

SUNDAY MORNING (October 20th) • HOLINESS

Holy Love

Justice is not the only manifestation of God's holiness. A complementary facet of God's justice is his love for his creation (Psa 33:4-5). While his justice is perfectly fair and sure, it is always administered in the context of his love. He loves us as a father loves his children. He is actively seeking to accomplish in us what is needed to have a loving relationship with him.

We ended last week's discussion with an emphasis on the seriousness of sin. "The wages of sin is death" (Rom 6:23) and "all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God" (Rom 3:23). God's holy love for his people can be seen in:

- His grace (God giving us what we *don't* deserve—life)
- His mercy (God *not* giving us what we *do* deserve—death)

In the Old Testament, God's people were consistently reminded of these aspects of his holy love via the system of animal sacrifice. God, in his love and mercy, allowed the price of life to be paid through an innocent representative. God showed his mercy for men and women created in his image by allowing an innocent animal to pay the price of death owed by the sinner. Those men and women deserved God's holy justice (death), but they received God's mercy (life) instead.

When people were careless with his expectations, God emphasized, "By those who come near Me I must be regarded as holy" (Lev 10:3, NKJV). How did this system of sacrifice help human beings "regard" God as "holy"?

In Leviticus 17:11, God told the descendants of Abraham: "For the life of the flesh is in the blood, and I have given it for you on the altar to make atonement for your souls, for it is the blood that makes atonement by the life." Throughout Old Testament history, the life of innocent animals "atoned" (paid the price) for human sins. God even instituted an annual Day of Atonement as a yearly reminder: "For on this day shall atonement be made for you to cleanse you. You shall be clean before the LORD from all your sins" (Lev 16:30).

For thousands of years, in the form of an untold number of sacrificed animals, God demonstrated both his holy justice (the price of life was paid for sin) and his holy mercy (the sinner was allowed to live). This system was so important that the writer of Hebrews emphasizes, "Indeed, under the law almost everything is purified with blood, and without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness of sins" (Heb 9:22).

What, then, is the grand significance of John's revelation in John 1:6-8, 19-29?

How does Jesus represent the perfect intersection of holy justice and holy love? And what practical impact does that intersection have for us?