

The God of Mercy and of Justice

Text : **Isaiah 63: 7-10**

INTRODUCTION :

A. How do you picture God ? (**It has a significant affect on a believer's life.**)

1. Some have unreal, but positive impressions of God.
 - a. A kindly old grandfather
 - b. A wise wizard
 - c. A type of combination body guard and ATM machine
2. Others have a more negative image of God.
 - a. A cruel king who makes unreasonable demands on his subjects
 - b. A maniacal and malevolent tyrant who seeks to condemn and to destroy
 - c. An all-seeing eye in the sky who looks for reasons to condemn

*** ILL.- One who might hold candy out to a child and then strike it down when he reached for it.**

B. Some Christians think God changed between the Old and the New Testaments.

1. They think the God of the Old Testament was angry, harsh, even vindictive.
 - a. They point to the stories of His judgments as their proof.
 - 1) He destroyed the earth in the great flood.
 - 2) He struck many people dead. (**Korah's rebellion .. Num. 16 ... 250 by fire, earth swallowed many, 14,700 died from plague which followed.**)
 - b. They also point to the harsh penalties under the Law Of Moses.
 - 1) All mediums and all spiritists were to be stoned. ... **Lev. 20:27**
 - 2) Anyone who cursed or blasphemed the name of God was stoned. ... **Lev. 24: 13-16**
 - 3) If a girl was not found to be a virgin on her wedding day she was stoned. **Deut. 22:21**
 - 4) If a son was not respectful of his parents he was to be killed. ... **Deut. 21: 18-21**
2. They then contrast all of the positive affirmations of God's love in the New Testament.
 - a. **John 3: 16 ... God SO loved**
 - b. **Rom. 5: 6-11 ... while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us**
 - c. **I John 4: 8, 16 ... God is love**
3. The God of the universe does not change.
 - a. As in the O.T., disrespect was not tolerated in the N.T. church. ... **Ax 5**
 - b. **Heb. 13: 8- Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever.**
 - c. God lives outside the sphere of time. (**Perpetual now**) **II Pet. 3: 8 day = 1000 yrs**

God has always been both a God of mercy and a God of justice.

I. His mercies are too numerous to count.

A. In the O.T. the prophet David described God as being merciful.

1. **II Sam. 24: 14-** Then David said to Gad, "I am in great distress. Let us now fall into the hand of the LORD for His mercies are great, but do not let me fall into the hand of man"
2. **Psa. 86: 15-** But You, O Lord, are a God merciful and gracious, Slow to anger and abundant in lovingkindness and truth.
3. **Psa. 145: 8-9** The LORD is gracious and merciful; Slow to anger and great in lovingkindness. ⁹ The LORD is good to all, And His mercies are over all His works.

B. The prophets of old described God as merciful and compassionate.

1. **Isa. 30: 18-** Therefore the LORD longs to be gracious to you, And therefore He waits on high to have compassion on you. For the LORD is a God of justice; How blessed are all those who long for Him.
2. **Jonah 4: 10-11** Then the LORD said, "You had compassion on the plant for which you did not work and *which* you did not cause to grow, which came up overnight and perished overnight. ¹¹ Should I not have compassion on Nineveh, the great city in which there are more than 120,000 persons who do not know *the difference* between their right and left hand, as well as many animals?"

C. God has consistently been described as compassionate and remains so until this day.

1. **James 5: 11-** We count those blessed who endured. You have heard of the endurance of Job and have seen the outcome of the Lord's dealings, that the Lord is full of compassion and is merciful.
2. **Heb. 2:17-18** Therefore, He had to be made like His brethren in all things, so that He might become a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people. ¹⁸ For since He Himself was tempted in that which He has suffered, He is able to come to the aid of those who are tempted.

D. God has never desired to punish anyone.

Ezek. 33: 11- "Say to them, 'As I live!' declares the Lord GOD, 'I take no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but rather that the wicked turn from his way and live. Turn back, turn back from your evil ways! Why then will you die, O house of Israel?"

* **Did you ever enjoy punishing one of your children ? Of Course not.**

II. Then why do we read so much about God killing people in the O.T. ?

A. To understand this, one must understand the purpose of the O.T.

1. It is:
 - a. NOT for entertainment ... great literature, poetry, etc.
 - b. NOT primarily to teach us the history of the Jews.
2. It is to :
 - a. Reveal God to man. (**One cannot learn of God anywhere else. Self-portrait**)
 - b. Give us hope ... i.e., to reveal the gospel of Christ.
Rom. 15: 4- For whatever was written in earlier times was written for our instruction, so that through perseverance and the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope. (to understand = to have hope)

