BC 20; Rom. 3:24-26; Rom. 8:1-4; Is God Just or Merciful? I. The Justice of God II. The Mercy of God III. The Blessings We Receive

Congregation of our Lord Jesus Christ, is God just or merciful- or a little bit of both? When we think of justice and mercy, we often contrast these two. For example, a criminal gets either justice or mercy- never both. Being convicted, the criminal gets justice if he is sent to jail or mercy if he is pardoned and set free. But when it comes to the character of God- He is not partly just and partly merciful. Rather God is perfectly just and perfectly merciful! God must be just! And in His justice, sins must be dealt with. God cannot simply sweep our sins under the rug and pretend that they do not exist. But God is also merciful- and in His mercy we will see that those who have been pardoned cannot be condemned! So this morning as we consider BC art. 20 we will focus on these two attributes of God- His justice and mercy! We consider this theme: the sending of Jesus Christ proves and satisfies the justice and mercy of God!

**I. The Justice of God**

In our first point, we start with an illustration. What would God be like if He was not just? Well, if God was not a just God He would simply smile and wink at sin. Like a doting grandfather- just ignoring sin, the pain sin causes, and the consequence of sin entering the world. But would we really want a God who does not take sin seriously? Would we be compelled to worship a God who smiles as the masses are cut down by murder? Would this be a God that you would want to sing praises to? Surely not! In our hearts we know that God must be just- because the divine judge of the earth will do what is right! He must! Sin must be dealt with! What God promised as a consequence of rebellion must be meted out! We know this- even if we do not want to be the ones to experience God’s justice- we know that if God would be God He must be just! Who would want to serve a God like the Roman gods who were just as fickle and immoral as mankind? So we see that God must be just- and His justice shines through in His work of salvation. Now to be clear, when we are considering the justice of God in our BC article, we are not considering God’s justice as poured out on the wicked, reprobate man. We are not looking at the fact that God is just in condemning to hell someone who refusing to repent and believe. Although true, that is not our focus today. Rather, we will see God’s justice on display in His work of saving His people! So then, how can a holy God pardon wicked sinners? How is God’s justice upheld when He loves and adopts His people who are by nature rebellious, children of wrath? The answer is found in the substitutionary atonement! In other words, God is and remains just when He saves His chosen people because the laws of justice are upheld! What is the law of justice? Well, as God said to man in the garden, the soul that eats the fruit shall die. And as we saw from Rom. 7 a few weeks back, sin entered the world through Adam- and death through sin. But Christ was obedient, and by His perfect righteousness life was gained! So although we are the sinners who deserve to die, God uphold His own justice when He sends someone- specifically Jesus- to die in our place! Our salvation does not offend God’s justice but rather upholds it- in that Jesus satisfied the wrath of God by becoming a curse for us- in our place! As our BC article put is- God sent His Son to assume our nature in order to bear in it the punishment of sin. So God does not and cannot just sweep our sins under the carpet- pretending that the dirt does not exist. But what God can and has done is take the dirt of our sins and place them on Jesus- so that by His shed blood they would be washed away! The curse and guilt are dealt with! Our reading from Rom. 8:3 clarifies that Jesus was sent to do what we could not. Our flesh was weakened by sin- unable to fulfill the Law. So Jesus takes on our flesh and by His suffering and death He condemned sin in the flesh. Jesus is a sin offering! For us to avoid the consequence of our sin someone has to make amends- to satisfy God’s justice and pay the debt! And again in Rom. 3:25 we read that Jesus was put forth as a propitiation. This means that Jesus satisfied God’s justice and wrath- by drinking the cup of God’s wrath and bearing the penalty in His flesh. So the Father satisfies His own justice when He sends His Son to earth- and the Son fulfills the requirements of the Law when He said on the cross- it is finished! This statement means that the payment has been accepted! So to summarize our first point, God is just as we read in 3:26. He shows Himself just in this- in order for us to be forgiven someone had to pay our debt!

**II. The Mercy of God**

But more than that- God is not only just – He is also the justifier! Not only has He seen to it that His justice is satisfied- He is the one who in fact provides this satisfaction! So then, God is just and His justice is upheld when someone pays the debt for us. But God is not only just, He is also merciful. In some ways, God’s justice and mercy are two sides of the same coin. Where God’s justice describes the reason why Jesus must come and suffer in our place, God’s mercy describes the motivation for why Jesus would be sent! As we read in Rom. 8:3, the law was powerless as we were weakened by the sinful nature. In other words, we could not save ourselves. But God did this by sending His own Son in the likeness of man. And again in Rom. 3:26- God is just and the justifier of the one who can faith in Jesus Christ! So mercy is given to those who trust in Jesus- these are the ones who are pardoned. Remember that justification describes the transfer of debt! Our sins are credited to Jesus and His righteousness is credited to us. And again, as we all remember from John 3- for God so loved the world that He sent His one and only Son. We are the objects of His love and the recipients of His mercy. It is because the Father has poured out His wrath on His Son- forsaking His Son- that He can pour out His mercy on us! Mercy is where God does not give us what we deserve. So mercy is, by its definition, undeserved! We are justified by His grace as a gift- or as Eph. 2 puts it- by grace you have been saved through faith- not of yourself- it is a gift! But not only is this mercy undeserved, it is also sufficient. All that is needed has been provided! The mercy of God actually accomplishes our salvation. This merciful provision of a savior does not just make salvation possible; it actually secures that salvation! We are not only salvable- but fully saved! By the cross- Jesus Christ and Him crucified- we are fully and completely saved! Fully ransomed and pardoned! The fact is, for those in Christ, God’s anger has been turned away! God does not look at you with anger, but with love! Tender compassion! He does not need or look for any other payment- you are welcomed into His family! The recipient of His mercy! So as our article summarizes, God made known His justice towards His Son, and He poured out His goodness and mercy on us.

**III. The Blessings We Receive**

Sone of you may remember that there was a book released a few years ago called “Love Wins.” The point of this book was that because God is love, He would never send someone to hell. But the fact is, God’s love and justice are not opposed! It is not as if God’s love cancels His Justice- rather God’s love works within the realm of His justice to secure our salvation! Our article then concludes by highlighting the benefit that we receive because God is both and merciful. Because of His Jesus work, we have justification, immortality and eternal life. Not only are we spared from wrath, but we are also granted life- even everlasting life! We have already read of our justification in Rom. 3- we are justified by His grace! We are given life- pardoned and now received! He has taken on our guilt and given us blessings! Made children- now heirs to everlasting life! This is what we now have in Him!

Once Jesus had been sent, because God remains just- it now stands that those who are pardoned cannot be condemned! God will not double charge for sin. You know that sometimes when you buy something from the store you are accidently double charged- your item is scanned twice so you are charged more than you should. Well, God will never do that! Once you have been paid for and your sins have been pardoned- God will not require further payment from you! Behold what manner of love the Father has given!

To conclude, today we have seen that God’s mercy and justice are not only compatible- but they remain a necessary aspect of God’s character and work. God’s justice and mercy is what guides us to worship Him properly- with fear and reverence because He is just- and with joy and thanksgiving because He is merciful! How can God be just and the one who justifies? Only by way of Jesus and His substitutionary atonement! In this article the incarnation is linked to atonement- Justice and mercy kiss- and peace is secured between a holy God and sinful man! As our theme states: the sending of Jesus Christ proves and satisfies the justice and mercy of God! Praise God that He is both just and the justifier!