

King's Online Bible School

Doctrine 101: Learning about God — Spotlight Studies

(from Wayne Grudem's *Bible Doctrines*, 93-95 and Augustus Strong's *Systematic Theology*, 290-298)

God is Just (Lesson 10)

1. Infinite Purity's priority

a. God is what He is — infinite purity. He cannot change.

"Who will not fear, O Lord, and glorify Your name? For You alone are holy;
For all the nations will come and worship before You,
For Your righteous acts have been revealed" (Rev 15:4).

Man is created in His image to be like Him in moral purity.
God's ways with His creatures conform to the purity of His nature.

God can cease to demand purity only when He ceases to be holy — that is, only when He ceases to be God.

Justice and righteousness in God's dealings with men are the revelation of the inmost nature of God. His righteousness is the perfect agreement between His nature and His acts.

Justice is nothing but the recognition and enforcement of this necessity of His nature.
(Strong, 290, 292-93)

"For I am the Lord your God. . . . Be holy, for I am holy" (Lev 11:44).

b. Man, created in God's image, is governed by Him, the Holy One.

He exercises His holiness toward His creatures and in all His dealings with them.

His righteousness demands conformity to His own moral perfection from all moral beings.
His justice visits non-conformity to that perfection with penal loss or suffering.

His righteousness appears in the form of moral requirements.
We experience His justice in the form of judicial sanctions and actions.

As God cannot but demand of His creatures that they be like him in moral character, so He cannot but enforce the law which He imposes on them.

Penalty is the reaction of God's holiness against that which is its opposite.
Justice binds God to punish just as much as it binds the sinner to be punished.
(Strong 291, 293)

"Your eyes are too pure to approve evil,
And You cannot look on wickedness with favor" (Hab 1:13).

What is well for us is determined by what is right for us. Right is more than a debt to others. It is a debt to oneself.

To arrive at the fullness and satisfaction of who we are and were created to be, we must be like God in moral purity. What is best for us is determined by what is right for us, not *vice versa*, because righteousness *is* God's best for us. We were created for righteousness and holiness. While it is to our greatest advantage to be holy, holiness is not God's answer to the goal that we be happy and fulfilled. While His holiness serves our advantage, it is so because it is His holiness that is the purpose for which we were created — “. . . that God may be all in all” (1 Cor 15:28).

“For us there is but one God, the Father, from Whom are all things, and we exist for Him; and one Lord, Jesus Christ, by Whom are all things, and we exist through Him” (1 Cor 8:6).

“You shall be holy, for I the Lord your God am holy” (Lev 19:2).

2. “Just and Righteous”

In *righteousness* God reveals His love of holiness.

In *justice* God reveals His hatred of sin.

The two are inseparable - so much so that the same word is frequently used for righteousness and justice in the Old Testament, and always in the New Testament.

“A bribe . . . subverts the cause of the **righteous** (*tsadîqim*).

Justice (*tsedeq*) you shall follow that you may live” (Deut 16:19-20).

The cause of maintaining righteousness (protecting those who keep the laws and who do what is legal and right) requires the practice of justice.

In the New Testament, *díkaios* means “just” and “righteous.”

“Great and marvelous are Your works,

O Lord God, the Almighty;

Just (*díkai*) and true are Your ways,

King of the nations!

Who will not fear, O Lord, and glorify Your name?

For You alone are holy;

For all the nations will come and worship before You,

For Your **righteous** acts (*dikaiômata*) have been revealed” (Rev 15:2-4).

a. the Righteous One

God's holiness establishes Him as the Source, Determiner, and Provider of righteousness in His creation. He is the original and final standard of what is right. In His righteousness He imposes His Law in Scripture, but also in every man's conscience.'

"The Law of the Lord is perfect, restoring the soul;
The testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple.
The precepts of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart;
The commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes.
The fear of the Lord is clean, enduring forever;
The judgments of the Lord are true
They are righteous altogether" (Ps 19:7-9).

