

Born to Win

Liberty and Justice

by Ronald L. Dart

One of the most persistent, nagging questions that dogs the Christian faith is called “theodicy”—theodicy, a new word for your vocabulary. It means the...

defense of God’s goodness and omnipotence in view of the existence of evil

The Merriam-Webster Dictionary - “theodicy”

I mean, the Christian faith has been around now for 2,000 years now, and people are *still* fighting with this question. It has a name. It’s had a name ever since...I don’t know *how* far back the name theodicy goes; it’s based on Greek, so who knows. The point simply is: When you understand that God is good, and you understand that God is omnipotent, *why does he allow the existence of evil in his world?* And it’s a problem that has troubled Christians down through all ages. Not that many years ago there was a popular book titled *When Bad Things Happen to Good People*, where a rabbi sets out to try to explain theodicy to people: How in the world can bad things happen to good people in a world where a God is good, and where God is all-powerful?

Now, I’ve noticed something else: You can explain this to people again and again and again and again, and for some strange reason the explanations don’t stick. You can explain it, you can make it clear, and then something *terrible* happens and they will say, “I don’t understand how God could let this happen to me.” That’s the question of theodicy: “Why would God let something this bad happen to me? I don’t deserve this. This shouldn’t have come my way.” (And, of course, we understand “deserving” has nothing to do with it.) It’s because people still cling to the God of their imagination instead of the God they find in the Bible. We’ve talked about that before [*See “The God of Your Imagination”, ID: 0304.*]. Oddly enough, one of the clearest and simplest answers I’ve ever seen to this—and stated in the most simplest possible terms—is found in, of all places, the *Pledge of Allegiance*. Never thought of that.

I pledge allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America, and to the Republic for which it stands, one Nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.

The Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag - 4 U.S. Code § 4

Liberty and justice. One nation, under God, with liberty and justice for all. And this is what the nation, and a nation’s relationship with God, *has to be about*: liberty and justice—two of the most awful words in our language. They are inseparable twins that define the foundation of Man’s relationship with God.

Now, this came home to me not long ago because of a letter I got from a lady who just couldn’t understand why it was that God could not liberate Israel from Egypt, and Egyptian slavery, without

killing all the Egyptian children—you know, the firstborn of all the families of Egypt. And I thought, “Well, it’s a logical question, and she has every right to ask this question.” Because, indeed, if God is omnipotent then we have to conclude it was possible for him to get Israel out of Egypt without harming a hair on the head of any Egyptian child. Right? How could we say otherwise? If we say otherwise, then we say God is not omnipotent, he is not all-powerful, he is not one who can do whatever he pleases. He could have caused all the Egyptians to go into a coma. He could have caused them all to lapse into unconsciousness. The Israelites could then have gathered all their stuff together; got on their camels, horses, donkeys, whatever they were using; trekked across, gone dry-shod across the bottom of the Red Sea; and disappeared. God could have erased all the tracks. The Egyptians could have awakened to no Israelite in sight, and they have *no idea* where they went. Right? Could have done that. And the question the woman wanted to know: *Why didn’t God do that?* It would have been a piece of cake.

There would have been, in that situation, liberty; but there would be no justice. There would have been no justice had God done that. And the thing that came home to me (and it came as I was working on a series of radio programs and I could not escape it): The Egyptians had killed not merely the firstborn of the Israelites; they had killed *all* the male boys of the Israelites. Remember the story [**Exodus 1**]? They were worried about the Israelites overpopulating their part of the country. They were afraid, in the event of a war, the Israelites would turn against them. The Israelites were getting too strong. They said they had to weaken them. So, for whatever period of time, they told the midwives, “If a baby is born, if it’s a boy, kill it.” Well, the midwives didn’t do that, and made their excuses—got away with it. So Pharaoh told his soldiers, and all the Egyptians, that they were to make a diligent search, find all the Hebrew children...if they found a Hebrew boy, they were to throw it in the river to the crocodiles. And so God only knows how many hundreds, perhaps thousands, of Israelite little boys were thrown into the Nile River during that period of time. Thus, the first plague that Moses brought on the Egyptians when he came down there was to turn the river into blood [**Exodus 7**]. There’s no coincidence here, folks. That was a deliberate act of justice on God’s part. It was a sign, it was a statement, and a connection that between, “The place where you threw all these babies...that river is now blood. You can’t drink of it any longer.” And it was a startling thing for the Egyptians, and every bit of water they could find anywhere was being turned into blood; and indeed they had shed enough blood, God was giving them now blood to drink.

