

# GOD, THE JUST KING

**+ SESSION IN A SENTENCE:**

God is right to judge people for their sinful conduct and hearts, but in His mercy, He judged Christ on their behalf so that they might be saved.

**+ BACKGROUND PASSAGES:**

Amos 5; Romans 1–3

**+ SETTING:**

The people of Israel wanted a human king to go out before them and fight their battles, never mind that it was the Lord who had always been there doing exactly that. Yet the Lord gave the people what they wanted, and while he began well, he proved to be a king out for his own reputation and gain. Therefore, the just God who raised him up also tore the kingdom away from him. God's justice, both past, present, and in the promised future, serves as a warning against our sin and should lead us to repentance and faith in Jesus. And then, because our God is just, we should strive to live justly and to seek His justice in the world.

# DAY 1

**READ:**

**Romans 1–2**

**FOCAL PASSAGE:**

**Romans 2:4**

NOTES

When I was a kid, I could not wait to grow up to be an adult. Now that I am an adult, there are moments when I wish I could go back to being a kid! This is one of the most frustrating parts of life—the tendency not to appreciate what we have in the moment.

In a sense, the apostle Paul was saying the same thing in Romans 2:4. A day is coming when, if we have not repented of our sins and trusted in Christ, we will long for the day when God exercised patience and gave us opportunity after opportunity to turn to Him. Failure to heed the call of the gospel here and now is to despise the riches of God's kindness, restraint, and patience toward sinners. This time is not meant to be spent doing as we please, putting off for tomorrow what ought to be done today. Rather, God's longsuffering with sinners is meant to be an incentive to repent and believe in the gospel today.

God does want us to long for tomorrow, because when Christ returns, He will take us home to enjoy Him forever. But the only way to truly long for the day of the Lord as we should is by turning from sin and self and putting our hope in Christ alone. Even as believers, we must recognize God's patience toward us so that we might give ourselves to loving others and serving the Lord until we stand and give an account of our lives (Rom. 14:9-12). Let us remember that we have experienced the riches of His kindness because Jesus bore the storm of God's wrath against our sin. Look to the day of the Lord, then, with hope and joy, but in doing so, do not forget to make the most of the present day.

**How will you respond to God's kindness toward you today? With repentance and faith? With kindness toward others? With sharing the gospel?**

# DAY 2

## READ:

Romans 3:1-20

## FOCAL PASSAGE:

Romans 3:20

## NOTES

Perhaps one of the loneliest, least used items in a home is the weight scale. It usually stays hidden in a closet or it lies concealed under a piece of furniture, silently collecting dust. Why? Because to step on the scale is to be confronted with the truth—the truth about our body weight. Unfortunately, the act of weighing ourselves will not produce the results we desire. And once we have stepped on the scale, we can no longer plead ignorance. Of course, the scale itself isn't to blame for the number that appears—we are. It only reveals our current state.

Such is the case with the law of God handed down through Moses. Like a scale, the law itself is good, but it reveals that something has gone terribly wrong in our souls. Confronted with God's divine commands, we recognize our spiritual condition—we are sinners. And like a scale, the law cannot bring about lasting change in our hearts. It is intended to reveal our sin so that we might see our need for the Savior.

In a sense, Paul was trying to help people who were obsessed with the scale of righteousness to see that it can never produce the righteousness God requires. In fact, one must confess his utter helplessness in order to receive Christ's perfect righteousness. And in doing so, the scale of righteousness reveals not what is true of us but what is true of Jesus.

As much as we would like the same principle to work itself out with the scale in our bathroom, the scale of God's righteousness is infinitely more important. If we will accept what the law calls out in us, then we can find the answer for our sinful condition in the gospel of Jesus Christ. As a result, we can rest assured that God sees and loves us as He does His own Son.

**Based on Romans 3, what role does God's law play in the life of an unbeliever? In the life of the believer? What does a right use of the law look like for the believer?**

# DAY 3

## READ:

**Romans 3:21-31**

## FOCAL PASSAGE:

**Romans 3:23-26**

NOTES



## ESSENTIAL DOCTRINE #17: GOD IS JUST

God establishes standards for His moral creatures that are in accordance with His righteousness, and His moral creatures will be judged according to those righteous standards (Lev. 11:44-45; Rom. 2:5-11; 2 Cor. 5:10). It would be an injustice if God were not to uphold His righteousness, for such a failure would require God to violate His own righteous character. Since humanity has sinned by failing to live up to God's righteous standards, God has taken it upon Himself to make provision by being both just and the justifier of those who place their faith in Christ (Rom. 3:25-26).

