how many times Moses prayed to God based simply for the sake of the Name of God

4. but this verse does not tell us the Method of God's forgiveness

a. what is the means that God employs in blotting out sin's record?

b. the context makes it clear, by condemning the sins of the nation that God cannot simply wipe away sin

and disregard the matters of justice and the honouring of the fact that He is a holy God

- c. the debt of those transgressions must be fully paid, so that the act of wiping out sin be an act of both justice and mercy
 - (A) mercy, because it is done at His gracious pleasure
 - (B) just, because the debt is fully paid
- d. it is in the NT that we find that this debt was paid by the Servant – the Suffering Servant on the cross – rendering satisfaction to God’s justice as the basis of pardon for our sins
 - (A) ‘13 When you were dead in your transgressions ..., He made you alive together with Him, having forgiven us all our transgressions, 14 having cancelled out the certificate of debt consisting of decrees against us, which was hostile to us; and He has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross.’ (Colossians 2:13-14)
 - (B) ‘He made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.’ (2 Corinthians 5:21)
- e. that is the method by which God forgives.

5. but if we are to receive such forgiveness

- a. it is necessary, as the passage which we read in 1 John points out to us, that first we acknowledge that we are sinners
- b. that we come in repentance for such forgiveness
- c. so the passage concludes with some verses with the intention of

D. Bringing to Repentance

- 1. Once again, as He has before in Isaiah, God calls His people into court; to a place where under oath the truth can be discovered.
 - a. verse 26: ‘Put Me in remembrance, let us argue our case together; State your cause, that you may be proved right.’ (Isaiah 43:26)
 - b. ‘I have said that I will remember your sins no more’ says God
 - c. now, He asks them to remind Him, if they can of some reason, some merit, some good deed, which should obligate Him to give this forgiveness; because, the implication of the words is, He cannot bring to mind any reason on their part for doing so

- d. bring in your case to court
 - e. assemble your witnesses
 - f. let's discuss this
 - g. lay out your arguments as I have laid out mine
 - h. and let us determine whether or not you deserve to be forgiven
 - i. again there is silence; only the Judges words of condemnation
2. verse 27: 'Your first forefather sinned, And your spokesmen have transgressed against Me.'
- a. it doesn't matter whether we take the 'first forefather' to be Abraham or to be Jacob
 - (A) the result is the same
 - (B) they were chosen not because of their perfection
 - (C) Abraham, that great hero of faith, faltered on a number of occasions from that faith; but He was a friend of God
 - (D) Jacob, that schemer, was twisted it seems from birth, always looking for a way of getting the upper hand – Hosea 12: 3 gives this description of him, 'In the womb he took his brother by the heel, And in his maturity he contended with God.' and yet he became a prince with God
 - (E) but they, and all their descendants after them were sinners
 - b. what is more, those who should have been the spiritual leaders were just as bad: the spokesmen, teachers or interpreters – the prophets, the priests – these have rebelled, transgressed
3. so, Israel cannot claim merit; Israel cannot claim innocence
- a. so the need for repentance is brought out in court
 - b. they have sinned; deliberate rebellious sin; and not repented
 - c. Numbers 15:30 tells the result of such sin: 'But the person who does anything defiantly, whether he is native or an alien, that one is blaspheming the Lord; and that person shall be cut off from among his people.'
 - d. so the warning judgement of Israel and its spiritual leaders that is now given in verse 28 should come as no surprise: 'So I will pollute (profane or make common) the princes of the sanctuary, And I will consign Jacob to the ban and Israel to revilement.'
 - e. the princes of the sanctuary are the priests, the spiritual leaders or spokesmen of the preceding verse:

- their special privileged position will be taken away, their status removed, left as being but common men
- f. and the nation will be given to the curse or ban; that is what happened to Jericho – it was devoted to destruction, and except the family of Rahab delivered by grace, every one and every thing in it was to be totally destroyed – that is Israel's outlook
 - g. this is the warning, then, that should bring repentance to God's people who have lost their first love and turned cold and sinned

E. Conclusion

1. sin and fellowship with God, having a personal relationship with Him in daily communion – sin and fellowship cannot co-exist
 - a. repent and seek forgiveness if you have never trusted in Him
 - b. repent and seek forgiveness if as His child you have sinned
 - c. that you may with joy, and with truthfulness, sing our closing hymn, 'My Sins Are Blotted Out, I Know!'

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