"For when Gentiles who do not have the Law do instinctively the things of the Law, these, not having the Law, are a law to themselves, in that they show the work of the Law written in their hearts, their conscience bearing witness and their thoughts alternately accusing or else defending them" (Rom 2:14-15).

"The Lord is righteous in all His ways
And kind in all His deeds" (Ps 145:17).

b. the Just One

God's holiness ensures that He always rules and acts in accordance with what is right.

"All His ways are justice" (Deut 2:4).

"He loves righteousness and justice;
The earth is full of the lovingkindness of the Lord" (Ps 33:5).

"For the righteous God tries the hearts and minds.
My shield is with God,
Who saves the upright of heart.
For God is a righteous Judge
And a God Who has indignation every day" (Psalm 7:9-11).

Against You, You only, I have sinned,
And done the evil thing in Thy sight,
So that You are righteous in your sentencing
And pure in Your judging (Ps 51:4).

"I know, O Lord, that Your judgments are righteous,
And that in faithfulness You have afflicted me" (Ps 119:75).

"What shall we say then? Is there unrighteousness with God? Certainly not!" (Rom 9:14).

His unrevealed will in matters of justice and fairness requires a response that bows down before Him and confesses His uncompromising, faithful, just, and wise dealings.

And Yahweh said to Job,
Will you even put Me in the wrong?
Will you condemn Me that you may be justified?" (Job 40:2, 8)

3. Establishing right

"Right" is whatever conforms to God's moral character.

Because He rules the world in righteousness, it is inconceivable that He would not reveal His righteous requirements to those He has created in His image to love and obey Him.

I Yahweh speak the truth,
I declare what is right (Isa 45:19).

"Right" = whatever has been appointed by God to be acknowledged and obeyed by men.
"Righteousness" is the word used to refer to the sum total of the requirements of God.

"John came to you in the way of righteousness" (Matt 21:32).

"Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied"
(Matt 5:6).

"Seek first His kingdom and His righteousness. . . ." (Matt 6:33).

God ensures that men know what righteousness requires of them in two ways.

1) God has created us so that we are able to know what righteousness requires without being told.

"For when Gentiles who do not have the Law do instinctively the things of the Law, these, not having the Law, are a law to themselves, in that they show the work of the Law written in their hearts, their conscience bearing witness and their thoughts alternately accusing or defending them" (Rom 2:14-15).

2) We encounter our inner sense of what is right again — particularly in God's "greatest commandments." This is most immediately evident in the second greatest commandment, which builds on the natural inclination in every human life to be treated kindly and well. "You shall love your neighbor as yourself" (Matt 22:39).

The great and foremost commandment does the same: "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the great and foremost commandment" (Matt 22:37-38; Deut 6:5). It draws on our conscience's attraction to what is good and to its witness to God's being: ". . . That which is known about God is evident within them; for God made it evident to them" (Rom 1:19).

These commands, the Ten Commandments (called God's "testimony" and written by Him [Exod 31:18]), and the many derivative biblical commands that prohibit or require specific behavior are recognized as "apodictic" — they are evident "from the saying" or "self-evident." When we hear them we know that they are right. We do not need argument or proof to be convinced that they are declarations of what righteousness is.

Jesus' call to righteousness is inseparably linked to keeping the Law God gave:

"Do not think that I came to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I did not come to abolish, but to fulfill. For truly I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not the smallest letter or stroke shall pass from the Law until all is accomplished. Whoever then annuls one of the least of these commandments, and teaches others to do the same, shall be called least in

the kingdom of heaven; but whoever keeps and teaches them, he shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven.”

“For I say to you that unless your righteousness surpasses that of the scribes and Pharisees, you not enter the kingdom of heaven” (Matt 5:17-20).

4. Dealing with evil

As a result of God's righteousness, it is necessary that He treat people as they deserve. This is what justice requires. Sin must be punished, for if God did not punish He would be unrighteous.

a. God prescribes what is just.

