

I. The Glory of God

- A. Psalm 19:7-11 . . . The law of the LORD is perfect, restoring the soul; the testimony of the LORD is sure, making wise the simple. [8] The precepts of the LORD are right, rejoicing the heart; the commandment of the LORD is pure, enlightening the eyes. [9] The fear of the LORD is clean, enduring forever; the judgments of the LORD are true; they are righteous altogether. [10] They are more desirable than gold, yes, than much fine gold; sweeter also than honey and the drippings of the honeycomb. [11] Moreover, by them Your servant is warned; in keeping them there is great reward.
- B. Psalm 140:12-13 . . . I know that the LORD will maintain the cause of the afflicted and justice for the poor. [13] Surely the righteous will give thanks to Your name; the upright will dwell in Your presence.
- C. Romans 9:14-15 . . . What shall we say then? There is no injustice with God, is there? May it never be! [15] For He says to Moses, "I will have mercy on whom I have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I have compassion."
- D. Prayer

II. The glory of God is revealed through His justice

- A. As I have said several times over the course of this study, God is a single, unified whole, even though we speak of Him as if He has many parts – with each of His qualities and character traits so integrated with all the other parts that you cannot tell where one begins and another ends.
 - 1. Therefore, in light of our topic today, which is the justice of God, let me give you some examples of God's integrated whole.
 - a. There is no justice without a penalty for the rebellious act of breaking God's rules – rules which promote love and protect the well-being of all. And there is no fair and impartial application of the penalty without justice.
 - b. There is no justice without rewards for righteousness, and no fair and impartial dispersing of those rewards without justice.
 - c. In an environment where relationships are important, where people are woven together in families and communities, tribes and nations, and where the church is married to Christ and Christ

- to the church, God's justice is mingled with love, yet His love never acts outside the boundaries of His justice.
- d. Due to the inherent weaknesses of our human nature and God's love for His creatures, His justice is full of mercy. Yet His mercy is never sets aside justice.
 - e. Because God is both Judge and Loving Father, and because we are prone to rebel and sin, God's justice includes forgiveness, yet His forgiveness is never denies justice its due.
 - f. Because sin abounds in our world, God's justice is patient and even long-suffering, yet His patience and long-suffering never undermine justice. And this list could go on and on.
2. However, there is one more important truth that I want to add here – God's justice is seen and experienced through His dealings with His created beings – be they angels or humans. In other words, justice is made for relationships, and relationships among sinners need justice to right wrongs, protect rights, restore loss, punish evil, and reward righteousness.

B. A look at God's justice

1. According to both the OT and NT scriptures, God's justice is often linked to His righteousness. For example, we read in –
 - 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. Romans 3:21-26 . . . 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.
 - c. I believe the reason justice and righteousness are linked so often in the scriptures is because impartial, consistent, and unending justice can only come from those whose character, mind, heart,

and intentions are solely, perfectly, and eternally righteous. And who fits this description other than God?

- d. Therefore, righteous is what God is, justice is what God does – which is why God's justice is always righteous.
- 2. To help us have a clearer understanding of justice and righteousness, I want to give some definition to these two terms.
 - a. Justice is the practice of, the defense of, and the rewarder of righteousness. Justice upholds the law, promotes what is fair, defends the truth, exposes lies, protects people's rights, ensures proper compensation for those who have been wronged, rewards righteousness, and punishes unrighteousness. As the scripture says, God's justice renders to each person what each one is due, according to each one's conduct and motives (Jer 17:10; Eze 7:27; Matt 16:27; 2 Cor 5:10; Rev 20:12).
 - b. Because justice is directly involved in dealings between persons, God's justice expresses itself on whatever scale necessary – be it between nations, states, tribes, communities, those in authority and those under authority, bosses and employees, neighbors, co-workers, church members, families, and spouses.
- 3. With that definition of justice in mind, let's look at the three primary forms or ways God reveals His justice.
 - (1) First, there is God's legislative justice – which begins with His making laws and then requiring His creatures to live according to His laws.
 - (a) David speaks of the perfection of God's laws in Psalm 19:7-8 . . . The law of the LORD is perfect, restoring the soul; the testimony of the LORD is sure, making wise the simple. [8] The precepts of the LORD are right, rejoicing the heart; the commandment of the LORD is pure, enlightening the eyes.
 - (b) And one of the proofs that God's legislative justice is directly related to relationships comes from Romans 13:10 . . . Love does no wrong to a neighbor; therefore love is the fulfillment of the law.
 - (2) Then there is God's correcting and restoring justice – which refers to God's work of correcting and disciplining wrongdoers, the work of requiring compensation for wrongs done, and the work of caring for the victims of injustice. We read about this in –

