

It's Not Fair

Have you ever said, "It's not fair"? Have you ever felt that someone was getting preferential treatment over you? Have you ever been under the impression that your life is nothing more than a series of mishaps and that you were just dealt a bad hand in life? Has the thought ever crossed your mind that God's treatment of you is less than equitable at best and downright unfair at worst? If so, you are not alone.

In Ezekiel 18 we find the Lord addressing the Jews' misunderstanding of His judgments. Having already twice stated, "the soul that sinneth, it shall die" (verses 4 and 20), God informs His readers that faithfulness will be rewarded and disobedience will be punished. This would hold true even if a person had at one time been faithful but later fell away or at one time had been disobedient but repented and turned back to God. "But if the wicked will turn from all his sins that he hath committed, and keep all my statutes, and do that which is lawful and right, he shall surely live, he shall not die. All his transgressions that he hath committed, they shall not be mentioned unto him: in his righteousness that he hath done he shall live." (Ezekiel 18:21-22). "But when the righteous turneth away from his righteousness, and committeth iniquity, and doeth according to all the abominations that the wicked man doeth, shall he live? All his righteousness that he hath done shall not be mentioned: in his trespass that he hath trespassed, and in his sin that he hath sinned, in them shall he die." (Ezekiel 18:24). To this Israel replied, "It's not fair," though we have to wonder what was not fair about that. Did they figure that everyone should be saved regardless of the type of lives they lived? Perhaps they reasoned that the disobedient should never be forgiven, no matter how righteous they might become and that the righteous should never be condemned, regardless of how far away they might fall. "The way of the Lord is not equal," they declared (Ezekiel 18:25). The Lord broke it all down in even simpler terms in ensuing verses. If you turn to God, you will be saved. If you turn away from God, you will be lost. Still, Israel persisted in their belief that God was not fair (Ezekiel 18:26-30).

Job thought that things weren't very fair. As fellow humans it would be hard to argue with him, but when Divine inspiration shows us God's hand in this patriarch's life, it's evident that he was still being treated justly, even in the midst of tragedy.

The Psalmist, Asaph, among others, looked at the wickedness all around him. Observing the apparent comfortable lives of the disobedient when compared to his oppression as a faithful servant of God, he wrote, "Verily I have cleansed my heart in vain, and washed my hands in innocency." (Psalm 73:13). Fortunately he took the time to carefully consider the facts and, in so doing, he repented and changed his heart. For a while though, he was saying, "It's not fair."

To be sure, there are inequities in this life. Amos wrote of those in his day who were bribing their way out of trouble while afflicting those who were striving to live Godly lives (Amos 5:12). Do you suppose that ever happens in our society? Sometimes imperfect mankind treats each other unfairly. That does not mean though that God treats us in an unfair manner. Numbers 23:19 says that "God is not a man, that he should lie..." Deuteronomy 32:4 says, "He is the Rock, his work is perfect: for all his ways are judgment; a God of truth and without iniquity, just and right is he." Speaking to Christians, John wrote, "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." (1 John 1:9). Man's injustice does not preclude God's perfect justice. Indeed, as Solomon wrote, "Lo, this only have I found, that God hath made man upright; but they have sought out many inventions." (Ecclesiastes 7:29). Man's sins bring about the unfairness but God's perfection equals perfect fairness with Him.

We can say some things are not fair, but we will be incorrect if we apply this to God's dealings with us. In fact, looking at this from another perspective, if there's something that on the surface doesn't seem fair, it's that God has opened heaven to mankind. From a worldly standpoint, rewarding those who have been lawless is not fair at all. We "all have sinned and come short of the glory of God." (Romans 3:23). It would be only fair that our sins would separate us eternally from the Father (Isaiah 59:1-2). From a heavenly standpoint, the blood of Christ obtained through obedience to His Gospel makes glory in eternity possible. Thanks be to God that He "commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." (Romans 5:8).

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