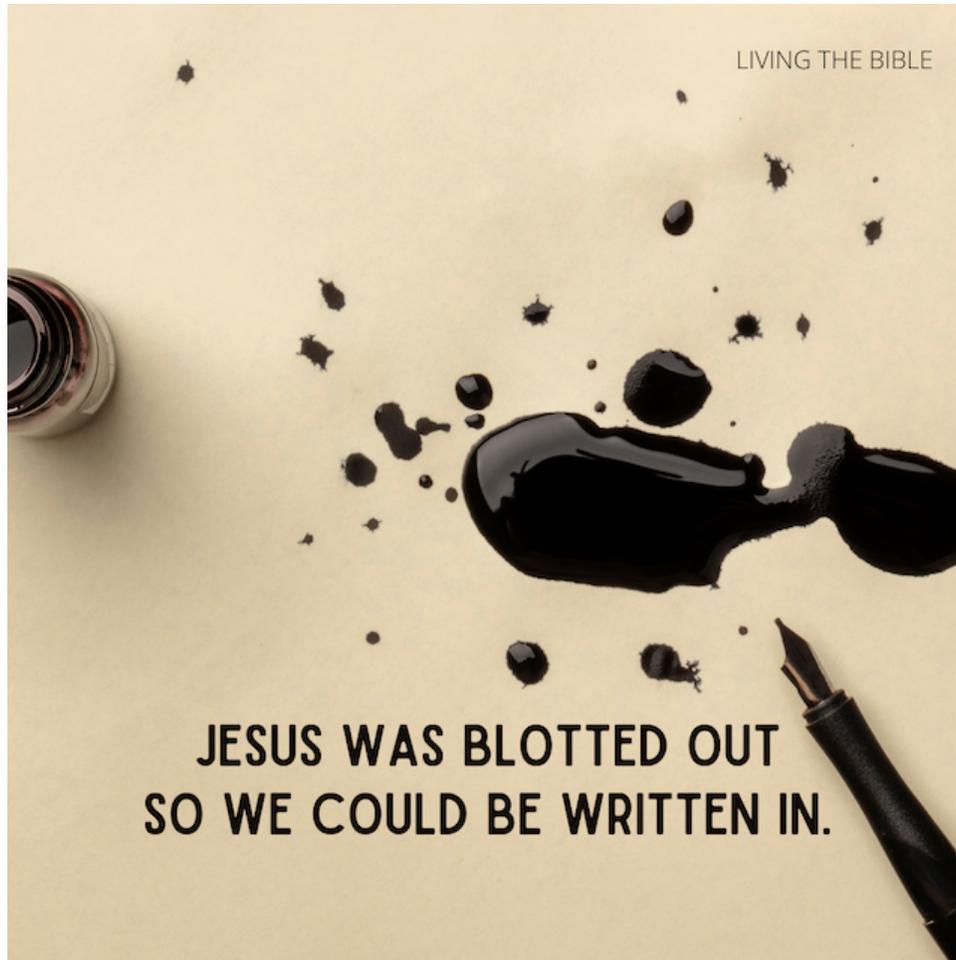

PUNISHING SIN AND PRAYING FOR SINNERS

EXODUS 32:15-35



We tend to go to extremes when dealing with sin in others. We can excuse it too easily or we can execute too harshly. That's true in our families, in our friendships, in our churches, in our workplaces, and in our judicial system. Whether we excuse it too easily or execute too harshly, the end results are the same. We add sin to sin, we do no good to the sinner, and we do not glorify God.

In Exodus 32:15-35, we can observe and learn from Moses's response to the Israelites' sin of idolatry. He punished sin and prayed for sinners.

LEARNING

GOD'S MEDIATOR PUNISHES SIN (15-29)

When Moses saw Israel's idolatry, **Moses' anger burned hot, and he threw the tablets out of his hands and broke them at the foot of the mountain. He took the calf that they had made and burned it with fire and ground it to powder and scattered it on the water and made the people of Israel drink it** (19-20).

Moses then confronted Aaron for his failed leadership, who blamed the people and even the golden calf for what happened! (21-24). Having dealt with the calf and with Aaron, Moses turned to deal with the people who by this point had descended into shameful chaos and disorder (25).

He cried out, **"Who is on the Lord's side? Come to me"** (26). When only the Levites came to his side, he armed them with swords and commanded them to execute God's judgment upon the people. By the end of the day, 3000

were dead (27-28). If any Levites had any doubt that this was God's will, Moses dispelled them with these words: **"Today you have been ordained for the service of the Lord, each one at the cost of his son and of his brother, so that he might bestow a blessing upon you this day"** (29). God's future blessing depended upon their faithful dealing with sin.

SIN MUST BE PUNISHED IF
SINNERS ARE TO BE BLESSED.

"That's scary. How can any sinner ever know God?"

GOD'S MEDIATOR PRAYS FOR SINNERS (30-35)

The next day Moses said to the people, **"You have sinned a great sin. And now I will go up to the Lord; perhaps I can make atonement for your sin"** (30). He combined condemnation of sin with the hope of forgiveness. He does the same in his prayer to God. **"Alas, this people has sinned a great sin. They have made for themselves gods of gold. But now, if you will forgive their sin—but if not, please blot me out of your book that you have written"** (31-32).

It's a beautiful combination isn't it. He confesses their sin, he pleads for forgiveness, and even offers to be judged instead of the people to secure their forgiveness. Even though he had not sinned this sin, he was willing to be judged as if he had, to save those who really had.

God accepted the confession, rejected Moses's offer of substitution, and announced additional chastisement of the sin. But he also assured them of his presence going forward and that he would take them to the Promised Land (33-35).

JESUS WAS BLOTTED OUT
SO WE COULD BE WRITTEN IN.

LOVING

In Deuteronomy 18:15, God promised that the future final mediator would be like Moses. Israel was to look for someone who punished sin and prayed for sinners. We now know this was Jesus, but he took it a step further by being punished for sin and praying for sinners. He forgave sin by being blotted out of God's book. Though he had never sinned, he was judged as if he had. He glorified God's holiness and dealt with our sinfulness. What a Savior! What a salvation!

LIVING

Come to God through his perfect mediator who was punished for sin and prayed for sinners.
