

God's Righteousness & Justice Revealed

Genesis 18:16-33

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Introduction:

Over the last several weeks in our Genesis sermon series we have been looking at how the LORD came to Abraham to assure him of His plans to make him into a great nation.

- He made a number of things very clear to him as recorded in chapter 17...
 - First, that Abraham and his descendants were to walk before Him and be blameless.
 - The nation God was establishing through him was to be a kingdom of righteousness—a people who walk with God and obey Him.
 - Second, that there would be a great multitude of people in this kingdom, that it would encompass nations and kings.
 - Third, that Abraham and his seed would be given an everlasting inheritance in the earth—indicating that Abraham would be resurrected to obtain this eternal inheritance.
 - Fourth, that Abraham and his sons and all who enter this kingdom were to receive the covenant sign of circumcision to mark them out as God's people.
 - We saw that this sign anticipated the coming of the promised Son, Jesus, and that after Jesus came, the sign was changed to baptism.
 - Fifth, that the essence of the covenant was God's promise to be their God.
 - All the blessings come out of this—eternal life, the forgiveness of sins, the destruction of their enemies, the walking with God—all grow out of this promise of God to be their God.
 - Sixth, God made it clear that the kingdom would come through a son that would be born to Abraham's wife Sarah, even though she was now past the age to have children...
 - This showed clearly that the kingdom would come forth by God's grace and power, not by Abraham's doing!
 - God told Abraham that this would happen in a year's time.
- And last week in the first half of Genesis chapter 18,
 - we saw how the LORD came to Abraham three months later to convince his wife Sarah that she really would bear a son.
 - She had given up on ever having a child, and felt that she was now too old to even try, but the LORD graciously convinces her and she believes, as Hebrews 11:11 tells us.
 - The LORD appeared to Abraham in a rather unusual way on this occasion—in the form of a man with two angels who were also in the form of men...
 - He came in this form and received hospitality from Abraham in the form of a meal, expressing friendship and commitment.

And it is with verse 16 that we pick up the narrative today...

- Here we find the LORD arising from the table to go on His way,
 - but we also find that He is not finished dealing with Abraham.
 - He has more to reveal to him!
 - We shall see that He wants to inform Abraham that He is preparing to visit the cities of the plain with judgment for their sins.
 - The two principle cities among these were Sodom and Gomorrah.
 - The LORD reveals His plans to Abraham before He acts—and He tells why He does this—and then we see how Abraham responds to the revelation.
 - It is an account that has much to teach us!
- Please listen carefully as I read it to you, and then we will examine it.
 - Genesis 18, beginning in verse 16.
 - This is the very word of God, holy and infallible...

Genesis 18:16-33: Then the men rose from there and looked toward Sodom, and Abraham went with them to send them on the way. ¹⁷ And the LORD said, “Shall I hide from Abraham what I am doing, ¹⁸ since Abraham shall surely become a great and mighty nation, and all the nations of the earth shall be blessed in him? ¹⁹ For I have known him, in order that he may command his children and his household after him, that they keep the way of the LORD, to do righteousness and justice, that the LORD may bring to Abraham what He has spoken to him.” ²⁰ And the LORD said, “Because the outcry against Sodom and Gomorrah is great, and because their sin is very grave, ²¹ I will go down now and see whether they have done altogether according to the outcry against it that has come to Me; and if not, I will know.” ²² Then the men turned away from there and went toward Sodom, but Abraham still stood before the LORD. ²³ And Abraham came near and said, “Would You also destroy the righteous with the wicked? ²⁴ Suppose there were fifty righteous within the city; would You also destroy the place and not spare *it* for the fifty righteous that were in it? ²⁵ Far be it from You to do such a thing as this, to slay the righteous with the wicked, so that the

righteous should be as the wicked; far be it from You! Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?” ²⁶ So the LORD said, “If I find in Sodom fifty righteous within the city, then I will spare all the place for their sakes.” ²⁷ Then Abraham answered and said, “Indeed now, I who *am but* dust and ashes have taken it upon myself to speak to the Lord: ²⁸ Suppose there were five less than the fifty righteous; would You destroy all of the city for *lack of five*?” So He said, “If I find there forty-five, I will not destroy *it*.” ²⁹ And he spoke to Him yet again and said, “Suppose there should be forty found there?” So He said, “I will not do *it* for the sake of forty.” ³⁰ Then he said, “Let not the Lord be angry, and I will speak: Suppose thirty should be found there?” So He said, “I will not do *it* if I find thirty there.” ³¹ And he said, “Indeed now, I have taken it upon myself to speak to the Lord: Suppose twenty should be found there?” So He said, “I will not destroy *it* for the sake of twenty.” ³² Then he said, “Let not the Lord be angry, and I will speak but once more: Suppose ten should be found there?” And He said, “I will not destroy *it* for the sake of ten.” ³³ So the LORD went His way as soon as He had finished speaking with Abraham; and Abraham returned to his place.

