

The Divine Pity

In the minds of some, the idea prevails, that sin quenches pity for the sinner, in the heart of God. It is not so. That it shall do so hereafter, and that God will cease to pity the lost, is an awful truth. The lost soul's eternity will be an unpitied eternity of woe. But meanwhile, God's hatred of the sin is not hatred of the sinner. Nay, the greatness of his sin seems rather to deepen that to lessen the divine compassion. At least we may say that the increasing misery which increasing sin entails, calls into new intensity the paternal pity of God, 'the God of the spirits of all flesh.' 'It grieves him at his heart' (Genesis 6:6).

The further the prodigal goes into the far country, the more do the yearnings of the father's heart go out after him, in unfeigned compassion for the wretched wanderer, in his famine nakedness, and degradation, and hopeless grief.

No; sin does not quench the pitying love of God...The most gracious invitation ever uttered by the Lord was to Capernaum, and Bethsaida, and Chorazin – 'Come unto me.' The most loving message ever sent

to a church was that to Laodicea, the worst of all the seven (in Asia Minor). It was Jerusalem in her extremity of guilt and unbelief that drew forth the tears of the Son of God. No; sin does not extinguish the love of God to the sinner. Many waters cannot quench it, nor can the floods drown it. From first to last, God pursues the sinner as he flies from him; pursues him not in hatred but in love; pursues him not to destroy, but to save.

God is not man that he should lie. He means what he says, when he speaks in pity, in truly as when he speaks in wrath... He words are all true and real. You cannot exaggerate the genuine feeling they contain... (Nothing can) cast the slightest doubt upon the sincerity of the great oath which God has sworn before heaven and earth, that he has 'no pleasure in the death of the wicked'; nor in the least blunt the solemn edge of his gracious entreaty, 'Turn ye, turn ye, for why will ye die?'

Horatius Bonar (1808-1889)