

God is Just | Ezekiel 18:21-24, 30-32 | 11/3/19

- God is fair and just.
 - God is always just, being just is one of his attributes and it is part of his character.
 - Now God as we have seen is a holy God so in his character of being just, he is a holy just.
 - **He is set apart in his justice in such a way that no one else can be or will ever be just has God is.**
 - **Now we know that this is true, but we see that there are people in the world, both lost and even Christians that tend to think that God isn't always just or that he isn't fair.**
 - Even perfectly good strong Christians can think this at times, especially when they themselves have experienced some sort of injustice because they were just trying to live a good Christian life.
 - **So, people wonder how can there be a just and righteous God if he allows these things to go on?**
 - **On the surface we look at this and want a black and white answer from God, as if we could put him on trial and demand that God tell us why.**
 - As we will see that God is never the one on trial, he is the supreme judge of all and he at his discretion and by his will chooses when and how he gives his judgment.
 - **He is not obligated to give us the specifics on when and why or how he will do these things.**
 - For example, the book of Job makes this very clear, God never told Job the why for his suffering, but Job trusted in God anyways.
 - However, from scripture he does tell us several things regarding his justice, and we will examine these.
- God's justice on the sinner
 - **Read Ezekiel 18:21-24,30-32**
 - Personal responsibility for sin
 - **Chapter 18 in Ezekiel speaks quite clearly regarding our personal responsibility for our sin.**
 - The people of Judah would not acknowledge their guilt that it was worthy of judgment, even though they were sinning and being very wicked.
 - **They blamed their forefathers for their troubles that they didn't think that they were doing anything worthy of punishment that it had to have been because of their relatives.**
 - **They (knowing that they were the chosen by God) began to think that they were immune to any punishment because hey they were God's chosen people.**
 - As we will see that Christians can sometimes have this view as well, that because they are a child of God that they are somehow immune to punishment or receiving injustice in the world.
 - God rejects this view over the early verses and makes an example regarding a man, his son and his grandson.
 - If the man was righteous then he would live, but if he had a sinful son who turned from God and was unrighteous, he wouldn't be forgiven just because of his dad.
 - Then likewise if the unrighteous son had a child that boy could turn away from the path of his father and become righteous by being obedient to God.

- **God made this distinction that we are responsible for our own sins**
 - Ezekiel 18:19-20
 - “But you may ask, ‘why doesn’t the son suffer punishment for the father’s iniquity? Since the son has done what is just and right, carefully observing all My statutes, he will certainly live. The person who sins is the one who will die. A son won’t suffer punishment for the father’s iniquity, and a father won’t suffer punishment for the son’s iniquity. The righteousness of the righteous person will be on him, and the wickedness of the wicked person will be on him.”
- **God has made it known through these verses that not only are we responsible for our own sins and actions, but we can be punished and that punishment for sin is death.**
- **However, God also states in verse 21 and 22 that the sinner, the wicked person, has an opportunity to have his sins forgiven** by turning from them with repentance and has an opportunity to be made righteous before God.
 - *Read Ezekiel 18:21-22*
- **We know this of course because of the work that Jesus had done on the cross for us, that we have the forgiveness of sins by Christ’s blood.**
- **Why do you think it seems difficult for some to take responsibility for their sins and actions? Compare the sinner a stubborn child who will not take responsibility for their actions.**
- **God’s judgment on the sinner.**
 - This passage of scripture deals with God’s judgment on the sinner.
 - **When we look at this, we see what we have heard and we know to be true, that an unrepentant sinner will die.**
 - This is of course an eternal death against those that deny the truth of God.
 - Romans 1:18
 - “For God’s wrath is revealed from heaven against all godlessness and unrighteousness of people who by their unrighteousness suppress the truth,”
 - **If one denies the truth claims of God regarding Jesus, you will die.**
 - **God deals justice on the repentant sinner by sending them to hell for eternity.**
 - **Someone might say well that’s not fair!**
 - As God says in verse 25 that it’s not that God’s way isn’t fair but that it is our ways that our unfair, because we have chosen to disobey and sin against God.
 - **God is just acting in his holy character and is providing holy justice, His is ALWAYS fair and we should never think or accuse God that he is not.**
 - **It is up to us to decide** whether we will **obey** and turn from our sinful ways or to **embrace them** and receive the punishment that we deserve.
 - **God is the sovereign ruler of our lives. He requires righteousness from us, and he will accept our repentance and give us forgiveness.**
 - **But if we live the life of unrighteousness and deny the truth claims of God, He is in fact very fair and just to give us the punishment that we deserve.**
 - **Do you think we sometimes try to put God in a box of “fairness”? That everything He does must be measured against it?**
 - **God does not take pleasure with the death of the wicked | Ezekiel 18:23**
 - *Read Ezekiel 18:23*
 - **God makes it clear that he does not enjoy giving out the punishment of eternal damnation in hell.**
 - It does not make God happy to punish his creation. Much like a parent who does not enjoy punishing their children, God doesn’t enjoy it.

