

BC 20 Rom. 3:21-26; Rom. 8:1-4; Justice and Mercy in Christ I. Justice in Christ's Death II. Mercy in Christ's Death

Congregation of our Lord Jesus Christ, few attributes of God receive more attention than God's justice and His mercy. It is hard for us to fathom- to reconcile in our minds- that God is both just and merciful. That He can both love and hate at the same time. Last week we saw God's justice and mercy in the election and reprobation of man. Some are chosen- or elected- and these display God's mercy. Others are passed over- or they are ordained for destruction as reprobate- these prove that God is just. This week we find these two attributes of God- His justice and His mercy- made evident in the coming and condemnation of His Son, Jesus. Many have argued that justice and mercy are mutually exclusive- you can't have both. Either you get what you deserve- or you do not. But in Jesus Christ we find that mercy and justice come together in beautiful harmony. Remember that God is His attributes- He is perfectly and fully just in mercy. Since He is just, He cannot overlook sin. And since He is merciful, He will not condemn the people He loves whose sins are forgiven. So we consider this theme- Jesus Christ displays the justice and mercy of God.

### **I. Justice in Christ's Death**

In our first point we consider the justice of God made evident in the death of Christ Jesus. First of all- as we think of this phrase- the justice of God in the death of Jesus- we are struck by the fact that His death on the cross was not just at all! Justice was not upheld in the process that lead up to Jesus crucifixion! We know that Jesus was condemned by both God and man! While the Son was being tried in the human courts- both the people of Israel and the Roman leaders did not follow due process. There was a lack of evidence and the testimony from witnesses was coerced. Even Pilate had to say in John 19- I find no grounds- there is no guilt found here. This man is innocent! And as far as the Father goes- it was the Father that said back in Matthew 3- this is my beloved Son with whom I am well pleased. So that Father was pleased with the Son- the Father delighted in the Son. There was no deceit in the Son's mouth- as I

Peter 2 puts it- he committed no sin. So when we think of this statement- the justice of God in the death of the Son- we are not speaking about the justice of this event in abstract! No- not at all! Because we know that this event was not just at face value. However, the point of this phrase and its consideration today is made in the context of redemption. How is the justice of God made evident in the death of Jesus when it comes to the purpose of this death? Not that He died- but why did Jesus have to die? As our article states- God made His justice known towards His Son- who was charged with our sins and condemned! Now this should rightly be shocking! When we know who Jesus is- what He was like- when we confess what Jesus deserves. Why would God be pleased to condemn the perfect Son? Psalm 1 says that the man is blessed who fears God- who walks in wisdom's way! Could this be said of any man except Jesus Christ? Will not the judge of the earth do what is right- as Gen. 18 asks? So the justice that we are considering this morning is not justice towards Jesus as such- but rather the justice of God as a principle when applied to our redemption. At issue is this- how can God remain just and justify sinners as Rom. 3 states it? How can God uphold His justice and save His elect and chosen people- when those people do not deserve the grace and kindness He shows them? Now we are getting to the heart of the issue! The fact is- since God is just- sin committed against His majesty must be paid for! For example- if you are going to the store and you want to take an item home- you need to pay for it- right? Well- our sins have incurred a debt to God- a payment must be made if God is to remain just! Since we cannot make a payment for ourselves, God in His good pleasure sends Jesus to make that payment for us! It is kind of like our judicial system. A criminal will not be released unless bond is paid. If that criminal cannot come up with the money, someone else can buy that bond on his behalf. A ransom if you will. If not, that man will remain in jail! Well, we deserve much worse than jail time for all our sins! The fact is, man often makes light of sin. We think God can simply overlook- or smile and wink at sin. But God cannot and He will not sweep sin under a rug- to hide it and ignore it. This debt must be paid- sins need to be atoned for. And that is how the arrival of Jesus displays God's justice- The Son of God took our flesh and our

burden. He was our substitute. Man sinned- and a man would pay for our sins. One of us had to die- and He did! As Rom. 8:3 puts it- God has done what the Law could not do by sending His Son for sin- in Christ He condemned sin in the flesh- so that the requirements of the law might be fulfilled. There can be no forgiveness without satisfaction- and that is what Jesus provides! Or again in Rom. 3:25- God put Jesus forward as a propitiation- to show God's righteousness- to display His justice! The cross proves that sin is a big deal- to be taken seriously! But the cross also proves that God has dealt with this offense justly! The ransom cost of fallen man is incredibly costly- but that is exactly what Jesus has supplied! So God remains just- and the elect have their sins paid for! If we will be forgiven, Jesus had to die! So we see God's justice in the death of Jesus. But, was the Father just in condemning His Son- knowing that His Son remained innocent? Was it right- or fair- for the Father to forsake the Son? Well- we have to keep in mind that the Father never asked the Son to do something that the Son was unwilling to do! In fact, the Son volunteered! The Son said- Here am I- send me! I will go- I will do what you have asked! I will do what needs to be done in order to save a people! I will submit to your will, design and plan! As Heb. 10:7 states- the Son said- Here am I- Behold I have come! This is part of what we call the Covenant of Redemption! So the Father never asks of the Son what the Son is not willing to do! In this way- the Justice of God is also on display!

## **II. Mercy in Christ's Death**

Now that we have seen the justice of God- we move next to consider how the arrival of Jesus proves God's mercy. As we saw last week, the fact that some are saved- that some are delivered from the perdition and fall- is a proof of God's mercy. Election displays this attribute of God. But as our article also puts it- God made known his mercy- He poured out His goodness and mercy on us! Because we who are guilty and worthy of damnation have been given immortality and eternal life! This is what we call the Great Exchange! Our sins have been placed on Christ- while His righteousness have been imputed to us! Although we deserve none of these riches, although we only deserve death, damnation and curses- in

Jesus we have life, union with God and eternal blessing! Any riches we receive- any blessings- any kindness- are all attributed to Jesus Christ and His work for us! That is why Rom. 3:26 continues in this way- In sending Jesus Christ, God has displayed His righteousness- His justice- so that He might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus! He is just- and the justifier of sinful men- because Jesus has paid for our sins and secured our righteousness. God is merciful- in not giving us what we deserve- and God is gracious in given us riches to which we have no claim! But even in His mercy- God remains just! What I mean is this- once a sin is paid for God will not require payment again. God will not require from your hand what Jesus has already supplied! God will not charge double- once from you and once from Jesus! And that is some very good news- isn't it! Imagine going to the grocery store to purchase some items- and as the clerk scans your items, they accidently scan the same item twice! You get home and you look at your receipt- and you are outraged! Why is this one item recorded here twice- why was I double charged! That is not fair- it is not just! Well, you can rest assured that God will never charge twice for a sin! When Jesus paid your debt in full- your account has been settled- and the Father will no longer look for you to supply- or add to- what Jesus has already provided! And that is the glory of the gospel! So we could say that God gave Jesus our justice- while giving us His riches!

To conclude, in Psalm 85:10 we read that steadfast love and faithfulness meet; righteous and peace kiss each other. Only in Jesus at the cross do we see how justice is satisfied and mercy display to the lost. It is at the cross that God's justice is satisfied and our mercy secured! So let those recipients of mercy rejoice in the fact that in Christ God remains just and the justifier of His people!