“He is the Lord our God;
His judgments are in all the earth” (Ps 105:7).

“Give ear to Me, O My nation;
For a law will go forth from Me,
And I will set My justice for a light of the peoples” (Isa 51:4).

The Law God revealed to Israel and preserved in the Old Testament contains not only commands, but also judgments. These instructions provide mankind with the knowledge of the consequences He requires when His laws and commandments are broken.

God’s word to Adam in Genesis 2:17 is both law and judgment (command and consequence): “From the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat from it you will surely die.”

Judgments (also referred to as “statutes”) can usually be stated or restated in the formula “if . . . then.” If a man breaks *this* law, then *this* is the sentence the judge must give — the punishment that must be applied or the restitution that must be required.

b. God appoints men to execute justice on His behalf.

God's provision for governing His world in justice is through those who are appointed as judges in each nation and community.

"For rulers are not a cause of fear for good behavior, but for evil. Do you want to have no fear of authority? Do what is good and you will have praise from the same; for he is a minister of God to you for good. But if you do evil, be afraid; for he does not bear the sword for nothing; for he is a minister of God, an avenger who brings wrath on the one who does evil" (Rom 13:3-4).

"Submit yourselves for the Lord's sake to every human institution, whether to a king as the one in authority, or to governors as sent by him for the punishment of evildoers and the praise of those who do right" (1 Peter 2:13-14).

God's intention that justice should also be man's responsibility is implicit in His initial blessing and command to Adam: ". . . and rule . . . over every living thing" (Gen 1:28).

We find God's earliest judicial instruction to mankind in His requirement that the descendants of Noah execute murderers.

"Whoever sheds man's blood,
By man his blood shall be shed,
For in the image of God He made man" (Gen 9:6).

Then, when men increased in the earth again, God separated them into nations and languages, providing a natural division into separate, governable societies.

Anticipating the time when Israel's tribes would be settled in Canaan, God specifies the provision He is ordaining for executing His justice in His nation.

"You shall appoint for yourself judges and officers in all your towns . . ., according to your tribes, and they shall judge the people with righteous judgment" (Deut 16:18).

Solomon's counsel applies to every nation.

Righteousness exalts a nation,
But sin is a reproach (brings judgment) to any people" (Prov 14:34).

"Take away the wicked before the king,
And his throne will be established in righteousness" (Prov 25:5).

5. Impartiality

“You shall do not injustice in judgment; you shall not be partial to the poor nor defer to the great, but you are to judge your neighbor fairly” (Lev 19:15).

“You shall not distort justice; you shall not be partial, and you shall not take a bribe . . . Justice, and only justice, you shall pursue, that you may live and possess the land which the Lord your God is giving you” (Deut 16:19-20).

The judge’s responsibility includes:

1. rendering a verdict or decision;
2. then, assigning the consequence — sentencing the guilty party;
3. but also, ensuring that the sentence is executed justly: neither less nor more than required.

“If there is a dispute between men and they go to court, and the judges decide their case, and they justify the righteous and condemn the wicked, then it shall be if the wicked man deserves to be beaten, the judge shall make him lie down and be beaten in his presence with the number of stripes according to his guilt. He may beat him forty times but no more, so that he does not beat him with many more stripes than these and your brother is not degraded in your eyes” (Deut 25:1-3).

When Solomon inherited the responsibility of ruling Israel, he prayed: “Give Your servant an understanding heart to judge Your people to discern between good and evil. For who is able to judge this great people of Yours?” (1 Kgs 3:9)

His instruction in Proverbs reflects the personal care officials must exercise to avoid injustice:

“It is not for kings to drink wine,
 Or for rulers to desire strong drink,
 For they will drink and forget what is decreed,
 And pervert the rights of all the afflicted.

