

The Absolute Righteousness of God

I maintain that the Bible teaches that God's righteousness is absolute. In my evangelism and in my writings, I stress that God's judgement is so strict, that He cannot let any sin go unpunished. Therefore, if anyone were to die with just one sin on his record, God would have no choice but to sent him to hell forever. The Bible does not use the phrase, "God's righteousness is absolute." But this teaching can be confirmed through inductive study of the Scriptures. This article attempts to confirm this teaching by providing a variety of verses that speak on this subject. These verses can be used to help those who evangelize reason with unbelievers about God's absolute righteousness.

God is pictured as holy, separate from sin, pure.

"The Lord your God is a consuming fire" (Deuteronomy 4:24).

"So it was, when you heard the voice from the midst of the darkness, while the mountain was burning with fire, that you came near to me, all the heads of your tribes and your elders. "And you said: 'Surely the LORD our God has shown us His glory and His greatness, and we have heard His voice from the midst of the fire. We have seen this day that God speaks with man; yet he still lives. 'Now therefore, why should we die? For this great fire will consume us; if we hear the voice of the LORD our God anymore, then we shall die. 'For who is there of all flesh who has heard the voice of the living God speaking from the midst of the fire, as we have, and lived?" (Deuteronomy 5:23-26).

Prior to the advent of Christ, the holy God revealed Himself in a limited way to and through the nation of Israel. Not even Moses was holy enough to get a full glimpse of God because of His holiness:

He (Moses) said, "Please, show me Your glory." Then He said, "I will make all My goodness pass before you, and I will proclaim the name of the LORD before you. I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion." But He said, "You cannot see My face; for no man shall see Me, and live." And the LORD said, "Here is a place by Me, and you shall stand on the rock. "So it shall be, while My glory passes by, that I will put you in the cleft of the rock, and will cover you with My hand while I pass by. "Then I will take away My hand, and you shall see My back; but My face shall not be seen" (Exodus 33:18-23).

God instituted a temporary way for the nation of Israel to meet with God through the tabernacle and Levitical priestly rituals. Things had to be done perfectly by those who attempted to approach Him through this temporary means. If not, the person would die.

On the first day of the tabernacle service, two sons of Aaron died instantly when they went into the outer room (called "the holy place"), simply because they did not burn the correct incense. (They had good intentions in their hope to serve God as His appointed priests.)

"Then Aaron lifted his hand toward the people, blessed them, and came down from offering the sin offering, the burnt offering, and peace offerings. And Moses and Aaron went into the tabernacle of meeting, and came out and blessed the people. Then the glory of the LORD appeared to all the people, and fire came out from before the LORD and consumed the burnt offering and the fat on the altar. When all the people saw it, they shouted and fell on their faces. Then Nadab and Abihu, the sons of Aaron, each took his censer and put fire in it, put incense on it, and offered profane fire before the LORD, which He had not commanded them. So fire went out from the LORD and devoured them, and they died before the LORD. And Moses said to Aaron, "This is what the LORD spoke, saying: 'By those who come near Me I must be regarded as holy; And before all the people I must be glorified' (Leviticus 9:22-10-3).

On a similar occasion, the nephew of King David died while they transported the ark of God back to Jerusalem. His mistake, simply reaching out to steady the ark so it did not fall off the cart.

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"So they set the ark of God on a new cart, and brought it out of the house of Abinadab, which was on the hill; and Uzzah and Ahio, the sons of Abinadab, drove the new cart. And they brought it out of the house of Abinadab, which was on the hill, accompanying the ark of God; and Ahio went before the ark. Then David and all the house of Israel played music before the LORD on all kinds of instruments of fir wood, on harps, on stringed instruments, on tambourines, on sistrums, and on cymbals. And when they came to Nachon's threshing floor, Uzzah put out his hand to the ark of God and took hold of it, for the oxen stumbled. Then the anger of the LORD was aroused against Uzzah, and God struck him there for his error; and he died there by the ark of God" (II Samuel 6:3-7).

