

“A God of Action!”—Deuteronomy 32:39

The text for this sermon, the theme of which is, “A God of Action!”, is Deuteronomy 32:39 → Yahweh says: *See now that I, even I, am He, and there is no god beside Me; I kill and I make alive; I wound and I heal; and there is none that can deliver out of My hand.* This is the text.

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ Jesus:

A question that has plagued people since the Garden of Eden is “Why do bad things happen to good people?” For Adam and Eve the answer is simple —sin. Being truly good, perfect and righteous they could easily attribute their suffering to that one deed of disobedience. However, for humankind who feels the affects of their one deed of disobedience, the question implies that a “good” person naturally deserves to experience only good in their lives. Have you ever wondered why the LORD allows “bad” things to happen in your life which cause you discomfort, struggles, pain and grief? Have you wondered what you did to deserve the “bad” stuff happening in your life, especially if you cannot clearly connect it to a choice or action of your own doing?

Our text speaks about Yahweh as a God of action in the midst of our actions and experiences in life. We do not have a God Who created us, sent

us out on our own and went on “vacation” for thousands of years with no involvement in our lives. He is a God of action in the midst of life and death.

No matter what's happening in our lives, faith trusts that God is at work for our well-being through it all!

Our text is an excerpt from a song of Moses in which he describes how God's actions affect His people both in life and in death. While God's actions of blessing us are either taken for granted or received with thanksgiving, the action which can be difficult to endure, let alone understand, is His action of disciplining us with His judgment upon our sin. On top of it all, it is even described in the Scriptures as an action of His love toward us! (cf. Hebrews 12:4-11; Job 5:17; Proverbs 3:11-12) This section of Moses' song refers to Yahweh judging His people's sin by “wounding” them to “kill” their idolatrous pride in order to heal them and bring them back to life.

I suppose we could understand this action in comparison to parents who discipline their children, having to break their rebelliousness in ways that don't seem too loving. Many a child has heard their parent say, “This is going to hurt me more than it hurts you!” However, in the midst of the pain children may doubt that it hurts their parents more. It seems a strange way to say “I love you.”

This is why many have a hard time applying this same principle of love to

God. It's kind of like a spiritual double standard. I can inflict punishment under the judgment of disobedience upon my children because I love them but God is viewed as unjust and unloving when He inflicts punishment under the judgment of disobedience upon my sin? Believe it or not God's punishing actually does hurt Him more than it hurts you. Why?

Scripture describes God's disciplining action in our lives as *strange* in Isaiah 28:21. Calling God's people to repentance and faith, Isaiah says what will happen if they refused to listen: *Yahweh will rise up and be roused; to do His deed—strange is His deed! and to work His work—alien is His work!* Why is disciplining His children because of their sin a "strange work" or "alien task?" This action on God's part is strange because it is foreign or alien to His nature. So what would prompt God to act this way? Not just His love but **His love for sinners!**

When God's love is pushed to the limit by rebelliousness and refusal to conform your life to His Word He is a God of action to restore relationship. The punishment is actually prompted by His people forsaking Him in idolatry. Earlier in this song Moses sang about God's people becoming prosperous and so blessed that they *forsook God Who made them and scoffed at the Rock of His salvation* (referring to Jesus since He was the purpose for their existence). *They provoked Him to anger in their idolatry, being unmindful of the Rock that*

bore them, and they forgot the God Who gave them birth. (cf. Deuteronomy 32:15-18) Their idolatry demanded serious action from a loving God because it put their relationship with Him in eternal jeopardy!

Idolatry is placing other gods alongside of Yahweh. Earlier Moses had sung about their idolatry making Yahweh jealous (cf. Deuteronomy 32:21) as He will not share His glory with any other. The worst form of idolatry is serving the unholy trinity—me, myself and I. In addition to idol statues a god can be anything to which we look for all good and in which we find help in any time of need. Idolatry encompasses every area of our lives when we trust in positions, people and possessions. Naturally these elements are very important in our lives and we do depend upon them for our sustenance, help and good. We even seek out these things in time of need. So, how can we avoid idolatry?

While living amidst these dynamics of life faith recognizes Yahweh is acting through them. **He provides** people who gives us guidance. **He provides** possessions for living. **He provides** positions in life for service to others. As our text says, *there is no god beside Him.* Faith recognizes that He is a God of action in every single area of our lives and continues to trust in Him and look to Him for every good, even in the midst of our struggles. God acts in discipline to deliver us from idolatrous destruction.

The LORD says in our text that He kills and wounds for the purpose of making alive and healing. In order to bring sinners to see their need for trust in Yahweh they need to be brought to the point where their own strength is gone and they are left powerless. Hopefully at this point they will quit fighting God, repent of their sins and plead for His mercy. Then He comes with His healing grace and forgiveness, giving us a whole new perspective of life and way of living!

Repentance is turning back to the LORD, recognizing our total need and dependance on Him in both life and death. It confesses with the words of Hosea 6:1 → *Come, let us return to the LORD; for He has torn us, that He may heal us; He has struck us down, and He will bind us up.* God's disciplining action of wounding and healing, killing and making alive, is actually not directed at you. It was actually done in a manner which was completely unfair.

In our text the LORD unequivocally states that *there is none that can deliver out of His hand.* Thus, there is nothing you can do to appease the justice of God's punishment upon sin. No amount of works, no amount of promises to make it up to Him, not even your repentance alone can bring about God's deliverance from sin. Instead, He wounded His Son, Jesus, and killed Him so that the justice of His punishment upon all sin would be done once for all time and for all people. As the prophet said nearly seven hundred years before this

punishment occurred: *He was pierced for our transgressions; He was crushed for our iniquities; upon Him was the chastisement that brought us peace, and with His wounds we are healed.* (cf. Isaiah 53:5) Jesus was punished **for you**.

Repentance which accompanies faith in Jesus Christ's life, death and resurrection for you is where the Holy Spirit acts to make us alive in action for the LORD. It will involve dealing with the affects and presence of sin on a daily basis. It will include struggles with suffering on many levels which challenge our faith. But it will also include faith in a God of action! We will experience a relationship with God as our heavenly Father Who promises: *I will never leave you nor forsake you.* (cf. Joshua 1:5; Hebrews 13:6) When the unfair sufferings of life come to challenge our faith we experience a relationship with Jesus Christ Who bore our punishment for sin completely on the cross! As we walk by faith we experience the Holy Spirit's carrying us through the weakest and strongest of times, acting through us to bring God's actions in Jesus to others. Amen.

The peace of God, which passes all understanding,
keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen.

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