May the LORD bless the reading of His holy Word.

As we begin to examine this passage, let’s look first of all at...

I. The LORD's revelation to Abraham about His plans to deal with Sodom.

A. He is very deliberate about revealing it to him.

1. The LORD and His companions—two angels—arise from the meal of friendship that Abraham has just served them,
 - and in a very obvious way, they look toward Sodom—the city where Lot lived.
 - We have already been told that Sodom was a very wicked city.
 - There were five cities that were together, at the plain that is located at the southeastern side of the Dead Sea (remains have been found).
 - In Genesis 14, we have the account of how God had used Abraham to rescue these cities when Chedorlaomer had come against them with a bully coalition.
 - The LORD even raised up a priest to lead them in thanksgiving to God after Abraham had recused them—
 - This should have brought them to repentance—but instead they continued in their wickedness.
 - And so now after eating with Abraham, the LORD and His angels arise from the table and focus their ominous gaze on Sodom...
 - They begin to walk in that direction and Abraham accompanies them.
 - It was customary for a host to see his guests off by walking down the road with them a way.
2. And then, as they go along, the LORD actually deliberates about His intent to inform Abraham about what He is going to do to Sodom and Gomorrah...
 - **Verse 17: And the LORD said, “Shall I hide from Abraham what I am doing...?”**
 - He goes on to give the reasons for telling Abraham what He is going to do...
 - We will look at the reasons in a minute...
 - But for now just see that the LORD is very intentional about telling Abraham His plans...

B. Look at what He reveals to him...

1. First, He declares to Abraham how displeased He is with Sodom's sin...
 - In verse 20: **And the LORD said, “Because the outcry against Sodom and Gomorrah is great, and because their sin is very grave...”**
 - a. The idea here is that these cities were engaged in such sin that it was as if they were crying out for judgment!
 - You might remember how God told Cain that the blood of Abel whom Cain murdered was crying out for vengeance.
 - That is the idea here—that Sodom and Gomorrah were asking for punishment.

- The LORD is very patient,
 - but He does not let wicked nations go on and on without stopping them.
 - He had already told Abraham that He was not yet prepared to judge the Canaanites because their iniquity was not yet full...
 - It would be over 400 years until it was time!
 - But with Sodom, the time was drawing near for destruction to come.
 - b. The LORD, in this way, is clearly revealing Himself to Abraham (and to us) as a righteous God who judges sin.
 - Abraham already knew, of course, about the great flood.
 - The flood was recent enough that it still struck fear in the hearts of many that God was not be trifled with.
 - God had revealed His promise of mercy through the promised seed of the woman in the ancient world,
 - And He had appointed sacrifices to show the need for atonement even from the time of Adam.
 - And with Noah, everything started over with this one family that was looking to the LORD for their salvation.
 - Many in the ancient world, though often in increasingly perverted ways, repented of their sin and offered sacrifices to deity and pled for mercy.
 - But these men of Sodom and Gomorrah did not fear God.
 - God is revealing to Abraham His friend here how displeased He is with such disregard of Him!
 - Of course, we also have the benefit of this revelation of the righteousness and justice of our God.
2. Second, the LORD declares to Abraham that He will proceed very carefully in judging Sodom and Gomorrah.
- a. In verse 21, He says, **I will go down now and see whether they have done altogether according to the outcry against it that has come to Me; and if not, I will know.**
 - In other words, He will not act without complete knowledge of the situation.
 - If there is any reason in them for withholding judgment, He will certainly find out.
 - You understand, of course, that God who knows the secrets of every heart does not really need to investigate the way we do,
 - but He speaks this way for our sake—to let us know that...
 - b. He is a God of justice and righteousness who does not indiscriminately judge.
 - He will never punish the righteous or the innocent!
 - It is not in Him to do such a thing.
 - He is making sure that Abraham understands that about Him.
 - He has revealed this so that *we* might understand this about Him.
 - He never treats anyone in any way that is unjust or unrighteous!
 - That is what He is showing us here.

TRANS> But now I want to turn the subject I told you we would take up in a moment.

