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Establishing the Kingdom God, Part 6

You will know them by their fruit

Christ said, speaking of the deceivers which soon would arise, “So then, you will know them by their fruits” (Matthew 7:20). Paul stated the truth this way:

Titus 1:16, “They profess that they know God; but in works they deny him, being abominable, and disobedient, and unto every good work reprobate.”

It doesn't matter what you say you believe, your life, the way you live, reflects your true theology and what you actually believe.

This fact is so important, especially when one evaluates teachers and movements. One can say all day long that you stand for such and such, but the bottom line is: What is the sermon that is preached by your living? A. W. Tozer put it this way:

“Compared with our actual thoughts about [God], our creedal statements are of little consequence. Our real idea of God may lie buried under the rubbish of conventional religious notions and may require an intelligent and vigorous search before it is finally unearthed and exposed for what it is. Only after an ordeal of painful self-probing are we likely to discover what we actually believe about

God.”¹

Another way of saying what Tozer put in so many words would be this: “you will know them by their fruits” (Matthew 7:20).

This is of particular importance to us as we examine the passage before us. Last time we saw “The Message” which was proclaimed at the start of Saul’s Kingdom was a message that Saul himself didn’t adhere to later in his regency but one which God boldly paraded so that His people might see NOT ONLY the purpose and end of Saul’s Kingdom BUT more importantly, the purpose and end of the Kingdom of His beloved Son.

The message that accompanied Saul’s kingdom was one

- Of deliverance, 1 Samuel 11:9a.
- Which evoked gladness, 1 Samuel 11:9b.
- Which brought a confidence not of this world, 1 Samuel 11:10.

Forgiveness

Yet brothers and sisters, talk is cheap. Any nation at its genesis can say any manner of things as to its goals and purpose. However the real question that must be answered is this: What did the kingdom of God’s anointed actually produce?

We are going to begin looking at the actual fruit of Saul’s kingdom. A fruit which sadly didn’t endure in the life of Saul, following this passage Saul quickly abandoned the foundation upon which his kingdom rested. Yet a fruit which in Providence, brought to the forefront in this text, is a picture/foretaste of the Kingdom which Christ established when first He walked the earth. Regardless of what Saul later would do, we learn ultimately of the fruit which accompanied Christ’s Kingdom! So behold “The Fruit” which was produced by the kingdom of God’s anointed, the first fruit was that of forgiveness.

Guilty Individuals

1 Samuel 11:12, “And the people said unto Samuel, Who is he that said, Shall Saul reign over us? bring the men, that we may put them to death.”

This is a rather interesting response of the people following their victory against the Ammonites. Yet the response was not a stretch. Recall in 1 Samuel 10 when Saul was installed as the king of Israel, “...certain worthless men said, ‘How can this one deliver us?’” (1 Samuel. 10:27a).

When we looked at this passage, there was a sympathy on our part for this sentiment. When the time came to unveil “God’s anointed”² Saul was hiding beneath a pile of outer coats.³ From the outside looking in we are left wondering if Saul is afraid of standing before the people of God and how much more will he shrink back when it comes to standing before the enemy? Truly, this man is not qualified to serve as king.

¹ A. W. Tozer, *The Knowledge of the Holy*, HarperOne (February 11, 1998), ISBN-10: 0060684127, page 10

² Compare 1 Samuel 10:1

³ Compare 1 Samuel 10:23

But then we noted that the moment that God anointed this son of Kish. Saul no longer was the bumbling fool pictured in 1 Samuel 10. Rather, he now was a chosen vessel of God through whom God deigned to work His will.⁴ Saul was now a vessel who now demanded the respect and obedience of the people of God.

Accordingly, while we might identify with the sentiment of the “worthless men” of 1 Samuel 10:27, nevertheless from the perspective of God’s choice, we conclude that these “worthless men” were in the wrong and therefore ought to have been punished!

That is why when the battle of 1 Samuel 11 was drawing to a close, a battle which demonstrated Saul’s qualification as king we are not surprised to read that the first thing the people wanted to do was to deal with the grumblers and naysayers. In fact it could very well be that the ones who prompted the call for the execution of the “worthless men” of 1 Samuel 10 were the ones who initiated the move toward a monarchy in Israel. They would have had the most to lose had Saul failed; likewise they would have been the most offended when some refused to acknowledge Saul as king.

Individuals Who Stand condemned

With that, note that our passage begins with a group of individuals who stood guilty before God. These were men who sinned by not submitting to God’s choice for king. And yet it is more serious than that.

1 Samuel 11:12, “And the people said unto Samuel, Who is he that said, Shall Saul reign over us? **bring the men, that we may put them to death.**”

This may sound rather harsh, since before when these individuals publicly rejected Saul there were no consequences. We simply read that “they despised him and did not bring him any present. But [Saul] kept silent” (1 Samuel 10:27). Apparently, it was ok for these men to express their doubts. They came to believe that there was nothing wrong in rebelling against God’s anointed. If you didn’t like what you saw, you didn’t have to submit!