The priests who officiated in the tabernacle worship had to follow strict rules or they could be struck dead on the spot. And none of them could even go into the holiest room of the tabernacle except the high priest. And he could only come one time each year. He had to come with blood from a sacrificed animal. He had to wear bells on his gown so the people could listen to make sure he was still alive. The most holy room had a thick veil and all the fixtures pictured concepts that taught about the holy God's unapproachable nature. The New Testament says that the Holy Spirit was teaching through all of it that the way to God had not been made open. In other words, "Sinners keep out!"

"Now when these things had been thus prepared, the priests always went into the first part of the tabernacle, performing the services. But into the second part the high priest went alone once a year, not without blood, which he offered for himself and for the people's sins committed in ignorance; the Holy Spirit indicating this, that the way into the Holiest of All was not yet made manifest while the first tabernacle was still standing" (Hebrews 9:6-8).

The problem, God is pure, and all people are stained with sin.

"You are of purer eyes than to behold evil, And cannot look on wickedness" (Habakkuk 1:13).

God has not changed. He remains pure and holy. No sin can come into His presence. This holy nature of God can also be seen in His justice.

God is pictured as a righteous judge who will rightly punish all sin.

There is no unrighteousness in Him" (Psalm 92:15).

As a judge, because there is no unrighteousness in Him, He must uphold the law perfectly. He cannot accept plea bargains like the unrighteous human judges.

"For the LORD your God is God of gods and Lord of lords, the great God, mighty and awesome, who shows no partiality nor takes a bribe" (Deuteronomy 10:17).

If God excused just one single sin, He would no longer be righteous. It would be wrong (not righteous) to excuse any sin whatsoever.

"The Lord will not let the guilty go unpunished" (Exodus 34:7, Nahum 1:3).

The Bible teaches that God is great in mercy, but not at the expense of His perfect righteousness. Not only is it impossible for sinful man to come into His holy presence and live, it is impossible to escape God's promised judgment.

"Who can stand before His indignation? And who can endure the fierceness of His anger? His fury is poured out like fire" (Nahum 1:6).

"We know Him who said, "Vengeance is Mine, I will repay," says the Lord. And again, "The LORD will judge His people." It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God" (Hebrews 10:30-31).

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Since everyone is stained with sin, no person can come into His presence without being consumed instantly. In addition, being a righteous judge, He cannot let a single sin go unpunished. But because He is merciful, He made a righteous way for guilty sinners to have their sin remitted (washed away). In the process, He remained absolute in His righteousness because the sins were indeed punished. He sent His Son down out of heaven to take the punishment. Since the sins were punished, the way into God's presence is now open to all who come through this WAY.

Jesus said, "I am THE WAY, the truth and the life. Nobody comes to the Father except through me" (John 14:6).

Prior to Jesus' death on the cross, the way into God's presence had not been manifested. But God demonstrated to us that THE WAY is now made open through the death of His Son. The moment He died on the cross, God Himself ripped the veil to the holy of holies from top to bottom to demonstrate that the WAY into God's presence is now made open. This was a supernatural event in that the veil was made of very thick material and the rip began very high off the ground, and at the exact moment necessary.

"Jesus cried out again with a loud voice, and yielded up His spirit. Then, behold, the veil of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom; and the earth quaked, and the rocks were split, and the graves were opened; and many bodies of the saints who had fallen asleep were raised; and coming out of the graves after His resurrection, they went into the holy city and appeared to many. So when the centurion and those with him, who were guarding Jesus, saw the earthquake and the things that had happened, they feared greatly, saying, "Truly this was the Son of God!" (Matthew 27:50-54).

In addition, God raised Jesus from the dead on the third day.

Had not Jesus come here and died to save us from our sins, the way to the Father would have remained shut and all would be doomed to face the wrath of God that is coming soon because indeed, God is absolute in His righteousness and therefore cannot excuse any sin whatsoever.