It was justice—severe justice; but you see, a severe crime requires severe justice or there is *no justice at all*. And there’s something else you need to understand (it may be hard to get your mind around it): that without justice, liberty cannot endure. It’s not possible. You can’t have liberty without justice. Try it, and your society will dissolve into chaos.

The last plague was to take the life of every *firstborn* male in Egypt [**Exodus 11–12**]. Not everyone; didn’t take all the boy babies, just did firstborn of all of Egypt, thereby making a statement of the nature of the crime that was being punished in this particular situation. Now, the God of our imagination might not do that. But the God of the Bible most certainly *did* do that; and says he did it, takes the credit, the blame, or whatever it is you want to give him for it. And there’s no point in dodging the issue, no point in apologizing for God, no point explaining God away. God did it because without it there would have been no justice. And without justice, liberty won’t last and, in fact, doesn’t really mean anything.

Why did God allow the Egyptians to kill the Israelite babies in the first place? If he’s good, if he’s all-powerful, why didn’t he stop it? The question of theodicy. The answer? Liberty. God is just as dedicated to liberty as he is dedicated to justice. And if you don’t have the liberty to do evil, you don’t have liberty. You’re not free. If you don’t have the liberty to do both good *and* evil, to make a choice between good *or* evil...If you don’t have those choices, you don’t have liberty. You are an automaton. Someone once asked me, “Well, why didn’t God make us so that we could not sin?” I said, “He made creatures that couldn’t sin. We call them cows.” Is that what you want to be? God made creatures who *could* sin because he gave them *liberty*.

Now, if men are not free to do evil to one another, then they are not free at all. What that means is that good people, in God's world, are going to be subject to the evil choices of evil men; and that's just the way the world is because *God made us free*. Set us free. Turned us loose. Said, "You make the choice, and then we'll deal with what happens later." But you see then, if God never does *anything* in response—if he never brings any karma (as people like to call, "some bad karma coming down"), then there is no justice. Nothing gets paid off. There is no balance in Creation at all. The Germans, yes, the Germans performed the Holocaust and killed millions of people in their gas chambers in Eastern Europe. I don't suppose any of you saw Germany after World War Two was over—if you saw how devastated the country was, how few men there were and how many women there were left—who have any idea of the devastation that was *reaped* on Germany during World War Two. And then, of course, you would have to visit Hiroshima and Nagasaki, to see what happens there, to realize the retribution that God brought on the heads of the Japanese for some of the evils that they performed—for the Rape of Nanking and other things which probably many of you don't even know anything about. You've heard about the Holocaust because the Jews have determined nobody will ever forget it. (God bless them; I'm glad they won't let us forget it.) But some of the other things, like the Rape of Nanking, many people have never heard of—don't even know where Nanking was, have no idea of what happened there, or what the Japanese did. Well, God saw justice visited on the Japanese as a result of their atrocities in World War Two (and *before* World War Two ever started).

Liberty and justice. Men are free. And if they are free, that means they are free to do bad things to you and me. That means terrorists are free to set off a nuclear bomb right here in Tyler while this service is going on, and all of us disappear in a cloud of vapor. We'd all be gone. They're *free* to do that. God will allow men to do that sort of evil thing. He does intervene in human affairs, because of the prayers of his people; but at the same time, if men...if evil men are not free to do evil things to good people, then they don't have liberty. And God has granted to Man liberty.

Liberty and justice are two of the most important words in the English language for understanding God. Men have liberty, as I said; that means they have the liberty to hurt one another. But Liberty can only be destructive if there is no justice.

There is a scripture in Revelation, chapter 6. It's the fifth seal, the opening of the fifth seal, and it's interesting because of what it says here. Again we are talking about the *real* God—the one that is there, not the one of our imagination. Revelation 6, verse 9:

Revelation 6

AKJV

⁹ And when he had opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of them that were slain for the word of God, and for the testimony which they held:

¹⁰ And they cried with a loud voice, saying, How long, O Lord, holy and true, do you not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth?

