

The Strange and Wonderful Attributes of God

Lesson #19 – God’s Righteousness & Justice ²³¹⁹

We know that God is righteous and just. Scripture is clear. In this lesson we will learn in substantial detail how these two concepts are related and in fact derived from God’s other attributes as an example of perfection regarding these two related concepts.

I. Definition of God’s Righteousness & Justice

With respect to God, Righteousness is defined as meaning that God always acts in accordance with what is right and just, and is in and of Himself the final standard of what is right and just. Whatever conforms to God’s reflection of righteousness is likewise right and righteous.

In both the Old Testament Hebrew, and the New Testament Greek, only one class of words is used to reflect both “righteousness” and “justice”. In the Hebrew these two English words are derived from the *tsedek* word group and in the Greek these two English words are derived from the *dikaio*s word group.

Greek Adverb - *δικαιος* (Strong’s 1342) 79x meaning: *righteous, innocent, just, upright*.
e.g. A word group is a root word that has many related meaning, based on that same root.

An English example of a root word & its family of related words: bio, bioassay, biochemistry, biocide, biogenesis, biographical, biological, biologist, biome, biophysics, bioscope, biosynthesis, etc.

Categorical Discussions:

Is this an Existential or a Relational Category? All that God does is correct, moral, and good. This is by very definition who He is as He is the standard of all that is correct, moral, and good. In a sense, this is part of God’s inherent nature (existential), and yet it is in His actions towards others (His creatures) that the meaning of righteousness and justice are established in a practical way. So, which is it? Are these 2 attributes existential or relational attributes. Certainly they are both in certain senses.

Is this an Incommunicable or a Communicable Category? Here again, we discover complexity. Clearly, we are called to live in righteousness, in correct behavior. This is clearly a communicable attributes.

It is clear that God is the judge of His creatures, not us. Do we share in God’s expression of justice? Yes, in certain limited ways. In that we are to be righteous, and likewise to be just, wherever we have responsibility over others, we likewise are required to love justice and condemn behavior that is not righteous.

Micah 6:6-8 *With what shall I come to the LORD and bow myself before the God on high? Shall I come to Him with burnt offerings, with yearling calves? ⁷Does the LORD take delight in thousands of rams, in ten thousand rivers of oil? Shall I present my firstborn for my rebellious acts, the fruit of body for the sin of my soul? ⁸He has told you, O man, what is good; and what does the LORD require of you but to do justice, to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?*

Areas of example: As a leader of our families, our churches, our neighbors, in the work place. Our insistence on righteous behavior on our own parts, and by those whom we have been assigned stewardship over, our love of justice must be expressed in that stewardship.

Clearly we are expected to be just and to have a Godly love of justice that requires us to promote such within our stewardship relationships. Justice is primarily a communicable attribute, but does not apply universally, only where we have become a stewardship over others behavior.

Discuss example – Can a Christian discipline and/or fire an employee over whom he has been given charge?

Problem Statement:

It is vital that we understand God’s absolute perfect righteousness. Without a clear understanding of this doctrine, it is impossible to understand our own depravity and our own desperate need for God’s mercy and Christ’s atoning work on our behalf.

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Without this teaching, it is hard to believe in God's sovereign grace. If God's righteousness is no more than a superlative of the righteousness possessed by the best of men, then we cannot really understand the necessity of God's sovereign action on our behalf in the matter of salvation & of daily living.

God's justice is a necessary extension of His absolute righteousness and our obligation to serve Him as sovereign Creator, King, and LORD.

II. Logic and Importance of God's Righteousness & Justice

Premise: God is just substantially more righteous than any and all humans.

Derivative Argument Elements:

- On what basis does God judge and punish humans and angels for their sin?
 - All men have turned against their Creator and denied His authority over them as mere creatures!
- Most humans are being as righteous as they can.
 - All men in their natural lost state are in open rebellion against a righteous and just God!
- Has God forgotten that man is a creature made from the dust of the earth?
 - No, God remembers what we are and that's where selective mercy and grace come into the picture.
- We all make mistakes, so what have we done to deserve being cast out in judgment?
 - We don't all just make mistakes, we are (in our natural state) treasonous rebels against God!
- Most men and women are trying to be righteous and to love God to the best of their ability?
 - No we are not trying to be righteous before God. Rather we are self-righteous in trying to justify our sinful nature!

Conclusion: This argument sounds good to lost men and women and "Christians" who are untrained in Biblical truth. What is functionally wrong with this argument? The premise is wrong. God is absolutely and perfectly righteous in all things.

