

PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH MINISTRY OF THE WORD

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The Anatomy of Rebellion, Part 5

Catalog of Mishaps

There came a time in David's life where he endeavored to move the Ark of the Covenant to Jerusalem. As the responsibility for moving the Ark was given to an order of priest known as the Kohathites, Uzzah and his brothers were charged with the task.

You know the account; they transported the Ark in an unlawful way. When the ox jumped and the Ark began to fall to the ground, Uzzah reached out his hand and steadied the Ark. Family of God, he violated the word of God and so was stricken on the spot.

2 Samuel 6:7, "And the anger of the LORD was kindled against Uzzah; and God smote him there for his error; and there he died by the ark of God."

We could think of Moses. He was the meekest man in the world.¹ In all his time leading the people of God, he served faithfully and selflessly, except for one time. God brought Israel to a rock for water and told Moses simply to speak the word of God and the water would run. Instead, Moses struck the rock with his staff! The result, Moses was disqualified from entering the Promised Land.

Numbers 20:12, "And the LORD spake unto Moses and Aaron, Because ye believed me not, to sanctify me in the eyes of the children of Israel, therefore ye shall not bring this congregation into the land which I have given them."

Then there is Saul. He spared Agag, even though he was to told to utterly destroy him. After this the Lord said, "because you have rejected the word of the Lord, He has also rejected you from being king" (1 Samuel 15:23).

And recall Nadab and Abihu who on account of their irreverence also were struck dead.² And the unnamed prophet who disobeyed the word of God and so was eaten by lions.³

All of these examples solemnly testify to us that the "wages of sin is death" (Romans 6:23). And yet, we know that Christ died in our place on the cross such that when we sin today we no longer fear death, but

¹ Compare Numbers 12:3

² Compare Numbers 3:1-5

³ Compare 1 Kings 13:26

praise God for His goodness and grace.⁴

This leads to a these very important questions:

- What's to keep us from sinning now that we are saved?
- If the death penalty has been removed, what motive is there for living a life of devotion unto God?

Our text answers these questions as we close out our study on the anatomy of rebellion or apostasy.

In our text, the forgiven, redeemed, and restored people of God⁵ are running headlong into sin. For years the thought of an earthly king festered in the hearts and minds of God's people. And now in our text their rebellious passion gives way to action. They come together. They gather as much support as they can. And then they purposefully and premeditatively cast off God!

Divine Chastening

Now the wages for this sin was death... the death of Christ on the cross.⁶ Accordingly, God here doesn't destroy them. Rather He CHASTISES them, as a father would his own children.⁷ And this brings us to sixth and final attribute of rebellion; it is met with divine chastening.

Notice that God's chastening takes two forms, the first being allowance.

Allowance

1 Samuel 8:9, “**Now therefore hearken⁸ unto their voice:** howbeit yet protest solemnly unto them, and shew them the manner of the king that shall reign over them.”

The word rendered here hearken has a variety of nuances such as hear, listen, report, communicate, etc. However in response to an individual's words hearken or listen carries the idea of obeying them or doing what is requested. For example after the fall we read this:

Genesis 3:17, “And unto Adam he said, Because thou hast **hearkened** unto the voice of thy wife, and hast eaten of the tree, of which I commanded thee, saying, Thou shalt not eat of it: cursed is the ground for thy sake; in sorrow shalt thou eat of it all the days of thy life.”

When we read here that Adam “listened to the voice of his wife” we understand by this that he obeyed her!

Psalms 81:11 (NASB), “But My people did not listen⁹ to My voice; and Israel did not obey Me.”

Exodus 24:7, “And he took the book of the covenant, and read in the audience of the people: and

⁴ Though Uzzah, David, and the like were covered by the blood of the Lamb, nevertheless they stand as examples of what would happen to all of us if God withheld His grace. Compare also Romans 4:25

⁵ Compare 1 Samuel 7

⁶ Compare Isaiah 53:6

⁷ Compare Hebrews 12:7-13

⁸ שמע shama'

⁹ שמע shama'

they said, All that the LORD hath said will we do, and be obedient¹⁰.”

The word *obedient* here could be rendered *hear*. Hence they really were saying, 'All that the Lord has spoken... we will hear!' In each of these verses the same word is used to reference the idea of obeying or upholding someone's word.

Now, in our passage when Samuel is instructed to “listen to their voice” the meaning is clear: ALL THAT ISRAEL WANTED, AS A JUDGE SAMUEL WAS TO GIVE. In fact, it couldn't be clearer.

1 Samuel 8:7, “And the LORD said unto Samuel, **Hearken unto the voice of the people in all that they say unto thee:** for they have not rejected thee, but they have rejected me, that I should not reign over them.”

