

Transgressions Blotted Out

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And Israel to reproaches. Now, if the Lord were leave us to ourselves to figure out a way as to how to please him and how to approach him and live forever in his presence, none of us could ever figure out that way. That's what the Lord is reminding Israel of here in these first few verses that in spite of all the instruction that had been given to them over the years in their history as to how it is they were to approach unto a living God, yet they were found to be ignorant of that way. Such is the depravity of men's heart. If you want an idea of just how depraved men are, think about this, that this Bible is still the number one bestseller in the world. Do you realize the King James version of the Bible, those that print it still pay royalties to the Queen over in England? They get royalties on every one of these Bibles sold and they make a lot of money on it. But as many people as reading it, as many people as have Bible studies meeting in homes and congregations around and everybody kind of sharing what they feel the Lord is teaching them, they still do so in ignorance. They are much like the Lord describes here in Israel when he says, "Thou hast not called upon me but thou hast been weary of me, O Jacob, and, O Israel."

Some might object. They might say, "Well, wait a minute, people when they gather, they are calling on the Lord." Well, it could be said that these went through the motions, yes, but there is calling on the Lord and then there is calling on the Lord. To truly call on the Lord is not just to mutter a prayer that someone has taught you or, as we see today in some of these public invocations when someone is asked to do the invocation, they reach in and pull out a piece of paper and open it up and they read it. That's all they know about addressing God and many of them do it in a generic sense. They'll refer to him as Almighty. They'll refer to him as the Great One. Even some will call him Father because they believe that, "Well, if he created us, he must be then all of our Father."

And yet the denunciation is by the Lord himself here. There was religious activity going on in Israel at this time. People bringing sacrifices but not the right kind. People offering the minimum unto the Lord, not careful as to what those sacrifices represented. In their minds they say, "Well, it doesn't matter what kind it is. He says bring a sacrifice so here it is." And the priests back in the day were doing the same thing as in Christ's day, they were trying to make money off the people. So here comes this poor person with their little sacrifice and they get to the door of the temple and the priest says, "That won't do. Here but we've got some over here that are sanctified but it's going to cost you. If you're really interested and sincere, go and get some money and come and get it and in the

meantime we've got to take this one away from you because it's counterfeit. It won't do." So while that person trots off to try to find another sacrifice or get the one that they have over here that they're going to sell them, that priest takes that one and puts it around back behind, mixes it in with the rest to get the next person coming. That kind of stuff was going on. That's what the Lord here was denouncing, the hypocrisy and the ignorance and put it down on a bottom line, the rebellion of their hearts in coming before him.

Notice in verse 22 how he describes it, "but thou hast been weary of me." You know, people trying to find out an easy way of worship. They don't want to be wearied in coming and sitting and listening to a message. We've got to do something. We live in a day of do and perform and that's what people, why they go to places of worship. They like activity. They don't want to sit and listen. They're weary of hearing a man stand and declare unto them the glories of Christ. They cannot endure it. Paul said, "They have itching ears. Scratch me here." They want something more. That's the way it is in our time, that's the way it was in this day.

If you go over to Malachi which is the last book of the Old Testament, just before Matthew. So if you have a hard time finding it, go to Matthew and go back a book to Malachi 1 and you can see how our Lord speaks of their manner of worship in their day. They were busy. There were priests; there were sacrifices; there were altars. They were all of these things going on but the Lord denounces it.

You see in verse 6 of Malachi 1, "A son honoureth his father, and a servant his master: if then I be a father, where is mine honour? and if I be a master, where is my fear? saith the LORD of hosts unto you, O priests, that despise my name." Over here in our chapter, Isaiah 43, they're called "the princes of the sanctuary," and yet not even the priests had any kind of fear or regard for how it was that they were to approach unto God.

"And ye say, Wherein have we despised thy name?" So not only were they doing wrong, but they weren't aware that they were doing wrong. It's like people today that say, "At least they're going to church. What are you complaining about?"

"Ye offer polluted bread upon mine altar; and ye say, Wherein have we polluted thee?" Here, you want a bread? Take it.

