

The God Of Righteousness & Justice Pleasant Plains 1-12-2020AM NICK ANGEL

- ***READ Psalm 33:1-5*** Some of you might have seen a news story that gained a great deal of attention during the Christmas season. There was a stabbing that led to the death of two individuals who were out for the evening at a Midtown establishment in Nashville. One young man was a student at Rhodes College in Memphis and the other young man was the brother of CJ Beathard who was a quarterback at Iowa just a few years ago. The suspect in the case was able to flee the scene and was actually on the run for a few days. Authorities were doing everything they could to find the man suspected of committing this crime, but were coming up empty.
 - In order to help encourage someone who might have information to come forward, a grand total of \$42,500 was offered as a reward for information leading to a successful capture. This money included the usual TBI reward of \$2,500 for information leading to an arrest, but it also included \$10,000 from Governor Bill Lee, \$20,000 from a number of midtown establishments, and an additional \$10,000 from Nashville sports talk personality Clay Travis. Thankfully, the man who was suspected of these murders was found and arrested on Christmas Day.
 - I share this with you because it illustrates to me that there are still a great number of people who desire for justice to be carried out. It would make sense for the TBI and even the Governor's office to post a reward, but for private businesses and citizens to voluntarily put forth those large sums of money speaks volumes towards their desire for justice to be carried out for those whose lives were unlawfully taken away from them. But this gets me thinking...why do people so greatly desire justice?
 - I believe that people desire justice and are willing to go to such great lengths to make sure justice is carried out because God created within us an innate understanding that wrongs should be righted and those who are guilty ought to face the consequences for their actions. I believe that God created with this understanding which is different from any other living thing in this world because we are made in His image and He Himself, according to the text we read together at the onset of this study, loves not only justice but also righteousness.
 - In fact, I would go to say that He could be described as the God of Righteousness and Justice. We might not think of these two concepts as being all that pervasive to the Big Picture of the Bible, but we would do well to understand that these themes and motifs (patterns) are seen from cover to cover within our Bibles. This morning, I would like for us to talk about these two important Biblical themes, what exactly they are, their part in the character of God, what God expects from us in regards to these themes, and then we will close by looking at how God was willing to suffer injustice in order to bring about justice on our behalf.
 - We'll begin by detailing what exactly is meant when we're talking about righteousness and justice from a Biblical perspective. When we talk about righteousness in this lesson, we are referring to the Hebrew word *tsēdaqah* which means to have the right relationship between ourselves and God and other people. And when we talk about justice we are talking about the Hebrew word *mishpat* which can mean either retributive justice for those who have been wronged or simply the act of seeking to uphold those who are vulnerable, helpless and often taken advantage of. I want to take the ideas and see from the Scriptures that they are key components to the character of God.
- I. **The Scriptures clearly indicate that righteousness and justice are key components of God's character.**
- A. "God, give your **justice** to the king and your **righteousness** to the king's son. He will judge your people with **righteousness** and your afflicted ones with **justice**." (Psalm 72:1,2)
 - B. "Clouds and total darkness surround him; **righteousness** and **justice** are the foundation of his throne." (Psalm 97:2)
 - C. "The mighty King loves **justice**. You have established fairness; you have administered **justice** and **righteousness** in Jacob." (Psalm 99:4)

- D. "The Lord executes acts of **righteousness** and **justice** for all the oppressed." (Psalm 103:6)
- E. "But the Lord of Armies is exalted by his **justice**, and the holy God shows that he is holy through his **righteousness**. (Isaiah 5:16)
- F. "The Lord is exalted, for he dwells on high; he has filled Zion with **justice** and **righteousness**." (Isaiah 33:5)
- G. "But the one who boasts should boast in this: that he understands and knows me— that I am the Lord, showing faithful love, **justice**, and **righteousness** on the earth, for I delight in these things. This is the Lord's declaration." (Jeremiah 9:24)

II. The Scriptures also teach that our God expects for His people to live in righteousness and be committed to carrying out justice.

- A. "**Abraham** is to become a great and powerful nation, and all the nations of the earth will be blessed through him. For I have chosen him so that he will command his children and his house after him to keep the way of the Lord by doing what is **right** and **just**. This is how the Lord will fulfill to Abraham what he promised him." (Genesis 18:18,19)
- B. "So **David** reigned over all Israel, administering **justice** and **righteousness** for all his people." (II Samuel 8:15 & II Chronicles 18:14)
- C. "Blessed be the Lord your God! He delighted in you and put you on the throne of Israel, because of the Lord's eternal love for Israel. He has made you king to carry out **justice** and **righteousness**." (King Solomon I Kings 10:9)
- D. "Speak up for those who have no voice, for the **justice** of all who are dispossessed. Speak up, judge **righteously**, and defend the cause of the oppressed and needy." (King Lemuel Proverbs 31:8,9)
- E. "This is what the Lord says: "Go down to the palace of the king of Judah and announce this word there. You are to say, 'Hear the word of the Lord, king of Judah, you who sit on the throne of David—you, your officers, and your people who enter these gates. This is what the Lord says: Administer **justice** and **righteousness**. Rescue the victim of robbery from his oppressor. Don't exploit or brutalize the resident alien, the fatherless, or the widow. Don't shed innocent blood in this place.'" (Jeremiah 22:1-3)
- F. "Mankind, he has told each of you what is good and what it is the Lord requires of you: to act **justly**, to love faithfulness, and to walk humbly with your God." (Micah 6:8)

