

General Topics :: Musings about Israel's dilemma and the just character of God**Musings about Israel's dilemma and the just character of God - posted by docs (), on: 2018/10/23 15:05**

From "The Truth of the Cross" - by R.C. Sproul (copyright 1982 by Thomas Nelson pg 17-19 - ch 2: "The Just God")

"We are familiar with the great men of the Reformation period and later, such as Luther, Calvin, and Edwards. But when it comes to the intervening era, the Middle Ages, we hear of few great thinkers other than Aquinas. Yet there was a theologian-philosopher from that period who made an enormous contribution to church history - Anselm of Canterbury."

"Anselm left a legacy of three very important works, all of which were brief. The first two were works in apologetics. One is called the "Monologion" and the other is the "Proslogion." It was in this latter book that Anselm gave his famous ontological argument for the existence of God. Perhaps his greatest contribution was his little work that appeared under the title "Cur Deus Homo?" This title literally means "Why the God-man?" In other words, Anselm was asking why there was a incarnation. Why did Christ become a man?"

"At the heart of Anselm's answer to that question was his understanding of God. Anselm saw that the chief reason a God-man was necessary was the justice of God. That may seem to be a strange answer. Thinking of the cross and of Christ's atonement, we assume that the thing that most strenuously motivated God to send Christ into the world was His love or His mercy. As a result, we tend to overlook the characteristic of God's nature that makes the atonement absolutely necessary - His justice."

"God is loving, but a major part of what He loves is His own perfect character, with a major aspect being the importance of maintaining justice and righteousness (emphasis mine). Though God pardons sinners and makes great provision for expressing His mercy, He will never negotiate His justice. If we fail to understand that, the cross of Christ will be utterly meaningless to us."

"What do we mean when we speak of God's justice? In the ancient Jewish mind, justice was never abstract. That's why, in the Old Testament, justice was inevitably linked with righteousness. Righteousness means doing what is right. Therefore, God's justice has to do with His internal righteousness, His character, which defines everything He does. God never acts according to injustice. He never violates any of the standards or canons of righteousness. A simple definition of God's justice is, "His eternal, immutable commitment always to do what is right." (END)

I was reviewing my notes etc. for an Atonement study class and once again was thinking that it really all begins with God's justice and His unwillingness, even His inability (bear with me in the use of that word when it concerns God) to compromise with sin and leave it unpunished. And yet, as I was briefly going through Dr. Sproul's book, I ran across similar thoughts from his pen. And he mentions this Anselm and his contribution. We can see that God's justice is closely linked with the maintaining of the righteousness of God Himself. God of course is internally righteous. He can't and won't deal with anyone and bring them into fellowship if the issue of righteousness or their lack of it has not been dealt with.

God always has the ability to do right and fallen man does not. Thus is highlighted by Israel's dilemma which in its essence is every man's dilemma. But maybe we should explore that the dilemma of the covenant involves more than just invoking God's mercy and love. The horns of the dilemma pierce deep. Israel is caught in the demands of God's justice even before their acute need of love and mercy be shown them. Thus the incarnation of God in Christ is magnified even further for its absolute wonder! I'm thinking that many critics of eschatology voice the proposal that all this end times stuff and Israel and on and on is just a comic book type of hobby that bypasses the greater message of Christ and the cross. Far be it from the truth in my opinion!! The eschatological events are God and Christ putting the finishing touches on what they began long ago WITH THE INCARNATION AND THE CROSS OF CHRIST AT THE CENTER!

I may be rambling at this point. Likely. But Israel's dilemma is that they were first commanded by God to keep a standard of righteousness in their behavior when they entered the land. But God told them through Moses that they would not be able to do so because God had not yet given them a heart to do so. So a dilemma came into being - God told them to do something while also telling them they would not be able to do it. God had purposefully thrown a divine monkey wrench into the promises made to the nation. In other words, I require you to do this but you won't be able to do it because you don't yet have a circumcised heart (Deut 29:4). And this divine monkey wrench was the grand schoolmaster designed to lead them to the only source of true righteousness which was and is always outside of us. This very same dilemma is wh

ere Israel finds itself today. If we show the futility of Israel's own efforts to extract themselves from the dilemma of the covenant (Romans 10:1-4) aren't we automatically testifying to God's immutable holiness and righteousness? So the issue of Israel and its ramifications can be a witness to the world and the principalities and powers in that it goes beyond just the issue of a nation having failed and being in need of redemptive righteousness. It testifies to the very nature of God Himself which invariably involves His unvarying and immutable justice.