The summer before my senior year of high school, I had the privilege of taking part in a student leadership trip to England and France. For me, it was the trip of a lifetime. But of all the places we visited, the beaches of Normandy made the greatest impact on my life. Just when you thought you were on a vacation at the beach, you would turn around to see the massive craters in the hillsides, the ghostly remnants of mortar shells. Just above them were the concrete machine gun nests the Nazis' manned while the brave Allied soldiers stormed the beach to what was almost certain death. And at the top of the hill lay the American Cemetery, which contains over 9,000 graves of U.S. servicemen who lost their lives in the June 6, 1944, D-Day invasion and ensuing operations that brought the Nazi regime to an end. Never have I seen something so beautiful and terrible.

As I walked the cemetery, I was gripped by the awful cost of freedom. Most of those buried there were not much older than I was on that trip when their lives came to an end, cut down in the prime of life. All their hopes and dreams came to a sudden end in a foreign land, away from family and friends. Most of them are anonymous to us even as we daily enjoy the freedom they purchased with their lives.

Yet for the enormity of their sacrifice, nothing compares to the sacrifice the Lord Jesus made that dark day on Calvary. Through His shed blood, sinners like you and me were purchased out of slavery to sin and delivered into the freedom of the kingdom of God. We neither earned nor deserved such a gracious gift, but through faith in Christ, the Spirit applied it with all its power to our souls and futures. We stand forgiven in the presence of God because of an unspeakable sacrifice, and now we are to offer ourselves as living sacrifices back to the One who is worthy of all glory, honor, and praise, both now and forever.

**What are some reasons we may struggle to grasp the significance of Jesus's sacrifice on the cross? How can we address those?**

# DAY 4

## READ:

Amos 5

## FOCAL PASSAGE:

Amos 5:18

NOTES

The father of my best friend was a college football coach for many years. While we were in high school, he became a pro coach for my favorite NFL team. Needless to say, I wasn't upset when I had to change weekend plans to travel with my friend's family to attend a game. On one special occasion, I was invited to attend the post-game team meal with my friend and his dad. When we arrived at the location for the meal, several very large gentlemen were stationed at the entrance to ensure that no unwanted guests entered. Now, I could have attempted to negotiate my way in, but as a high school student, I didn't have much cash to negotiate with. I could have pleaded with them, pointing out my lifelong devotion as a team fan, but I'm sure they had plenty of experience dealing with crazy team devotees. Or I could have strutted up expecting entry since I was a somewhat well-known high school defensive lineman from a small high school in a relatively unknown town. Yet I was gladly permitted entrance, not because of who I was but because of who I was with. The security guards took one look at my friend's dad, opened the doors, and welcomed us all in.

Israel had an identity problem. They were sure "the day of the LORD" would be a day of rejoicing for them because of their status as God's chosen people. As Amos prophesied, however, the day of rejoicing they were expecting was going to be a day of mourning instead. Why? Because in relying on their status, they failed to trust in the Lord Himself, evidenced by their idolatry, immorality, and injustice toward the most vulnerable of their own people. In other words, were they to arrive at the bar of justice, they would have heard the Master say, "Depart from me, for I never knew you." The question now is, "What are we depending on for that final day when we all stand before our Maker?"

**What confidence do you have for "the day of the LORD," for the day of Jesus' return?**

# DAY 5

## READ:

Amos 5

## FOCAL PASSAGE:

Amos 5:24

## NOTES

## VOICES from CHURCH HISTORY

"The best human policy is that which is connected with a reverential regard to Almighty God, the supreme governor of the earth. Every plan, which aims at the welfare of a nation, in defiance of his authority and laws, however apparently wise, will prove to be essentially defective, and, if persisted in, ruinous. The righteous Lord loveth righteousness, and he has engaged to plead the cause and vindicate the wrongs of the oppressed. It is righteousness that exalteth a nation; and wickedness is the present reproach, and will, sooner or later, unless repentance intervene, prove the ruin of any people."<sup>1</sup>

-John Newton (1725-1807)

Our family road trips have resulted in a good problem of sorts. For whatever reason, my children seem to be ultra-aware of homeless individuals or of people begging for money or food. On the one hand, I'm incredibly thankful for my children's tender hearts. I hope they never stop looking on other people with compassion. On the other hand, if we stopped to help every person we encountered with a sign standing on the median of the road, we would never arrive at our destination and we would have very little ourselves in the end! So, we try to help some people, while explaining to our children that we can't help every person we see in need. It's a hard line to walk, but I'm thankful my kids feel the need to do something about their situation.