- Especially since eternal punishment is eternal separation from God.
- **It is important that we understand that God doesn't enjoy this or desire to do it, which leads us to understand another important truth.**
 - **God would rather His mercy be glorified in our repentance and our Salvation, than when His justice is glorified in His judgment on the sinner.**
- **God wants everyone to come to repentance and to come to the knowledge of the truth.**
 - 2 Peter 3:9
 - "The Lord does not delay His promise, as some understand delay, but is patient with you, not wanting any to perish but all to come to repentance."
- **God is patient so that all may come to repentance.**
 - This verse is important because when we think of getting justice, we usually want it quick.
 - **If someone has wronged us, we want justice to be delivered promptly and punishment carried out.**
 - **We see though that with God that he is patient and He will delay the judgment on sinners so that they can come to repentance.**
 - This is truly only because of God's grace and mercy, because if he weren't patient then it would be rare for someone to be a Christian.
 - **Sometimes we can live a life of sin for years before we finally listened to God's call in our hearts and believed.**
 - It can take us time to realize our sin and to repent and ask God for forgiveness and then turn our lives over to him.
 - **But if God was not patient and gave us our deserved judgment the first time, we sinned we might all be in hell.**
 - **But God is patient and he wants all of us to repent, so he is patient with us and gives us an opportunity to come to the truth.**
- Are we patient for the repentance of others?
 - We see how God is patient for our repentance of our sins against him.
 - **So why aren't we? Why do we want justice and judgment brought immediately upon others?**
 - **Why do we rarely show patience to those that have wronged us?**
 - If God is patient with us, do we think that we should be patient in our desire for immediate judgment on others?
 - We should want all to come to know Christ even those that have wronged us.
 - When we see our enemies, we should not forget that they are a soul that might need to be saved.
 - A soul that Christ loves and who desires for that person to come to repentance for their sins and to have true faith in him.
 - We may want God to remove people who act evil from the world, but those souls are acting upon evil desires put in them from the devil.
 - We cannot forget that we also have evil desires that we might have control over, but that doesn't change the fact that we are ALL sinners and deserve the same punishment.
 - This **does not negate** the need for person to have earthly punishment for their actions, no they must receive that, however we must still be concerned for their soul.

- Should a criminal just get a free pass on punishment because of God's grace? No, a criminal should get that just punishment here as well as there are consequences for actions.
 - However, we should always be genuinely concerned for the souls of others.
 - We should be patient with others that wrong us.
 - We should also act in the character of God to show patience for those that wrong us, it doesn't mean that they get a free pass from punishment, but we should be patient in looking for their repentance.
 - **Is it common for us to desire patience and mercy from God before He enacts justice upon us, but when someone has wronged us personally we demand immediate justice?**
- **The seemingly righteous person who truly was unrighteous.**
 - *Read Ezekiel 18:24*
 - **This verse at first might make one wonder if one could lose their salvation.**
 - This is not to say that if a Christian sins that they could lose their salvation, not at all.
 - **The Bible is very clear that we cannot lose our Salvation if we have true faith in Jesus Christ our Salvation is guaranteed.**
 - **But if a person who said they were a Christian, yet gave it up and lived a life in complete rebellion with no desire for obedience to God, may have never truly believed in the first place.**
 - This is not the same as one who has backslid and is giving into their sinful desires more, but still knows and believes the truth.
 - But instead one who has completely denounced the truth claims of Christ.
 - **From an Old Testament perspective death to them meant more for the life they were living now. They equated a benefit of being righteous by being obedient to God would mean that they would live a full life.**
 - Deuteronomy 5:16
 - "Honor your father and your mother, as the LORD your God has commanded you, so that you may live long and so that you may prosper in the land the LORD your god is giving you."
 - They desired to live a long and prosperous live by being obedient to God and obeying his commands.
 - But the one who disobeyed God would certainly be punished. From reading the OT we can see on numerous occasions where God disciplined his people because of their disobedience because they turned from the Lord their God.
 - When the Israelites wandered around the wilderness for 40 years is a good example.
 - However, we can also see God's patience, in several places God was patience in his judgment and gave them time to repent for their wrong and to return to God.
 - **Being a Christian does not give you a free pass to sin.**
 - A "free pass to sin" is the belief that because I'm saved and going to heaven, that one can willingly live a sinful life in disobedience to God with no regrets because it doesn't matter.
 - **An individual that holds this perspective never understood truly what being a Christian is all about in the first place.**
 - **God is just and if we think that because we are a Christian that we are somehow immune to God's justice then we need to wake up.**

