

Lent, Day 32
Thursday, April 11, 2019

Revelation 18:9–20

When I was thirteen years old I was arrested for shoplifting. Looking back, the whole thing was so stupid. Of course, the whole thing was quite an ordeal—its designed to be to dissuade repeat offence. Probably what stands out most for me of that day was my parents reactions. It was a Friday and I was supposed to meet my dad after school. Because of the arrest I was going to be late. As I got in the car and slid into the back seat, my dad started to shout at me. To be honest, I don't remember a whole lot of what he said. One sentence did stick though, "you're not sorry you did it. You're just sorry you got caught." At the time, I wasn't sorry for either. I just didn't like the hassle it was creating for me—maybe that's what he meant.

Something alike is happening in this passage. The judgment against Babylon falls and in just one hour it goes from splendour to horror. We have the perspective of the merchants who profited off of the great city. They mourn and wail, but not really for the city, but for their own profit by the city. This might be fine right up until we hit the end of the list of cargo; human lives. This shows the level of their greed. I really like the way Wright puts it, "When you worship idols, the idols demand sacrifices."¹

Sin dehumanizes. I can't tell you what I was thinking when I was shoplifting. But, I do know that I wasn't thinking about people. I wasn't thinking about the effect my actions were having on employees or their families. I wasn't even thinking about what damage I was doing to my thieving partner, who I called my friend. I wasn't thinking about the impact I was having on myself. My lament was for all the wrong things because I had sacrificed my humanness for my selfishness. That's what sin does.

As we approach the end of lent we need to remember the human dimension of our sin. We participate in sin and systems of sin which destroy others. When we come to the cross and see Jesus hanging there, we come face to face with the "buck-stops-here" result of our sin.

Prayer

Father help us to see the destruction to human lives our sin causes so we might mourn it appropriately and flee from it with vigour. Amen.

¹ N. T. Wright, *Revelation for Everyone* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2011), 164.