- (a) Proverbs 21:15 . . . The exercise of justice is joy for the righteous, but is terror to the workers of iniquity.
 - (b) Deuteronomy 10:17-18 . . . The LORD your God is the God of gods and the Lord of lords, the great, the mighty, and the awesome God who does not show partiality nor take a bribe. [18] He executes justice for the orphan and the widow, and shows His love for the alien by giving him food and clothing.
- (3) Finally, there is God's primary justice – which speaks of His rewarding the righteous and punishing the unrighteous, both generally – as a nation, community, church or family, and individually. Two examples of this justice are seen in the OT blessings and curses, and the NT warning to husbands of unanswered prayer for mistreatment of their wives.
- (a) Psalm 37:27-28 . . . Depart from evil and do good, so you will abide forever. [28] For the LORD loves justice and does not forsake His godly ones; they are preserved forever, but the descendants of the wicked will be cut off.
 - (b) Romans 2:5-11 . . . 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. [9] There will be tribulation and distress for every soul of man who does evil, of the Jew first and also of the Greek, [10] but glory and honor and peace to everyone who does good, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. [11] For there is no partiality with God.
4. Righteousness is the quality or state of being just, fair, holy, pure, and virtuous.
- a. When used in this way, righteousness refers to the condition of one's heart, mind, character, and intentions. In other words, righteousness are the inward qualities that manifest themselves in the outward actions of promoting and preserving justice.
 - b. Now because God is infinite, He is infinitely righteous – or as John says, “God is light, and in Him there is no darkness at all” (1 John 1:5).

- c. And because God is holy, loving, compassionate, and righteous, He is offended by unrighteousness and angered by the unjust harm the righteousness do to others. It is for this reason that God goes so far as to express wrath toward those who continue to inflict injustice on the weak, the unprotected (*such as widows, orphans, and prisoners*), the outcasts (*such as foreigners and those considered to be second class citizens*), and the poor.

III. Though we may depend on God's justice and see God's glory in His justice, there are reasonable questions about God's justice that are worth considering. In closing, I want to address two of those questions.

A. How can God be merciful, patient, or even long-suffering, and at the same time be just?

- 1. Admittedly, there may never be a fully satisfying answer to this question in this life. However, there are four truths I believe we should consider.
 - 2. First, God's mercy, patience, and even His long-suffering toward sinners and unrighteousness are for a time, but never for eternity.
 - a. What God bears with today, out of mercy, patience, or long-suffering, He will not bear with forever. The day of reckoning is coming, and if you do not repent in this life, or if God's reckoning does not come in this life, it will come in the next.
 - b. This may not give much comfort to those who are suffering under the thumb of someone's unrighteousness and injustice, yet who of us has not received at least some mercy and patience from God?
 - c. Beginning with Adam and Eve, the penalty for sin has not been immediately applied to its fullest extent. True, the beginnings of justice are often applied, but for most of us, final justice comes later. What is God doing in the interim? Giving us time to repent, just like He has done throughout human history.
 - 3. Second, with the exception of young children, who of us is totally innocent of unrighteousness and injustice? Who has not sinned? Who has not sown injustice into our world?
 - a. This does not mean we deserve all the injustices done to us, yet who has not left disappointed, frustrated, ill-treated, hurting victims in their wake?
 - b. Has God been merciful, patient, and even long-suffering with you? If you are here today, then the answer is yes! For as we all know, the penalty for sin is physical and spiritual death – and justice

