

UNIT 1: The Attributes of God

Section 17: God's Righteousness and Justice

Assigned Reading:
A. W. Pink – The Attributes of God
No Assigned Reading

Introduction:

Having discussed God's Goodness in general last week, we now turn our attention to specific elements that help describe what we mean when we say God is good. Surely, God's goodness includes His Righteousness and Justice. Meanwhile, it seems that this element of God's nature is often neglected, avoided, or abhorred by many in our world... We need to be reminded that God is a Righteous Judge, and the Scriptures (OT and NT) are consistent in proclaiming this truth!

Q1: *What do we mean by God's Righteousness? What determines "rightness?"*

Q2: *Do the Old and New Testaments present different pictures of God? Wrath vs Love...*

Q3: *How can God forgive anyone and still be just?*

Outline:

I. Defining Terms...

A. Righteousness and Justice

1. Both of these words are translated by one word in Hebrew and one word in Greek
2. **OT** – צְדָקָה – "tsedek" word group – righteousness, justice, right doing
3. **NT** – δίκαιος – "dikaios" word group – righteousness, justice
4. **Ryrie**, "In relation to Himself, God is righteous; i.e. there is no law, either within his own being or of His own being, that is violated by anything in His nature. In relation to His creatures He is also righteous; i.e. there is no action He takes that violates any code of morality or justice."
5. **Erickson** explains that God's righteousness is His holiness applied to his relationships to other beings. This means that "the law of God, being a true expression of His nature, is as perfect as He is."
 - a. **Realists:** Maintained that God chooses the right because it is right.
 - b. **Nominalists:** Asserted that it is God's choice that makes an action right.
 - c. **Erickson**, "The biblical position falls between realism and nominalism. The right is not something arbitrary, so that cruelty and murder would have been good if God had so declared. In making decisions, God does follow an objective standard of right and wrong, a standard that is part of the very structure of reality. But that standard to which God adheres is not external to God—it is His own nature."
6. **Grudem**, "God's righteousness means that God always acts in accordance with what is right and is himself the final standard of what is right... Whatever conforms to God's moral character is right. God is the final standard of righteousness."
7. **Tozer**, "Justice, when used of God, is a name we give to the way God is, nothing more; and when God acts justly He is not doing so to conform to an independent criterion, but simply acting like Himself in a given situation."
8. **Culver**, "If [God] announces a moral law it will be righteous precisely because it will be an expression of His holy will... His laws are right because they express His holiness... The righteousness by which God orders His world is neither something created, external

to Himself, nor something other than God Himself in any manner whatsoever. His righteous acts are His character in action; God is law unto Himself.”

B. *The Testimony of the Scriptures*

1. **Examples:**

- a. *Adam and Eve: Genesis 2:17* but from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat from it you will surely die." **Gen 3:14-24** – *Punishment on Adam and Eve...*
- b. *Noah and the Flood: Gen 6-8*
- c. *Abraham: Genesis 18:25* "Far be it from You to do such a thing, to slay the righteous with the wicked, so that the righteous and the wicked are *treated* alike. Far be it from You! Shall not the Judge of all the earth deal justly?" –*Sodom & Gomorrah (Gen 18-19)*
- d. *Golden Calf Worshippers Judged – Ex 32:26-35*
- e. *Judgment of Achan – Josh 7*
- f. *Judgment on Israel – Judges 2:11-15, 3:5-8, 4:1-3, II Kings 17, 22, 23*
- g. *Ananias and Sapphira – Acts 5:1-10*
- h. *Herod – Acts 12:21-23*
- i. *Elymas – Acts 13:8-11*
- j. *Christians @ Corinth – 1Cor 11:29-32*