 Open your mouth for the mute,
 For the rights of all the unfortunate.
 Open your mouth, judge righteously,
 And defend the rights of the afflicted and needy” (Prov 31:4-5, 8-9).

6. Man's longing for justice

a. in personal injustices and disputes

"Moses sat to judge the people, and the people stood about Moses from the morning until the evening." . . . Moses' father-in-law said to him, ' . . . The task is too heavy for you; you cannot do it alone.'"

"So Moses listened to his father-in-law Moses chose able men out of all Israel and made them heads over all the people, leaders of thousands, of hundreds, of fifties, and of tens. They judged the people at all times; the difficult dispute they would bring to Moses, but every minor dispute they themselves would judge" (Exod 18:13, 17-18, 24-26).

Paul challenges the Corinthian Christians about going to law courts and seeking unbelievers to resolve their disputes (1 Cor 6:1-8). The Holy Spirit is faithful to reveal the truth that restores righteousness and peace in Christ's body.

b. in the maintenance of law and order in nations and communities

In his proverbs, Solomon recognizes and declares the sacredness, importance, and blessing of righteous judgment and justice.

"A divine decision is in the lips of the king;
His mouth should not err in judgment" (Prov 16:10)

"The king gives stability to the land by justice" (Prov 29:4).

When justice and enforcement is lacking, those who have it within their power to take advantage of others are unrestrained.

"A king who sits on the throne of justice
Disperses all evil with his eyes" (Prov 20:8).

"The exercise of justice is joy for the righteous,
But is terror to the workers of iniquity" (Prov 21:15).

7. Sovereign Lord of Justice

God rules in His world.

a. judging nations

When Sodom and Gomorrah allowed evil to go unchecked and their wickedness exceeded God's established boundaries for mercifully restraining judgment, He destroyed their cities.

His decision that Abraham's descendants would be slaves in Egypt for 400 years was determined, in part, by His timetable for destroying the nations of Canaan — holding back His wrath, but measuring their wickedness to the extent and, consequently, the time He had set for judgment (Gen 15:13-16).

David recognized and relied on God's faithfulness to judge and punish every nation's sin:

"The nations have sunk down in the pit which they have made;
In the net which they hid, their own foot has been caught.

The Lord has made Himself known;
He has executed judgment.
In the work of his own hands the wicked is snared *Higgaion Selah*.
The wicked will return to Sheol,
Even all the nations who forget God.
For the needy will not always be forgotten
Nor the hope of the afflicted perish forever.

Arise, O Lord, do not let man prevail;
Let the nations be judged before You.
Put them in fear, O Lord;
Let the nations know that they are but men. *Selah*" (Ps 9:15-20).

The Lord sent Jonah to Nineveh to warn that He was about to destroy it because "their wickedness has come up before Me" (Jonah 1:2). Hearing Jonah's warning, the king of Nineveh commanded a fast: "Let men call on God earnestly that each may turn from his wicked way and from the violence that is in his hands" (3:8).

Nineveh was spared, only to take up its wicked ways again. Nahum declared God's coming judgment at the hands of Babylon: "Woe to the bloody city, full of lies and pillage" (3:1).

b. judging individuals

Job and his friends were renowned wise men, who lived a few generations after Abraham's time and centuries before the Law was given. They evaluated every condition in men's lives on the basis of the certainty that God always blesses the righteous and punishes the wicked.

Israel's psalmists and prophets frequently celebrated God's faithfulness to render judgment on behalf of the oppressed.

"The Lord performs righteous deeds
And judgments for all who are oppressed" (Ps 103:6).

"Every morning He brings His justice to light;
He does not fail" (Zeph 3:5).

Jesus is even more emphatic: "Will not God bring about justice for His elect who cry to Him day and night, and will He delay long over them? I tell you that He will bring about justice for them quickly" (Luke 18:7-8).