As the Creator of all things, God is offended and justly angry about man's arrogance and pride in man's own measly lack of righteousness, no, rather of man's own wickedness.

Consequences of God's Righteousness & Justice - Because God is wholly and perfectly righteous (and we are not) and because God is wholly and perfectly just, sin must be judged and found wanting in order to bring the universe under His sovereign control to become what our sovereign God intended it to be so that His creation will serve God in perfection.

Historicity of God's Righteousness & Justice - This knowledge of the righteousness and justice of our God has been thoroughly understood and taught by God's saints throughout all time. God wins and these attributes will be entirely obvious when we see God face to face in eternity future.

III. Scriptural Basis of God's Righteousness & Justice

Unless otherwise indicated, all Scriptures are quoted from the New American Standard Updated version (NASU) Some verses pertinent to this goal of knowing of God's Righteousness:

Ezra 9:15 *"O Lord God of Israel, You are righteous, for we have been left an escaped remnant, as it is this day; behold, we are before You in our guilt, for no one can stand before You because of this."*

Ps 145:17-20 *The Lord is righteous in all His ways and kind in all His deeds. ¹⁸The Lord is near to all who call upon Him, to all who call upon Him in truth. ¹⁹He will fulfill the desire of those who fear Him; He will also hear their cry and will save them. ²⁰The Lord keeps all who love Him, **but all the wicked He will destroy**.*

Ps 50:1-6 *The Mighty One, God, the Lord, has spoken, and summoned the earth from the rising of the sun to its setting. ²Out of Zion, the perfection of beauty, God has shone forth. ³May our God come and not keep silence; fire devours before Him, and it is very tempestuous around Him. ⁴He summons the heavens above, and the earth, to judge His people: ⁵"Gather My godly ones to Me, those who*

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have made a covenant with Me by sacrifice." ⁶And the heavens declare His righteousness, for God Himself is judge. Selah.

Isa 45:21-24 Declare and set forth your case; indeed, let them consult together. Who has announced this from of old? Who has long since declared it? Is it not I, the Lord? And there is no other God besides Me, a righteous God and a Savior; there is none except Me. ²²Turn to Me and be saved, all the ends of the earth; for I am God, and there is no other. ²³I have sworn by Myself, the word has gone forth from My mouth in righteousness and will not turn back, that to Me every knee will bow, every tongue will swear allegiance. ²⁴They will say of Me, "Only in the Lord are righteousness and strength." Men will come to Him, and all who were angry at Him will be put to shame.

Isa 64:5-7 You meet him who rejoices in doing righteousness, who remembers You in Your ways. Behold, You were angry, for we sinned, we continued in them a long time; and shall we be saved? ⁶For all of us have become like one who is unclean, and all our righteous deeds are like a filthy garment; and all of us wither like a leaf, and our iniquities, like the wind, take us away. ⁷There is no one who calls on Your name, who arouses himself to take hold of You; for You have hidden Your face from us and have delivered us into the power of our iniquities.

Rev 19:5-16 And a voice came from the throne, saying, "Give praise to our God, all you His bond-servants, you who fear Him, the small and the great." ⁶Then I heard something like the voice of a great multitude and like the sound of many waters and like the sound of mighty peals of thunder, saying, "Hallelujah! For the Lord our God, the Almighty, reigns." ⁷"Let us rejoice and be glad and give the glory to Him, for the marriage of the Lamb has come and His bride has made herself ready." ⁸It was given to her to clothe herself in fine linen, bright and clean; for the fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints. ⁹Then he said to me, "Write, 'Blessed are those who are invited to the marriage supper of the Lamb.'" And he said to me, "These are true words of God." ¹⁰Then I fell at his feet to worship him. But he said to me, "Do not do that; I am a fellow servant of yours and your brethren who hold the testimony of Jesus; worship God. For the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy." ¹¹And I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse, and He who sat on it is called Faithful and True, and in righteousness He judges and wages war. ¹²His eyes are a flame of fire, and on His head are many diadems; and He has a name written on Him which no one knows except Himself. ¹³He is clothed with a robe dipped in blood, and His name is called The Word of God. ¹⁴And the armies which are in heaven, clothed in fine linen, white and clean, were following Him on white horses. ¹⁵From His mouth comes a sharp sword, so that with it He may strike down the nations, and He will rule them with a rod of iron; and He treads the wine press of the fierce wrath of God, the Almighty. ¹⁶And on His robe and on His thigh He has a name written, "KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS."