Israel also had a problem. As the Lord made clear, their religious ceremonies and rituals were meaningless because they failed to worship Him with their lives. While making sure they carried out their religious obligations, they also worshiped false gods, lived in sexual immorality, and took advantage of their own citizens. The Lord wanted nothing of their "worship" because they had neglected the more important things, such as justice, mercy, and faithfulness (see Matt. 23:23).

As the apostle James asked, "Can faith without works save a person?" (Jas. 2:14). The answer is no, and not because the works themselves save! Our faith in the Lord Jesus is evidenced by a life of obedience to God and love for others. We can claim to be Christians, but if we never feel the need to seek justice for others, then we deny with our lives the profession of our lips. As those who have been justified by God's grace, we should live justly before all people, knowing our faith is evidenced through our action. While we cannot help everyone, we can help some, and in doing so, we will show the loving and gracious heart of our Father.

**What acts of justice, mercy, and faithfulness will you do today because this is the heart of God?**

# GROUP

NOTES

**POINT 1: God's justice is served to all people everywhere** (Rom. 2:1-5).

Paul indicted the Gentiles as \_\_\_\_\_ in Romans 1:18-32. But the Jews, who judged Gentiles for their sin, were \_\_\_\_\_ of the same. Therefore, both Jews and Gentiles—including us—\_\_\_\_\_ God's judgment.

**?** *What sins have we seen thus far in King Saul's life that we could find in our own?*

Because God is just, He must punish sin, and yet, He shows \_\_\_\_\_ and patience so that sinners would \_\_\_\_\_. Though we deserve God's \_\_\_\_\_, He provides for us a way of \_\_\_\_\_, if we will take it.

**?** *How does God's kindness lead sinners to repentance?*

**POINT 2: God's justice is revealed in the atoning sacrifice of Jesus** (Rom. 3:19-26).

The law of God provides us \_\_\_\_\_ hope for righteousness or salvation because we, being sinful, \_\_\_\_\_ keep it. Rather, the law shows us our desperate, sinful state and our need for a \_\_\_\_\_.

## **ESSENTIAL DOCTRINE #17: GOD IS JUST**

God establishes standards for His moral creatures that are in accordance with His righteousness, and His moral creatures will be judged according to those righteous standards (Lev. 11:44-45; Rom. 2:5-11; 2 Cor. 5:10). It would be an injustice if God were not to uphold His righteousness, for such a failure would require God to violate His own righteous character.

## **VOICES from THE CHURCH**

"When we put our faith in Jesus, we are relying on him to stand as our substitute before God, in both his perfect life and his penalty-paying death for us on the cross. In other words, we are trusting that God will substitute Jesus' record for ours, and therefore declare us to be righteous (Rom. 3:22)."<sup>2</sup>

-Greg Gilbert

Since humanity has sinned by failing to live up to God's righteous standards, God has taken it upon Himself to make provision by being both \_\_\_\_\_ and the \_\_\_\_\_ of those who place their \_\_\_\_\_ in Christ (Rom. 3:25-26).

**?** How should we respond to the truth that God is both just and gracious in the gift of Jesus for salvation?

**POINT 3: Living with an abundance of justice is pleasing to God** (Amos 5:18-24).

God is just, and He is concerned for \_\_\_\_\_ in His creation. This will result in judgment against all sinners who do not find \_\_\_\_\_ in God.

The people of God must not be concerned with appearances only. Rather, the justice and righteousness of God should flow from our faith-filled \_\_\_\_\_ and inform our faith-filled \_\_\_\_\_.

**?** What should it look like for believers in Christ to reflect God's justice and righteousness in the world?

## MY RESPONSE

Because God is just in all of His ways, we are to live justly and righteously before all people as an act of worship to our God.

- **HEAD:** Because God is just, how should believers view the circumstances of their lives?
- **HEART:** What are some ways you might be going through the motions of worship instead of repenting and worshiping with a whole heart?
- **HANDS:** How is God calling you to share the hope of the gospel while seeking justice for others?

## VOICES from THE CHURCH

"God is a holy God and will not allow sinners into heaven. No one is good enough to live in heaven with God. But what we cannot do, God has done for us. If we confess our sins and trust in Christ to save us, we become God's children. The Bible clearly teaches, God is 'fair and just, and he declares sinners to be right in his sight when they believe in Jesus' (Romans 3:26). Do you trust in Jesus to save you? 'To all who believed him and accepted him, he gave the right to become children of God' (John 1:12)."<sup>3</sup>

-Africa Study Bible