"In that ye say, The table of the LORD is contemptible. And if ye offer the blind for sacrifice, is it not evil? and if ye offer the lame and sick, is it not evil?" You see, the Lord said that the lamb that was to be brought had to be spotless because it represented the person of the Lord Jesus Christ and the work that he would accomplish. Without sin, he came as a sin-bearer but he was not a sinner. And it's like people today that say, "Oh, why get so particular? It doesn't matter what kind of Christ just as long as someone's believing in Christ. It doesn't matter what you believe about his death just as long as we say he died. So be it. Let's leave it there." No, there is a particularness to his person. There is a particularness to his death and what he came to accomplish that is of great importance to any sinner who has an interest, that God has given an interest to him as far as their salvation.

Notice what our Lord says here, "Offer it now unto thy governor." Go ahead and take that sick lamb that you say it doesn't matter, it's a lamb. Here it is. Go and take it to your governor.

"Will he be pleased with thee, or accept thy person? saith the LORD of hosts. And now, I pray you, beseech God that he will be gracious unto us: this hath been by your means: will he regard your persons? saith the LORD of hosts. Who is there even among you that would shut the doors for nought? neither do ye kindle fire on mine altar for nought. I have no pleasure in you, saith the LORD of hosts, neither will I accept an offering at your hand. For from the rising of the sun even unto the going down of the same my name shall be great among the Gentiles." I will take my blessing off of you, the Jews, and I'm going to put it upon the nations. "And in every place incense shall be offered unto my name, and a pure offering: for my name shall be great among the heathen, saith the LORD of hosts." There he was looking to the death of Christ which he offered. It wasn't just for the Jew, it was for the Gentile.

Verse 12, "But ye have profaned it, in that ye say, The table of the LORD is polluted; and the fruit thereof, even his meat, is contemptible. Ye said also, Behold," here it is, "what a weariness is it!" I hear people get weary. They've said, "Is this the only message you have to preach? Is this the only way that you worship? Every time if we go, leave and come back, it's just the same old way?" Well, that's what the Lord has ordained. One altar. One sacrifice. One high priest. It's not me, it's Christ.

"Behold, what a weariness is it! and ye have snuffed at it, saith the LORD of hosts; and ye brought that which was torn, and the lame, and the sick; thus ye brought an offering: should I accept this of your hand? saith the LORD. But cursed be the deceiver, which hath in his flock a male, and voweth, and sacrificeth unto the Lord a corrupt thing: for I am a great King, saith the LORD of hosts, and my name is dreadful among the heathen."

So you can see our Lord's complaint here and you can see, first of all, coming back to Isaiah 43 and these verses 22-24, those transgressions that make us guilty before a holy God. When we talk about transgression being blotted out, we have to define what they are. Most people think in terms of lying and cheating and stealing and committing adultery and murder. Those are the things that they consider to be of great evil before a holy God, but what about the way they worship? They profess to know God; they try to keep themselves from certain sins; they strive to keep what they believe are the sum of the law, the Ten Commandments, and yet in all of this, they are still lost and condemned and very much like what we see here in these verses, bringing offerings that the Lord cannot accept.

In other words, it's the religion of Cain. Even though the years have gone by, not much has changed. There is a lot of religion out there that is nothing more than what Cain attempted to do, bringing the works of his own hands. It takes work to till the ground. It takes work to raise fruit. When you compare it, Abel, he had to sit there under a shade tree and watch the sheep grow and populate and grow and populate. I'm sure Cain

probably in many ways was jealous, "What do you do exactly? You don't even grow the grass, Abel." But the Lord said, "Bring a sacrifice." Turnips don't bleed. Cain was sincere in what he offered and yet unacceptable to God because it was not what he required.

Fast forward a thousand years later, the same thing could be said of Israel. In spite of all of the visual aids that the Lord had given them to see what that tabernacle represented and the sacrifices, it was in the center of their worship and then later when the temple was built, year after year reminders of how it is that God would accept a sinner and yet they snuffed their noses at it. They turned from it. They minimized it. They were weary in it. They had no interest in it. Does that describe any that you know? Does it describe yourself? That somehow God can accept you in any other way than through that one sacrifice that he has ordained in his Son, the Lord Jesus Christ.

Let's come then to verse 25. That's what the transgression is, it's in our heart. Left to ourselves, we would ever come in a wrong way and attempt to justify ourselves in it. But verse 25 gives us the only remedy and here's the heart of this message here today. We've seen the transgression before the Lord but what's the remedy? The remedy, first of all, the Lord says, "I, even I, am he that blotteth out thy transgressions," so let's just start with that. Who is it that forgives sin? Is it another man or is it God? But here the Lord says, "I, even I, am he that blotteth out thy transgression." There were priests that the Lord ordained should take those sacrifices from the people and offer them unto him but the people were not to put their confidence in the priest.