Judgment involves vengeance; and, in fact, vengeance is the central value of justice. Unless the blood of innocents is avenged, there isn't any justice. There are some people who foolishly think that vengeance is wrong. How could they possibly say that vengeance is wrong when God says, "Vengeance is mine. I will repay" [**Deuteronomy 32:25**], when God makes it very clear that he's going to render *vengeance* upon unjust men. God speaks of vengeance in the most positive terms for himself. What he prohibits you and I from doing is pursuing our own *personal* vengeance. We have no right to do that. That was against the Law of God in the Old Testament; it's against Christian principles in the New Testament. We're not allowed to pursue our own personal vengeance, but that doesn't mean vengeance is a bad thing. Vengeance is the core value of justice, and that's why these saints under the altar cried out saying, "How long is it going to be before you will judge, and before you will avenge our blood upon them that dwell upon the earth?"

Revelation 6

KJ2000

¹¹ And white robes were given unto every one of them; and it was said unto them, that they should rest yet for a little while, until their fellow servants also and their brethren, that should be killed as they were, should be fulfilled.

More people were going to die. More good people were going to die at the hands of evil men because God granted to Man liberty. But God will also execute judgment and justice. The Egyptians had to learn that, although it may take some time, that vengeance had to come. And vengeance, again, is one of the central pillars of justice. Romans 12:19:

Romans 12

KJ2000

¹⁹ Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath: for it is written, Vengeance is mine; I will repay, says the Lord.

Now, with all this in mind, I'd like you to turn back with me to Jeremiah the 19th chapter, because sometimes people have difficulty in reading the prophets. They find the prophets a little disturbing because, once again, the God of their imagination doesn't match the God they encounter in the pages of the Bible. Now, Jeremiah's book (I am convinced more and more as I make my way through it in the radio programs) is something of a personal journal—memoirs of his conversations with God. All of the messages that we find here were given to Jeremiah; and he told him to go down to the gate of the city (which is the equivalent of our courthouse steps) and deliver these messages to the elders that came and went, and the people who did business there, and even to some extent to the kings and princes in those locations. So Jeremiah went down to the gate of the city and *orally* spoke all these prophecies. At the same time, he wrote them down; and he wrote down what *he* said to God (which I doubt if he told the people in the gates of the city), and he wrote what God said back to him and the things that he was supposed to do—the little *visual* things that he was supposed to use to explain the things that he was trying to say to people...that God gave him these things. So he wrote all this stuff down. In the words of the apostle Paul:

1 Corinthians 10

KJ2000

¹¹ Now all these things happened unto them for examples: and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the ages are come.

This is the *real* God talking here, to a *real* man in his chamber one night, when he tells him, “Here is what I want you to do.”

Jeremiah 19

AKJV

¹ [...] Go and get a potter's earthen bottle, and take of the ancients of the people, and of the ancients of the priests;

“I want you to get the *oldest* people. Not the younger priests, I want you to get the old guys.”

Jeremiah 19

AKJV

² And go forth to the valley of the son of Hinnom, which is by the entry of the east gate, and proclaim there the words that I shall tell you,

Now, I wonder how many of you know what the Valley of Hinnom is—what the expression of it is when you come to the New Testament. In the New Testament, it's "Gehenna" [γέεννα, Strong's G1067]. It's one of the words for "hell"; because it was a place where fires burned all the time, burning off the refuse of the city. I expect it would have been an *awful* place to have been downwind from; and I don't think it was all that far away from the city, as a matter of fact. Now, why was this particular spot what it was? Why had it been turned into a burning place, even for dead bodies, at this time? Why was it a place of refuse? Well, it was this because of an earlier prophecy Jeremiah had given about what was going to happen. And he's going to talk more about it right here, on this particular occasion, as he brings these people down here; because stuff went on in the Valley of Hinnom that would absolutely curl your hair (perhaps making it straight).

Jeremiah 19

KJ2000

³ And say, Hear you the word of the LORD, O kings of Judah, and inhabitants of Jerusalem; Thus says the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel; Behold, I will bring such evil upon this place, that whosoever hears of it, his ears shall tingle.