2. **Statements:**

- a. **Deuteronomy 32:4** "The Rock! His work is perfect, For all His ways are just; A God of faithfulness and without injustice, Righteous and upright is He.
- b. **Psalm 11:7** For the LORD is righteous, He loves righteousness; The upright will behold His face. **19:9** The fear of the LORD is clean, enduring forever; The judgments of the LORD are true; they are righteous altogether **75:7** But God is the Judge; He puts down one and exalts another **89:14** Righteousness and justice are the foundation of Your throne; Lovingkindness and truth go before You. **119:137** Righteous are You, O LORD, And upright are Your judgments.
- c. **Isaiah 45:19** "I have not spoken in secret, In some dark land; I did not say to the offspring of Jacob, 'Seek Me in a waste place'; I, the LORD, speak righteousness, Declaring things that are upright.
- d. **Jeremiah 9:24** but let him who boasts boast of this, that he understands and knows Me, that I am the LORD who exercises lovingkindness, justice and righteousness on earth; for I delight in these things," declares the LORD.
- e. **Daniel 9:7** "Righteousness belongs to You, O Lord, but to us open shame, as it is this day-- to the men of Judah, the inhabitants of Jerusalem and all Israel, those who are nearby and those who are far away in all the countries to which You have driven them, because of their unfaithful deeds which they have committed against You.
- f. **Sadly, many believe that the day of God's judgment is passed, as if it was an OT concept now replaced with God's love (as if these attributes were in competition with each other)... Read the NT... You'll see this is not the case!**
 - (1) **Hebrews 12:23** to the general assembly and church of the firstborn who are enrolled in heaven, and to God, the Judge of all, and to the spirits of *the* righteous made perfect,
 - (2) **James 5:9** Do not complain, brethren, against one another, so that you yourselves may not be judged; behold, the Judge is standing right at the door.
 - (3) **1 Peter 4:5** but they will give account to Him who is ready to judge the living and the dead.

- (4) **Romans 2:5** But because of your stubbornness and unrepentant heart you are storing up wrath for yourself in the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God, ⁶ who WILL RENDER TO EACH PERSON ACCORDING TO HIS DEEDS: ⁷ to those who by perseverance in doing good seek for glory and honor and immortality, eternal life; ⁸ but to those who are selfishly ambitious and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, wrath and indignation.
- (5) **Jesus: Read Matthew 25:31-41, John 5:22-29**

II. Discussing Righteousness...

A. God's Justice seen in Punishing Sin...

1. **Romans 6:23** For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.
2. **Psalms 58:10-11** The righteous will rejoice when he sees the vengeance; He will wash his feet in the blood of the wicked. ¹¹ And men will say, "Surely there is a reward for the righteous; Surely there is a God who judges on earth!"
3. **Ecclesiastes 12:14** For God will bring every act to judgment, everything which is hidden, whether it is good or evil.
4. ***BUT what about the apparent prosperity of the Wicked... *READ Ps 73 – cannot evaluate the justice of God on a short-term basis...***
 - a. **Romans 12:19** Never take your own revenge, beloved, but leave room for the wrath of God, for it is written, "VENGEANCE IS MINE, I WILL REPAY," says the Lord.
 - b. **Revelation 19:1-4** After these things I heard something like a loud voice of a great multitude in heaven, saying, "Hallelujah! Salvation and glory and power belong to our God; ² BECAUSE HIS JUDGMENTS ARE TRUE AND RIGHTEOUS; for He has judged the great harlot who was corrupting the earth with her immorality, and HE HAS AVENGED THE BLOOD OF HIS BOND-SERVANTS ON HER." ³ And a second time they said, "Hallelujah! HER SMOKE RISES UP FOREVER AND EVER." ⁴ And the twenty-four elders and the four living creatures fell down and worshiped God who sits on the throne saying, "Amen. Hallelujah!"
 - c. **Rev 20:11-15** Then I saw a great white throne and Him who sat upon it, from whose presence earth and heaven fled away, and no place was found for them. ¹² And I saw the dead, the great and the small, standing before the throne, and books were opened; and another book was opened, which is *the book of life*; and the dead were judged from the things which were written in the books, according to their deeds. ¹³ And the sea gave up the dead which were in it, and death and Hades gave up the dead which were in them; and they were judged, every one *of them* according to their deeds. ¹⁴ Then death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. This is the second death, the lake of fire. ¹⁵ And if anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire

B. How Can God Be Just and Forgive Sin?

1. **Anselm** asked how God could be all and supremely just and meanwhile spare anyone?
 - a. His response involved looking straight to *what* God is...
 - b. He appealed to God's Unity to explain this situation. God is not a grouping of parts attempting to work in harmony, but instead His actions are SIMPLE...
 - c. There is nothing in God's justice that forbids the exercise of His mercy. No attribute of God is in conflict with another...