- God will not enact the punishment of eternal damnation in hell because of our sins if we are saved but we can certainly be punished in this life between the justice system of the world and also lack of blessings from God.
 - **Instead a Christian understands the hurt that our sin causes God and desires to live in obedience and to turn from sin.**
 - A Christian does not see salvation as a pass to sin freely, but it something that has given us a way to turn from our evil desires and to live righteously.
- **Do Christians (at times) not take sin as seriously as they should? Why?**
- **How do we deal with the injustice that we see and experience as Christians?**
 - **Just because one is saved does not mean that they will have an easy life free from injustice in the world from the lost and even fellow Christians.**
 - Nor does it mean that a Christian is immune to punishment from God for their sinful actions.
 - **Vengeance for our injustice that we receive belongs to God and not us**
 - Romans 12:19-21
 - “Friends, do not avenge yourselves; instead, leave room for His wrath. For it is written: Vengeance belongs to Me; I will repay, says the Lord. But if your enemy is hungry, feed him. If he is thirsty, give him something to drink. For in so doing you will be heaping fiery coals on his head. **Do not be conquered by evil, but conquer evil with good.**”
 - As much as we may want to avenge the injustice against us we are told to let God handle it.
 - This is truly hard to do because we get so angry and want to take matters into our own hands.
 - **Instead we are told something quite the opposite that we are supposed to do, instead of vengeance on evil we are supposed to conquer evil with good.**
 - God says let me take vengeance, but you show them my goodness.
 - Show them the love of Christ.
 - **He also very importantly tells us to do this otherwise we may be conquered by evil.**
 - **Taking out vengeance for injustice may seem like a good cause, but it could potentially cause us to sin in the process.**
 - **Do you find it hard to let God handle the injustice? Do you find it difficult to conquer evil with good?**
 - **God will vindicate his people.**
 - **We do not determine the decision for how justice is dealt but instead this decision is by God alone.**
 - **God is always righteous and just and he will deal punishment in the time and manner in which he sees fit.**
 - Deuteronomy 32:36
 - “The LORD will indeed vindicate His people and have compassion on His servants when He sees that their strength is gone and no one is left—slave or free.”
 - Revelation 19:1-2
 - “After this I heard something like the loud voice of a vast multitude in heaven, saying: Hallelujah! Salvation, glory, and power belong to our God, because His judgments are true and righteous, because He has judged the notorious prostitute who corrupted the earth with her sexual immorality; and He has avenged the blood of His slaves that was on her hands”
 - God will avenge us he will vindicate his people.

- **So while the Bible tells us it is so and we know it is true, yet we still have a hard time with this.**
- It goes back to our desire to have vengeance and justice right now, we are not patient as God is patient with repentance.
- **Justice served in time.**
 - **As we look at justice we need to keep in mind that God's holy justice doesn't work on a timeline that we would necessarily want. God's timing for his justice likely isn't the way we would want it to be.**
 - This of course isn't a bad thing. In fact it is quite the opposite because God's timing is for a purpose that we cannot always see.
 - For example from the book "The Count of Monte Cristo"
 - The story is one of severe injustice that was laid upon Edmond Dantes. However in the end justice was served both for him and the ones that wronged him, but it took most of his life before this came to be.
 - This can be the same with God's judgment on others and also for us.
 - We see that it took time before things worked themselves out, but they worked out for the better.
 - **If God is using patience in his judgment or his vengeance for us, it is for a reason.**
 - He is a holy and just God that only makes righteous decisions.
 - We also must accept the truth that in some cases justice isn't realized until the end.
 - 2 Thessalonians 1:5-9
 - We can take comfort in this truth to get us through these times of trials.
 - **But we must patiently endure our sufferings and focus not on our comfort and happiness but instead on the glory of God and the fulfillment of his promises.**
 - **How do you feel about timing related to God's justice? Do you struggle with letting God do it according to his time?**
- **God perfects us in our suffering even if it is because of injustice.**
 - **It is not that we suffer and then we think well this is evidence that God is not with us, but instead evidence that God is with us and perfecting us.**
 - It's not an "if" but when we will suffer or when we will see injustice in our lives, brought on by the world.
 - **These are times of trials where we are tested and our faith is perfected.**
 - Do we curse God at the first time we didn't get our prayers answered?
 - If we have true faith and we believe the scriptures, then we know that trusting God through our trials can perfect our faith.
 - Matthew 5:10-12
 - "Those who are persecuted for righteousness are blessed, for the kingdom of heaven is theirs. You are blessed when they insult and persecute you and falsely say every kind of evil against you because of Me. Be glad and rejoice because your reward is great in heaven. For that I show they persecuted the prophets who were before you"
 - If the prophets before suffered why wouldn't we?
 - Romans 8:18
 - "For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is going to be revealed to us."
 - 2 Corinthians 12:10