Now, first right off the bat, you've got to understand something. We know that God is just. Therefore, when he says, "I'm bringing evil upon this place so bad that, anybody who hears it, his *ears* are going to tingle when he hears about it. It's going to give him the *shivers* when he hears what took place in this place." Now, God would not be doing that unless what had taken place here was *so* evil, *so* rotten that it deserved the kind of judgment that was going to come down on it...*richly*. Okay. He says, "I'm going to do this"...

Jeremiah 19

AKJV

⁴ Because they have forsaken me, and have estranged this place, and have burned incense in it to other gods, whom neither they nor their fathers have known, nor the kings of Judah, and have filled this place with the blood of innocents;

Innocents. Now, who's innocent? You know, if you and I sat around chatting for a while and really got honest with each other, we wouldn't fall in that category, would we? But I see babes in arms here. They're innocent. They haven't done anything wrong. Is that what he's talking about? Listen, as he goes on to say,

Jeremiah 19

AKJV

⁵ They have built also the high places of Baal, to burn their sons with fire for burnt offerings to Baal, which I commanded not, nor spoke it, neither came it into my mind:

I want you to think long and hard about what you just read and the implications of what you just read. These people, and all the ancients who were there with him on that day, knew it. He selected the old men because they would be more likely to listen to him and say, "I know you're telling the truth". They'd seen it with their own eyes and knew it was so—that the Israelites, the Jews, had taken their own children down there; and they had burnt these children in the fire to that god; as a burnt offering to that god, destroyed their own children. (Hopefully they kill the child before they burn it.) *Why* could they do that? And listen to what God says: "I never commanded that. I didn't speak it. It never crossed my mind."

What does that tell you? What it tells me is this: These people *thought*, in some perverted way, that this was a correct way to worship God—it was a part of the worship of God, that this was acceptable and pleasing to God. You've got to realize (unless you have studied your biblical history you won't know

this) these people had moved altars to Baal right inside the courtyard of the temple of God. They had put Asherah poles inside the very enclosure of the temple of God. If you want to look it up, look up “Josiah” in your concordance; and look up the things that Josiah had to do to cleanse the temple of God, to get those things out of there during his reign [2 Kings 23]; and you will understand what had to be done. These people had so commingled the worship of God, the worship of Baal, the worship of Moloch, the worship of Chemosh—the whole pantheon of Middle Eastern gods—and had corrupted the worship of God so much that they had gone to the extent of burning their own children in the fire to those gods. *Unspeakably* evil.

So, Jeremiah drags the elders down here and says, “I’m going to do something in this place—such a judgment—that anybody who hears what I have done here, his ears will tingle when he hears it.” God is just. And, you know, I think of the day when they brought little children to Jesus for him to put his hands on them and bless them. His disciples said, “Oh, keep these kids away. He doesn’t have time for kids.” And Jesus rebuked his disciples and said, “You bring them in here to me.”

Matthew 19

ERV

¹⁴ [...] Suffer the little children, and forbid them not, to come unto me: for of such is the kingdom of heaven.

I believe that children are precious in God’s sight. I think he loves children. And I think he absolutely *abhors* any person who would harm a child. Just a little illustration Allie mentioned to me just last night: She was talking about the occasion where God was calling Moses, and was going to send Moses into Egypt, and Moses starts making excuses. He gets all the way down finally to the *third* excuse, and the scripture says,

Exodus 4

NASB

¹⁴ Then the anger of the LORD burned against Moses[...]

For what? For *making excuses*. What do you think goes on inside of God when he knows someone has harmed a child? God’s *fury*, I’m sure, must rise up within him; and he must store that fury up, because he is patient and he allows it to happen, because he has granted to Man liberty. And if Man doesn’t have liberty to do evil to a child, he doesn’t have liberty at all. But there is also *justice* right on the heels of that liberty, and *God will make Man pay*. You can write that down in your book of remembrances: God will make men pay. How, when, exactly who will do it, under what circumstances they do it? Ah, that’s up to God; and I could never even begin to say, because I am not a prophet. All I am is a person who *reads* the prophets and sometimes trembles at the things that I read in the prophets, as I think all of us should.

Jeremiah 19

KJ2000

⁶ Therefore, behold, the days come, says the LORD, that this place shall no more be called Topheth, nor The valley of the son of Hinnom, but The valley of slaughter.