B. The O.T. teaches us about the nature of sin and the gravity of its consequences.

1. It was a time when spiritual truths were foreshadowed by physical acts.
2. The O.T. graphically emphasizes the truth that, **"The wages of sin is death."** (**Rm 6:23**)
 - a. The garden ... driven from the presence of God.
 - b. The flood ... **all** but a few faithful were destroyed. (**"Get in the ark or be lost."**)
 - c. The falling away and enslavement of God's people .. **His people must stay faithful.**
3. **The crucifixion was the ultimate demonstration of sin's penalty.**

C. The O.T. teaches us about the sovereignty of God.

1. God reigns over all creation.
 - a. He spoke it into existence from nothing. (**It is HIS and it is FOR Him.**)
 - b. He covered the earth with water and then removed it.
 - c. He sent millions of creatures as plagues and then removed them.
2. God reigns over the kingdoms of the earth.
 - a. He created great nations and then brought them down at His command.
 - b. He brought kings to power and made the mighty eat grass.
 - c. He used even unbelievers as He willed.
3. God reigns over the spiritual realm.
 - a. He limited Satan's vexation of Job.
 - b. He sent legions of angels to do His will on the earth. (**II Kg. 6: 15-23, 19:35, etc.**)

D. No one rebels against any sovereign king and is allowed to stand unpunished.

When one sins he deserves punishment (death), but God is being patient.

III. God is a just God as well as being merciful.

A. No one would choose to serve an unjust God.

1. Webster defines “*just*” as :
 - a. conforming to a standard of correctness : PROPER
 - b. being in conformity with what is morally upright or good : RIGHTEOUS
2. Thus, being “*unjust*” would be to act improperly or do what is unrighteous, i.e., bad.

B. God is totally and completely just.

1. God is infinite in all His attributes. (**invariably consistent**)
2. **Neh. 9:13-** Then You came down on Mount Sinai, And spoke with them from heaven; You gave them just ordinances and true laws , good statutes and commandments.
3. **Isa. 30: 18-** ... For the LORD is a God of justice;

C. To be just, God must consistently enforce His standard.

1. The sovereign one must reign, rule, govern.
 - a. To reign, one must have a law.
 - b. A law is only of value if that law is implemented, enforced.
2. There are two requirements for a reign or for a law to be just.
 - a. Punishment must be appropriate to the crime. (**A year in jail for speeding is not just.**)
 - b. The law must be applied consistently and equally to all. (**no friends in the court**)

D. In order to be just, God must punish the violators of His law.

1. **Nah. 1: 3-** The LORD is slow to anger and great in power, And the LORD will by no means leave *the guilty* unpunished.
2. **II Thes. 1: 6-8** For after all it is *only* just for God to repay with affliction those who afflict you, ⁷ and to give relief to you who are afflicted and to us as well when the Lord Jesus will be revealed from heaven with His mighty angels in flaming fire, ⁸ dealing out retribution to those who do not know God and to those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus.
3. It is basically unjust to leave the guilty unpunished.
 - a. There must be one standard for all people. (Cf.- **Gal. 3:28**)
 - b. It's not fair to those who were obedient. (**ice cream if you clean room = only if**)

IV. It is foolish to mistake the patience of God for weakness or injustice.

A. God has gone to great lengths to avoid punishing men, but He will do it.

1. He does not want to see any of His creatures isolated from Him.
II Pet. 3:8- The Lord is not slow about His promise, as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing for any to perish but for all to come to repentance.
2. He has gone to great lengths to save men from their sinful folly.
 - a. **Read ... Rom. 5: 6-11**
 - b. **Read ... Eph. 2: 1-5**
3. The offer of salvation is there, but men must accept it while they have opportunity.

B. This is the time of mercy, but the time of JUSTICE and of judgment is coming.

1. God has set the day ... **Act. 17: 30-31**
2. No body knows when that day will come, but it is certain. ... **II Pet. 3: 10 ff**
3. The punishment of the wicked is sure and it is just. ... **Heb. 2: 2 ff**
4. Each man will face God when He dies. ... **Heb. 9: 27**
5. Every person will face God to receive either judgment or mercy. **John 5: 25 ff**

CONCLUSION :

A. Each person must choose now ... BEFORE ... God calls him to judgment.

1. What have you chosen ?
2. We urge you as the Hebrew writer also urged :
Heb. 4: 16- Therefore let us draw near with confidence to the throne of grace, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.
3. Grace is found only through faith in Jesus as the risen Christ.

B. God has been being patient, but the time of His justice must come.

1. Will you stand before God to receive justice for the deeds done in **your** body ?
2. **OR** – Will you stand before Him to receive the deeds done in **Christ's** body ?
3. What about those you love ? Have you warned them ?

INVITATION :