

Justice & Mercy



Day Four of the Heidelberg Catechism
[1563]



Heidelberg, Germany

Last Week: The conclusion of Day Three

Question:

Are we so corrupt that we are totally unable to do any good and inclined toward all evil?

Answer:

Yes, unless we are born again by the Spirit of God.

The Day Four Questions:

1. But doesn't God do us an injustice by requiring in his law what we are unable to do?
2. Does God permit such disobedience and rebellion to go unpunished?
3. But isn't God also merciful?

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But doesn't God do us an injustice by requiring in his law what we are unable to do?

Answer: No, God created human beings with the ability to keep the law. They, however, provoked by the devil, in willful disobedience, robbed themselves and all their descendants of these gifts.

From Good to Bad... fast!

Gen.1:31: God saw all that he had made, and it was very good.

Gen.3:6 When the woman saw that the fruit of the tree was good for food and pleasing to the eye, and also desirable for gaining wisdom, she took some and ate it. She also gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate it.

The Devil made me do it?

Gen.3:13: Then the LORD God said to the woman, “What is this you have done?” The woman said, “The serpent deceived me, and I ate.”

John 8:44: You belong to your father, the devil, and you want to carry out your father’s desires. He was a murderer from the beginning, not holding to the truth, for there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks his native language, for he is a liar and the father of lies.

Does God permit such disobedience and rebellion to go unpunished?

Answer: Certainly not. God is terribly angry with the sin we are born with as well as the sins we personally commit. As a just judge, God will punish them both now and in eternity, having declared: “Cursed is everyone who does not observe and obey all the things written in the book of the law.”

Judge of All the Earth

Exodus 34:7: ...maintaining love to thousands, and forgiving wickedness, rebellion and sin. Yet he does not leave the guilty unpunished; he punishes the children and their children for the sin of the parents to the third and fourth generation.

Deut. 27:26: “Cursed is anyone who does not uphold the words of this law by carrying them out.”

Vengeance is the Lord's

Psalm 5:4-6: For you are not a God who is pleased with wickedness; with you, evil people are not welcome. The arrogant cannot stand in your presence. You hate all who do wrong; you destroy those who tell lies. The bloodthirsty and deceitful you, LORD, detest.

Nahum 1:2: The LORD is a jealous and avenging God; the LORD takes vengeance and is filled with wrath. The LORD takes vengeance on his foes and vents his wrath against his enemies.

God of the New Testament?

Rom. 1:18: The wrath of God is being revealed from heaven against all the godlessness and wickedness of people, who suppress the truth by their wickedness...

Eph. 5:6: Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of such things God's wrath comes on those who are disobedient.

Heb. 9:27: Just as people are destined to die once, and after that to face judgment

But isn't God also merciful?

Answer: God is certainly merciful, but also just. God's justice demands that sin, committed against his supreme majesty, be punished with the supreme penalty—eternal punishment of body and soul.

God declares Himself

Exodus 34:6,7: And he[the LORD] passed in front of Moses, proclaiming, “The LORD, the LORD, the compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness, maintaining love to thousands, and forgiving wickedness, rebellion and sin. Yet he does not leave the guilty unpunished; he punishes the children and their children for the sin of the parents to the third and fourth generation.”

Mercy & Justice

Psalm 103:8,9: The LORD is compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, abounding in love. He will not always accuse, nor will he harbor his anger forever.

Hebrews 10:30,31: For we know him who said, “It is mine to avenge; I will repay,” and again, “The Lord will judge his people.” It is a dreadful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.

The Son of Man: Merciful & Just

'For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me...

The Son of Man: Merciful & Just

Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me.'

“Then he will say to those on his left, ‘Depart from me, you who are cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels. For I was hungry and you gave me nothing to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me nothing to drink, I was a stranger and you did not invite me in,

The Son of Man: Merciful & Just

I needed clothes and you did not clothe me, I was sick and in prison and you did not look after me... Truly I tell you, whatever you did not do for one of the least of these, you did not do for me...' "Then they will go away to eternal punishment, but the righteous to eternal life."

Matthew 25:31-46

Wrap-up thus far:

- Satan deceived, and Man sinned.
- God's attributes of justice and mercy must both be satisfied.
- There is no distinction between the God of the Old and New Testaments.
- Heaven cannot exist apart from the justice and the mercy of God.

Tonight's Take-home:

We may sift the events of ANY week's news through the lattice of God's justice and God's mercy, confident that He is the Judge who will always do right. (Gen. 18:25)

Let us pray...

