



Week 3

Christ Receives our Punishment

READ

*Since we have now been justified by his blood, how much more shall
we be saved from God's wrath through him!*

Romans 5:9



In our current cultural moment, many people find the idea of God's wrath against sin objectionable. The idea that God could even be 'wrathful' might seem counter-intuitive to his loving nature. However, the Bible is very clear. God hates sin. He deplores rebellion. The prophet Nahum wrote against the corrupt city of Ninevah that God is, "a jealous and avenging God; the Lord takes vengeance and is filled with wrath. The Lord takes vengeance on his foes" (Nah 1:2). Now if we stopped there we might be tempted to see God as some angry authority figure who is just pushing his cosmic weight around but in the very next verse, Nahum clarifies that,

"The Lord is slow to anger but great in power; the Lord will not leave the guilty unpunished"

Nah1:3

God's wrath is not petulant or arbitrary but is an expression of justice.

There are two ways that justice gets worked out. The first and more popular today is restorative justice. This is the general idea that when someone does something wrong, they need to be rehabilitated so that their actions will change. There is also another aspect of justice called retributive justice. This is the idea that when someone does something wrong they need to be punished for it, there needs to be 'retribution.'

Generally this is not held up much as a desirable way to enact justice. However, when we stop to think about it, we actually all see the importance of wrath against injustice or retributive justice. We know when we hear stories of a weak person being taken advantage of or harmed that the perpetrator should face punishment. We are filled with anger and we want that person to pay. When Harvey Weinstein was exposed for being a serial rapist, it kick started a series of movements that were collectively labeled #metoo. There was very little sense that these powerful men who had sexually abused women simply needed to be rehabilitated. They also needed to be punished. They needed to pay. Righteous wrath was poured out against them. And for those who were brought before the courts of law and found guilty, virtually no one has argued that there was simply an issue of needing to be reformed.

This is because we understand that for justice to be fulfilled a payment must be made. None of these men can give back the innocence they have stolen but they can rightfully experience a measure of the pain they inflicted through punishment.



God is absolutely perfect. He cannot commit a wrong, and yet we have wronged him deeply. And we too can't go back and undo what we have done. Like the women who were filled with wrath against Harvey Weinstein and the other abusers, God has been wronged and his wrath against evil is both justified and right. His wrath against sin is finalized in eternal death in hell. That is the punishment all humans deserve for our rebellion against God. And yet, in Jesus, God not only rightly poured out his wrath against us, but also, in love, took that punishment upon himself.

The Apostle Peter put it this way, "For Christ also suffered once for sins, the righteous for the unrighteous, to bring you to God. He was put to death in the body but made alive in the Spirit " (1 Pet 3:18). We deserved death, it was our punishment; the righteous wrath of God against us for the wrong we had done to him. And yet out of love, Jesus took that punishment upon himself. The death we deserved, he experienced. God's justice was satisfied by his act of sacrificial love.

Questions to Ponder:

(If you are doing this as family or with others share your answers)

1. Think of a time you experienced a deep injustice. If the person or group who had perpetrated that injustice simply apologized but nothing else happened. How would you feel? Would that be just?
2. Read through Matthew 27:11-26. As you do so, imagine yourself standing watching Jesus' trial as Barabbas. Share or write down what you would be thinking, how you would be feeling, knowing you had committed crimes that would lead to your death and then seeing Jesus taken in your place. How would you feel knowing Jesus was innocent and going to die and you were guilty and now going to be released?

Kids Corner:

Have you ever seen someone hurt another person on purpose? Perhaps, you may have even experienced someone hurting you like when your brother or sister hits you. When this happens what do you do? Often times the response is to tell a person who is in charge what is going on. When I was 6 my mom got me some special butterfly hairclips as a reward for doing my chores well all month. Wanting attention, my 4-year-old brother took hairclips and broke them all with a rock outside.

When I found them all broken, I was miserable and cried, running to my mom to make things right. And what do you think my mom did? She punished my brother by grounding him from seeing his friends and she made him buy me new hairclips with his birthday money. Growing up, whenever my brother pestered me, I would run to my mom and tell her because she would always bring justice, which is a big word for making things fair and right. Justice is the idea that we all get what we deserve. And the feeling we have when we see that justice is not happening might be described as wrath. We are angry because we know that justice needs to take place. If my brother had not been punished and my parents hadn't done anything, I wouldn't have been able to trust them, because they would not have been doing a good job of keeping things just.

The Bible tells us that we all took something that belonged to God. He created us and loved us and told us how to live and he asked us to respect, love, and trust him. But we took the trust and respect that we were supposed to have for God and gave it to other things. That wasn't right. God made us; he deserved our trust, love, and respect. And so, when we took it away, he was filled with wrath, and to make things right, we needed to be punished. Just like when we take something from someone else our punishment might include losing something of our own, the punishment was that we were sent away from God and we would lose our lives by experiencing death. But God loved us so much, that even though it was right for us to experience his wrath and experience the punishment we deserved, he decided that he would take the punishment himself. On the cross, Jesus, God with skin on, died. It was our punishment for not loving, respecting, and trusting God, but he took it instead. Have you ever heard of anyone doing that before? I haven't! It's so amazing! It shows us that God loved us a whole lot! Let's take some time to thank Jesus for taking our punishment by dying on the cross for us.



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Discuss | Reflect



Take a few minutes to read through the following passages of Scripture and then discuss/answer the questions below.