There is one God and one Mediator between God and men, the man, Christ Jesus. But today you've got people elevating a man. You've got them elevating a pastor. Men like to wear titles. They like the people to come and give them honor. A friend of mine attended a place of worship one time and came bolting out of there and he said, "I fully expected to go hear something of the word of God and I showed up and it was pastor appreciation day." He said, "The pastor was sitting up there on the platform in this big oversized chair that was covered with a white sheet and they had a big old offering basket at his feet and one by one people stood up and testified of just how important this man was to them in their spiritual lives and whatever and then they came and put some money in the basket for him." He said, "I was the only one left sitting there." He said, "I should've gotten up and left and run out of there but," he said, "it was such a production." He said it was like going to a bad movie. You keep expecting it to get better and it never does and then when the credits show up, you're sitting there scratching your head and thinking, "I paid for this? Why did I even stay to the end?"

But there are people in places that elevate men above measure. Over the years I've had some want to come to me and tell me all of their sin thinking that somehow confessing to me is going to make it better before God and I just have to stop them and think, "Whoa. I've got enough garbage to deal with in my own yard, I don't need you coming and dumping yours in it on top of it."

This is something that needs to be dealt with before the Lord because even as he says here, "I, even I, am he." When it says, "I, even I," it's talking about exclusiveness. There

is none that can forgive sin but God and that's why when Christ healed that lame man and said that, "Your sins are forgiven you," they were all aghast. They said, "Wait a minute, who is this that forgives sins?" Men can say it, "Your sins are forgiven you." They can even make the sign of the cross and say you're forgiven but that's not forgiveness. "I, even I, am he that blottereth out thy transgressions." In other words, none but the Lord. The offended judge alone has the authority to forgive if he will. None of us deserve it but still that forgiveness is with him.

If you look over to Psalm 130, this was David's cry unto the Lord, and as a needy sinner hearing my voice, if the Lord so directs your heart, that's where you need to look, to him. To him. David here in Psalm 130 says, "Out of the depths have I cried unto thee, O LORD." He's talking about the depths of his own worthlessness, David realizing there was nothing good in him. If the Lord lays you low, that's a good thing. There is no greater blessing than for him to show you that you're lost.

He said, "Lord, hear my voice: let thine ears be attentive to the voice of my supplications. If thou, LORD, shouldest mark iniquities, O Lord, who shall stand?" If there was one iniquity that the Lord should pin on me, even one, who could stand?

Notice he says, "But there is forgiveness with thee, that thou mayest be feared." So he says, "I wait for the LORD." I'm not waiting for some man to say a quick prayer with me to make me feel better. I wait for the Lord. I'm not going to push people into that sort of thing where at the end of a message get you down here and shake my hand and let's go in a side room and let's get this dealt with. No.

"I wait for the LORD, my soul doth wait, and in his word do I hope." In his word. If the Lord has tenderly drawn your heart to Christ without even knowing exactly how or when, I can tell you that he used his word to break you and to cause you to look outside yourself to Christ alone. If not, it's a false hope. In his word do I hope. Not in a man but in his word.

"My soul waiteth for the Lord more than they that watch for the morning: I say, more than they that watch for the morning." If the doctor told you that if you live until morning, I think you'll have turned the corner, well, you lay there all night watching for the morning, thinking about that. Thinking that there is hope in the morning.

So he says, "Let Israel hope in the LORD: for with the LORD there is mercy, and with him," not with men, not with our works but "with him is plenteous redemption. And he shall redeem Israel from all his iniquities." That's the foundation. The remedy for transgressions begins with him, who it is that forgives sins.

Now, you come back here to Isaiah 43:25 and look at a second thing and that is: what kind of sins are forgiven? We tend to categorize them. We tend to think, "Well, this one really is worse than the other and this would require a greater forgiveness of God than the other." If that's your thinking, put it out of your mind. Sin is sin. There is none righteous, no not one.

But here it's all summed up in one word "transgressions." "I, even I, am he that blotteth out thy transgressions." He uses the word "sins" in the next clause but it's the same word. Whether it's actual sin that people can look upon or sin from the heart, it's whatever transgresses God's law. A transgression. It says, "No trespassing." That's a transgression. You've cross the line. It causes you to be guilty and condemns you. Whatever is contrary to God and to his nature that strikes at his glory. We all have sinned and come short of the glory of God so you don't even have to say or do anything to be a transgressor, it's what we are. When Adam fell, we fell.

