

Devotion 33:

Our Father Is Just And Righteous

Amos 1—9

The attribute of our Father in the book of Amos stands out by way of contrast with the behavior of the children of Israel. There is certainly an economic or materialistic theme throughout the nine chapters. Just prior to their captivity, Israel and Judah experience some prosperity. Businesses are booming, but with their wealth come a complacency, an arrogance, and oppression toward the poor. Evidently in the marketplace they would *“skimp the measure, boost the price, and cheat with dishonest scales.”* (8:5b) Our Father also had this against them:

“You trample on the poor and force him to give you grain. Therefore, though you have built stone mansions, you will not live in them....You oppress the righteous and take bribes and you deprive the poor of justice in the courts.” (5:11-12)

Interestingly and fittingly, Amos was not a professional prophet. He was a shepherd by trade.

The word that comes to mind as I read this book is “justice.” Our Father is just and is disgusted at the lack of justice shown by his children, especially toward the poor and needy. Justice is a comprehensive term in Scripture. It refers to both one’s disposition and conduct. Justice is not only respect for the rights of one’s fellow men, as of life, property, and reputation (some commandments should come to mind here!). It also includes some details often forgotten: love, honor, courtesy, and hospitality. In short, man is to reflect the justice or righteousness of God in how he relates to his fellow man.

Therefore to be just is synonymous with being righteous. Said of our Father it is the perfect agreement between His nature and His acts. *Righteous* is a legal term, which involves the whole process of justice. God is just. He cannot condone sin. No sin is forgiven unless it is atoned for, and suffering the penalty makes full satisfaction.

In the suffering of Christ, God declared His righteousness, His justice, which demands that the sins of the world must be expiated, if they are to be forgiven. Since by His holy precious blood and His innocent suffering and death, Christ did fully atone for the sins of men, as proved by His resurrection from the dead, God no longer imputes them to us but has forgiven them. Thus, Christ satisfied the demands of God’s justice with respect to the punishment man should have suffered for his sins.

“For you know that it was not with perishable things such as silver or gold that you were redeemed from the empty way of life handed down to you from your forefathers, but with the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect.” I Pet. 1:18-19

“God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting men’s sins against them.” II Cor. 5:19

“God presented him as a sacrifice of atonement, through faith in his blood. He did this to demonstrate his justice, because in his forbearance he had left the sins committed beforehand unpunished—he did it to demonstrate his justice at the present time, so as to be just and the one who justifies those who have faith in Jesus.”
Rom. 3:25-26

Paul uses the term “justified” 22 times in the book of Romans. The term describes what happens when one believes in Christ as his Savior: our Father declares the person to be not guilty and He declares him to be righteous. Although we clearly and totally deserve to be declared “guilty,” God declares us “righteous” because of the redemption through Christ. It is free, by His grace, and given through faith.

Many people often wonder why Jesus had to die. Jesus had to die because our Father is just and righteous. And now this righteousness—Christ’s complete and flawless obedience to God’s law and His sacrificial death--is credited to us believers as our own.