James warns those who grow rich by abusing and taking advantage of others that they will experience loss at the hands of the Lord of Hosts:

"Come now, you rich, weep and howl for the miseries which are coming upon you. Your riches have rotted and your garments have become moth-eaten. Your gold and silver have rusted; and their rust will be a witness against you and will consume your flesh like fire" (5:1-4).

Paul focuses on a particular way that God deals with those who reject Him. He gives them over to the degrading passions they choose and to their defiling consequences.

"Even though they knew God, they did not honour Him or give thanks, but they became futile in their speculations. . . . Therefore God gave them over in the lusts of their hearts to impurity" (Rom 1:21, 24, 26, 28).

How much better for those who honour Him as the Judge and accept His dealings, so that their lives can be right in His sight!

"My flesh trembles for fear of You,
And I am afraid of Your judgments" (Ps 119:120).

"I know, O Lord, that Your judgments are righteous,
And that in faithfulness You have afflicted me" (Ps 119:75).

'Search me, O God, and know my heart;
Scrutinize me and know my disquietings;
And see if there be a way of pain in me,
And guide me in the way everlasting" (Ps 139:23-24).

c. eternal judgment

The scriptures call on all nations and peoples and on all creation to rejoice in the Lord because He is coming to render complete and final judgment on every act of wickedness and injustice in human history.

"Say among the nations, 'The LORD reigns;
Indeed, the world is firmly established,
It will not be moved;
He will judge the peoples with equity.'

Let the heavens be glad, and let the earth rejoice;
Let the sea roar, and all it contains;
Let the field exult, and all that is in it.
Then all the trees of the wood will sing for joy
Before the Lord, for He is coming,
For He is coming to judge the earth;
He will judge the world in righteousness
And the peoples in His faithfulness" (Ps 96:10-13).

8. Caring fully about evil

Because God is righteous and just, it is necessary that He also has the attribute of **wrath**. God's wrath is an aspect of His righteousness, whereas our anger is often an aspect of our unrighteousness. In God, "wrath" means that He intensely hates all sin.

For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who suppress the truth in unrighteousness" (Rom 1:18).

a. God's wrath is emphasized in Scripture.

It may surprise us to find how often the Bible talks about God's wrath and, also, that it is mentioned no less frequently in the New Testament than in the Old Testament. In fact, since God is unchangeable in His nature, He *always* has to respond to us in the same way. That means that He always has to respond to sin with hatred of that sin, just as He always responds to that which is good and right with pleasure. He is often faced with sin so His response is frequently wrath. The descriptions of God's wrath usually occur in the contexts where God's people sin greatly against Him (*e.g.*, Ex 32:9-10; Deut 9:7-8). The same idea is also frequently found in the New Testament (*e.g.*, John 3:36; Rom 1:18).

". . . because they did not receive the love of truth so as to be saved, for this reason God will send upon them a deluding influence so that they will believe what is false, in order that they all may be judged who did not believe the truth, but took pleasure in wickedness" (2 Thess 2:10-12).

b. God's wrath should inspire worship.

God's wrath seems to be such a negative concept. But what would God be like if He were a God Who did not hate sin? Since sin is hateful it is worthy of being hated. It is a virtue (not a vice) to hate sin (see Zech 8:17; Heb 1:9). As such, it is an attribute of God that we should seek to imitate. A God who delighted in or ignored something so hateful as sin would not be worthy of worship. But knowing that God will ultimately right all that is wrong leads us to rejoice in the wrath of God, that punishes all wrongdoing and makes way for a new heaven and earth in which there will be no unrighteousness.

c. God's wrath should not cause fear in Christians.

The wonder is that, although "we were by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind" (Eph 2:3), we now have trusted Jesus, "Who delivers us from the wrath to come" (1 Thess 1:10). As we think of the wrath that we deserved, but which was poured out on Jesus instead, we worship in amazement.

9. God’s mercy satisfies God’s justice

“Behold My Servant, Whom I uphold; . . . I have put My Spirit upon Him; He will bring forth justice to the nations” (Isa 42:1).