"But if our unrighteousness demonstrates the righteousness of God, what shall we say? Is God unjust who inflicts wrath? (I speak as a man.) Certainly not! For then how can God judge the world? (Romans 3:5-6)

If the issue of Israel is the issue of man itself then the issue of Israel is also the issue of God's very character which always has to maintain justice when it comes to sin. Israel's punishment and dispersion then is not just an historical event. It is rooted in the very internal nature and character of God Himself and His always just demands. So understanding the issue of Israel in the context of eschatology is more than just an understanding of a certain set of chronological events. It is a display and lesson in who God Himself is. Which is far more than just a pop comic book type of interest in eschatology. The dilemma of the covenant, man's need of righteousness and where to get it, tied in with God's internal righteousness and justice, are still being worked out before the eyes of the world when it comes to Israel.

Bear with me if need be. I just got a little excited to see things in fresh light this morning. Civil comments for the purpose of discussion are welcome. If you don't believe Israel has a future and want to bad mouth it and eschatology in general then please just refrain out of courtesy. Courteous and thought out comments welcome if you are inclined. If not, thank you anyway.

Blessings.

Re: Musings about Israel's dilemma and the just character of God - posted by passerby, on: 2018/10/24 1:16

We may methodically posit the mind of God for whatever claim, but in the simplicity of faith, He reveals what is in His heart, our hearts burn with fire for the realization that His lovingkindness endures forever.

What He had declared He will do, it will happen. What had unfolded and is unfolding follows wherever the Almighty say it shall.

To those with simple faith, it can be a profound epistemological ignorance but in their hearts He had gifted them with revelation of peace that passeth understanding.

Re: - posted by docs (), on: 2018/10/25 9:57

Not squabbling here but curious. How do your thoughts, and they are good ones, relate to the fact that within Himself God is JUST and will not ever do what is unjust and unholy by lowering His standards? How does this fit with Israel and every man's dilemma that the JUSTICE and righteousness God demands will not ever be found in man? I'm still musing a bit here and purposefully stirring for comments.

Blessings.

Re: The Everlasting Righteousness - posted by docs (), on: 2018/10/25 10:12

The Everlasting Righteousness goes right to the heart of the gospel of Jesus Christ. How can sinful people be right before a holy God? God's INFLEXIBLE JUSTICE (emphasis docs) demands a perfect righteousness in His creatures; only the everlasting righteousness of the Son of God will suffice! His is sufficient because it is that of God Himself. When a sinner believes on Christ the Savior, his record of sins is erased on the basis of the substitutionary work of Christ on the cross, and Christ's righteousness is freely reckoned to his account. This priceless gift is granted freely to the one who places his faith in the Person of Christ, not in his own merits, graces, or even faith itself. The sufficient righteousness of Christ is the safe ground of peace and joy for the believer, as he looks not at anything in himself but the all-sufficient Lamb of God. (Horatius Bonar - 1808-1889)

Re: - posted by TMK (), on: 2018/10/25 10:30

//God told them to do something while also telling them they would not be able to do it.//

How certain are you of the absolute accuracy of this statement?

I might request my son to do 100 push-ups to build his strength knowing that is impossible for him. But I would not punish him for not doing 100. If I did so, I would be considered an evil man.

Re: - posted by Gloryandgrace (), on: 2018/10/25 10:57

Hi Todd when you judge spiritual things according to the natural mind the answer is always a fault with God so in order to reconcile this biblical truth must be eclipsed so human wisdom can remain intact. God's commands to obey are patently impossible outside God's own in working. When you think as an autonomous agent God must be unjust because you as a little god declare your own wisdom is superior.

Re: - posted by docs (), on: 2018/10/25 11:25

The Covenant Renewed in Moab – Deut 29

1 These are the words of the covenant which the Lord commanded Moses to make with the children of Israel in the land of Moab, besides the covenant which He made with them in Horeb.

2 Now Moses called all Israel and said to them: –“You have seen all that the Lord did before your eyes in the land of Egypt, to Pharaoh and to all his servants and to all his land”

3 the great trials which your eyes have seen, the signs, and those great wonders.

4 Yet the Lord HAS NOT GIVEN YOU A HEART to perceive and eyes to see and ears to hear, to this very day.

5 And I have led you forty years in the wilderness. Your clothes have not worn out on you, and your sandals have not worn out on your feet.