Yet that couldn’t be further from the truth. Indeed! That these “worthless men” were not punished in 1 Samuel 10 does not mean that what they did wasn’t serious. For indeed it was:

Exodus 20:12, “Honour thy father and thy mother: that thy days may be long upon the land which the LORD thy God giveth thee.”

While this rightly addresses the role relationship between parents and children in a family, nevertheless we must see that this passage speaks to far more than the family. It addresses the disposition and duty we ought all to have toward any and all in authority over us- whether that be...

- A king.
- A parent.
- A teacher.
- A policeman.

⁴ Compare Romans 13:1

- Etc.

Listen to the word of God:

Exodus 22:28, “Thou shalt not revile the gods, nor curse the ruler of thy people.”

Following Mount Sinai, Moses exhorted the people of God with regard to how they ought to live as a newly organized nation. In this context he equated cursing a “ruler of the people” (i.e., an elder, a prophet, a priest, a king, a parent, an officer, i.e., anyone in authority over them) with cursing God. This is how serious this issue is:

Romans 13 explains to us how cursing a ruler is ultimately cursing God:

Romans 13:1, “Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers. For there is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God.”

See behind every lawful authority is God! Thus to rebel against a king, as some did with Saul, is to rebel against God. Thus we read this:

1 Samuel 8:7, “And the LORD said unto Samuel, Hearken unto the voice of the people in all that they say unto thee: for they have not rejected thee, but they have rejected me, that I should not reign over them.”

These elders thought that they were rejecting an aged priest along with his ungodly family. In actuality, because God had anointed Samuel, the prophet exercised his office with the authority of God. Thus when the elders opposed Samuel they were opposing God! And that you might see this is serious, notice the cost of such rebellion:

Roman 13:2, “Whosoever therefore resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God: and they that resist shall receive to themselves damnation.”

What is this “condemnation?” Based on the context⁵ it would include the death penalty. Or in the words of Christ in the parable of the Talents:

Luke 19:27, “But those mine enemies, which would not that I should reign over them, bring hither, and slay them before me.”

This could very well be an allusion to 1 Samuel 10:2. Truly this is what justice demanded when subjects rejected a king!

In light of all of this when we look at the installation of Saul as king and behold the “worthless men’s” rebellion, we note that they should have been executed on the spot. That is what justice demanded! But they weren’t, for you see Israel was a nation of cowards who at the time “did that which was right in their own eyes” (Judges 21:25). Matthew Henry put it this way:

“They had not courage thus to move for the prosecution of those that opposed him when he himself

⁵ Compare Romans 13:4

looked mean, but, now that his victory made him look great, nothing would serve but they must be put to death.”⁶

Thus when we come to our text we should not be surprised at the proposal that the “worthless men” of 1 Samuel 10:27 be put to death because this is what justice demanded! In fact if there is any surprise, it ought to be over the fact that Israel waited this long before justice was sought. And so we have guilty individuals who stand condemned before God.

Now if we were speaking about the Babylonian kingdom under Hammurabi, or a nation ruled by the Taliban these individuals would not have found mercy. Yet we are not talking here about just any old kingdom. We’re talking about Saul’s kingdom at its best and so the foretaste of Christ’s kingdom. Accordingly at the advent of Saul’s kingdom, notice that these guilty individuals found forgiveness.

Forgiveness

1 Samuel 11:13, “And Saul said, There shall not a man be put to death this day: for to day the LORD hath wrought salvation in Israel.”

The verb for “put to death” carries the idea of execution. and therefore this is an interesting statement, if for no other reason than it is so utterly unexpected coming from Saul. In fact, later in Saul’s life when Saul was more true to his character and so was endeavoring to execute innocent people right and left—these words would be thrown right back at him by his son Jonathan.⁷

Yet in our text Saul had participated in the deliverance of God (which in the Hebrew is the word for “salvation from sin”). As such, as one who had tasted this deliverance, could smell it, and saw it vividly and had touched it with his hands. Heard it with his ears, and experience its vividness that went beyond description; Saul could think of no other option for guilty sinners than deliverance. And so in a bold move of grace, Saul pardoned the sin of his adversaries.

From this we derive the first “fruit” of Saul’s kingdom: Forgiveness! And as God established the regency of Saul; a regency which at its start spoke of grace and forgiveness, the Lord foreshadowed the glorious reign and rule of Christ in which

- Sinners would be pardoned.
- The unrighteous forgiven.
- The errant turned back.
- The transgressor restored.