God is bound to purpose and to do what His absolute holiness requires. He has no attributes, no will, no sovereignty, above this law of His being. He cannot deny Himself, He cannot acquit the guilty without an atonement.

“ . . . Who forgives . . . Yet He will by no means leave the guilty unpunished” (Exod 34:6-7).

So, Paul says, when God offered Jesus as a sacrifice to bear the punishment for sin, it was "to show God's righteousness" (Rom 3:25), demonstrating that He dealt with sin appropriately in His desire and determination to provide and offer forgiveness to men.

“But now, apart from the Law, the righteousness of God has been manifested, . . . even the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all those who believe; . . . being justified as a gift by His grace through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus; Whom God displayed publicly as a propitiation in His blood through faith. This was to demonstrate His righteousness, because in the forbearance of God He passed over the sins previously committed, for the demonstration, I say, of His righteousness at the present time, so that He would be just and the Justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus” (Rom 3:21-26).

“Yet we ourselves esteemed Him stricken,
Smitten of God, and afflicted.
But He was pierced through for our transgressions,
He was crushed for our iniquities;
The chastening for our well-being fell upon Him,
And by His scourging we are healed.

.....
The LORD has caused the iniquity of us all
To fall on Him.

.....
By His knowledge the Righteous One,
My Servant, will justify the many,
As He will bear their iniquities.

.....
Because He poured out Himself to death,
And was numbered with the transgressors;
Yet He Himself bore the sin of many” (Isa 53:4-12).

God’s righteousness is exhibited in the death of Christ, the evidence that God is neither indifferent to sin, nor regards it lightly. His holiness must find expression in His condemnation and punishment of sin. (Vines)

God’s patience in delaying wrath is ruled by His holiness.

The Bible tells us that God is "slow to anger" (Ps 103:8). He delays in executing His wrath in order to leave people more time to repent (see 2 Pet 3:9-10).

Right furnishes the rule and law for love, but it is not true that love furnishes the rule and law for right. Holiness is independent of love as an attribute and it is superior to it. If it were otherwise — if God’s holiness ever made an exception for the sake of love, He would no longer be holy.

10. Eternal justice

"He will judge the world in righteousness;
He will execute judgment for the peoples with equity" (Ps 9:8).

"Rejoice, young man, during your childhood, and let your heart be pleasant during the days of young manhood. And follow the impulses of your heart and the desire of your eyes. Yet know that God will bring you to judgment for all these things" (Ecclesiastes 11:9).

"For God will bring every act to judgment, everything which is hidden, whether it is good or evil" (Ecclesiastes 12:14).

God's perfect righteousness and absolute power are the guarantee that **justice will ultimately prevail in the universe.**

"God did not send the Son into the world to judge the world, but that the world might be saved through Him. He who believes in Him is not judged; he who does not believe has been judged already, because He has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God" (John 3:17-18).

"But because of your stubbornness and unrepentant heart you are storing up wrath for yourself in the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God" (Rom 2:5).

"For the Son of Man is going to come in the glory of His Father with His angels, and will then repay every man according to his deeds" (Matt 16:27).

The demand of justice is God's own unyielding cause, and no injustice will go unanswered. This assurance frees God's people to forgive those who abuse them and wrong them. In fact, this is what is required of us.

Peter writes, "Beloved, never avenge yourselves, but leave it to the wrath of God, for it is written, 'Vengeance is Mine, I will repay, says the Lord'" (Rom 12:19).

Jesus' own example helps us see that love that forgives is not indifferent to wrong:

"While suffering, He uttered no threats, but kept entrusting Himself to Him Who judges justly" (1 Peter 2:23).

When Jesus hung on the cross and prayed, "Father, forgive them," He knew that, far from violating justice, He was taking all the sin of the world on Himself to bear what His Father's wrath required on behalf of all men. But those who do not accept His suffering their punishment in their place must finally bear the punishment themselves forever.