This means that when it came to Israel's sinful desires and proclivities, this godly prophet not only was to stand by and watch, but he also was to actively ensure that they got what they wanted! This is not to say that Samuel himself was to engage in sin. Again based on Deuteronomy 17:14 it is clear that part of God's plan for His people was an earthly monarchy, and accordingly for Samuel to usher the nation into this new era was not sin, but a divinely ordained action.

Does God Hate Sin?

So why would God allow Israel to sin? I thought God hates sin.

Brothers and sisters, in a cause and effect world one of the ways God chastens His people so that they might not sin is the allowing of them to reap the consequences of their sin, which is death. For example, recall God's people under Moses.

The all-too-familiar cycle was constantly repeated. God was never enough for Israel. They constantly and continually grumbled against the Lord at every turn. And so to teach His children that they ought not to sin, God gave them their sinful request, but this time without His preserving grace!

Psalms 106:15, “And he gave them their request; but sent leanness¹¹ into their soul.”

You and I both know that the Lord will not allow His people to live in sin. And so in this text we read that God gave His rebellious people all that they wanted, but He removed the sense of His presence from them! He sent leanness into their soul!

- They would eat, but not be filled.
- They would play, but not have fun.
- They would celebrate, but never know rejoicing.
- They would serve, but lack joy.
- They would worship, but fall short of communion.

Brothers and sisters don't miss it. If God is our greatest good then to have any sin without God is NOT to know pleasure BUT to reap hell on earth! And so part of God's chastening when it comes to rebellion and His people is to give them their request, yet withdraw a sense of His presence, remove a portion of His

¹⁰ שמע shama'

¹¹ רזון razown

grace, and allow them to reap the consequences of their sin.

And such was God's course of action here. In order to teach His children the folly of sin and rebellion, God gave them their request yet He deigned to lift His grace such that they would have both their sin and its misery! They wanted a "king like the nations," and so God gave them exactly what they wanted.

From this we see the first element in God's chastening of His people: Allowance.

Do you understand what this means?

This is such a horrible response from the Lord! We should rather have God rebuke us, try us, or send fiery serpents to devour us than to open the way to our sin. Yet there are times when that is exactly what God does.

You may not realize this but today in Christ we are shielded not only from the punishment that our sin deserves, but also, to a great degree, its consequences.

Don't miss this important point. 1 Corinthians 15 teaches us that sin brings with it a powerful sting.

1 Corinthians 15:56, "The sting of death is sin; and the strength of sin is the law."

Indeed! Sin brings forth devastation, pain, injury, and ultimately death¹² and yet we learn in Hebrews 11 that there are few things in this life more pleasurable than sin. This passage speaks of Moses:

Hebrews 11:25, "Choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season."

So how can sin be both painful and pleasurable at the same time?

It's not! In the end, sin brings death. Thus today, most who participate in sin do so without experiencing sin's death. To the ever sinning Jews of Paul's day, Paul said this:

Romans 2:5, "But after thy hardness and impenitent heart treasurest up unto thyself wrath against the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God."

ACCORDINGLY TODAY WE LIVE IN A WORLD WHERE MOST PEOPLE KNOW THORN-FREE SINNING.

Because God loves us and does not want us to love sin, He can and does allow us to reap in our being the consequences of our sin. This means

- He will permit us to sin.
- But that sin will NOT be free of its consequences
- But that sin will NOT be thorn-free!
- Rather, a small portion of the hell that is sin will be experienced.

Now amazingly when it comes to the Christian reaping in their life the wages of their sin there are some

¹² Compare Romans 6:23

who actually cry, foul! They say, “What an unloving God that He should allow me to reap what my sin has sown. I'm not sure I can continue to love a God who has allowed me to consume a measure of my sin.”

Brothers and sisters! There could be no greater taking of God's grace for granted than this.

Do you understand the hell that accompanies your sin?

Honestly I don't think we can. Yet, think of it in these terms: When at the final judgment God removes His grace such that the sinner reaps in his body, soul, and spirit the full consequences of his sin, will God be unjust?

NO! Judgment is coming; that is a message that must be proclaimed.

Well then, why is it wrong for God to withhold grace and allow the sinning Christian to reap a foretaste of it now?

It's Not! In fact far from being wrong, it is loving for it gives us a greater hatred of sin! Jeremiah put it this way:

Lamentations 3:39, “Wherefore doth a living man complain, a man for the punishment of his sins?”

Why should any living mortal, or any man, offer complaint in view of his sins? So far from crying foul, we ought to praise God for allowing us such a foretaste. We should pray that, accompanying any sin that we might commit, God would give a taste of the poison generated by our sin so that we would hate sin.