John 16:5-11 But now I am going to Him who sent Me; and none of you asks Me, 'Where are You going?' ⁶But because I have said these things to you, sorrow has filled your heart. ⁷But I tell you the truth, it is to your advantage that I go away; for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you; but if I go, I will send Him to you. ⁸And He, when He comes, will convict the world concerning sin and righteousness and judgment; ⁹concerning sin, because they do not believe in Me; ¹⁰and concerning righteousness, because I go to the Father and you no longer see Me; ¹¹and concerning judgment, because the ruler of this world has been judged.

2 Cor 5:20-21 Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were making an appeal through us; we beg you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God. ²¹He made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.

IV. Important Points About God's Righteousness & Justice

1st How God's Righteousness & Justice Relates to Other Attributes

God's righteousness relates importantly to God as Creator. He establishes all of the laws that determine our existence because He knows that the creation and the creatures cannot survive to accomplish His purpose when they are in chaos. Because of God's omniscience and His sovereign

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threat of judgment, sin and its effects are minimized and kept in check because of fear of the LORD. Here is the beginning of wisdom.

2nd Why God's Righteousness & Justice is Important to Our Faith

God will succeed in eliminating any and all sin, willful disobedience, and bring about an administration where men and angels will live righteously before the face of God in full harmony with His will, accomplishing His purpose, a population of redeemed men and women, willingly and joyfully praising God in eternal intimate fellowship with our Creator.

3rd Confessions or Creeds that Address God's Righteousness & Justice

The 1689 London Baptist Confession, Chapter 6, Article 2. Our first parents, by this sin, fell from their original righteousness and communion with God, and we in them, whereby death came upon all: **all becoming dead in sin, and wholly defiled in all the faculties and parts of soul and body.**

Total Depravity! (Romans 3:23; Romans 5:12, etc; Titus 1:15; Genesis 6:5; Jeremiah 17:9; Romans 3:10-19)

4th Errors/Heresies that Deny God's Righteousness & Justice

Deists, Unitarians, pagan religions around the world, and theologically liberal churches, which includes many Evangelical churches that are unknowingly sliding precipitously into modern theological liberalism, are denying to some degree the absolute perfection of God's righteousness and the sovereign and good purpose of God's justice. Why? Because:

1st Absolute perfection in God's righteousness undermines man's concept of his own self-righteousness and is offensive to the natural man.

2nd Absolute and perfect justice brings fear to the natural man who turns his view of God into a superman rather than an infinitely holy, righteous, and just sovereign ruler of all things.

Important Quotes About God's Righteousness & Justice

Characteristics of a Judge: 2. The judge is a person identified with what is good and right. The modern idea that a judge should be cold and dispassionate has no place in the Bible. The biblical judge is expected to love justice and fair play and to loathe all ill treatment of one person by another. An unjust judge, one who has no interest in seeing right triumph over wrong, is by biblical standards a monstrosity. The Bible leaves us in no doubt that God loves righteousness and hates iniquity, and that the ideal of a judge wholly identified with what is good and right is perfectly fulfilled in Him. **J. I. Packer; *Knowing God*; p. 141**

"God is love" is not the complete truth about God so far as the Bible is concerned. It is not an abstract definition which stands alone, but a summing up, from the believer's standpoint, of what the whole revelation set forth in Scripture tells us about its Author. This statement presupposes all the rest of the biblical witness to God. The God of whom John is speaking is the God who made the world, who judged it by the flood, who called Abraham and made him a nation, who chastened His Old Testament people by conquest, captivity, and exile, who sent His "Son to save the world, who cast off unbelieving Israel and shortly before John wrote had destroyed Jerusalem, and who would one day judge the world in righteousness. It is this God, says John, who is love. **J. I. Packer; *Knowing God*; p. 120**

It is sometimes said, "Justice requires God to do this," referring to some act we know He will perform. This is an error of thinking as well as of speaking, for it postulates a principle of justice outside of God which compels Him to act in a certain way. Of course there is no such principle. If there were it would be superior to God, for only a superior power can compel obedience. The truth is that there is not and can never be anything outside of the nature of God which can move Him in the least degree. All God's reasons come from within His uncreated being. Nothing has entered the being of God from eternity, nothing has been removed, and nothing has been changed. **A. W. Tozer, *The Knowledge of the Holy*, p. 87**