So that curse is our condemnation. We only prove it when we sin. We're not sinners because we sin, we sin because we're sinners. It's what we are before a holy God, transgressors, and yet the Lord says no matter how deep that stain has gone, he says, "I, even I, am he that blotteth out thy transgressions." You know that there are certain stains you can take water and soap and just rub them right out. No problem. There are other stains that it doesn't matter what you do, it's still there. It can never be blotted out. The only way to do it is to get rid of whatever was stained and yet the mercy and the grace here of our Lord.

Notice the context of verse 25, it's against the backdrop of nothing going right. "You wretched people. The stuff you are bringing me. You say you're honoring me. You're not. Go offer that to your governor." And yet he says, "I, even I, am he that blotteth out thy transgressions." Deeper than the stain, it's gone.

Well, how is it that these are blotted out? That begs that question, doesn't it? We've seen who it is that forgives and what kind of sins are forgiven, but how? How is it that transgressions are remitted? Here the word is used of blotting. Blotting. It's an old word that talks about when, you know, today with computers you can hit "delete" and it's gone but back in the day, especially in books of accounts, when you wrote it it had to be written in ink so you had your credit and your debit column and whatever was in that debit column, for it to be paid, there were different ways of blotting it out. It had to be shown somehow that it was paid. Sometimes they took a line and drew it through it. Sometimes they took some other means of showing that it was blotted out. In many ways in some of these old books, they weren't allowed to erase it because it had to be shown what came in went out.

There had to be a reckoning, an accounting and that's the word that the Lord uses here in this word "blotting." It means to be forgiven. It means to be hardened. It means to be stricken. However that was done in the debt book. Sins are debts. We have nothing in the positive column. It's all in the debt column and yet the Lord is saying here, "I've crossed it out."

I read it for you over here in Colossians 2, if you'll go back there with me in Colossians 2 and see how it's put here. In Colossians 2:14, notice, "Blotting out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to his cross." This talks about the old habit in the courthouse of when a debt was

paid, a line was stricken through the debt that was in that book and actually taken out of the debt book, the debit book. Taken out and it was sealed by the court and nailed to a tree out in front of the courthouse so if anybody wanted to know if their debt was paid, you know, maybe they were all against Mr. So-and-so down the road. "He owes," and someone says, "Oh no, wait a minute. I saw his piece of paper out nailed to that tree out in front of the courthouse. Go on down there and look at it." Someone passed by and it didn't matter how much they felt he was guilty but it had the judge's signature on it, it had the line drawn through it and it was nailed to that tree. That man was a free man. He owed nothing.

That's the language that is used here of our Lord Jesus Christ, that their sins are remitted. So satisfactory was the death of the Lord Jesus Christ and the payment that he made, full payment for every sin, not just some of the sins but every sin, past, present and think about this, even future, sins yet to be committed. If the Lord has paid your debt, it has been paid in full. And the Lord says, "I, even I, am he that blotteth out thy transgressions."

It wasn't just by decree. When he says, "I, even I, am he that blotteth out thy transgressions," it meant that he had to pay the debt. Here's the offended judge himself, as if he stepped down from his bench which Christ did, and came as a man, and laid down his life to pay the sin debt for those that he would save. How great a redemption that is, that he should accomplish that, but that's what it took because nobody could pay this debt. We're not talking about chump change, we're talking about standing before a holy God and matching his holiness. Who could do it? That's why David said, "Lord, if you should mark iniquity, who could stand?" But the Lord says, "I, even I, am he that blotteth out thy transgressions." You know, this old flesh gets a little cocky. You can imagine somebody walking away having a huge debt paid and thinking, "I'm somebody. I'm somebody."

Well, why is that transgression pardoned? Is there anything in us? You come back here to Isaiah 43:25, don't forget those words, "for mine own sake." For mine own sake. Let's don't get heady. Let's don't get thinking that we're better than somebody else, that the Lord should look upon us and forgive our sin. No, he's the source of this blessing. He's the author of it. "I, even I, am he," and if there's any glory to be given, it's for his own name's sake. It's because he purposed it. It's not procured by anything in the creature. It's not by riches. There are some men in congregations that are honored and they're even put on the deacon boards and committees because they've got a lot of money. "We can use this guy." That's why they've got prominence and when they die, they name halls after them. They put up monuments, plaques, to remember them.