6 You have not eaten bread, nor have you drunk wine or similar drink, that you may know that I am the Lord your God.

7 And when you came to this place, Sihon king of Heshbon and Og king of Bashan came out against us to battle, and we conquered them.

8 We took their land and gave it as an inheritance to the Reubenites, to the Gadites, and to half the tribe of Manasseh.

9 Therefore KEEP the words of this covenant, and DO them, that you may prosper in all that you do.

So the Lord had not yet given them a heart to see and understand. Even at this point and this time in history the main issue was one of the heart. Yet He told them to KEEP the words of the covenant and DO them. This could only come from a willing heart. The people had previously cried out, 'All that you have said we will do!' – The will to perform was there but the ABILITY was not. It was an inward issue even then.

Prediction of Israel's Rebellion

14 –“Then the Lord said to Moses, –“Behold, the days approach when you must die; call Joshua, and present yourselves in the tabernacle of meeting, that I may inaugurate him.”

So Moses and Joshua went and presented themselves in the tabernacle of meeting.

15 Now the Lord appeared at the tabernacle in a pillar of cloud, and the pillar of cloud stood above the door of the tabernacle.

16 –“And the Lord said to Moses: –“Behold, you will rest with your fathers; and this people will rise and play the harlot with the gods of the foreigners of the land, where they go to be among them, and they will forsake Me and break My covenant which I have made with them.

17Â Then My anger shall be aroused against them in that day, and I will forsake them, and I will hide My face from them, and they shall be devoured. And many evils and troubles shall befall them, so that they will say in that day, "Have not these evils come upon us because our God is not among us?"

18Â And I will surely hide My face in that day because of all the evil which they have done, in that they have turned to other gods.

19Â "Now therefore, write down this song for yourselves, and teach it to the children of Israel; put it in their mouths, that this song may be a witness for Me against the children of Israel.

20Â When I have brought them to the land flowing with milk and honey, of which I swore to their fathers, and they have eaten and filled themselves and grown fat, then they will turn to other gods and serve them; and they will provoke Me and break My covenant.

21Â Then it shall be, when many evils and troubles have come upon them, that this song will testify against them as a witness; for it will not be forgotten in the mouths of their descendants, for I KNOW THE INCLINATION OF THEIR BEHAVIOR TODAY, even BEFORE I HAVE BROUGHT THEM TO THE LAND I swore to give them.

22Â Therefore Moses wrote this song the same day, and taught it to the children of Israel.

23Â Then He inaugurated Joshua the son of Nun, and said, "Be strong and of good courage; for you shall bring the children of Israel into the land of which I swore to them, and I will be with you."

24Â So it was, when Moses had completed writing the words of this law in a book, when they were finished,

25Â that Moses commanded the Levites, who bore the ark of the covenant of the Lord, saying:

26Â "Take this Book of the Law, and put it beside the ark of the covenant of the Lord your God, that it may be there as a witness against you;

27Â for I know your rebellion and your stiff neck. If today, while I am yet alive with you, you have been rebellious against the Lord, then how much more after my death?

28Â Gather to me all the elders of your tribes, and your officers, that I may speak these words in their hearing and call heaven and earth to witness against them.

29Â For I know that after my death you will become utterly corrupt, and turn aside from the way which I have commanded you. And evil will befall you in the latter days, because you will do evil in the sight of the Lord, to provoke Him to anger through the work of your hands.

God knew upon their going in to the land that His command to be faithful and KEEP and DO the covenant would be beyond their ability. Yet He plainly told them you must KEEP and DO the words of the covenant to find peace and permanent possession of the land. So a divine dilemma was set up. You must do this but the inclinations of your heart will not allow you to do so. Yet who is to say that God's wisdom was not seen in the dilemma He purposefully set up? How does one eventually come into possession of the ability to obey God except by obtaining a new heart and that only comes from one place. The law, which they could not keep because of a lack of inward ability to do so, was designed to be a schoolmaster to lead them to a source of inward power outside of themselves. If your son cannot do the required 100 push ups and you emphatically state that 100 push ups is the only acceptable thing in your sight then your son must look for a source of strength outside of himself. That would make you a wise dad in setting up this dilemma for your son. Israel's dilemma and every man's dilemma is that they cannot do what God requires and which because of His inward justice God will not lower His standard of requirement.

