



attributes of *God*

WEEK 15 — GOD IS RIGHTEOUS AND JUST



JOHN FRAME

"We should remind ourselves again that all these divine attributes are just different ways of describing a person. When this person does mighty works in our history and experience, all his attributes come with him. Whatever he does, he simultaneously reveals his benevolence and his authoritative standards."

DEUTERONOMY 32 : 4

*"The Rock, his work is perfect, for all his ways are justice.
A God of faithfulness and without iniquity, just and upright is he."*

GOD'S RIGHTEOUSNESS & JUSTICE

"Do you believe in divine judgment? By which I mean, do you believe in a God who acts as our Judge? Many, it seems, do not. Speak to them of God as a Father, a friend, a helper, one who loves us despite all our weakness and folly and sin, and their faces light up; you are on their wavelength at once. But speak to them of God as Judge and they frown and shake their heads. Their minds recoil from such an idea. They find it repellent and unworthy. But there are few things stressed more strongly in the Bible than the reality of God's work as Judge." (J. I. Packer)

Why do we consider righteousness and justice together?

ATTEMPTS TO DEFINE GOD'S RIGHTEOUSNESS AND JUSTICE:

A. W. Tozer – *"Justice is not something that God has. Justice is something that God is... God is love, and just as God is love, God is justice"*

John Frame – *"God's righteousness is a form of his goodness.... God's righteousness is the form or structure of his goodness, and his goodness is the concrete, active embodiment of his righteousness."*

John Frame - *"Scripture often presents God's righteousness, as we shall see, not merely as an authoritative standard, but also as an active power bringing salvation."*

Herman Bavinck – *Righteousness is an "attribute by virtue of which God justifies the righteous."*

Wayne Grudem – *"God's righteousness means that God always acts in accordance with what is right and is himself the final standard of what is right."*

God's righteousness and justice refer to God's holy and perfect character, and the holy and perfect works that then flow from His character. His righteousness and justice mean that all He says and does is right. It also means that His truth will certainly prevail and that every wrong will one day be punished, yet salvation certainly will come to His people.

GOD'S RIGHTEOUSNESS & JUSTICE IS SEEN THROUGHOUT SCRIPTURE

Genesis 18:25 – “Shall not the Judge of all the earth do what is just?”

Deuteronomy 32:4 – “The Rock, his work is perfect, for all his ways are justice. A God of faithfulness and without iniquity, just and upright is he.”

Deuteronomy 10:17 – “For the LORD your God is God of gods and Lord of lords, the great, the mighty, and the awesome God, who is not partial and takes no bribe. He executes justice for the fatherless and the widow, and loves the sojourner, giving him food and clothing.”

1 Samuel 12:6-7 – “And Samuel said to the people, “The LORD is witness, who appointed Moses and Aaron and brought your fathers up out of the land of Egypt. Now therefore stand still that I may plead with you before the LORD concerning all the righteous deeds of the LORD that he performed for you and for your fathers.”

Nehemiah 9:8 – “You have kept your promise, for you are righteous.”

Psalms 9:7-8 – “But the LORD sits enthroned forever; he has established his throne for justice, and he judges the world with righteousness; he judges the peoples with uprightness.”

Psalms 92:15 – “He is my rock, and there is no unrighteousness in him.”

Psalms 97:2 – “Clouds and thick darkness are all around him; righteousness and justice are the foundation of his throne.”

Jeremiah 9:24 – “But let him who boasts boast in this, that he understands and knows me, that I am the LORD who practices steadfast love, justice, and righteousness in the earth. For in these things I delight, declares the LORD.”

2 Timothy 4:8 – “Henceforth there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, will award to me on that Day, and not only to me but also to all who have loved his appearing.”

Hebrews 10:30-31 – “For we know him who said, “Vengeance is mine; I will repay.” And again, “The Lord will judge his people.” It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.”

Revelation 16:4-7 – “The third angel poured out his bowl into the rivers and the springs of water, and they became blood. And I heard the angel in charge of the waters say, “Just are you, O Holy One, who is and who was, for you brought these judgments. For they have shed the blood of saints and prophets, and you have given them blood to drink. It is what they deserve!” And I heard the altar saying, “Yes, Lord God the Almighty, true and just are your judgments!”

ASPECTS OF GOD'S RIGHTEOUSNESS & JUSTICE

1. God Loves Righteousness and Justice

Hebrews 1:8-9 - "But of the Son he says, 'Your throne, O God, is forever and ever, the scepter of uprightness is the scepter of your kingdom. You have loved righteousness and hated wickedness; therefore God, your God, has anointed you with the oil of gladness beyond your companions.'"

"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 standard 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)

2. God Must Punish All Sin

God would be unjust and not righteous to leave even one sin unpunished.

Romans 1:18 – "For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who by their unrighteousness suppress the truth."

"How dost Thou spare the wicked if Thou art just, supremely just?" (Anselm)

3. God Certainly Will Save His People

God never forgives sin. He only forgives sinners. Every sin must be punished.