Warning

So, having paid for His people's sin, one way God chastises the child of God when they sin is by giving them their sin with a measure of its thorns! And yet, it doesn't stop here. Another element to God's chastisement is warning.

1 Samuel 8:9, “Now therefore hearken unto their voice: **howbeit yet protest¹³ solemnly unto them, and shew them the manner of the king that shall reign over them.**”

There is a word play in this verse that is not readily apparent in our English translations. Throughout this chapter, the issue of “justice” has been at hand. The word [*mishpat*] and its root [*shapat*] are used seven times in this chapter.

1. Joel and Abijah were appointed as *judges* [*shapat*] (verses 1, 2).
2. Yet they perverted *justice* [*mishpat*] (verse 3).
3. Now it was this that prompted the elders to throw off God that they might have an earthly king who would *judge* them [*shapat*] according to their longing (verses 5, 6, 20).
4. Accordingly, to a people so concerned when it came to *justice*, Samuel was to bear witness as to the *justice* that the nation would in fact receive under an earthly king.

¹³ עֹרֵד ud

5. And what was the *justice* to which Samuel was to bear witness? He was to: "...solemnly warn them and tell them of the procedure of the king."

There are two commands here, the first is to solemnly warn. This conveys the idea of calling someone to witness. It is a word used in situations of great importance. For example in Deuteronomy 4:26; 30:19, God appeals to and invokes heaven and earth as His witness against Israel that He has given her a choice between life and death. In Deuteronomy 31:28, Moses invokes heaven and earth as witnesses against the anticipated rebellion of Israel. In Nehemiah 13:15, Nehemiah "solemnly warns" the merchants of his day not to desecrate the Sabbath. All these examples indicate that to "solemnly warn" someone is to issue forth a strong appeal.

Secondly Samuel was to tell or show what manner of king they would have.

1 Samuel 8:9, "Now therefore hearken unto their voice: howbeit yet protest solemnly unto them, **and shew¹⁴ them the manner of the king** that shall reign over them."

This word show is a judicial term used in the context of a witness in a court of law. In its most essential form it means, "to place a matter high or conspicuous before a person."¹⁵

Together, these expressions, to "solemnly warn and to tell," denote the action of bringing out the consequences of something such that it is evident to all who hear. And that is what Samuel was to do when it came to God's people's sinful longing. Not only was he to allow them their sin (that they might know the repercussion of it in their body), but he here also was to spell out the dire consequences beforehand, holding nothing back.

1 Samuel 8:9, "Now therefore hearken unto their voice: **howbeit yet protest solemnly unto them, and shew them the manner of the king that shall reign over them.**"

Skip down to verses 10-18. Here we behold the "procedure" or the justice involved in a monarchy! We'll look at this next time, but the consequences are just awful.

- Slavery.
- A draft.
- Taxation.
- Forced labor.
- And much, much more.

And so behold the second component of God's chastening love when it comes to His people's sin: NOT ONLY does He allow us to enjoy sin- thorns and all BUT He also issues forth a strong warning as to its cruel consequences.

You say, "Wait a second. When has God ever told me of the dire consequences of sin? He's never spoken to me- at least not like in the days of Samuel!"

Brothers and sisters, you are mistaken. God has spoken to you of the horrible consequences of sin, in His word. Accordingly, we do not look for a dream or to a prophet by which God might testify against our sin. The Canon is closed: dreams, visions, impressions, etc. no longer occur! What remains is a

¹⁴ נגד nagad

¹⁵ *Theological Word Book of the Old Testament*, Volume II, page 549.

collections of sixty-six letters assembled in your Bible all of which solemnly warn against sin.

So behold the wages of sin. If you persist in your sin/rebellion God lifts a measure of His grace such that you not only get your sin, but also its consequences. Then this is what it may cost you; this is what it has cost other brothers and sisters in the faith. It may cost you

- Your health, 1 Timothy 6:9.
- Your livelihood, Genesis 13:10-11; 19:23-26.
- Your joy, Psalm 51:12.
- Your spouse, Job 2:9.
- Fellowship, Matthew 18:17.
- A child, 2 Samuel 12:14.
- Your future, Proverbs 7:23.
- Your marriage, 1 Samuel 4:11, 19.
- Your ministry, 1 Corinthians 9:27.
- Your looks, Galatians 6:8.
- Your youth, Proverbs 7:23.
- Your conscience, 1 Timothy 4:2.
- Your innocence, 1 Timothy 3:2.
- Your faith, 1 Timothy 6:10.
- Your greatest good (which is the glory of God), Joshua 7:19.
- Your life, 1 Corinthians 11:30.

Such are the chastening words of warning found throughout the pages of Scripture. Oh, how we must flee from sin!