⁷ And I will make void the counsel of Judah and Jerusalem in this place; and I will cause them to fall by the sword before their enemies, and by the hands of them that seek their lives: and their dead bodies will I give to be food for the fowls of the heaven, and for the beasts of the earth.

In other words, carcasses lying all over in the Valley of Hinnom, being burned.

Jeremiah 19

KJ2000

⁸ And I will make this city desolate, and a hissing; everyone that passes thereby shall be astonished and hiss because of all its plagues.

Probably what he's saying is they will walk by here and they will *whistle*. You know how we do: [**Whistles**] Wow! Because of all that has happened in this place. And he's not through:

Jeremiah 19

KJ2000

⁹ And I will cause them to eat the flesh of their sons and the flesh of their daughters, and they shall eat everyone the flesh of his friend in the siege and distress, with which their enemies, and they that seek their lives, shall distress them.

¹⁰ Then shall you break the flask in the sight of the men that go with you,

¹¹ And shall say unto them, Thus says the LORD of hosts; Even so will I break this people and this city, as one breaks a potter's vessel, that cannot be made whole again: and they shall bury them in Topheth, till there be no place to bury.

¹² Thus will I do unto this place, says the LORD, and to its inhabitants, and even make this city as Topheth[.]

When I read this, and I ponder the society we live in today... You've got to understand: that was a very religious society. You go back and you read it; it's not that they were irreligious. It's not that there was no religion. There was religion *all over the place*. It was a *very* religious place and time—very *civilized* time and place. And these people thought they were righteous and good people, who were doing all these things that God spoke about and was holding them in judgment for. So that if you looked at their land, and you looked at what they called up to the gates as court cases... you know, they bring some guy up to the gate to actually punish him for some crime, they did this sort of thing constantly. And yet, they still allowed children to be burned to Baal. You have to understand that their whole moral structure had turned.

Now I sit here, in the 21st century, in the United States of America, where we have killed more children many times over than ever were killed by... than *could have been* killed in Jerusalem in those days. Since *Roe v. Wade*, there have been *40 million* potential lives snuffed out in this country. And people are not prosecuted for it, just as people were not prosecuted in those days for burning their children to Baal. And they were religious people who did these things. They were people who went to church as they saw it and did the things that they thought they were supposed to be doing. And yet they were killing off their own children. (In many cases it was the firstborn that this was done to.) And God said, "How could you do this?"

And my question I had to ask myself was: "Where is the moral difference between, you know, a child that has *just* been born being burnt and sacrificed to this god; and on the other hand a child which might have been born in 5 minutes, or 10 minutes, or an hour, or 2 days being killed off and burned in a hospital incinerator? Where's the moral superiority in what we are doing today and what they were doing then?" Of course, I realize that in this church I'm speaking to the choir; but at the same time, somehow or other, we've got to come to understand that the judgment of God (not *if* it comes, *when* it comes) will be very severe, and it will not be because we're innocent. It won't be because we don't deserve anything bad to happen to us. And candidly, I don't really think that September 11th was a result of this; I don't think that's what that was about. I think what this is all about is something much stronger, much more significant, and much more far-reaching than anything we could ever have imagined have happened to us as a people. Remember the Civil War? Remember how many men... I think it was close to 50,000 [casualties] at Gettysburg alone. (We worried about 53,000 men, in all the years we were in Vietnam, we lost those men over there.) That Civil War was a *terrible* holocaust in

this country. And it came at the end of a long period of holding other men captive, mistreating slaves, killing slaves, treating people as property. Is there a judgment of God for people who do that sort of thing? Maybe the Civil War *wasn't* that judgment; I have no way of knowing. All I know is that we killed off an awful lot of people in the Civil War. We paid a horrible price in order to end slavery in this country. And there could be a good case made in the Supreme Court of heaven: We had it coming.

And so it goes with *all* of the events of mankind. Anyone who thinks that God is not there, and that God is not going to hold men's feet to the fire for the things that they have done in this life, doesn't know the God of the Bible. And that's my job today: it's simply to remind us all that God *is there*. He is *fair*, he is *just*, and (as Paul put it on one case):

Romans 11

AKJV

²² Behold therefore the goodness and severity of God[....]

