

Human Heedlessness and Divine Remembrance.

Horatius Bonar:

"They consider not in their hearts that I remember their wickedness." — Hosea 7:2

"They do not realize that I remember all their evil deeds. Their sins engulf them; they are always before me." — Hosea 7:2

Let me present this passage to you under these two heads: (1.) human sin; (2.) the divine remembrance of it.

I. HUMAN SIN. What is sin? It is not--

- (1.) an accident,
- (2.) nor an imprudence,
- (3.) nor a misfortune,
- (4.) nor a disease,
- (5.) nor a weakness.

It may be all these, perhaps; but it is something beyond all these; something of a more fatal and terrible character. It is something—

- (1.) with which law has to do,
- (2.) which righteousness abhors,
- (3.) which the judge condemns,
- (4.) which calls for the infliction of punishment from God.

In other words, it is **GUILT**— it is **CRIME**. Man's tendency is either to deny it or to extenuate it. He either pleads not guilty, or he smooths over the evil; giving it specious names. Or if he does not succeed in these, he casts the blame off himself; he shifts the responsibility to his nature, his birth, his circumstances, his education; no, to God himself. But human sin is not thus to be diluted or transformed into a shadow. It is infinitely real— true— deep— terrible in the eyes of Him with whom we have to do. It is the transgression of law; and as such must be dealt with by God, and felt by ourselves. Let us not trifle with sin, either in the conscience or the intellect. Let us learn its true nature from the terribleness of the wrath and condemnation threatened by God against every sin, great or small.

II. THE DIVINE REMEMBRANCE OF IT. God remembers. His memory never fails in anything. Nothing escapes it, great or small. Nothing effaces anything from it.

- (1.) Time does not efface it. Ages blot out nothing. The past is as clear and full as the present.
- (2.) Other events do not efface it. With man one fact expels another; today's doings destroy the recollection of yesterday's. Not so with God.
- (3.) Our own forgetfulness will not efface it. Our memory and God's are very different. Our forgetfulness does not make Him forget. God remembers! Nothing can make Him forget. He may seem to do so; but it is only seeming. He remembers the person— the time— the circumstances— the thing itself; public or secret; bad or good; negative or positive. He remembers **SINS**.

Let no one say that God is too good to remember them. He cannot but do so. He would not be God if it were otherwise. God can forget nothing; for memory is but the knowledge of the past, and He knows everything. It may be found hereafter that man forgets nothing either; and that the bitterness of a ruined eternity will lie in memory. But though man should forget, God remembers; and He can call up sin to remembrance. It will and must come up at last. Men may try to forget it; to drown all thought of it; to efface all traces of it; but it will come up! As even Job said, 'My bones are full of the sins of my youth.'

For a season here men succeed often in forgetting sin. And having forgot it they conclude that God has done the same. "They consider not in their hearts that I remember their wickedness." They conceive that God's memory is as treacherous as their own. For this God reproves them. "You thought that I was altogether such a one as yourself,"— that my memory was as untrue as yours. But the day is coming which shall show how foolish, how criminal was such a thought! The opening of the books will show this if nothing else will.

But there is such a thing as forgetfulness with God. "Their sins and iniquities will I remember no more." This is the true oblivion; divine oblivion of sin; perfect and eternal oblivion. And how is this? The prophet in the Old Testament, and the apostle in the New, tell us that this is one of the provisions and results of the New Covenant; that covenant which has been sealed with the blood of the Son of God. It is the blood that enables God to forget sin; that blots out all sin of ours from His eternal memory; so that it becomes as if it had never

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been. But this oblivion is no accident; no mere result of time and intervening circumstances. It is righteous oblivion! Oblivion which righteousness constrains! O blessed oblivion which is the result of righteousness. Had it been accomplished in any other way, there would always have been the danger of reviving memory; memory rousing itself from dormancy, and calling for vengeance after all. But where righteousness has produced the forgetfulness, all is well forever. Sin is buried beyond the possibility of resurrection. But when does God cease to remember sin in my individual case? When I have accepted the covenant; when I have fixed my eyes upon the blood; when I have received the divine testimony to that great propitiation which has made it a righteous thing in God to remember my sins no more!

Is not this a description of our world? It is not here the fool saying, "There is no God;" nor is it men saying, God has forgotten us; but it is, God has forgotten our sins! Indifference to sin like their own, forgetfulness like their own, they ascribe to Him! "God does not remember sin," is this great world's motto. And so they neglect the sacrifice for sin, and put away all fear of hell. "They consider not in their hearts that I remember their wickedness." What will they say when the Judge arrives?