- d. **God's justice and mercy** flow out of His goodness... When God punishes the wicked it is right for they get what they deserve, and when he spares the wicked it is just because it is compatible with His goodness; so God does what becomes Him as the supremely good God.
2. **The Doctrine of Redemption**
- a. **Forgiveness**
 - (1) Even though God provided forgiveness, He does so righteously... Christ died, paying the penalty for the sins of the redeemed.
 - (2) **1 John 1:9** If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.
 - b. **Imputation of Christ's Righteousness**
 - (1) Christ's righteousness becomes vicariously ours... justification by faith!
 - (2) Through the atoning work of Christ, justice is not violated but satisfied when God spares a sinner. Christ was our substitute!
 - (3) **Rom 3:21-28** But now apart from the Law *the* righteousness of God has been manifested, being witnessed by the Law and the Prophets, ²² even *the* righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all those who believe; for there is no distinction; ²³ for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, ²⁴ being justified as a gift by His grace through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus; ²⁵ whom God displayed publicly as a propitiation in His blood through faith. *This was* to demonstrate His righteousness, because in the forbearance of God He passed over the sins previously committed; ²⁶ for the demonstration, *I say*, of His righteousness at the present time, so that He would be **just** and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus. ²⁷ Where then is boasting? It is excluded. By what kind of law? Of works? No, but by a law of faith. ²⁸ For we maintain that a man is justified by faith apart from works of the Law.

C. Application

- 1. **Who are we to judge God's actions?**
 - a. All that God does is RIGHT... He is not subject to our judgment, but we to His!
 - b. **Explaining Hardship:**
 - (1) *God does not provide Job with an explanation for his trials, but instead makes a statement of His own sovereignty and power...*
 - (2) **See Job 38-39**
 - (3) **Job 40:2** "Will the faultfinder contend with the Almighty? Let him who reproves God answer it. **40:8** "Will you really annul My judgment? Will you condemn Me that you may be justified?"
 - c. **Explaining Election:**
 - (1) Ultimately, God's answer regarding His choice in salvation, is that He has prerogative... He is acting as He desires for His own glory!
 - (2) **Romans 9:19-23** You will say to me then, "Why does He still find fault? For who resists His will?" ²⁰ On the contrary, who are you, O man, who answers back to God? The thing molded will not say to the molder, "Why did you make me like this," will it? ²¹ Or does not the potter have a right over the clay, to make from the same lump one vessel for honorable use and another for common use? ²² What if God, although willing to demonstrate His wrath and to make His power known, endured with much patience vessels of wrath prepared for destruction? ²³ And *He*

did so to make known the riches of His glory upon vessels of mercy, which He prepared beforehand for glory,

- d. **We ought to GIVE THANKS for God's righteous acts!**
2. **There is a Great White Throne Judgment coming...**
 - a. **Hebrews 9:27** And inasmuch as it is appointed for men to die once and after this *comes* judgment.
 - b. **Acts 17:31** because He has fixed a day in which He will judge the world in righteousness through a Man whom He has appointed, having furnished proof to all men by raising Him from the dead."
 - c. **Tozer**, "God's justice stands forever against the sinner in utter severity. The vague and tenuous hope that God is too kind to punish the ungodly has become a deadly opiate for the consciences of millions. It hushes their fears and allows them to practice all pleasant forms of iniquity while death draws every day nearer and the command to repent goes unregarded. As responsible moral beings we dare not so trifle with our eternal future."
 - d. **Leon Morris**, "Judgment means that evil will be disposed of authoritatively, decisively, finally. Judgment means that in the end God's will will be perfectly done."
 - e. **J.I. Packer**, "The NT answer is: Call on the coming Judge to be your present Savior. As Judge, he is the Law, but as Savior he is the gospel. Run from him now, and you will meet him as Judge then—and without hope. Seek him now, and you will find him (for "he that seeketh findeth"), and you will then discover that you are looking forward to that future meeting with joy, knowing that there is now 'no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus' (**Rom 8:1**)."
3. **There is a judgment for believers, too!**
 - a. Reward and Loss... (At the "Bema Seat")
 - b. **1 Corinthians 3:12-15** Now if any man builds on the foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw, ¹³ each man's work will become evident; for the day will show it because it is *to be* revealed with fire, and the fire itself will test the quality of each man's work. ¹⁴ If any man's work which he has built on it remains, he will receive a reward. ¹⁵ If any man's work is burned up, he will suffer loss; but he himself will be saved, yet so as through fire.
 - c. **We ought to take care in our behavior as Christians as well!**