

October 7, 2018
Sunday Evening Service
Series: Communion
Community Baptist Church
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Greer, SC 29650
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To Ponder . . .

Questions to ponder as you prepare to hear from Isaiah 43:25-28.

1. What is the difference between the “Book of life” to which Moses referred, and “the books” that are opened at the final judgment?
2. How thorough is the “blotting out” of our transgressions?
3. What is the difference between forgetting and choosing not to remember?
4. What is the most common trait among false religions regarding atonement for sin?
5. Is there any connection between the depth of our knowledge about our sin and the joy we experience because of forgiven sin?

GOD WILL NOT REMEMBER OUR SINS

Isaiah 43:25-28

You are well aware of the incredible ideological battle that has been playing out on the stage of our culture over the past few weeks. Again, we are witnessing the tactics of wicked people as they attempt to destroy the character and reputation of a man with whom they disagree ideologically. That the liberal politicians and liberal media will destroy this person irreparably is of no concern to them. No cost is too great to pay for them to have their way.

This whole sad scenario is but a replay of something we older folks witnessed about thirty-five years ago with a Supreme Court appointee named Robert Bork. Listen to the observation presented by Andrew Cohen from *the Atlantic* on December 19, 2012 at the death of Judge Bork.

“The relentless honesty and arrogant mien of Robert Bork, who has died at 84, during his unforgettable 1987 Supreme Court nomination hearing resulted in two very important things for this nation. First, it precluded the ideologue from becoming a life-tenured justice, which has meant over the intervening 25 years many saving graces for progressives and many bitter disappointments for conservatives. Second, it changed (forever, I suspect) the way judicial confirmation hearings unfold, by encouraging earnest nominees to say to the Senate Judiciary Committee nothing at all candid, specific, or profound about their judicial philosophies or views of the law.”

Indeed. The new way of confirmation (or non-confirmation) is to assassinate the opponent’s character. How things have changed since the time of John Kennedy. In 1962 President Kennedy appointed liberal judge Byron White to the Supreme Court and the Senate met to question him for eleven minutes.

Why the difference? What is going on? I have said before, and it bears repeating, that the more a culture removes itself from God and His laws, the more the culture reflects the character of Satan. We read the wonderful news in the Revelation that in the last times when Christ is purging sin and sinners from the earth, there will be great rejoicing in heaven saying, “*Now the salvation and the power and the kingdom of our God and the authority of his Christ have come, for the accuser of our brothers has been thrown down, who accuses them day and night before our God*” (Revelation 12:10).

Everything about God is perfect, pure, and beautiful. Everything about God’s enemy Satan is wretched, abominable, and ugly. The ugliness of sin and sinners continually reminds us of how ugly hell is. That ugliness is portrayed especially when Satan tempts God’s people to fall and then runs to the throne of God with evidence of a person’s sin and waves it in the face of God.

That is precisely what Satan attempted to do with Christ. As God the Son began His ministry of paying for the penalty of sin with His own blood, Satan attempted to stop the process by tempting Jesus

to sin. Had Jesus actually worshiped him, had the Son of God for one moment stopped trusting God the Father, Satan would have had all the evidence he needed to accuse and stop the process of salvation.

The wonderful news is that, in spite of Satan's ugly habit of accusing the people of God, God removes the guilt and penalty of our sin and never brings the matter up again. God inspired Isaiah to speak these words of comfort to God's people Israel. God had chosen Israel to be His special people. They chose not to be God's people. They chose to live like their pagan neighbors who were enslaved by sin and Satan. God's people chose to get real ugly, Satan-ish in the way they lived. God warned them that such a choice was going to end in a bad way. And so they found themselves in captivity in Babylon.

Nevertheless, in that very context of failure and sin against God, God reminded Israel and us that He is incredibly forgiving. He prefers to remove our sins and never bring them up. God prefers to carry out the promise John gave us, *If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness (1John 1:9)*. Our celebration of the Lord's table is a celebration of the price our Savior paid in order to free us from sin's power and penalty. That price paid never stops Satan from accusing us. But we rest confidently in the truth that because Jesus paid for our sins with His own blood, our eternal Judge will never bring up those paid for sins to accuse us again.

Read the words God sent to His people who recently were taken as captives to Babylon.

I But now thus says the LORD, he who created you, O Jacob, he who formed you, O Israel: "Fear not, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by name, you are mine. 2 When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and through the rivers, they shall not overwhelm you; when you walk through fire you shall not be burned, and the flame shall not consume you. 3 For I am the LORD your God, the Holy One of Israel, your Savior. I give Egypt as your ransom, Cush and Seba in exchange for you. 4 Because you are precious in my eyes, and honored, and I love you, I give men in return for you, peoples in exchange for your life. 5 Fear not, for I am with you; I will bring your offspring from the east, and from the west I will gather you. 6 I will say to the north, Give up, and to the south, Do not withhold; bring my sons from afar and my daughters from the end of

