

# Nature and Character of God

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What Is God Like?

October 13, 2019

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- I. God is the judge
  - A. For the last eleven Sundays, we have been looking at the nature and character of God from a variety of perspectives. Over the last two Sundays, we have considered God's nature and character in light of His role as the Judge of all mankind.
  - B. Today, we are going to conclude our look at God's nature and character as a Judge by looking at **Psalm 7:11-12**, **Luke 12:2-5**, and **1 Peter 1:17-19**.
  - C. Prayer
- II. God's nature and character as seen through His being our Judge
  - A. **Psalm 7:11-12** . . . God is a righteous judge, and a God who has indignation (*anger mingled with disgust or abhorrence*) every day. [12] If a man does not repent, [God] will sharpen His sword; He has bent His bow and made it ready.
    - 1. I want to add to this statement by reading **Psalm 9:7-8**, "But the LORD abides forever; He has established His throne for judgment, [8] and He will judge the world in righteousness; He will execute judgment for the peoples with equity."
    - 2. Returning to **Psalm 7:11**, we see that it begins by pointing out that God is a righteous judge in spite of feeling anger, mingled with disgust or abhorrence – every day – over the way people are living.
    - 3. So what does it mean when the Bible says God is a righteous judge?
      - a. It means that God is **right** or correct in all His judgments, which implies He has all the information needed to make the right or the correct decision.
      - b. It means that God is **just** or fair in all His judgments, or in other words, God impartially renders to each of us what is due based on our beliefs, values, desires, choices, and behavior.
      - c. And it means God is **wise** in His judgments, that is, He judges and applies the rewards or punishments in ways that render what is due **AND** in ways that bring about the greatest good for His kingdom, the world, the nation or community in which a government or person lives, those directly and personally effected by the person's behavior, and the person himself.

4. Now I want to remind you here that God does not judge only to discipline and punish, but also to sustain and reward.
    - a. The important truth here is that God judges both the godly and the ungodly, believers and unbelievers, those who serve Him and those who don't. In other words, His judgments result in rewards for the righteous and punishment for the wicked.
    - b. Jesus affirms this truth in His parable about the sheep and the goats – which is found in **Matthew 25:31-46**.
  5. Continuing on with **Psalms 7:12**, we see that if sinners do not repent, God will punish them – and though it isn't always immediate, it is always certain to happen.
  6. I have two reasons for bringing this to your attention.
    - a. **First**, if we do not repent during this life, we will receive the due consequences of such a choice in eternity.
    - b. **Second**, as long as we are alive and have a sound mind, we can repent, trust in Jesus for salvation from the penalty of sin, and proceed to live a godly life – which results in receiving from God the gift of eternal life.
    - c. As we saw last week in our examination of **Ezekiel 18**, should a believer go back into sin as an intentional way of life, he still has the opportunity to repent as long as he is alive and in his right mind.
    - d. God affirms this in **2 Chronicles 7:12-14** . . . Then the LORD appeared to Solomon at night and said to him, "I have heard your prayer and have chosen this place for Myself as a house of sacrifice. [13] If I shut up the heavens so that there is no rain, or if I command the locust to devour the land, or if I send pestilence among My people, [14] and My people who are called by My name humble themselves and pray and seek My face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, will forgive their sin and will heal their land."
  7. Therefore, it is God's nature and character to be a righteous judge who judges both the godly and the ungodly, and who keeps the door wide open to anyone who will repent and change their ways while living in this world.
- B. Like children sneaking cookies when their parents cannot see or hear them, we adults try to hide our sin – whether we are trying to hide it from everyone, or from those outside the home, or from those we want to impress or gain an advantage with by looking better than we are.

1. John Bunyan's observation of this reality produced this well known quote in Pilgrim's Progress: "A saint abroad, and a devil at home."
2. However, what we think we have hidden from the world, or those nearest and dearest, will come to light one day, for Jesus states in **Luke 8:17**, "For nothing is hidden that will not become evident, nor anything secret that will not be known and come to light."
  - a. Jesus expanded on this truth in **Luke 12:2-3**, "But there is nothing covered up that will not be revealed, and hidden that will not be known. [3] Accordingly, whatever you have said in the dark will be heard in the light, and what you have whispered in the inner rooms will be proclaimed upon the housetops."
  - b. My mother repeatedly said to me, "Be sure your sins will find you out," which is a quote from **Numbers 32:23** (KJV).
  - c. And we know that even if we hide our sin for many years, some investigative reporter might set his sights on us and dig around until he finds enough dirt to expose our sins on the nightly news.
  - d. The point is, we cannot hide our sin from God, and whether in this life or in the next, it will come to light. Now I don't think God does this to simply shame us, or expose how evil we are, but rather to humble us and bring us to the place of having a broken and contrite heart so that we will repent and change our ways.
3. But as I said earlier, God's judgments are not confined to sinners and punishment, He judges the righteous as well for the purpose of rewarding and blessing them.
  - a. Solomon speaks of this in **Proverbs 15:3**, "The eyes of the LORD are in every place, watching the evil and the good."
  - b. So once again, as Judge, God judges both the wicked and the godly, and punished the wicked while rewarding the godly.
  - c. And in just as God will expose the hidden evil we have done, so He will bring to light the godly deeds that no one in this world knows about except God and the one who did them.
4. Therefore, the fact that God punishes sinners and rewards the godly ought to promote both fear and joy in us.
  - a. It ought to promote the fear of God in relation to allowing any selfishness and sinfulness to remain in our lives.
  - b. And it ought to promote joy over the fact that even though righteousness produces its own reward, God blesses it with additional rewards – in this life and the next.

