

Campus Church of Christ Jail Ministry
Series 2, Lesson #3: "God's Wisdom, Justice and Holiness"

"God's Wisdom"

Romans 11:33 (New King James Version)

³³Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments and His ways past finding out!

What is God's wisdom?

"The wisdom of God allows only the best possible results, by the best possible means, to accomplish the highest possible purpose, for the longest time, for the most people in and around your life." (p. 132)¹ The only one who could possibly accomplish this is God!

What evidence do we have of God's wisdom?

- The natural world: Romans 1:20, Psalm 19, and Psalm 104:24.
- the good things that He provides and works out for our good: Romans 8:28
- through His plan for redemption – how He would buy us back from the slavery of sin / Satan. Christ was the ransom (Mark 10:45). Even Satan was not prepared for this one! Colossians 2:15
- in the life of Jesus who is God in the flesh. If we truly want to understand how life is supposed to work, we have to know Jesus intimately enough to do what He would do. 1 Corinthians 1:30, James 3:17

When we live our lives in faith, tapping into God's wisdom, we can see the difference it makes! The evidence speaks for itself.

How should we respond to God's wisdom?

It is one thing to know about God's wisdom, it is another matter entirely to respond to and benefit from it.

- God wants us to live our lives by exercising His wisdom. Ephesians 5:15-17
- Those who live wisely will show reverence and honor to God. Proverbs 9:10
- We receive and grow in God's wisdom by being in and learning His Word. Psalm 119:97-101, 2 Timothy 3:15-17
- We must ask God with confidence for wisdom. James 1:5-6

- We must trust God, understanding that His goals for us, and therefore His response, are not for our momentary pleasures but rather for our eternal happiness. He wants us to be like Jesus. In our asking, are our purposes and goals towards that end, too?

Conclusion:

“Until we grasp what it means that God is all-wise, we will never be able to trust and rest in His wise plan for our lives.” (p. 130)¹ There is a better way than the stress of trying to figure out life for ourselves, it is God. He has “charged Himself with full responsibility for our eternal happiness and stands ready to take over the management of our lives the moment we turn in faith to Him.” (p. 131)¹

“God’s Justice”

Each of us has probably complained, “That’s not fair.” at some time or another. Even though we know from experience that life is not fair, we still somehow expect it to be. We want someone to be accountable. For those who do not believe in God, there is no one. For those who do believe in God, this can pose a dilemma: How can there be a just God in a world that is so unjust? We see bad things happen to good people; we see good things happen to bad people; and we have to ask, “Where is God? If He is there, why would He allow this?” (refer back to Lesson 2 for additional information on this subject)

What is God’s justice?

God’s justice “involves an uncompromising and unwavering allegiance to a standard and God *is* the standard.” (p. 152)¹ God sees and knows all the details and nuances of our lives – both good and bad. He has all the facts and His justice cannot be manipulated by anyone. He alone is judge over all and from Him alone comes justice.

How does God’s justice work?

- The process of His justice:
 1. God’s first judgment in the Garden of Eden when Adam and Eve exercised their free will and disobeyed God’s command to them (Genesis 3); the beginning of sin and this world has been in a “fallen” and sinful condition ever since
 2. the world is under God’s judgment until the final judgment on Judgment Day (Revelation 20).
 3. in the end, He will make all things right; each person will stand before God and have to give an account for his/her life. Romans 14:11-13; 2 Corinthians 5:10

- He is a righteous judge, and He will reward fairly in the end. 2 Timothy 4:8
- God is delaying His justice because He wants to give ample time for all to repent and give their lives to Him. 2 Peter 3:9
- God is righteously indignant when it comes to disobedience and passionately hates evil. He has promised to bring His judgment against it. Romans 1:18

How does God reveal His justice?

- The human conscience; an intrinsic morality; Romans 2:14-16 and an example can be found in Acts 28:3-6.
- God will reveal His justice on the Judgment Day as promised. Hebrews 12:23 and 2 Timothy 4:8.
- Jesus' atoning blood. "The cross of Christ stands as the centerpiece of history; its shadow of forgiveness covers both the past and the future." (p. 161)¹ The most fantastic way that God has revealed His justice is through the cross of Jesus. Because of His justice, God must punish sin. Because of His great love, God placed Himself as a substitute, an "atonement" or covering for our own sin. "Through the cross, God's qualities converged (p. 161)¹; "what God's justice demanded, His love provided." (p. 162)¹
Romans 3:25-26
- Through retribution in the Judgment: two options in how it can be settled: 1. eternal reward that can only be received through the atoning blood of Jesus Christ in a place with God – heaven; or 2. eternal punishment because of rejecting Jesus' atonement in a place far away from God for those who do not love God - hell.
- We only get one chance, which is one lifetime, to make up our minds. Once we die, that's it, no more chances (Hebrews 9:27). None of us knows how many days God has appointed for our life (Psalm 39:4), so we should take the matter seriously and not delay.

How should we respond to God's justice?

- Make your choice. Philippians 2:9-11, Acts 2:38
- Don't try to do God's job for Him. Romans 12:17-21

As Asaph did:

Psalm 73

A psalm of Asaph.

Conclusion:

We can find comfort in God's justice by keeping in mind that we live in a fallen world where things are not fair but that one day, God will balance the scales and justice will be served!

