

159 *A bridge too far – Penalty?*

I have a good friend who won't let me get away with anything in what I say here, and his pushing and probing have been really helpful to me. Thanks, John! (not his real name)

John thinks that I overemphasise the idea that God, in the OT, is to be seen as a smiting God: He said, *Thinking about Abraham being asked to sacrifice his son doesn't speak to me about a 'smiting God'; this would have been par for the course in the society from which Abraham was called.*

Exactly! God was trying to draw people *away* from the 'par for the course in the society' view, to a better view. But changing people's cultural understanding is really hard.

The outcome [of Abraham's actions in obeying what he heard God say] is a lesson pointing to God's love and not to his 'smiting' nature.

Yes, indeed. The experience showed Abraham that God was *not* the kind of god as seen by the tribes around him, who thought child sacrifice was acceptable.

But then again, Abraham *himself* must have had at least a *similar* world view; after all, he thought God might actually be demanding child sacrifice.

But in the rest of the article,^[158] the need for Jesus' redemptive sacrifice has no meaning unless it is referenced to the penalty of sin.

Sure, if we weaken the seriousness of sin, then the cross loses its power and importance, but in my articles, I'm not weaken its seriousness, am I?^[157]

Sin is serious all right; it's the idea of 'penalty' that I have difficulty with.

Now, I've often claimed here that Jesus shows us what God is *really* like, so **does Jesus speak about a penalty or punishment for sin?** Let's check.

In my NIV Bible, Jesus doesn't use the word 'penalty', so what about words starting "punish...":

Matt 23:14 (+ Mark 12, parallel) is applied to Pharisees.

Matt 25 'eternal punishment' (not just ordinary punishment!) will be meted out to those who...
...don't feed the hungry, clothe the naked, etc. Curious!^[60]

Luke 12:22 Again aimed (I think) against the Pharisees

Luke 20 The Pharisees cop it again.

Luke 21 End-times punishment. I'm not clear who is being punished, sorry.

So then, it seems to me that **Jesus never said anyone would be punished for their sins**, so should we be talking in those terms?

And what happened when Jesus (John 8:1-11) encountered someone caught in clear and patent sin (adultery)? He actually *defied* the law by stopping people carrying out the rightful punishment for such sin.

So the theme I've been using, almost throughout my writings, is that God is only interested in restoration, not retribution. It seems to me that Jesus reinterpreted the OT in that way, and I'm trying to do the same.

Paul Bev. 15.08.21