the earth, 7 everyone who is called by my name, whom I created for my glory, whom I formed and made." 8 Bring out the people who are blind, yet have eyes, who are deaf, yet have ears! 9 All the nations gather together, and the peoples assemble. Who among them can declare this, and show us the former things? Let them bring their witnesses to prove them right, and let them hear and say, It is true. 10 "You are my witnesses," declares the LORD, "and my servant whom I have chosen, that you may know and believe me and understand that I am he. Before me no god was formed, nor shall there be any after me. 11 I, I am the LORD, and besides me there is no savior. 12 I declared and saved and proclaimed, when there was no strange god among you; and you are my witnesses," declares the LORD, "and I am God. 13 Also henceforth I am he; there is none who can deliver from my hand; I work, and who can turn it back?" 14 Thus says the LORD, your Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel: "For your sake I send to Babylon and bring them all down as fugitives, even the Chaldeans, in the ships in which they rejoice. 15 I am the LORD, your Holy One, the Creator of Israel, your King." 16 Thus says the LORD, who makes a way in the sea, a path in the mighty waters, 17 who brings forth chariot and horse, army and warrior; they lie down, they cannot rise, they are extinguished, quenched like a wick: 18 "Remember not the former things, nor consider the things of old. 19 Behold, I am doing a new thing; now it springs forth, do you not perceive it? I will make a way in the wilderness and rivers in the desert. 20 The wild beasts will honor me, the jackals and the ostriches, for I give water in the wilderness, rivers in the desert, to give drink to my chosen people, 21 the people whom I formed for myself that they might declare my praise. 22 "Yet you did not call upon me, O Jacob; but you have been weary of me, O Israel! 23 You have not brought me your sheep for burnt offerings, or honored me with your sacrifices. I have not burdened you with offerings, or wearied you with frankincense. 24 You have not bought me sweet cane with money, or satisfied me with the fat of your sacrifices. But you have burdened me with your sins; you have wearied me with your iniquities. 25 "I, I am he who blots out your transgressions for my own sake, and I will not remember your sins. 26 Put me in remembrance; let us argue together; set forth your case, that you may be proved right. 27 Your first father sinned, and your mediators transgressed against me. 28

Therefore I will profane the princes of the sanctuary, and deliver Jacob to utter destruction and Israel to reviling” (Isaiah 43:1-28).

God Blots Out Transgressions (v.25).

In light of the foregoing stacking up of sinful evidence against His chosen people, we might have expected an invective, a threat of punishment, at this point. Instead we have this amazing reminder that it is God alone who is able to remove all the guilt we amass from sinning against Him. Within the context of reminding the people that they were reaping the consequences of their rebellion, God also reminded them that God removes sin for His sake. *“I, I am he who blots out your transgressions for my own sake” (v.25a).*

The statement assures us that God alone is able to blot out transgressions. God blotting out transgression paints a vivid picture of those transgressions first being written in a book. In one Old Testament situation that was an actual fact according to the historian who recorded that Manasseh’s sins were written in a book in a very literal way (2 Kings 21:17). Or we see the same kind of picture as Jeremiah said of the multiplied sins of God’s people: *The sin of Judah is written with a pen of iron; with a point of diamond it is engraved on the tablet of their heart, and on the horns of their altars (Jeremiah 17:1).* We also know that at the final judgment, the Great White Throne, God will open books and everyone will be judged according to what is written about them in the books. We can assume that because no one passes the judgment, the books must be full of a record of people’s sins.

How amazingly wonderful that God graciously blots those sins out of the books for His people. The “books” do not contain pages of redacted text where my sins are crossed out. Rather, the record is fully purged with no mark on the page. That idea comes from the meaning of the Hebrew word translated “blot out.” To blot out is to wipe, obliterate, or exterminate. This Hebrew word describes what God did to created things at the flood (Genesis 6:7). In fact, there is an important contrast involving this word “blot.” In response to Israel’s sin with the Golden Calf, Moses pled with God, *“But now, if you will forgive their sin – but if not, please blot me out of your book that you have written” (Exodus 32:32).* God replied, *“Whoever has*

sinned against me, I will blot out of my book” (Exodus 32:33). God either blots our transgressions out of the book of sins or our name out of the book of life!

Notice who owns the liability for sin. God made it very clear that these are **your** transgressions. The individual Jews were guilty of breaching the relationship based on covenant agreement. God chose to bring Israel into the agreement. Israel agreed to obey God’s law (the terms of the covenant) but went back on their word.

In the same way, we are all guilty of stepping over God’s boundaries or stepping outside the requirements of the covenant with our Creator. Because God is our Creator, He is our rightful authority. Because God is our authority, we owe Him allegiance, obedience to His law. Because we are born in sin, we cannot obey, but continually transgress.

How does God respond to our transgressions? He blots them out, obliterates them. Why? God explained to His people through the prophet Isaiah that He shows mercy for His own sake. The phrase translated, *for my own sake* literally means, “on account of Me.” God removes sin’s penalty according to His unmerited favor. We call that His grace. God chooses to withhold His justifiable wrath against us transgressors. We call that God’s mercy. God withholds His wrath on the basis of the price paid to cover the penalty for sin. We call that Divine justice. These traits are all of God.