"God's Holiness"

¹⁴Make every effort to live in peace with all men and to be holy; without holiness no one will see the Lord. **Hebrews 12:14 (NIV)**

⁵ "Do not come any closer," God said. "Take off your sandals, for the place where you are standing is holy ground." **Exodus 3:5 (NIV)**

³³ Hang the curtain from the clasps and place the ark of the Testimony behind the curtain. The curtain will separate the Holy Place from the Most Holy Place. **Exodus 26:33 (NIV)**

⁶⁹ ". . . and we know you are the Holy One of God." **John 6:69 (New Living Translation)**

The preceding passages are just a few of the hundreds found throughout the Old and New Testaments, containing the word ***holy*** (or one of its forms such as holiness, holier, holiest). As we read these passages, do we really understand the meaning of the word *holy*? Does it have enough meaning that it changes the way we understand God?

Defining God's Holiness

The dictionary defines holy as *sacred, revered, spiritually pure, sinless, set apart for religious purposes, deserving special respect or reverence*. As applied to God, it is the defining quality that sets Him apart from everyone and everything else, His quality of awesome mystery, His pure and sinless nature. Moses described God's holiness in a rhetorical question in Exodus 15:11, "Who else among the gods is like you, O LORD? Who is glorious in holiness like you-- so awesome in splendor, performing such wonders? "God's holiness refers to both His majesty and His moral purity. God himself is an entirely different category in which He is the only member." (p. 106)¹

How Does God Reveal His Holiness?

There are numerous ways in which God reveals His holiness to us: (p. 107-115)¹

1. through people in the Bible such as Moses, David, and Isaiah.
2. in special places, in particular, heaven.
3. through the Law. His instructions and commands for us reveal His holiness.

4. through the prophets whose job it was to reveal truths from God to the people.
5. through His wrath and judgment against that which is not holy (or made holy through Jesus), or that which would seek harm to what He has created and loves.
6. through His Son. Jesus was God in the flesh. He was completely holy except during the time on the cross when He became sin, which explains why He was separated from God at that time.
7. through His Church – Christians individually and collectively.

How can we, sinful human beings, live holy lives?

¹⁴Obey God because you are his children. Don't slip back into your old ways of doing evil; you didn't know any better then. ¹⁵But now you must be holy in everything you do, just as God--who chose you to be his children--is holy. ¹⁶For he himself has said, "You must be holy because I am holy." 1 Peter 1:14-16 (New Living Translation)

Holiness is not about following a set of rules. It is about how passionately our hearts beat for Jesus, how well we reflect His purity and His holiness. The early Christians were called, "holy ones" or "saints", because their lives were obviously set apart, uniquely different, pure, and righteous as compared to the people of the world. They reflected the holiness of Christ. They lived in the world, yet they were not partakers in worldly things. This is how our lives ought to be, also.

Once we understand that God is holy and that we are sinful creatures but our desire is to be holy in His sight, we can be covered by Jesus' holiness simply by accepting the free gift that He offers us in salvation. (Acts 2:38) Once we become Christians, Christ's blood continuously washes away our sins keeping us holy in God's eyes even though we are still imperfect. (1 John 1:7) Those of us who have been redeemed and sanctified through Christ will one day meet God face to face, and our holiness will become permanent as we live with Him for eternity.

How do we respond to God's holiness?

- It takes commitment which requires effort. Hebrews 12:14
- By a change in the way we think – we must be taught and then we must change the way we think. Ephesians 4:17-24
- It's a command we must obey – in all areas of our lives, not just the ones we choose. 1 Peter 1:14-16
- By setting our own selves apart from the world – not to be haughty or holier-than-thou, but to stand out as light in the darkness of the world, to be righteous in the midst of evil. 2 Corinthians 7:1

Conclusion

Revelation 4:8 (NIV)

"Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God Almighty, who was, and is, and is to come."

Whatever we see or know about God is magnified when we look through the lens of holiness. (p. 105)¹ When we finally get the high view of God we should have, we stop comparing ourselves to others because we understand how much we fail to measure up to Him. Instead of trying to figure out how close we can get to sin without actually sinning, we begin trying to figure out how we can get as close to holiness as possible. (p. 108)¹ An upward, accurate view of God, high and holy, leads to an inward, accurate view of ourselves, sinful and in desperate need of God's forgiveness. This realization in turn leads to an outward view of our lives being about God's agenda instead of ours. Finally, our lives start being about doing God's will in meeting the needs of others instead of being about us in our own little worlds. (p. 109)¹ Our deepest desire and effort is moving us continuously upward toward the goal of meeting God's desire for us of becoming holy like Him so that we are properly "attired" to spend eternity in His presence.

God in the flesh, Jesus Christ, gave His everything for us because He created us, He loves us, and He desires our presence with Him for all of eternity. How will you respond to such great love?

References:

¹ Ingram, Chip. ***God as He Longs for You to See Him.*** Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2004.

All scripture references are from <http://www.biblegateway.com/>

Definitions are from <http://dictionary.reference.com>

This lesson was prepared for you and presented by volunteers from Campus Church of Christ. We believe that the Bible is the holy, inspired, Word of God in which He has revealed to us Himself, His love, and His plan for us. We teach no other doctrine than that found in the Bible, and we ask that you examine all teaching from us or anyone else to be sure that it is accurate according to the Bible.

If you are seeking a church family with whom to worship and to grow in your faith, we invite you to Campus Church of Christ, 1525 Indian Trail Rd., Norcross, GA 30093. You may visit us online at www.campuschurch.org. Sunday morning worship services are at 8:30 and 11:00. We have Bible classes for all ages at 9:45. Sunday evening, we meet at 6:00 and Wednesday evening at 7:00.