And it's just *so easy* to forget one side or the other of that. People whose lives are coming apart can only see the severity of God. People who are doing just fine in life can only see the goodness of God. But the fact is: God is a God who founded Man's whole societies to come on principles of *liberty and justice*. And you can change your government, you can have revolutions and kings come and go, but you cannot escape justice when the time comes when God will bring it upon our heads. So, if you'll turn; continuing in Jeremiah, chapter 19, verse 13:

Jeremiah 19

AKJV

¹³ And the houses of Jerusalem, and the houses of the kings of Judah, shall be defiled as the place of Tophet, because of all the houses on whose roofs they have burned incense to all the host of heaven, and have poured out drink offerings to other gods.

¹⁴ Then came Jeremiah from Tophet, where the LORD had sent him to prophesy; and he stood in the court of the LORD's house; and said to all the people [*Right in the courtyard of the temple.*],

¹⁵ Thus said the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel; Behold, I will bring on this city and on all her towns all the evil that I have pronounced against it, because they have hardened their necks, that they might not hear my words.

Mmh. Hardened their necks. And this is something that, you know, I think that we have got to watch out for in our lives and approach that we make in life. It's that we don't harden our necks; that we don't refuse to hear God; that we don't say, "Well, I'm okay. I'm doing just fine. I haven't done anything to deserve God's evil". But again to open our Bibles, to kneel before God, to ask God, "Show me where I'm wrong. Correct me, teach me, and help me." There's a psalm I want you to read—Psalm 50, verse 1:

Psalms 50

AKJV

¹ The mighty God, even the LORD, has spoken, and called the earth from the rising of the sun to the going down thereof.

Here we go. One end of the earth to the other, God is calling out.

Psalms 50

AKJV

² Out of Zion, the perfection of beauty, God has shined.

³ Our God shall come, and shall not keep silence: a fire shall devour before him, and it shall be

very tempestuous round about him.

⁴ He shall call to the heavens from above, and to the earth, that he may judge his people.

Bang! There it is, right off the page. God is coming, there's a fire burning before him, and he's going to judge his people. Why? Because he's a God of justice. He gave us liberty, and now it's time to pay the piper.

Psalm 50

AKJV

⁵ Gather my saints together to me; those that have made a covenant with me by sacrifice.

Have you made a covenant with God by sacrifice? I *think* you have; but if you've ever kept the Passover, you have. If you've been baptized, you have. If you've made Jesus Christ the offering for *your* sins, you've made a covenant with God by sacrifice.

Psalm 50

AKJV

⁶ And the heavens shall declare his righteousness: for God is judge himself. Selah.

Oh, yeah. God is judge, and that's a *sobering* thought.

Psalm 50

AKJV

⁷ Hear, O my people, and I will speak; O Israel, and I will testify against you: I am God, even your God.

⁸ I will not reprove you for your sacrifices or your burnt offerings, to have been continually before me. [*I don't want to hear about them.*]

⁹ [*Listen to this.*] I will take no bullock out of your house, nor he goats out of your folds.

¹⁰ For every beast of the forest is mine, and the cattle on a thousand hills.

"I don't need *anything* that you have got! You got that straight?"

Psalm 50

AKJV

¹¹ I know all the fowls of the mountains: and the wild beasts of the field are mine.

¹² If I were hungry, I would not tell you: for the world is mine, and the fullness thereof.

"You are the last person I would tell I was hungry. I don't need anything from you. The *world* is mine, and the fullness thereof." Do we have that straight? Do we *really* understand that the ground we stand on belongs to God, wherever it is, regardless of who has the deed to it?

Psalm 50

AKJV

¹³ Will I eat the flesh of bulls, or drink the blood of goats?

¹⁴ [*Let's get this straight.*] Offer to God thanksgiving; and pay your vows to the most High [*Pay your vows.*]:

¹⁵ And call on me in the day of trouble: I will deliver you, and you shall glorify me.

What are you supposed to do? Offer thanksgiving, not cows. Offer gratitude toward God, you know, not another animal.

Psalm 50

AKJV

¹⁶ But to the wicked God said, What have you to do to declare my statutes, or that you should take my covenant in your mouth?