And yet, in giving this list, I realize that it may cause some confusion. In the past we have noted on multiple occasions that God does not punish His children when they sin (except in the case of church discipline) and this we still affirm.

In other words, when “bad” things happen to you as a child of God, the gospel would argue that this didn't happen because you are being judged on account of a specific sin or that God is getting even. Again, only when a Christian has been delivered over to Satan ought we to conclude that the “bad” in their lives is on account of a specific sin.

And yet we beheld a catalog of the horrible consequences that God has allowed in times past on account of sin. What is the difference?

The difference is huge. In the first case, that God does not “punish” us for our sin. We maintain as a child of God that the Lord's wrath was removed at the cross.¹⁶ Accordingly, we must cleanse our understanding when it comes to God of all Greek/Roman notions. Our sin doesn't enrage God. It doesn't “tick” Him off. When we sin, the Lord responds with the loving, gracious words of forgiveness.¹⁷ God is not against us on account of our sin!

In the latter case, where God allows us to have a small taste of the bitter cup of sin we begin by recognizing that we live in a cause/effect world. The result of adultery may be a child. The result of

¹⁶ Compare Romans 3:25

¹⁷ Compare 1 John 1:9

lying may be the loss of your job. The result of speeding may be a wreck. This isn't God getting even; this is according to the laws of sowing and reaping.

So it is in our text this morning. When Israel ran headlong into sin, God did not punish them by giving them a bad king. Rather, He chastened them by allowing them to reap the consequences of their sinful desires. He did not withhold the thorns which always accompany sin, but most often are withheld by grace.

And so it is in our lives. God is not against us on account of our sin; to the contrary. On account of love, the Lord sometimes will lift His grace and allow us to drink of the bitter cup of sin.

Where does that leave us?

Where does that leave the child of God who has lost a child, a spouse, their health, etc?

Ought they to interpret this as a result of a specific sin?

NO!

Brothers and sisters, unless we have been specifically told by divine revelation as were the people in our text (which will not occur in this age)¹⁸ we cannot conclude that any “bad” thing in this life is the result of a specific sin (again, unless you are under formal discipline). Truly the secret things belong to the Lord our God.¹⁹ Rather we conclude that every time we encounter the misery of this life, God is giving us a taste of the wages of sin generically. And He is allowing us to see just how harmful our sin really is.

Accordingly when we so drink of a bitter cup, the call is NOT for us to endeavor to discover what sin we have committed BUT rather to grow more and more in our overall hatred of sin. And so grow more and more in our longing for heaven!

After detailing the corruption which attaches itself to this life, Paul said this:

Romans 8:23, “And not only they, but ourselves also, which have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body.”

And thus, listen to how Paul responded to the bitterness of life.

2 Corinthians 4:16-18, “For which cause we faint not; but though our outward man perish, yet the inward man is renewed day by day. For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory; While we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal.”

So what do we learn from this passage?

Let me suggest a couple of things. Sin always brings with it thorns. Sometimes on account of love, God

¹⁸ Compare Hebrews 1:1-2

¹⁹ Compare Deuteronomy 29:29

will withhold His grace and allow us to sip the cup of sin. The purpose of this “sip” is to secure a greater hatred of sin and a longing and love for Christ.

Yet, never in this life does a child of God drink the entirety of the bitter cup that accompanies sin for Christ did this for them. Referencing the bitter cup which accompanies all sin Christ said, “O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me: nevertheless not as I will, but as thou wilt” (Matthew 26:39).

From here Christ proceeded to bear in His body, on the cross, the full wages of our sin!

In fact if holiness is secured as we taste the bitter cup of sin, unto our individual and corporate sanctification let us close this morning by taking just a sip of the wages of our sin. To do that, let's consider the bitterness of the cross!

What is it that could take the most beautiful person who has ever lived (and I'm not talking about outward form here)²⁰ and

- Turn the whole world against Him?
- Delight in His torture and abuse?
- Nail Him to the cross?
- Send this Man to experience the full forces of hell on the cross?
- Cause a separation between God the Father and God the Son?

Your insignificant, all-too-easily committed sin! Thomas Kelley put it this way:

Ye who think of sin but lightly,
Nor suppose the evil great,
Here may view its nature rightly,
Here its guilt may estimate.
Mark the Sacrifice appointed!
See Who bears the awful load!
'Tis the Word, the Lord's Anointed,
Son of Man, and Son of God.²¹

²⁰ Compare Psalm 45

²¹ The Trinity Hymnal, 1990, hymn 257, stanza 3

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About the Preacher

Greg Thurston preached this sermon on September 3, 2006. Greg is the preacher at Bethel Presbyterian Church.