- “So I take pleasure in weaknesses, insults, catastrophes, persecutions, and in pressures, because of Christ. For when I am weak, then I am strong.”
 - James 1:2-4
 - “Consider it a great joy, my brothers, whenever you experience various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces endurance. But endurance must do its complete work, so that you may be mature and complete, lacking nothing.”
 - **God never said we would live a life free from suffering and injustice from the world, in fact he said we should expect it.**
 - We must in these times rely even more on God in his truths and promises.
 - **The big question is can we rely on God even when we are suffering and receiving injustice from the world?**
 - But God also tells us that he will personally strengthen and support us in our suffering.
 - 1 Peter 5:10
 - Now the God of all grace, who called you to His eternal glory in Christ Jesus, will personally restore, establish, strengthen, and support you after you have suffered a little.”
 - God has promised in his word that he will never leave us nor forsake regardless of what we may be going through.
 - Let us trust God to give his Holy justice.
 - **Do you find it hard to look upon times of hardship or times of injustice and to see this as a good thing?**
- **Repent from our sins so that they will not be a stumbling block.**
 - *Read Ezekiel 18:30*
 - **God is a just and righteous God, but he is also a God of mercy.**
 - **God is merciful to show us patience to allow us to come to repentance to him.**
 - Not just repentance for the lost, but also repentance for the believer.
 - **So once we are a Christian are we never to repent again? No of course not, the Bible makes it clear that we do this as our ongoing sanctification with God.**
 - We can never lose our Salvation but we can certainly put up barriers between us and God if we never repent from what we do that is wrong.
 - To repent is to turn away from sin.
 - When we repent we should also truly turn away and desire never to go back.
 - We may fail and fall down again but when we repent we are telling God that I am sorry for the sin and that I am turning away from it.
 - **Our guilt is removed when we confess our sins**
 - Psalms 32:3-5
 - “When I kept silent, my bones became brittle from my groaning all day long. For day and night Your hand was heavy on me; my strength was drained as in the summer’s heat. Then I acknowledged my sin to You and did not conceal my iniquity. I said, I will confess my transgressions to the LORD,” and You took away the guilt of my sin.”
 - **Confessing our sins regularly is an important process for our ongoing sanctification.**
 - Where we desire to be clean and to turn from our sinful ways by confessing and repenting by turning away from them.
 - When we do this the guilt of the sin is removed and we have peace.
 - **We will find mercy by our confession**
 - Proverbs 28:13

- “The one who conceals his sins will not prosper, but whoever confesses and renounces them will find mercy.”
 - Notice the word “renounces” we must repent and turn away from sin.
 - This is not well I’ll just sin all day all I want and then just make sure I confess them.
 - If you have no true remorse for the sin then you don’t truly repent or renounce them.
 - God desires that all should come to repentance
 - 2 Peter 3:9
 - “The Lord does not delay His promise, as some understand delay, but is patient with you, not wanting any to perish but all to come to repentance.”
 - **How would you describe God’s mercy in relation to His justice?**
- Closing
 - God is a Holy God that is just in all his ways.
 - His justice is perfect even if we are feeling the injustice from the world.
 - We must put our faith and trust in God that he will take care of the injustice in the world according to his will.
 - We must also not forget God’s patience and his mercy when we seek justice.