Now brothers and sisters you might be tempted to say, “Where’s the justice in Saul’s action here?” And you’d be right to ask that. If the law could be set aside because Saul was in a forgiving mood could it not also be set aside for any reason, and hence lead to a reign and rule of capriciousness and partiality?

By way of note, that’s exactly what happened in Saul’s kingdom. Not only did Saul NOT uphold justice in this context, but throughout his regency justice would continually be set aside. The result is that men who

⁶ Matthew Henry, *Matthew Henry’s Commentary in One Volume*, page 298

⁷ Compare 1 Samuel 19:1-6; and also 2 Samuel 19:22

- Should have been punished- received blessing instead.
- Should have been honored for their work in the Kingdom, instead- were attacked.

Truly Saul's kingdom would be fraught with multiple violations because he had no basis upon which to forgive the transgressor except that of his own whim. So on the one hand we are encouraged at the message this morning, a message of forgiveness. Yet on the other we realize that as this forgiveness had no foundation, NO BASIS, it therefore rested on shifting sand.

Yet such was not the case when it came to the kingdom established by Christ — the regency to which Saul's Kingdom pointed! In the kingdom of Christ, grace and mercy is abundantly enjoyed. Yet justice is never violated or compromised. In fact it behooves us to see this.

Romans 3 is a text which speaks of the forgiveness granted to the sinner through Christ. Paul writes according to a problem/solution motif.

Romans 3:25, "Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God."

The word for *forbearance* literally means to hold back. It is not forgiveness, but the suspension of a penalty. And thus it points to a truce, not a peace! It is a temporary cease-fire and implies a limit. Now in this cease-fire, God passed over sins previously committed.

To "pass over sin" is to overlook it, or to pass it by in relation to punishment. Essentially, it is to let someone go unpunished. Now I want you to notice that this "passing over" is not salvation, BUT the withholding of due-punishment for a particular end.

This raises the questions of

- Why did and does God pass over sins?
- Why does God withhold the punishment which sin deserves?

God withholds the due punishment so that the individual might have the chance for salvation.

Acts 14:16, "Who in times past suffered all nations to walk in their own ways."

2 Peter 3:9, "The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance."

And so the passing over of sins is the withholding of Divine punishment for the sake of salvation!

Oh, what a great and glorious God who is "...compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in lovingkindness and truth" (Exodus 34:6b)! What wonderful news that God "passes over sins previously committed" that we might come to the knowledge of the truth!

And yet while this is good news, nevertheless this truth represents a serious PROBLEM in light of "the righteousness of God" which Paul in Romans 3 is addressing.

The "righteousness of God" is a statement about God's character, specifically that He is just and therefore always upholds justice. And herein is the rub: How many of you have ever wondered why Adam did not immediately die when he sinned against God in Genesis 3. That's what was promised in Genesis 2:17!

If you have wondered this, you have unknowingly grappled with "the problem." See, justice would demand that Adam be killed immediately.

Genesis 2:17, "But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die."

And yet he wasn't!

Now most of us have answered this passing question by referencing God's grace. We have thought, Adam wasn't immediately killed because God is a gracious God and has chosen to "pass over" the death penalty prescribed in Genesis 2:17. Now as wonderful as this may seem on the surface, this is NOT the answer, and really constitutes for us, "bad news." For in order for God to "pass over" the prescribed death penalty of Genesis 2:15-17 He would have to BREAK the obligations of the promise (specifically His word in Genesis 2:17) that required Adam's immediate death... thus proving Himself to be UNRIGHTEOUS!

So do you see the problem?

For a man to be forgiven for his transgression/sin is to imply that God is NOT RIGHTEOUS! Or better put, that God does not immediately punish the sinner when he sins may show that God is merciful and loving, but certainly not just. The obligations of the covenant of works require man's punishment! Justice demands that the guilty be punished just as it demands that the innocent go free! And so the truth of God's forgiveness places God's "RIGHTEOUS" character in question.

Paul knew this. Notice again Romans 3:25.

Romans 3:25, "Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God."

The demonstration of God's righteousness was necessary because God forbears with sin! Dr. John MacArthur wrote this:

"The real 'problem,' as it were, with salvation was not the matter of getting sinful men to a holy God but of getting a holy God to accept sinful men without violating His justice."⁸

Is there a solution to this problem? Paul answers this at the start of the verse.

Romans 3:25, "**Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood**, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God;"

⁸ Dr. John MacArthur, *Romans 1-8: New Testament Commentary (MacArthur New Testament Commentary Series) (Hardcover)*, Moody Publishers (April 9, 1991), ISBN-10: 0802407676, Page 219

This is what demonstrates that God is just, and so serves as the ANSWER to the PROBLEM; Jesus Christ and His sacrifice on the cross! Notice what Paul says: “to declare.” This means that God presented or set before the world in an open and visible way.⁹ In contrast to the sacrifices made in Old Testament worship, Christ's sacrifice was not made in the dark and hidden recesses of the Temple, but openly on the hill of Calvary for the entire world to see. And hence, Christ was presented publicly as propitiation.