Verse Deut 31:29 - "evil will befall you in the latter days..." Moses predicted a controversy that for Israel would last even into the latter days of its history. Israel's history and what we see going on today with them is this very same controversy being played out "where does the righteousness God's justice requires come from?" So the events surrounding Israel today are more than just interesting occurrences of history. The inflexible justice and holiness of God is being displayed through them as an object lesson to the world. Only to be solved by Calvary, Israel's present dilemma is the dilemma of every man and is on open display to the eyes of the world.

Re: - posted by TMK (), on: 2018/10/25 11:32

There has been no attempted explanation for such a logical absurdity that makes God a monster.

“His ways are higher than our ways” is certainly true, but His ways have no shadow of evil.

If we believe God does evil things, then how do we know that when we finally meet him that he won't say “hahahah a just kidding” and commence his torture?

Some folks say it's ok for God to do seemingly evil things because He is God and therefore it's really not evil.

By any objective standard, making something impossible and then punishing someone for not doing the impossible is monstrous.

I submit the premise is not correct, or there is a misunderstanding of what was actually going on.

Re: - posted by docs (), on: 2018/10/25 11:42

Why did God tell them they must keep the law knowing beforehand that the ability to keep the law was not within them? God threw a divine monkey wrench into things and purposefully set them on the horns of a divine dilemma. Why would that make Him a "monster" if the setting up of the dilemma was for a divinely wise purpose? Israel's past and present is a divine object lesson of attempting to solve the dilemma by one's own efforts and strength. No greater lesson exists regarding God's inward justice and inflexible requirements. PTL!

Re: - posted by Gloryandgrace (), on: 2018/10/25 12:10

If we cannot receive the truth "what is impossible with man is possible with God. Then our religion is not divine but humanly conceived and accordingly a false religion

Re: - posted by passerby, on: 2018/10/25 12:11

I believe, Todd's question is valid and deserves a valid answer. There are statements in the opening post that can be disturbing or maybe careless assumptions.

Re: - posted by TMK (), on: 2018/10/25 12:14

Docs-/ don't see an issue with that set up if punishment is not part of the equation.

Using my pushups example, telling my son to do something impossible is fine if the purpose is to encourage, etc. No problem with that whatsoever. But if I start whacking him because he was not able to do the full 100 on his first attempt, it enters the realm of shadow and darkness.

Re: - posted by docs (), on: 2018/10/25 12:31

/I believe, Todd's question is valid and deserves a valid answer. There are statements in the opening post that can be disturbing or maybe careless assumptions./

Which statements or assumptions specifically are you referring to? I'm not bowed up in the back or anything raring to start clawing back. I asked for any comments or discussion.

Thank you.

Re: - posted by passerby, on: 2018/10/25 13:09

"At the heart of Anselm's answer to that question was his understanding of God. Anselm saw that the chief reason a "God-man" was necessary was the justice of God. That may seem to be a strange answer. Thinking of the cross and of Christ's atonement, we assume that the thing that most strenuously motivated God to send Christ into the world was His love or His mercy. As a result, we tend to overlook the characteristic of God's nature that makes the atonement absolutely necessary - His justice."

"God is loving, but a major part of what He loves is His own perfect character, with a major aspect being the importance of maintaining justice and righteousness (emphasis mine). Though God pardons sinners and makes great provision for expressing His mercy, He will never negotiate His justice. If we fail to understand that, the cross of Christ will be utterly meaningless to us."

Is God a God of "cold justice"? Did He accomplish the atonement because He has to do it for His sake. Is God so engrossed with Himself and His own welfare?

1 Corinthians 13

If I speak in the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I am a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal.

2 And if I have prophetic powers, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but have not love, I am nothing.

3 If I give away all I have, and if I deliver up my body to be burned, but have not love, I gain nothing.

4 Love is patient and kind; love does not envy or boast; it is not arrogant

5 or rude. It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful;

6 it does not rejoice at wrongdoing, but rejoices with the truth. 7 Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.

8 Love never ends. As for prophecies, they will pass away; as for tongues, they will cease; as for knowledge, it will pass away.

13 So now faith, hope, and love abide, these three; but the greatest of these is love.

Re: - posted by docs (), on: 2018/10/25 14:26

/Is God a God of "cold justice"? Did He accomplish the atonement because He has to do it for His sake. Is God so engrossed with Himself and His own welfare?/

So have you ever really considered that God's own just requirements, stemming from who He Himself is at His core, was a major component of the sacrifice of one innocent at Calvary? I don't think I've considered it as much as I should. Yes, God is full of love and mercy and expresses it in many ways yet a large part of sending Christ into the world was so that God's demands for perfect justice, stemming from the standard of His own perfect character, could be met. He justly punished Christ in our place. God will not compromise with sin. It must be punished.

