

King's Online Bible School
Doctrine 101: Learning about God

God is Just (adapted from Wayne Grudem's *Bible Doctrines*, 93-95)

In English the terms "righteousness" and "justice" are different words, but in the Hebrew language (used in the Old Testament) and the Greek language (used in the New Testament) both ideas come from the same root. God is just because He always does what is right.

For I will proclaim the name of Yahweh,
Ascribe greatness to our God!
The Rock, His work is perfect
And all His ways are justice.
A God of faithfulness and without iniquity,
Just and right is He (Deut 32:4).

Definition: God's righteousness means that God always acts in accordance with what is right and is Himself the original and final standard of what is right.

1. Determining what is right

What is right? In other words, what ought to happen and what ought to be? Whatever conforms to God's moral character is right. God Himself is the final standard of righteousness, and we dare not question it.

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

And Yahweh said to Job,
"Shall a faultfinder contend with the Almighty?
He who argues with God, let him answer it."

Then Yahweh answered Job out of the whirlwind:
"Gird up your loins like a man;
I will question you, and you declare to Me.
Will you even put Me in the wrong?
Will you condemn Me that you may be justified?" (Job 40:2, 8)

2. Dealing with what is not right

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

The fact that God deals with sin should cause us to worship rather than complain, for a combination of His attributes of perfect righteousness and absolute power is the guarantee that justice will ultimately prevail in the universe. Think how horrible the universe would be if either God had unlimited power but no righteousness in His character, or if He was righteous but without the power to do anything about it!

3. Caring about what is not right

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

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). But the same idea is also frequently found in the New Testament (*e.g.*, John 3:36; Rom 1:18).

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). It is as we think of the wrath that we deserved, but which was poured out on Jesus instead, that we worship in amazement.

d. God's wrath is linked with His patience.

The Bible tells us that God is "slow to anger" (Ps 103:8). Despite the fact that we would at times like Him to bring about His justice and deal with wrong-doing immediately, He delays in executing His wrath in order to leave people more time to repent (see 2 Pet 3:9-10).