5. So here again, a balanced perspective is vital if we are going to see God's nature and character more nearly as it is.

C. The final truth I want us to consider in relation to God being our Judge comes from **1 Peter 1:17-21**. In this portion of scripture, Peter gives us two solid reasons to take God's role as our Judge seriously, even though we are born-again Christians. Listen carefully as I read it over and you will see what I mean.

1. **1 Peter 1:17-21**, "If you address as Father the One who impartially judges according to each one's work, **conduct yourselves in fear** during the time of your stay on earth; [18] knowing that you were not redeemed with perishable things like silver or gold from your futile way of life inherited from your forefathers, [19] but with precious blood, as of a lamb unblemished and spotless, the blood of Christ. [20] For He was foreknown before the foundation of the world, but has appeared in these last times for the sake of you [21] who through Him are believers in God, who raised [Jesus] from the dead and gave Him glory, so that your faith and hope are in God."
2. The **first reason** to take God's judgment of His children seriously is because He impartially judges everyone according to each person's work, that is, how we have lived our life and what we have done with the particular talents and abilities we have.
  - a. In other words, even God's children will be impartially judged according to their works.
  - b. And this is affirmed by the parable of the talents, which is found in **Matthew 25:14-30**. And though it gives us a simplified picture of this truth, it still affirms this truth.
3. The **second reason** we ought to take God's judgment of all Christians seriously is because we have been bought with precious blood, the blood of Christ.
  - a. In other words, the price Jesus paid for our redemption from the penalty and enslaving power of sin is not only of an exceedingly great value, its value can never be diminished.
  - b. Therefore, the only proper and rational expression of gratitude for having been bought with such a price is to purposefully and persistently pursue a godly life that is both God-pleasing and God-honoring.
4. Though he gives a different reason, the writer of Hebrews affirms this same truth in **Hebrews 10:26-31**, "For if we go on sinning

willfully after receiving the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins, [27] but a terrifying expectation of judgment and the fury of a fire which will consume the adversaries. [28] Anyone who has set aside the Law of Moses dies without mercy on the testimony of two or three witnesses. [29] How much severer punishment do you think he will deserve who has trampled under foot the Son of God, and has regarded as unclean the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified, and has insulted the Spirit of grace? [30] For we know Him who said, 'Vengeance is Mine, I Will repay.' And again, 'The LORD will judge His people.' [31] It is a terrifying thing to fall into the hands of the living God."

5. In light of these verses in **Hebrews 10**, it is exceedingly wise for those who think they are born again Christians yet who continue to unrepentantly practice known sin, to fear the judgment of God. Jesus confirms this in **Matthew 7:21-23**, "Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father who is in heaven will enter. [22] Many will say to Me on that day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in Your name, and in Your name cast out demons, and in Your name perform many miracles?' [23] And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness.'"
6. And finally, Paul exhorts us, and especially those of us who are in ministry, to remain vigilant in living a godly life lest we return to the unrepentant practice of sin and become disqualified.
  - a. We read this in **1 Corinthians 9:24-27**, "Do you not know that those who run in a race all run, but only one receives the prize? Run in such a way that you may win. [25] Everyone who competes in the games exercises self-control in all things. They then do it to receive a perishable wreath, but we an imperishable. [26] Therefore I run in such a way, as not without aim; I box in such a way, as not beating the air; [27] but I discipline my body and make it my slave, so that, after I have preached to others, I myself will not be disqualified."
  - b. The frightening truth in these verses is the word disqualified. To be disqualified is to be treated as if you never entered the race at all and therefore ineligible to receive any prize at all.
7. Without question it is God's nature and character to be just, and at the same time to make room for repentance, to be compassionate, and to show mercy.

- a. Therefore, if He exposes the hidden sins of unrepentant sinners, to be fair He must expose the hidden sins of Christians.
- b. And if He judges unrepentant sinners, then to be fair He must judge the unrepentant Christians.
- c. If He shows mercy to anyone, to be fair He must find a way to show mercy without compromising justice – for compassion and mercy always come at the expense of justice.

### III. Conclusion

- A. Which brings us to the cross! You see, it is in and through the cross that God maintains perfect and complete justice while making room for repentance and for showing mercy and grace.
- B. In other words, though God is exceedingly patient, and though His door is always open to the repentant sinner, and though He does not deal with us according to our sins, but instead shows mercy and gives us grace, He does all this at His own expense, for He is the one who keeps justice just by bearing the consequences and paying the price of what justice demands for sins committed.
- C. Every ounce of mercy we receive from God, we receive at His expense – and it is a great, immeasurable, and almost irrational expense at that.
  1. For how rational is it for anyone to put his own child through horrible torture and then sacrifice his child's life to pay the sin debt of his enemy so that his enemy could go free?
  2. Only those who know true love can understand what God did and why He did it.
  3. You can appreciate what God did, but until you know love as God is love, you can neither understand the completeness of what He did nor why He did it.
  4. And you can give a theological explanation of what God did, but until you know love as God is love, you can neither understand the completeness of what He did nor why He did it.
- D. You see, God paid a debt He did not owe to cover a debt we could not pay. And He did this because it is in His nature and character to love, to show compassion and mercy, to be gracious, to be patient, to be long-suffering, and to want relationship with us, while at the same time being perfectly and completely just.
- E. And it is this justice, bought and paid for by God through the shed blood of Jesus Christ, that I urge us to celebrate as we share in the Lord's Table.