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Judgment and God's Compassion

by Doy Moyer

When Abraham was told about the destruction of cities known for unrepentant wickedness, he didn't rejoice in that, but begged for them to be spared. When Jonah confronted a city of wickedness (and repentance), he pined for their destruction. Who are we more like?

Common to both accounts is 1) the absolute right of God to be the Judge, and 2) the compassion and lovingkindness of God to save. God judged Sodom because "their outcry has become so great before the Lord" (Gen 19:13), and it was clear there would be no repentance. Yet, though Lot hesitated, the angels took the hands of Lot and his family and led them out, "for the compassion of the Lord was upon him" (v. 16). Lot recognized that this magnified the lovingkindness of God because his life was saved (v. 19). In the midst of judgment, God showed mercy and compassion. He has the right to both.

Jonah, on the other hand, was angry that God spared Nineveh, and his reasoning is interesting: "Please Lord, was not this what I said while I was still in my own country? Therefore in order to forestall this I fled to Tarshish, for I knew that You are a gracious and compassionate God, slow to anger and abundant in lovingkindness, and one who relents concerning calamity" (4:2).

Again, God has the absolute right to judge, and sometimes because of unrepentant hearts He judges. That will always be His right, and His alone.

Yet through His compassion and lovingkindness, He offers opportunities to repent and be saved. “Or do you think lightly of the riches of His kindness and tolerance and patience, not knowing that the kindness of God leads you to repentance?” (Rom 2:4)

This is the gospel message. Judgment is coming, but salvation is offered by God’s grace.

Paul preached, “Therefore having overlooked the times of ignorance, God is now declaring to men that all people everywhere should repent, because He has fixed a day in which He will judge the world in righteousness through a Man whom He has appointed, having furnished proof to all men by raising Him from the dead” (Acts 17:30-31).

Peter taught, “Therefore repent and return, so that your sins may be wiped away, in order that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord” (Acts 3:19).

Why repent? Because there is yet judgment coming due to wickedness. Failure to repent means being caught up in the judgment: “But because of your stubbornness and unrepentant heart you are storing up wrath for yourself in the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God” (Rom 2:5).

Yet why repent? Because of God’s compassion and lovingkindness offering salvation. In His wrath, He remembers mercy (Hab 3:1). In His mercy, He provides hope (Rom 5:1-2).

Some have great difficulty reconciling these two facets of God, but Paul brings both together in Romans 2. To deny that God has the absolute right to judge is to fail to recognize the unfathomable glory and holiness of God on the one hand, and the horrific nature of sin on the other. God does not want anyone to perish (2 Pet 3:9; 1 Tim 2:3-4), but evil is so horrific that it cannot go unpunished. Many unbelievers will speak of “the problem of evil” and ask, “Why doesn’t God do anything about all the evil?” They do not realize that He has and He will. That is why God brings judgment. Yet this is

also why God offers salvation through Christ. “In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins” (1 John 4:10).

People want evil to be duly punished, but many never accept the fact all have participated in evil (Rom 3:23) and repentance is God’s compassionate prescription for averting that judgment. No one has to suffer eternally for it, and this is wonderful news. Sadly, many have come to expect mercy without repentance. It does not work that way. Still others get angry at God because He would dare judge at all, as if God has no such right. What they do not get is that whether or not they like what God does or who God is has absolutely no bearing on whether or not God exists. Failing to repent because of anger about God does not wipe away that failure to repent. God still judges, and God still offers salvation to the repentant. Why fight that? “Therefore repent and return...”

We began by asking, “Who are we more like?” Jonah is not held up as an icon of faith in Scripture. Abraham, on the other hand, is. This is not to say that Abraham was perfect, but his faith, even in the judgment events, is well seen: “Shall not the Judge of all the earth deal justly?”

Yes, He has, He does, and He will. Only God can determine the timing of judgment. Ours is to hold out the hope of the gospel so that as many as will may repent and follow the Lord. By granting repentance, God shows His mercy and grace. Let us never think lightly of this offer.

Prayer Requests & Announcements

- Tom & Ray's Uncle treated for cancer
- Sylvia Ward, Ross's Mom, continues rehab
- Scott Boucher (Sparks NV) cancer treatment
- Keep April in your prayers as she deals with health issues
- The Christians in the Philippines
- Worship Assignments for the month of December are posted on the bulletin board
- Building cleaning and Communion signup sheet for 2020 on back shelf
- Men's meeting after services today

For prayer requests, call or text

Chad @ (208) 221-2587 or Ross @ (208) 680-6590

Worship Assignments

Today

Song Leader – David Porter
Lord's Table – Ray Mitchell
– Chad Mitchell

Wednesday

Song Leader – Ross Ward
Invitation – David Porter

Blackfoot Church of Christ
370 North Shilling Ave.
Blackfoot, Idaho 83221

Meeting Times:

Sunday Morning Classes 10:00AM
Sunday Morning Worship 11:00AM
Wednesday Evening 7:30PM



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