Because God's judgment is exact, His vindication awaits those who persecuted God's faithful ones and who have not repented. This repentance is what Jesus and those who belong to Him are praying for their tormenters when they cry out that they will be forgiven.

But, because we have received God's very nature and His Spirit indwelling us is holy, we not only agree that His justice must finally be completely satisfied, but we will celebrate when He brings vindication in the end.

"For, after all, it is only just for God to repay with affliction those who afflict you, and to give relief to you who are afflicted and to us as well when the Lord Jesus will be revealed from heaven with His mighty angels in flaming fire, dealing out retribution to those who do

not know God and to those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus. These will pay the penalty of eternal destruction, away from the presence of the Lord" (2 Thess 1:6-9).

"Then the third angel poured out his bowl into the rivers and the springs of waters; and they became blood. And I heard the angel of the waters saying, 'Righteous are You, Who are and Who were, O Holy One, because You judged these things; for they poured out the blood of saints and prophets, and You have given them blood to drink. They deserve it.' And I heard the altar saying, 'Yes, O Lord God, the Almighty true and righteous are Your judgments.'" (Rev 16:4-7).

"After these things I heard something like a loud voice of a great multitude in heaven, saying, 'Hallelujah! Salvation and glory and power belong to our God, because His judgments are true and righteous; for He has judged the great harlot who was corrupting the earth with her immorality, and He has avenged the blood of His bond-servants upon her'" (Rev 19:1-2).

11. Rewards

Luke 17:7-10 When you shall have done all things that are commanded you, say, 'We are unprofitable servants; we have done that which is our duty to do.'

Neither justice nor righteousness bestows rewards on the creature. It is our duty to serve God and obey Him. It is what we owe Him. Worship and thanksgiving belong to Him. Nothing we ever do that pleases Him is more than is expected and required of us as creatures who depend on Him to allow and sustain our every breath and heartbeat, and to enable every thought, word, and action.

When God rewards, He rewards in virtue of His goodness and love. When we read in Scripture that He is faithful to reward His children, it is not to our deserving that He is being faithful, but to His promises that He has spoken as expressions of His gracious love and kindness.

There is another reason, as well, why our obedience is not a credit to us or something for which we should be rewarded. We are not able to choose to obey, to love, or even to believe in God.

"But a natural man does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually appraised" (1 Cor 2:14).

All of our worship, prayer, service, obedience, and love is the work of the Lord Jesus, Who lives in us through the Holy Spirit. He is the One to Whom the reward is due. It is His work for us and in us that God rewards (Strong, 293). The approval and delight the Lord expresses in His gracious words "Well done, good and faithful servant" and the rewards He bestows on His saints are a matter of grace — the result of Christ's completed work of redemption, securing His own resurrection life in every believer.

Because He purchased us with His blood, and because He is our Lord and our very life, our total surrender to His will, His character, and His bidding is all the more expected and due — and we will be judged accordingly.

"For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may be recompensed for his deeds in the body, whether good or bad" (2 Cor 5:10).

"Each man's work will become evident; for the day will show it because it is to be revealed with fire, and the fire itself will test the quality of each man's work. If any man's work . . . remains, he will receive a reward. If any man's work is burned up, he will suffer loss; but he himself will be saved, yet so as through fire" (1 Cor 3:13-15).

"Do you not know that you are a temple of God and that the Spirit of God dwells in you? If any man destroys the temple of God, God will destroy him, for the temple of God is holy, and that is what you are" (1 Cor 3:16-17)

"If you address as Father the One Who, without respect to persons, judges according to each one's work, conduct yourselves in fear during the time of your stay on earth" (1 Peter 1:17).

"Watch yourselves, that you do not lose what we have accomplished, but that you may receive a full reward" (2 John 8).

"In the future there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day; and not only to me, but also to all who have loved His appearing" (2 Tim 4:8).

God is just. His judgment is thorough, complete, uncompromising, perfect, and right.