Therefore, on account of Himself, God planned in eternity and brought to pass in time, the sacrifice of the Beloved Son Jesus Christ as the acceptable payment for sin. It is as though all our sins are written in the books of eternity, but **for His own sake** God displays grace, mercy, and justice toward us, by wiping away the entry of those sins.

This incredible grace, mercy, and justice is all of God Himself. He calls us to witness His grace. God spoke directly to the people through the prophet: *“You are my witnesses,” declares the LORD, “and my servant whom I have chosen, that you may know and believe me and understand that I am he. Before me no god was formed, nor shall there be any after me. I, I am the LORD, and besides me there is no savior. I declared and saved and proclaimed, when there was no strange god among you; and you are my witnesses,” declares the LORD, “and I am God. Also henceforth I am he; there is none who*

can deliver from my hand; I work, and who can turn it back?”
Isaiah 43:10-13.

The last words of this passage highlight the important truth that the blotting out of sins is by, for, through, of God alone. This is the wonderful doctrine of Soli Gratia – by grace alone. This is the truth of Soli Fide – by faith alone. And ultimately it is therefore, Soli Deo Gloria – for the glory of God alone!

God chooses not to bring up forgiven sins. He blots out our sins “*And I will not remember your sins*” (v.25b). This statement begs an important question. “Can God forget?” This might seem like a foolish question. But in the context of forgiving others don’t we often tell people they need to just forgive and forget? Depending on what sin it is we are trying to forgive, we may well not be able to forget.

How can the omniscient God forget something? Maybe this is a human term applied to God for our understanding. Or maybe God does wipe the record of our sins so cleanly that He cannot possibly remember. Maybe God buries our sin so deeply in the sea that even He cannot remember them as Micah promised, “*He will again have compassion on us; he will tread our iniquities under foot. You will cast all our sins into the depths of the sea*” (Micah 7:19). Maybe that is what removing our sins as far as the east is from the west means, as David said, “*As far as the east is from the west, so far does he remove our transgressions from us*” (Psalm 103:12).

Or maybe the reality is that God simply chooses not to remember. The beauty of forgiveness is that God makes a conscience choice not to bring up sin He has blotted out. He expects us to treat other people’s sins against us the same way. *Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you* (Ephesians 4:32).

We Gladly Accept God’s Work (v.26).

It would be foolish for us to argue that we are sinless. That was God’s challenge to His rebellious people when He said, *Put me in remembrance; let us argue together; set forth your case, that you may be proved right* (v.26). Only a deceiver or fool would argue that he has never committed sin. Here God calls on the sinful people to argue

their case. Are they not guilty of sin as God has so assessed them in this context? Let them present the evidence.

Are we not guilty of sin? Set forth your case to God. A simple recitation of the Ten Commands reminds us of how easily and often we sin. Add to that Jesus’s explanation of the extent and depth to which those commands apply to our lives, and we have to plead guilty. Then consider the hundreds of imperatives in the New Testament that define God’s boundaries for His created beings. No, we are all guilty of sinning against God. John stated the matter succinctly: *If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us* (1 John 1:8).

Only a deceived person would argue that he has done enough to atone for sin. It is as though God says here, “Bring to Me your evidence of works sufficient to atone for your sins. Maybe I have overlooked some good work.” There is nothing a sinner can do or say that constitutes enough righteousness to atone for sin. Only the sacrifice of the only Perfect human who ever lived will suffice.

Therefore, it is better for us to embrace reality. The sad reality is that we are born in sin. Because the people committed other sins of disobedience, they cannot obey in this matter of producing evidence that would render them “Not guilty.” It appears that the people are stone silent . . . and then God said: *Your first father sinned, and your mediators transgressed against me* (v.27). Adam was father of all humanity who are all guilty of sin. Abraham was father of Israel, but also of all Ishmael’s lineage (Arabs and Edomites) who also sinned. Jacob was father, truly father, of Israel alone and he sinned plenty.

Essentially because we all are born in the lineage of Adam, we, even the best of the people, are guilty before God. Even the mediators, that is the priests and leaders, are guilty of transgressing. The only thing left to do is agree with God. And when we agree with God against ourselves, God removes all retribution. *Therefore I will profane the princes of the sanctuary, and deliver Jacob to utter destruction and Israel to reviling* (v.28).

This is a reference to what had probably happened most recently as Babylon had come to destroy Jerusalem and take God’s people captive. The people of Jacob’s lineage steadfastly refused to agree with God that they were transgressors. If you are born again by the miracle of regeneration, you are different. You have acknowledged

that you are guilty of stepping over God's boundaries. You have, by faith embraced God's provision of salvation in the sacrifice of Jesus Christ. You do enjoy the assurance that God has wiped the record of your sin out of His book. You are confident that you are the object of God's sovereign choice to receive grace, mercy and justice.

Therefore, we celebrate the incredible kindness of God demonstrated in the Lord's death. We celebrate the price of our salvation, the body of Christ given to us, His blood shed to bring us into the new covenant. People like that will be accused by the Accuser of the Brethren. But was also know that the blood that saves us from the penalty of sin also secures us from the power of sin. Thank God that regardless of how and when the Accuser accuses us, God has blotted out our transgressions.