- immediately and fully applied for each offense means we would all be dead by now, for none of us is innocent of sin.
- c. And consider this? Can we sow injustice without reaping injustice? Can we model injustice without encouraging others to act unjustly? If we directly or indirectly encourage others to act unjustly, isn't it likely some will eventually treat us unjustly?
 - d. You see, we have all added, be it ever so little, to the sin that abounds in our world – which means we have also contributed to the resulting evils that come from that increase of sin. So I ask again, who is innocent?
4. Third, God's application of justice includes more than giving just dues to one evil person or one evil group or nation in relation to a single incident or specific period of time.
- a. God is bringing about justice, over a period of time, for many people in many situations – all of which are somehow all related. For example, Israel failed to practice the year of Jubilee, thus keeping slaves enslaved and debtors indebted – which was against God's law. God punished the two tribes of the Southern Kingdom for their injustice by using Babylonians to conquer them and carry them off to Babylon for 70 years.
 - b. Then – after those 70 years – God punished Babylon for the cruel way they treated the Israelites when conquering and enslaving them.
 - c. The point here is that God judges whole nations, people groups, communities, families, as well as individuals, and His process, in any given situation, may take years to complete.
5. Fourth, to save us from the penalty of sin and the eternal consequences of unrighteousness, God put himself through a very brutal form of injustice at the hands of the Jewish religious leaders, Herod, Pilot, the Roman soldiers, and one of his own disciples. His only relief or form of rescue was death – and an agonizing death at that. Therefore, He personally understands unjust suffering, including the unjust suffering of those we love. So we can trust Him to do what is right, at the right time, and in the right way.
- B. Since God has paid for our sin, are we not free of sin's consequences?
1. The answer to this question is both yes and no. The death and resurrection of Jesus Christ frees us from the eternal penalty of sin – which is a marvelous gift of grace by God to willfully rebellious sinners.

2. However, we are never free from all of sin's consequences, be they sin's natural consequences or the consequences that God specifically brings to bear because of our sin.
 - a. We read about this in Galatians 6:7-8 . . . Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, this he will also reap. [8] For the one who sows to his own flesh will from the flesh reap corruption (*slow process of destruction*), but the one who sows to the Spirit will from the Spirit reap eternal life.
 - b. We see this truth in David's life in relation to his sins of adultery, murder, and counting the people. David will not spend a moment in Hell for what he did, but he and the people in his kingdom suffered severe consequences in this life because of his sin.
 - c. In addition, the scripture teaches that certain consequences of sin go with us into eternity, if in no other way, than in the form of lost rewards or lower positions in God's eternal kingdom.
 - d. Now you may be wondering how forgiveness fits in here. Well, those who are hurt or abused or harmed in some way by injustice may forgive – as God does – but even if they do, their forgiveness does not remove the cost related to the consequences of the injustice – any more than God's forgiveness of us removes the cost of our sin. Someone always has to bear that cost – and most often it is the victim who must bear it – just as God bore it for us in Jesus Christ.
3. So yes, we are freed from eternal damnation by God's gracious gift of salvation – a gift He paid for with His life. But no, we are not freed from all the consequences of sin, for we reap, in some measure what we have sown – be it a dulled conscience, a harder heart, damaged relationships, broken marriage, troubled children, financial loss, public shame, or lost heavenly rewards – just to name a few.

IV. Conclusion

- A. God's justice is part of His glory. Our injustice is part of our shame. May we not add to our shame by acting as if we can take advantage of God's mercy, patience, and long-suffering, and in so doing, remain unjust in any of our dealings with others.
- B. Finally, it is my hope that you will both treasure and fear God's justice, for to be righteous and do justice is desired by God more than sacrifice or Christian service.