Dr. Sproul wrote, "As a result, we tend to overlook the characteristic of God's nature that makes the atonement absolutely necessary - His justice."

/Is God a God of "cold justice"?/

I don't think it's a matter of cold justice. It is a matter of what was absolutely required before God could redeem and enter back into fellowship with man.

/Did He accomplish the atonement because He has to do it for His sake??

YES. Dr. Sproul - "Thus, the necessity for the atonement of Christ finds its genesis, in the first instance, in the character

of God. Because He is holy and righteous, He cannot excuse sin. Rather, He must pass judgment on it. The Judge of all the earth must do right. Therefore, He must punish sin - or provide a way to atone for their sin."

Meanwhile, the Lord laid on Him the iniquity of us all.

/Is God so engrossed with Himself and His own welfare?/

I would not think that God's welfare was ever at stake because of the sin of man. Which underlines and highlights dramatically the cross of Christ. God could have folded the show but He chose not to. He chose instead to provide a just atonement which is the ONLY remedy for sin and the punishment due it. Meanwhile, as long as Israel still goes about trying to establish their own righteousness (Rom 10:1-4) they remain caught on the horns of a dilemma which every man is caught on - God requires that of man (righteousness) which cannot be found in man. It has to come from another source.

Perhaps the bells and whistles attached to so much of the gospel proclamation today could be remedied and real revival would come if this basic issue were preached again. I don't claim to have the entire solution to the lack of revival but this perhaps is part of it.

PTL.

Re: 100 pushups - posted by savannah, on: 2018/10/25 17:53

This may be a good time to revisit this thread;

https://www.sermonindex.net/modules/newbb/viewtopic.php?topic_id=56202&forum=48

Re: - posted by passerby, on: 2018/10/25 20:23

What I am pointing out is, in the pursuit of an argument, we may unnecessarily portray the Lord in a careless manner, with our tremendous statements, take for example,

"God is loving, but a major part of what He loves is His own perfect character, with a major aspect being the importance of maintaining justice and righteousness (emphasis mine)",

Can we not make a statement that would portray God better or otherwise we might as well just remain in silence.

Has God did not declare it this way:

John 15:3 "Greater love has no one than this, that someone lay down his life for his friends".

John 3:16 "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life".

Hebrews 9:22 "Indeed, under the law almost everything is purified with blood, and without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness of sins".

Does He need to vacillate His thoughts or actions back and forth between the principles of love and justice like a human being.

Re: - posted by docs (), on: 2018/10/25 20:52

/What I am pointing out is, in the pursuit of an argument, we may unnecessarily portray the Lord in a careless manner, with our tremendous statements, take for example,

"God is loving, but a major part of what He loves is His own perfect character, with a major aspect being the importance of maintaining justice and righteousness (emphasis mine)",

Can we not make a statement that would portray God better or otherwise we might as well just remain in silence./

You haven't pointed out why you think this portrayal is careless. You just point out it is careless. Why do you think that? It may not be normal statement such as some think of it. But it's not too hard to discern that by "a major part of what He loves is His own perfect character" Sproul meant God will not wink at sin but will only fellowship with holiness and righteousness which in essence is what He is.

Do you think any aspect of God's required justice was in play at Calvary? He expressed His love in that He willingly chose to punish His Son on behalf of others. Divine justice required it.

God also spoke in this way,

10 Yet it pleased the Lord to bruise Him; He has put Him to grief...

11 He shall see the travail of His soul and be satisfied. (Isaiah 53:10-11)

God was satisfied because the requirements of divine justice had been paid. Sin has to be punished. It's part of the internal justice and character of God. The wonder is that He loved us enough to make this astonishing sacrifice on our behalf! It provided a means by which man would be able to be extricated from the divine dilemma of being required to maintain an immutable standard of righteousness but being unable to find it within themselves to do so.

Re: passerby - posted by docs (), on: 2018/10/26 15:00

I can see to a degree what you mean about perhaps a couple of the statements. Yet at the same time I don't think Dr. Sproul ventured too far out of orthodoxy or whatever in making his statements. So I hear what you are saying and haven't just dismissed them.

Thank you for your replies.