

He is!

An Expository Exploration of the Attributes of God

Sermon Four: He is Just (Righteous)

January 26, 2020

Romans 3:19-26

Opening Illustration: “Employees must wash hands.” These signs that we see in restaurants are very important for a couple of different reasons. Any dangerous bacteria must be cleaned off of the employee’s hands so that the kitchen does not become contaminated. We definitely do not want a chef with unwashed hands. We want to feel as though our food is clean and free from any contamination. The cleanliness of the kitchen reflects the character of the chef. In fact, how would we feel if the sign said something different, like “Employees SHOULD wash their hands” or “Employees MAY wash their hands”? Wouldn’t we be very concerned about the food on our plate?

Point: Many people think that God isn’t really all that concerned about righteousness, and that He will let us into Heaven on some sort of sliding scale or technicality. We expect to hear him say, “You weren’t THAT bad, come on in!” or “You were no worse than anyone else, come on in!”. There is a problem with that, though. Lowering the standards of righteousness of those who are entering Heaven would pollute the Kingdom and call the righteousness of God into question.

Some verses to think about:

Matthew 5:20 "For I say to you that unless your righteousness surpasses *that* of the scribes and Pharisees, you will not enter the kingdom of heaven.

Habakkuk 1:13 Your eyes are too pure to approve evil, And You can not look on wickedness *with favor*

I. Introduction

A. *What is the justice (righteousness) of God?*

1. The word “just” translates the Greek word “dikaios”.

a. “In the inspired Scriptures justice and righteousness are scarcely to be distinguished from each other. The same word in the original becomes in English justice or righteousness, almost, once would suspect, at the whim of the translator.” Tozer¹

B. *Why is the justice of God so important?*

1. God must be righteous or He is not fit to be God.

a. It is absolutely essential that we think about God as He REALLY is, as much as is possible for our finite human minds. We must constantly be on our guard against substandard thoughts of Him.

C. *Why is the justice of God so misunderstood?*

1. Most people seem to think that God is not that concerned with righteousness.

a. Why on Earth would anybody think this?

i. Because there is a sense which God loves us despite any unrighteousness. This is true and wonderful. (Romans 5:8; John 3:16)

ii. Because the gospel most people hear strategically removes God’s wrath.

a) What many do not realize is that God, in order to be true to His nature and character MUST have a holy hatred of sin. To water this down may make the gospel more attractive to unbelievers. The problem, though, is that when we minimize the righteousness of God, it is no longer the gospel that we are preaching.

b) When our gospel presentation removes God’s wrath, it minimizes His righteousness.

¹ A. W. Tozer, *The Knowledge of the Holy*, page 86.

Quote: "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." A. W. Tozer

2. Most people seem to hope that God will change His standards.

ILL: Woodstock—So many people just showed up to Woodstock that they felt compelled to let them in. The world, similarly, seems to think that if we all demand lower standards from God that he will inevitably relax and let (almost) anyone in. In fact, it seems like many today would make the same demand of the church, as if we had any right to deviate from what God says.

II. The Problem of Justice (*Romans 3:19-20*)

Quote: "The problem of sin is really the problem of the being of God. Do not think of sin primarily in terms of yourself or of what you do and do not do. If you want to understand the problem of sin, start with God."

D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones

A. *The Law was never able to make us righteous.*

1. **Galatians 2:16** nevertheless knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the Law but through faith in Christ Jesus, even we have believed in Christ Jesus, so that we may be justified by faith in Christ and not by the works of the Law; since by the works of the Law no flesh will be justified.
2. **Psalm 143:2** And do not enter into judgment with Thy servant, For in Thy sight no man living is righteous.

B. *The Law was never intended to make us righteous.*

1. **1 Timothy 1:8** and ff.

C. *The Law was given to humble us.*

1. **Galatians 3:22-23** But the Scripture has shut up everyone under sin, so that the promise by faith in Jesus Christ might be given to those who believe.²³ But before faith came, we were kept in custody under the law, being shut up to the faith which was later to be revealed.

ILL: Pilgrim's Progress—Moses continually hitting Faithful.

So soon as the man overtook me, it was but a word and a blow; for down he knocked me, and laid me for dead. But when I was a little come to myself again I asked him wherefore he served me so. He said because of my secret inclining to Adam the First. And with that he struck me another deadly blow on the breast, and beat me down backward; so I lay at his foot as dead as before. So when I came to myself again I cried him mercy: but he said, I know not how to show mercy; and with that he knocked me down again. He had doubtless made an end of me, but that one came by and bid him forbear.

D. *The Law was given to reveal our sin.*

1. **Romans 7:7** What shall we say then? Is the Law sin? May it never be! On the contrary, I would not have come to know sin except through the Law; for I would not have known about coveting if the Law had not said, "YOU SHALL NOT COVET."

III. The Provision for Justice (*Romans 3:21-25a*)

A. What we could never do for ourselves has been done for us.

1. There is no way that our own death could ever fully atone for our sin.
2. The only hope that we have against the perfect wrath of God is that a truly sinless sacrifice would be provided. Good news! God has provided such a sacrifice: The Lord Jesus Christ.

B. What we could never earn through works is given to us by faith.

1. We are all sinners and fall short of God's glory.
 - a. **1 Kings 8:46** "When they sin against You (for there is no man who does not sin)

2. Salvation (deliverance) from God's wrath is provided for us as a simple gift.
3. Righteousness is given to us...the righteousness of Christ.
 - a. **Romans 3:22** even *the* righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all those who believe; for there is no distinction;
 - b. **Philippians 3:9** and may be found in Him, not having a righteousness of my own derived from *the* Law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which *comes* from God on the basis of faith,

C. What we deserved has been poured out on another.

1. **Isaiah 53:4-6** Surely our griefs He Himself bore, And our sorrows He carried; Yet we ourselves esteemed Him stricken, Smitten of God, and afflicted. ⁵But He was pierced through for our transgressions, He was crushed for our iniquities; The chastening for our well-being *fell* upon Him, And by His scourging we are healed. ⁶All of us like sheep have gone astray, Each of us has turned to his own way; But the LORD has caused the iniquity of us all To fall on Him.

Quote: ““How astonishing the thought, that the maker of heaven and earth, the holy one of Israel, before whose presence the earth shook, the heavens dropped, when he displayed a faint emblem of his majesty upon Sinai, should afterwards appear in the form of a servant, and hang upon the cross, the sport and scorn of wicked man!“
 ... yet it appears true and necessary, upon a supposition, that a holy God is pleased to pardon sinners in a way suited to display the awful glories of his justice.“ Newton works 1:358

IV. The Purpose for Sacrifice (*Romans 3:25b-26*)

- A. God is just—He is absolutely committed to the purity of His nature and standards.
 1. **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?”
- B. God is the justifier—He is graciously provided a means by which sinners may be delivered.

V. Conclusions

- A. What does this teach us?
 1. That God is uncompromising in His justice. For God to be any other way would be to our ruin and His dishonor.
- B. To what must this drive us?
 1. Humility
 2. Worship
 3. Repentance