III. Sadly, righteousness and justice have not always been present with the history of mankind at an individual or group level, and consequences have followed.

A. Individual Level:

1. "Cain said to his brother Abel, "Let's go out to the field." And while they were in the field, Cain attacked his brother Abel and killed him." (Genesis 4:8)
2. David with Bathsheba against Uriah (II Samuel 11)
3. Christians against a Poor Person (James 2:1-4)

B. Group Level:

1. Sodom & Gomorrah against Lot, His Visitors, & His Family (Genesis 19)
2. Egypt Against The Hebrews (Exodus 1,2)
3. "Woe to those who are heroes at drinking wine, who are champions at pouring beer, who acquit the guilty for a bribe and deprive the innocent of justice." (Leaders Of Judah Isaiah 5:22,23)

C. Consequences For Each:

1. Cain was cursed for the rest of his life.
2. David & Bathsheba's first son died.

3. The Christians faced condemnation for their evil thoughts.
4. Sodom & Gomorrah were annihilated from the earth with fire sent from the sky by God.
5. Egypt suffered the ten plagues, and Pharaoh was killed in pursuit of the Hebrews.
6. The leaders of Judah were under judgment from God for their continued failures in upholding righteousness and justice.

IV. Graciously, God has provided a way through Jesus for our unrighteousness and injustice to be remedied. (Romans 5:6-11)

A. The problem is that we are all guilty of unrighteousness.

1. The reality of man's situation is painted in the absolute worst light possible in **Romans 3:9-19; 3:23**. The righteousness that God is all about and that He wants for us to be all about simply isn't something that we are perfect at holding to. We fall short of bringing glory to God, and for that God demands justice be carried out. That justice will be carried out through our punishment which we have incurred through sinning which is death. (**Romans 6:23**)
2. If this was the end of the story then we would have no room to argue against God since He has given us the choice to choose right or wrong and we have simply chosen to do what is wrong. When the choice is laid out before us and we choose that which will lead to death, then justice would demand that a death be paid.

B. Yet, what we see in Romans 5:6-11 is that God is able to hold up both of the portions of what *mishpat* means in perfectly fulfilling justice.

1. Remember, the two ideas behind the meaning of *mishpat* are 1) retributive justice where the wrong doer faces consequences and 2) upholding and defending those who are helpless and vulnerable. In this text, God fulfills both understandings. He is ready to demand a life for the rebellion of sinners and enemies, but He's also ready to help those who are helpless. How does God do both? The answer is through Jesus Christ His Son. He suffered a death that He did not deserve so that we might have life that we don't deserve. In **II Corinthians 5:21** Paul puts it this way concerning Jesus suffering an unjust death on our behalf. *"He made the one who did not know sin to be sin/sin offering for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God."*
2. As the one who was declared by John as the perfect Lamb of God who comes to take away the sins of the world (**John 1:29**), Jesus was able to offer Himself as the atoning sacrifice that would satisfy the demands of God for justice to be served. (**Romans 3:23-25**) Through His atoning sacrifice, Jesus allows for us, through our faith, to be declared righteous, saved from God's wrath, and reconciled back to God which ties directly back into the righteousness that is a foundation of God's throne and what He desires of us. He desires so greatly that we be righteous before Him on just terms, and Jesus makes all of that possible for us.

So what does this mean for us on practical terms? If God was willing to go through so much for us, then surely we feel compelled to respond in a certain way, and I would suggest that we feel compelled to ourselves be people who make sure that righteousness and justice are a part of our own character. We must seek to dwell in peace with our fellow man and our God. We must respect other people as fellow image bearers of God, and we must respect God as Lord and allow Him free reign over our lives.

As for justice, we must remember that God went far beyond what was demanded for us to be saved as vulnerable sinners who were on a straight path towards condemnation and destruction. With this being the case, we ought to feel a responsibility to help those who we see who are vulnerable... whatever that vulnerability might look like. Whether they be poor, homeless, helpless, parentless, or full of sin and in need of a Savior... may we point them towards the one who provides the remedy. The One who provided us with the remedy for our unrighteousness... for He is the God whose throne is firmly upon the foundation of righteousness and justice.