

God's Dealing With Sin and the Sinner

by Horatius Bonar

God hates sin and punishes it severely, but in His justice and love, He redeems humanity through His Son, Jesus, who takes our evil as if it were His own and gives us His good as if it were our own.

Scripture: Genesis 38:7, 1 Chronicles 2:3, Isaiah 53:10, Romans 6:23, Romans 8:17, 2 Corinthians 5:21, Galatians 3:13, Ephesians 2:8-9, Hebrews 12:23, Revelation 21:2

Topics: "God's Judgment", "Grace and Redemption"

Description

Horatius Bonar emphasizes God's serious and decisive approach to sin and the sinner, illustrated through the fate of Er, the first-born of Judah, who was slain by God for his wickedness. Bonar highlights that God's judgment on sin is not arbitrary but rooted in His righteousness, and that sin disrupts the natural order and divine purpose. He explains that even the first-born of the royal line is not exempt from God's judgment, showcasing the severity of God's treatment of sin. Ultimately, Bonar points to Jesus, the true first-born of Judah, who bore our sins and was punished so that we might receive grace and eternal life. The sermon concludes with the assurance that through Christ, believers are grafted into the royal lineage and inherit the kingdom of God.

Transcript

"Er, the first-born of Judah, was evil in the sight of the Lord, and he slew him." --1 Chronicles 2:3

HERE we have, in one brief sentence, a statement of the way in which God deals with sin and the sinner. It is the repetition of a verse in Genesis, in a very unlikely place,--in the midst of names and genealogies; God thus giving us to know the stress He lays on it. It is not for nothing that He thus repeats it. Such clauses as this, flung in apparently by chance, or what is called the transcriber's taste, are full of meaning. This certainly contains a very distinct and awful utterance.

Looking at it generally, we may say that it brings out, in a very outstanding and unambiguous form, such things as these:--

I. God's estimate of sin. It differs widely from man's. It is the Judge's estimate; not the physician's merely, or the father's. It is one of condemnation. It is not simply disease, or misfortune, or an accidental deviation from the straight line; but guilt, which must be reckoned for according to inexorable law. Sin, in the divine judgment, is not something vague, and loose, and shadowy, but well-defined and substantial. It is not a thing of sentiment or feeling, but a thing to be determined by the sharp test of unchanging law,--law

interpreted by an inflexible tribunal, and applied by an infinitely righteous Judge, without respect of persons; without fear, or favour, or partiality; without the remotest risk of mistake, or possibility of miscarriage of justice.

II. God's treatment of sin. He does not merely pronounce a sentence or verdict, without meaning to carry it out. His deeds correspond with his words. He hates sin; He tells us this; He treats it accordingly. His treatment of it is--

(1.) Prompt. Though he does bear with the sinner, yet this patience is not at variance with the promptitude. He is both patient and prompt; yet is he not hasty. It does not take him unawares, nor shew him as if at a loss how to deal with it. He is always ready to meet it and deal with it, whether open or secret, greater or less.

(2.) Decided. He does not trifle with it, as if undecided how to proceed, or hesitating as to what sentence to pronounce. There may be, for wise and gracious reasons, some delay; but the delay does not arise from any want of decision, any changeableness or instability. He is altogether decided in words and ways. "He is in one mind, and who can turn him?"

(3.) Severe. "The Lord slew him"; that is, struck him down, cut him off by a violent death. He did not die the death of men, but perished like Korah. God made a fearful example of him before the eyes of his brethren; though what it was we know not. When God arises to smite, he is infinitely terrible in his vengeance. He is in earnest; and he punishes in earnest, when his wrath is kindled but a little.

(4.) Watchful. His eye is on the wicked, his eyelids try the children of men. Nothing escapes him. No sin, however small, is overlooked. Though fury is not in him, yet he is watchful. His eyes are as a flame of fire.

But it is not sin merely that God would have us consider here. It is the sinner specially. For this non-information as to the sin (we are not told what the sin was) seems to be for the purpose of making prominent the sinner. And then the reticence as to the personal history of the sinner, fixes our eye on the other circumstances thus brought out in relief.

He is a first-born son. To him would pertain peculiar honour, and in him would centre peculiar expectation. Yet he is slain--slain by God. How often do we thus find the natural order broken in upon, and human hope frustrated! It was so in Cain; it was so in Esau. Sin breaks up all order, and disappoints all hope. Were it not for sin, the river of human order (family and social) would flow on undisturbed.

He is the first-born of Judah. "Judah, thou art he whom thy brethren shall praise." Judah, in God's purpose, is already the royal tribe; and this sinner, slain by God for his wickedness, is the first of the royal line, the first link in Messiah's royal chain. As Esau and Reuben had been set aside because of their sin, so is Er. Sin breaks the line; and the blow that severs it is dealt by God himself. "Jehovah slew him," because "he was wicked in the sight of the Lord." And if any one say, "Why doth he yet find fault, for who hath resisted his will?" our answer is, "Nay but, O man, who art thou that repliest against God?"

Yes, God is not afraid to break Messiah's line. He can rectify the breakage in His own way, but rather than that sin should go unpunished, He does not hesitate to break that line; to set aside Judah's first-born. So in finitely does God hate sin!

But there is something yet more remarkable. The broken link was to be refastened by the permission of sin as great as that which had broken it: the triple sin, first of Onan, then of Judah, then of Tamar! How

mysterious! "How unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out!" What a strange fragment of human history is this breaking and this mending of Messiah's royal line! "Oh the depth of the riches, both of the wisdom and knowledge of God!" See how He hates sin; how He smites the sinner; how He does not spare even the first-born of Messiah's tribe! Yet see how His purpose stands! And see how He can make use of sin for remedying the breaches which sin makes! What a God is ours! So righteous, so wise, so powerful, so loving and gracious!

But how terrible the lesson regarding sin! God cannot pass it by. On whomsoever found, it must be punished. Even when God's purpose is to remedy it, it must be punished; first punished before it can be remedied, lest men should make light of it, or think that God is trifling with it.

Yes; and when sin is at last found (though but by imputation) upon His well-beloved Son, it must be punished.

He must die. Yet He dies only to live; and he lives that we may live also. Judah's royal Son, David's Lord, is our Redeemer from sin.

Jesus, the true "first-born of Judah," he whom "his Brethren shall praise," was "made sin for us;" though not "evil in the sight of the Lord," but good,--his beloved Son, "in whom he is well pleased,"--he was treated as evil, and slain of the Lord; "made a curse for us," though he was the blessed One; for "it pleased the Lord to bruise him, and to put him to grief." Thus He takes our evil as if it were His own; and we get His good as if it were our own. God dealt with Him on our account as if He were evil, not good; God deals with us on account of Him as if we were good and not evil. God slew Him, that He might not slay us. God condemned Him, that He might pardon us. We listen to God's testimony concerning Him, and, in listening, we drink in the everlasting life.

Nor only life, but glory; royal glory. For in receiving that testimony we are grafted into Judah's royal line. We become part of "the church of the first-born." We inherit a kingdom. Ours is David's palace, and David's city, and David's heritage. Ours is the better Canaan; the new Jerusalem; the throne and crown of the Son of God. We are joint-heirs with Him in His royal glory; sharers in His holy reign.

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