

Gospel Gleanings, "...especially the parchments"

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The Problem of Injustice

And moreover I saw under the sun the place of judgment, that wickedness was there; and the place of righteousness, that iniquity was there. I said in mine heart, God shall judge the righteous and the wicked: for there is a time there for every purpose and for every work. (Ecclesiastes 3:16-17)

We have all watched the unfolding of human legal processes and concluded that a multitude of factors other than facts and justice controlled the process. We've seen presidents lying with straight face while saying, "I am not a crook," or trying to redefine the simple verb "is" to avoid responsibility for their sins. (I use examples from both current political parties in our country to avoid the appearance of favoring one party over the other. I am thankful for the existence of two political parties to prevent one group of people from gaining excessive power, a scenario that inevitably leads to tyranny. However, neither political party has the answers or can remedy the increasingly complicated problems of a culture that seems determined to forget its moral and Christian roots in favor of just about any worldview other than Christianity.)

In this lesson Solomon sets the stage for his final conclusion in the last verse of the book. At times of intense injustice we need to revisit this profound truth. Without its impact on our thinking, we will not—indeed we cannot—"Fear God and keep his commandments." We'll be too busy complaining at the injustice, asking the proverbial "Why" question, or otherwise falling hopelessly into cynicism, an attitude that will choke out a person's Christian convictions and testimony.

It would require a concerted effort to miss the obvious point that Solomon makes in this context. God has established seasons for everything that He commands us to do. He has made obedience to His Word a beautiful thing. When we understand the seasons of God's goodness and live in harmony with those seasons and teachings, our life takes on an artistic form of moral and ethical beauty. God has made everything that He has commanded beautiful in His

time. However, immediately following this lesson Solomon calls our attention to injustice among men and complains at the ugliness of it, not its mystical beauty. There is nothing beautiful about human injustice, particularly among people who are by their position responsible for justice. The beauty appears in the counterpoint, not the injustice of sinful men. Despite injustice where justice should prevail, God is the final judge, and He shall bring every work to justice in His time. The final Day of Judgment is not a thing to be feared for a person who knows the truth of God. After Solomon reminds us of God's eventual and certain judgment, he revisits the point of divine seasons. For the family of God, the Day of Judgment will be a delightfully beautiful and "seasonal" thing that will magnify God's justice and holiness.

God's original relationship with mankind in the persons of Adam and Eve was based on moral law, not mystical divine orchestration. The advocates of what is typically called "double predestination" teach that God caused Adam and Eve to sin so that He could later gain more glory through redemption and judgment than if they had not sinned. Occasionally advocates of this idea will use double-speak in an attempt to evade the blasphemous idea that God caused sin or causes all the subsequent events of sin and human atrocities against other humans. They will say that God "permits" sinful things with the objective of turning the outcome of every event to His glory. Permission implies approval, and no Scripture even implies that God permits sin and human atrocity. God "permitted" Adam and Eve to eat of every tree in the garden with one notable exception. He forbade them to eat the fruit of that tree. Based on Scripture's clear and consistent teaching, God's first relationship with mankind

involved moral directives, coupled with blessings in/for obedience and consequences in/for disobedience. There is no Scripture that teaches or even implies that God openly gave the moral commandment, but secretly orchestrated (or permitted for that matter) Adam and Eve's sin. In Romans 3:1-8 Paul unequivocally rejected the inherent idea of double predestination, along with the related idea that God in some way "permits" or causes human sin so that His righteousness might be further "commended," a word that means

*"1 to place together, to set in the same place, to bring or band together. 1A to stand with (or near). 2 to set one with another. 2A by way of presenting or introducing him. 2B to comprehend. 3 to put together by way of composition or combination, to teach by combining and comparing. 3A to show, prove, establish, exhibit. 4 to put together, unite parts into one whole. 4A to be composed of, consist."*¹

Notice particularly the first of these meanings, "to place together, to set in the same place, to bring or band together." Paul unequivocally states that human sin does not "work together" for good to those who love God! Therefore when we read Romans 8:28, we should not isolate that verse from its context (nothing of which implies that God is in any way involved causatively or "permissively" with some mystical allowance or approval in human sin) or interpret it so as to create a contradiction in Paul's writings to the Romans or elsewhere.

The overarching point in Ecclesiastes is that God shall bring every act of sin to judgment, both sins committed by righteous people and sins committed by wicked people. This truth affirms what Scripture consistently affirms—that God's relationship with mankind is one of moral directive. You could comfortably call God's relationship

¹James Strong, *The Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible Showing Every Word of the Test of the Common English Version of the Canonical Books, and Every Occurrence of Each Word in Regular Order.*, electronic ed., G4921 (Ontario: Woodside Bible Fellowship., 1996).

with man a "moral covenant." To be accurate, it is a "unilateral" moral covenant. God does not negotiate with man to decide right and what is wrong. He issues the commandments and requires obedience. If disobedience occurs, He shall inevitably impose judgment and appropriate punishment. In the "place of judgment" among men injustice often appears. Jesus even framed a parable around a destitute widow and a corrupt judge. However, in God's court there is no injustice. Divine justice may at times appear slow to our liking, but we may live in the full assurance that God shall judge every sin and deal with them righteously.

God has no "secret will." Any argument for sin based on God's "secret will" is groundless in terms of Scriptural support. If not a single passage in the whole Bible ever mentions God's "secret will," why should anyone defend aberrant views based on the supposed existence of such a "secret will of God"? This point is particularly important when advocates of this idea attribute, either directly or indirectly, the cause of sin and human atrocities to God (under the guise that He either caused it or He "permitted" it for a secret and mystical greater good).

Both Solomon's conclusion regarding God bringing every sin to judgment and Paul's strong denial that human sin in some mystical way "commends the righteousness of God" are in agreement and affirm that God does not cause sin, either actively or "permissively" and selectively. Paul makes the logical point that exposes the fallacy of this argument. If God in some way is involved in human sin for purposes of a greater good, to "commend the righteousness of God," we inevitably define God as a schizophrenic and despotic tyrant who orchestrates evil for His own purposes, thus losing the position of righteous Judge.

Thank God, injustice does not invade the courts of heaven! And thank God, in the end—we know not the time—God shall have the last word with every sin ever committed. He shall judge righteously in every case. Whatever sentence He imposes against sinful humans will be deserved and appropriate to the sin committed. Given this assuring truth, despite human injustice, we can live faithfully to Him and not become distracted at the injustice of sinful men.

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