Now, don't allow this word *propitiation* to detour you in your understanding of this passage. Propitiation means a wrath removing sacrifice. It carries the basic idea of appeasement or satisfaction. So when Christ hung on the cross, far more was going on than just a sacrifice for our sin. God was in fact demonstrating to the world that the wages of sin was in indeed death. He was declaring that He Himself undertook this payment of the penalty in order to “pass over sin.”

When Adam sinned, it wasn't that God overlooked his sin in favor of mercy. Rather, God's wrath was kindled and, by grace, directed at the "wrath-removing sacrifice" of Jesus Christ rather than Adam. And thus the sacrifice of Christ on the cross did two things. It

- Removed God's wrath against us- IT FORGAVE US!
- Upheld the justice demanded by the law!

And this all leads to a specific conclusion:

Romans 3:26, “**To declare, I say, at this time his righteousness:** that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus.”

This passage refers to God's eschatological time clock. As redemptive history goes, we are in the present time. And thus, the declaration of God's righteousness can be seen even today; just look at the cross and there see that by it that “He might be just, and the justifier of him which believes in Jesus.”

Isn't this glorious?

Christ's death on the cross demonstrates both God's right character as well as the forgiveness that is able to be bestowed upon those in sin. Barclay put it this way:

“The natural thing to say, the inevitable thing to say, would be 'God is just, and, therefore, condemns the sinner as a criminal.' But if God has simply punished sinners, while that would have left no doubts about His justice, it would have raised questions about His mercy, and the God of the Bible is both just and merciful. What Paul is saying is that the cross shows us both.”¹⁰

And so the beauty and the mystery of the cross is here expounded upon. The cross not only is a proclamation of our salvation and thus God's grace and mercy, but also the manifestation of the righteousness of God!

⁹ Compare also verse 21, “made known” and verse 25, 26 “to declare/demonstrate”

¹⁰ Leon Morris, *The Epistle to the Romans (Pillar New Testament Commentary)*, Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company (March 1988), ISBN-10: 0802836364, page 184. (This book can be read on Google Books) Morris quotes John Barclay.

From this we conclude that unlike the benefit which came when Saul's Kingdom was established forgiveness from temporal harm at the expense of justice. The forgiveness which is granted in Christ's Kingdom is both

- Just! The law was not overlooked but fulfilled in Christ's sacrifice on our behalf.
- Eternal! The forgiveness granted in Christ was not for one infraction of the law, but for every violation of the sinner- past, present, and future!

And that is why Paul climaxed his treatment in Romans 8.

Romans 8:1, "There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit."

Listen if you are in Christ Jesus; if you are relying upon His cross-work as the sacrifice for your sin then:

- Your sins are completely and totally forgiven!
- You are blameless before God.
- You stand before Him not guilty of any violation.
- You are altogether beautiful in His eyes!

How do you respond to such a glorious truth?

If you haven't already, place your hands on the head of the "Lamb of God" and transfer your sin today. In Old Testament worship, forgiveness was portrayed via the sacrifice of a lamb. The sinner was required to take a spotless lamb; symbolizing purity, and lay his hands on its head while he confessed his sin; picturing the transferring of his sin on the animal. And then he took out a knife and cut the throat of the animal; which demonstrated the payment for his sin.

Brothers and sisters don't miss it: John called Christ, "the lamb of God" (John 1:29b). By this he taught us NOT ONLY that Christ is the only genuine lamb that can forgive sin BUT that we must lay our hands on His head, confess our sins, and so transfer our guilt to Him.

Have you done this today?

If not, wait no longer. Go to God this day in prayer and confess that you

- Have sinned.
- Cannot save yourself.
- And then ask God to forgive you on account of the death of Christ on your behalf.

If you are one this day who has confessed your sin, then brothers and sisters regardless of the difficulties of your life, your cold heart, and the sin you committed this past week for the 1000th time THEN REJOICE! IT IS WELL WITH YOUR SOUL! For God to hold any sin against you now would violate justice- since Christ paid the demands of the law when He hung on the cross.

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VISIT US WHEN IN Broomfield, COLORADO

Feel free to visit Bethel Presbyterian Church when in Broomfield, Colorado. Bethel Presbyterian Church meets at Broomfield High School, Eagle (10th Street) and Main, Broomfield, Colorado. The telephone number of the church is 303-469-6912. The worship services are at 9:30 a.m. and 6:00 p.m. each Sunday. Bethel Presbyterian Church is a member of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church.

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About the Preacher

Greg Thurston preached this sermon on December 9, 2007. Greg is the preacher at Bethel Presbyterian Church