But that's all works. The Lord says, "I, even I, am he that blotteth out thy transgressions for mine own sake." As you sit here, if you're the Lord's, that is a question you'll go to your grave asking, "Why me? Why should he consider a wretch like me?" What it is, dear friends, it's an instance of unmerited indistinguishable grace that he would pass by others and show grace to any such as we are. It flows from his free grace and it's all because of the blood of Christ. Notice, he blotted out those transgressions, nailing them to the tree. It

was when Christ finished the work that God could justify, declare righteous, acquit every one for whom he died, not before.

And you notice the result of the Lord doing it in verse 25, the final aspect of this. He says, "and will not remember thy sins." That's an amazing thing when you think about it. Don't you remember your sins? You could be laying there just with the clearest mind and something happened that just triggers quickly something that you said or did. It may have been years ago but up it comes in your mind, popping up, and you sit there and shake your head and think, "Where did that come from?" And you might even begin to think, "Well, I wonder if I need to do something about that? Maybe the Lord brought that to mind so that I would do something about it." If you're his, it's already been taken care of.

What the Lord purposes by it is that you not look to your flesh but to look to this one who died to put away that sin. You know, people say all the time, "Forgive and forget." That's something we can't do. We say we do. "I forgive you. Forget it, it's done." But some little incident pops up in an argument and the next thing you know, it's coming right back out again. That's something that in this flesh we can't do and yet the amazing thing is that God would say, "and remember them no more."

But what it is that he remembers them no more in a way of attributing guilt. There is no double jeopardy. The Lord is not going to put that sin upon his Son and have his Son pay for it only to punish you again for it. What a blessed God he is. There is no double jeopardy. If Christ paid that debt, it's paid. No matter what your conscience says. No matter what Satan says. No matter what men say. And for those whose debt has been forgiven, that's not a light thing. That's something that brings you on your face again and again before the Lord. But what it is, it shows us just how thorough is the forgiveness of sins in the Lord, "and will not remember thy sins." Having forgiven them, he'll never punish them because he has already put it on his Son.

The last thing in verses 26 and 27 and I know our time is gone but there is a challenge here that God puts out to any who seek forgiveness in any other way. When he says in verse 26, "Put me in remembrance," he's not talking to those whose sins he has blotted out. He's coming back to challenge these that are coming in another way and he's saying, "You want to approach me based upon your thinking and upon your works and your inventions? Go ahead, put me in remembrance. Let's plead together. Go ahead and bring that evidence into court," is what he's saying. "Declare thou, that thou mayest be justified in some other way."

I'll tell you what: I wouldn't want God to judge me even based on whatever righteousness I think I might have. A lot of people say, "I wouldn't want him judging me based on my sin." I wouldn't want him judging me based upon my righteousness which he calls already filthy rags. Can you imagine bringing that into court? The judge would call you for contempt. "Why are you bringing this in?" That's what the Lord is saying. It's not that God needs to be put in remembrance in order to keep forgiving sins. Some read it that way, "Well, put me in remembrance. Let's plead together." No, he's saying, "If you're going to come on that basis, then remind me of one thing you've done right." Well, we've

done nothing right. "All we like sheep have gone astray. We've turned every one to his own way and the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all." He did everything right, not us.

Verse 27 kind of seals it for any that think they can come in another way. "Thy first father hath sinned." The trial is over. Who is the first father? It was Adam. All did sin and have come short of the glory of God. When he sinned, we sinned. So what the Lord is doing here by way of derision is really throwing it back in their face. "You come this way? Well, it was over when Adam fell."

There is no hope in you. There is no hope in your teachers, verse 27, that have transgressed against me. He's talking about the priests that profaned his sanctuary and what he's saying there, "Therefore I have profaned the princes," the priests, "of the sanctuary, and have given Jacob to the curse, and Israel to reproaches." He was about ready to carry them into captivity, destroy the temple, so that anybody that had their confidence in that physical temple, it would be removed. There would be no hope.

I'm thankful that we have such a message as in verse 25 if the Lord will so teach us to know that, yes, transgression has been blotted out but it's not just in any old way, it's in a way that God himself has done it. It is satisfactory to his holiness and his justice and his righteousness and apart from that sins remains and any that would come in another way can only know God's curse and condemnation. May our hearts ever be turned to the Lord and to that salvation that he has accomplished.