Romans 3:21-26 – "But now the righteousness of God has been manifested apart from the law, although the Law and the Prophets bear witness to it-- the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe. For there is no distinction: for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God put forward as a propitiation by his blood, to be received by faith. This was to show God's righteousness, because in his divine forbearance he had passed over former sins. It was to show his righteousness at the present time, so that he might be **just and the justifier** of the one who has faith in Jesus."

"The perfect sacrifice of Jesus is the basis of our righteousness, and when God clears our guilt for Jesus' sake, he is acting justly. Through Christ, God is able both to justify the ungodly (us) and to defend himself against any charge of injustice." (John Frame)

1 John 1:9 – "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."

4. All God Says and Requires of Us is Righteous

Psalm 19:8 – “The precepts of the LORD are right, rejoicing the heart;”

Isaiah 45:19 – “I the LORD speak the truth; I declare what is right.”

5. God is the Final Standard of What is Right

Whatever is right is whatever conforms to God’s character.

There is no standard outside of God Himself by which He is judged or measured.

“God acts according to a perfect internal standard of right and wrong....” (John Frame)

“We must remember that justice is not something outside of God to which God must conform. Nothing ever requires God to do anything. If you have a god who is required to do anything, then you have a weak god who has to bow his neck to some yoke and yield himself to pressure from the outside. Then justice is bigger than God. But that is to think wrongly.” (A. W. Tozer)

6. We Are Not Given the Right to Judge God’s Actions

Job 40:2 - "Shall a faultfinder contend with the Almighty? He who argues with God, let him answer it."

Job 40:6-8 – “Then the LORD answered Job out of the whirlwind and said: "Dress for action like a man; I will question you, and you make it known to me. Will you even put me in the wrong? Will you condemn me that you may be in the right?"

Romans 9:18-21 – “So then he has mercy on whomever he wills, and he hardens whomever he wills. You will say to me then, "Why does he still find fault? For who can resist his will?" But who are you, O man, to answer back to God? Will what is molded say to its molder, "Why have you made me like this?" Has the potter no right over the clay, to make out of the same lump one vessel for honorable use and another for dishonorable use?"

However, this truth does not mean that we cannot bring God our questions and doubts.

COMMUNICABLE ATTRIBUTE

We share in Christ's righteousness.

2 Corinthians 5:21 – “For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.”

God calls us to fight for righteousness and justice.

Proverbs 21:3 – “To do righteousness and justice is more acceptable to the LORD than sacrifice.”

Isaiah 1:16-17 – “Wash yourselves; make yourselves clean; remove the evil of your deeds from before my eyes; cease to do evil, learn to do good; seek justice, correct oppression; bring justice to the fatherless, plead the widow's cause.”

CHALLENGES

1. It calls us to trust God.

Romans 11:33-36 – “Oh, the depth of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments and how inscrutable his ways! ‘For who has known the mind of the Lord, or who has been his counselor?’ ‘Or who has given a gift to him that he might be repaid?’ For from him and through him and to him are all things. To him be glory forever. Amen.”

2. It calls us to be thankful.

“It should be a cause for thanksgiving and gratitude when we realize that righteousness and omnipotence are both possessed by God. If he were a God of perfect righteousness without power to carry out that righteousness, he would not be worthy of worship and we would have no guarantee that justice will ultimately prevail in the universe. But if he were a God of unlimited power, yet without righteousness in his character, how unthinkable horrible the universe would be! There would be unrighteousness at the center of all existence and there would be nothing anyone could do to change it. Existence would become meaningless, and we would be driven to the most utter despair. We ought therefore continually to thank and praise God for who he is, ‘for all his ways are justice. A God of faithfulness and without iniquity, just and right is he’ (Deut. 32:4).” (Wayne Grudem)

3. It calls us to holiness.

1 Peter 1:17-19 – “And if you call on him as Father who judges impartially according to each one's deeds, conduct yourselves with fear throughout the time of your exile, knowing that you were ransomed from the futile ways inherited from your forefathers, not with perishable things such as silver or gold, but with the precious blood of Christ”

4. It calls us to take the pursuit of God seriously.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Anselm ponders how God could spare the wicked if He is supremely just. In reflecting on that question, A. W. Tozer writes,

"We don't worry about this question much, because in this day we have cheapened salvation. We have cheapened our concept of God to a place where we expect to stumble up to the pearly gate and bang on the door and say, 'Well, God, I'm here!' and have God take us in. We'd better get the old theologian's question figured out lest we presumptuously go to the gate of heaven and be turned away."

Do you agree with Tozer?

How has the concept of God been cheapened today?

2. How should God's justice and righteousness lead us to take our pursuit of God seriously? How should it help us in our striving for holiness?
3. How would thinking more about God's righteousness and justice help us face trials and difficulties in this life with confidence and joy?
4. How should understanding this attribute influence how we pray?
5. How should understanding this attribute guide our response to injustices in the world around us?
6. What songs do you know that describe God's righteousness and justice?