Read:

For what I received I passed on to you as of first importance: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures.

1 Corinthians 15:3 (NIV)

Surely he took up our pain and bore our suffering, yet we considered him punished by God, stricken by him, and afflicted. But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was on him, and by his wounds we are healed. We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to our own way; and the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all.

Isaiah 53:4-5 (NIV)

For it is better, if it is God's will, to suffer for doing good than for doing evil. For Christ also suffered once for sins, the righteous for the unrighteous, to bring you to God. He was put to death in the body but made alive in the Spirit.

1 Peter 3:17-18 (NIV)

Going Deeper:

1. If what Paul writes in the above passage from 1 Corinthians is true, this means that God planned to take our punishment upon himself from the very beginning of time. What does that tell you about what God thinks of you and the value he places on you?
2. When you read the passage from Isaiah 53, does it seem fair to you? If not what would have been fair in your mind?
3. The passage above from 1 Peter is part of a larger letter written to several churches that were experiencing direct suffering on account of following Jesus. When you read Peter's instructions telling them it is better to suffer for doing good, what do you think that would mean in your own life?
4. If Jesus suffered for you so that you could be brought to God, even though he didn't deserve it, would you be willing to suffer injustice to see someone else come to know Jesus? (Don't just make this hypothetical, think of practical things that you might actually suffer in your workplace, school, relationships, country...)



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PRAY



Take sometime to read through the prayer below and then speak it out loud. As you do, think through each line, ask the Spirit to stir your heart and your mind to understand and feel the implications of each line in light of your knowledge that God has indeed cleansed you through Jesus taking your punishment upon himself.

*'Have mercy on me,
O God, according to your unfailing love;
according to your great compassion
blot out my transgressions.
Wash away all my iniquity
and cleanse me from my sin.*

*For I know my transgressions,
and my sin is always before me.
Against you, you only, have I sinned
and done what is evil in your sight;
so you are right in your verdict
and justified when you judge.
Surely I was sinful at birth,
sinful from the time my mother conceived me.
Yet you desired faithfulness even in the womb;
you taught me wisdom in that secret place.*

*Cleanse me with hyssop, and I will be clean;
wash me, and I will be whiter than snow.
Let me hear joy and gladness;
let the bones you have crushed rejoice.
Hide your face from my sins
and blot out all my iniquity.*

*Create in me a pure heart, O God,
and renew a steadfast spirit within me.
Do not cast me from your presence
or take your Holy Spirit from me.
Restore to me the joy of your salvation
and grant me a willing spirit, to sustain me. '*

Psalm 51:1-12



Pray Throughout the Day:

As you go through your day, take time to pray through the following items.

1. Ask the Spirit to continue to grow in you an understanding and appreciation for the suffering, which Jesus went through, for your sake; that you may love him more and more.
2. Take time to pray and ask God to give you eyes to see (and not run from) opportunities to demonstrate what he is like to others by suffering on their behalf.
3. Pray that Jesus would reveal one person in your life who needs to know the good news that Jesus took his or her punishment, and so they no longer need to try and beat themselves up or punish themselves or to fear God's wrath.

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CELEBRATE | GO





This morning you are invited to simply take some space to worship Jesus for the mercy he showed in taking our punishment. As a family or as an individual look up “Lord Have Mercy – Prayers of the Saints live” on YouTube and use the following words below to sing along.

Lord Have Mercy

By Marc Willerton, Jordan Kauflin

[Verse 1]

O God, we come before Your throne
And in our weakness we confess
We go astray and sin each day
We cast ourselves upon Your grace
O Lord, have mercy on us
Sinners in need of grace
Forgive us our transgressions
And lead us in Your righteous ways
God, lead us in Your righteous ways

[Verse 2]

The blood You shed has paid our debts
Jesus, You’ve washed our sins away
We trust Your grace, believe by faith
In You we have all righteousness

O Lord, You’ve shown us mercy
Sinners are washed as saints
You’ve shown Your loving-kindness
Sons of disgrace are righteous made
Sons of disgrace are righteous made

[Verse 3]

We fix our eyes on You, our prize
Jesus, the Author of our faith
Till You return or bring us home
You strengthen us to run the race
O Lord, forever faithful
All glory to Your Name!
We have no other Saviour
Our great Redeemer, God and King
Jesus, Redeemer, God and King

Application:

God showed us mercy (not giving us what we deserved) by taking our punishment upon himself through pouring out his wrath upon Jesus at the cross. It is clear that Jesus’ earliest followers felt that an appropriate response was to suffer for the sake of others. When the religious leaders in Acts 5 beat Peter and John unjustly, Luke writes that they left, “rejoicing because they had been counted worthy of suffering disgrace for the Name” (v.41). Likewise Paul wrote, “Now I rejoice in what I am suffering for you, and I fill up in my flesh what is still lacking in regard to Christ’s afflictions, for the sake of his body, which is the church” (Col 1:24). Finally, Jesus before going to the cross told his disciples, “My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you. Greater love has no one than this: to lay down one’s life for one’s friends” (John 15:12-13). Clearly a way that we respond to Jesus taking our punishment and suffering on our behalf, is to suffer for the sake of others.

CHRIST AS OUR EXAMPLE

This week make a list of five ways you might suffer for someone in your life to show them what Jesus is like. (Think about your close relationships, people you are on mission to, people who might be antagonistic towards you). When you are done, share it with another person and ask him or her to check with you regularly to see how Jesus is at work in revealing his love through you suffering for others.