You realize what he's saying, don't you? He's talking about people who think they are religious, who talk about his law, who take his covenant on their lips—who actually pronounce the words of the covenant—who agree with God to do whatever it is they're going to do. "Why are you doing this", he says...

Psalm 50

AKJV

¹⁷ Seeing you hate instruction, and casts my words behind you.

The fact that you are religious *doesn't cut it*. It's not good enough. The fact that you go to church isn't good enough; it doesn't cut it. He's saying, "What do you think you're doing? What do you think you're accomplishing by coming before me like this?"

Psalm 50

AKJV

¹⁸ When you saw a thief, then you consented with him, and have been partaker with adulterers.

¹⁹ You give your mouth to evil, and your tongue frames deceit.

²⁰ You sit and speak against your brother; you slander your own mother's son.

Listen to the stuff he's talking about; he's talking about *the way we live our life*. He's not talking about *where* we worship, what *time* we worship, *where* we go to church. He's not talking about any of that stuff. He's talking about how we interact with the people—how we love our brother, how we treat people, how we handle our human relationships. *That's* what he's talking about: the things we do. He said,

Psalm 50

AKJV

²¹ These things have you done, and I kept silence; [...]

"And *boy*, did you make a big mistake. I didn't do anything initially", God says,

Psalm 50

AKJV

²¹ [...] I kept silence; you thought that I was altogether such an one as yourself [*Just like you are.*]: [...]

Not that you didn't think there *was* no God. You thought there was a God; but you thought God was *just like you are*. He said,

Psalm 50

AKJV

²¹ [...] but I will reprove you, and set them in order before your eyes.

²² Now consider this, you that forget God, lest I tear you in pieces, and there be none to deliver.

“Consider this”...consider what?

Psalm 50

AKJV

²³ Whoever offers praise glorifies me: [...]

Thank God, thank God.

Psalm 50

AKJV

²³ [...] and to him that orders his conversation aright will I show the salvation of God.

Now, I would have to conclude from that that the way we live our life has something to do with salvation. You may be able to find all kinds of theological arguments to your heart's content, but what I see in this is that the justice of God demands—*demands*—that we pay very close attention to the requirements of God as to how we live our life; because a *just* God is going to have to demand that of us unless those things are put under the blood of Jesus Christ, Jesus Christ speaks for us, and saves us. Now you've got to understand. When you understand God's *justice*, then you should begin to understand desperately the need for a savior, and how badly we need that savior. Without him, God's judgment will come down on our heads in fire, and that will be the end of us.

So we look into these things to see where God would take us with them. In Romans, chapter 8...one of the things that I personally, truly value is the liberty I have in Christ. It means more to me than I can tell you. But if I fail to value God's justice, then I am a fool. Romans 8, verse 16:

Romans 8

AKJV

¹⁶ The Spirit itself bears witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God:

¹⁷ And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together.

¹⁸ For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time [...]

Which we suffer because of our liberty. Those sufferings...

Romans 8

KJ2000

¹⁸ [...] are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us.

¹⁹ For the earnest expectation of the creation waits for the manifestation of the sons of God.

²⁰ For the creation was made subject to vanity, not willingly, but by reason of him who has subjected the same in hope,

It wasn't a frivolous choice on God's part; he subjected it to vanity in the very fact that he gave us liberty.

Romans 8

KJ2000

²¹ Because the creation itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the

glorious liberty of the children of God.

²² For we know that the whole creation groans and travails in pain together until now.

²³ And not only they, but ourselves also, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, that is, the redemption of our body.

That just God *is* going to come. He *is* going to judge the world. And, thank God, we have an advocate—Jesus Christ the righteous, whose righteousness is sufficient to carry us through hard times ahead. But I really think it would be stupid of us to think that between now and the return of Christ that we're not going to suffer *many things* in this world. Not so much because of the vengeance of God; because, if Jesus Christ sits at his right hand making intercession for us, God will not be avenging himself upon us; but that doesn't mean we're not going to suffer at the hands of evil men, who make evil choices, and who cause us to be hurt.

So let's put our trust in God. Let's remember that he is a kind God, a merciful God, a God who grants liberty, and a God who also requires justice.

Transcript of a sermon by
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