II. Why does God decide to tell Abraham about His plans to judge Sodom?

A. The LORD actually tells us why He is telling Abraham about this!

1. We are given special insight about this as God talks to the angels that are with Him and as He explains in front of Abraham why He is telling him of His plans.
 - You can see that in verses 17-19:
 - **Gen 18:17-19: And the LORD said, “Shall I hide from Abraham what I am doing, ¹⁸ since Abraham shall surely become a great and mighty nation, and all the nations of the earth shall be blessed in him? ¹⁹ For I have known him, in order that he may command his children and his household after him, that they keep the way of the LORD, to do righteousness and justice, that the LORD may bring to Abraham what He has spoken to him.”**
2. This gives us insight into why God revealed His plans to His people all through the centuries—telling them what He will do to this and that nation.
 - Amos goes so far as to say, **Am 3:7 Surely the Lord GOD does nothing, unless He reveals His secret to His servants the prophets.**
 - Amos does not mean this in a wooden literal way, but he is simply referring to the fact that over and over again the LORD would announce what He was going to do to this or that kingdom.
 - He would tell His people by telling His prophets...
 - And then the people would see the prophecy fulfilled and they would know that God had done it...
 - And they would know why He had done it because He would tell them.
 - This was so common that in Isaiah, the LORD challenges the other gods to step up and declare what they are going to do beforehand!
 - He taunts them, saying: **Isa 41:23 Show the things that are to come hereafter, that we may know that you are gods; yes, do good or do evil, that we may be dismayed and see it together.**
 - Of course, they can't do it because they are not in control as the LORD God is!

TRANS> So why does the LORD reveal these things to Abraham—and to His people?

B. The LORD tells us that He reveals His judgment against Sodom to Abraham because Abraham is to become a kingdom that knows God as their God!

1. God reiterates what He has been promising to Abraham—
 - that he will surely become a great and mighty nation and that all the nations of the earth will be blessed in him!
 - That is what Abraham and his descendants through Sarah are to become!
 - And the unique thing about this great nation is that they will be the people who know God!
 - That is why God has chosen Abraham, to become a nation that knows God.

2. You see in verse 19 that the LORD says: “for I have known him...”
 - The word *know*, used in this way, refers to friendship—you might paraphrase it like this,
 - “For I have taken him to be my friend.”
 - The world is cut off from God by the fall—we rejected God as our God when Adam ate the forbidden fruit...
 - We declared that we were not going to serve God...
 - So the world is cut off from Him but for His restoring mercy...
 - And here we see that mercy when He says of Abraham, “for I have known him.”
 - I have chosen him—I have taken him into friendship.
 - In Amos 3:2, the LORD uses “known” in this way when He says to His people. **“You only have I known of all the families of the earth.”**
 - This same language is used for God’s covenant people in the New Testament as well...
 - For example, in Galatians 4:9, Paul says, **“But now after you have known God, or rather are known by God...”**
 - And in 1 Corinthians 8:3, he says, **“If anyone loves God, this one is known by Him.”**
 - And in Deuteronomy 10:15, the same idea is brought out when Moses says, **The LORD delighted only in your fathers, to love them; and He chose their descendants after them, you above all peoples, as it is this day.**
 - God *knowing* us refers to Him taking us to be His own people—to be a kingdom that belongs to Him, saved out of this sinful world!
 - It is a wonderful privilege—
 - Your very presence here at church each Lord’s Day, instead of out in the world working or playing sports, distinguishes you as His people.
3. And the LORD goes on in explaining that He has known Abraham for the purpose of being a people in the earth who serve Him...
 - Look again at how it is worded in verse 19
 - **¹⁹ For I have known him, in order that he may command his children and his household after him, that they keep the way of the LORD, to do righteousness and justice that the LORD may bring to Abraham what He has spoken to him...**
 - This verse uses the Hebrew word which means *in order that*, or *that*, three times to show what God’s purpose is in *knowing* Abraham.
 - And you see that God choose him in order that he would command his children...
 - And that He would do that in order that they would keep the way of the LORD, to do righteousness and justice (unlike Sodom and Gomorrah)...

- That they would live as God’s people who know Him and who look to Him for salvation.
 - And then God will bring to them what He has spoken—He will make them a great and mighty kingdom.
- You can see that there is a conditional aspect here—
 - If Abraham does not command them to keep the way of the LORD and to do righteousness and justice,
 - then they cannot be the special kingdom of God’s people...
 - Then they will be like Sodom and Gomorrah.
 - They cannot be blessed or be a blessing to the nations if they are like that.
 - This does not mean that we are saved by obedience, but it means that God saves us to be obedient.
 - What I mean is, He saves us for the very purpose of being His people who come to Him and live for Him and obey Him as God.
 - Genuine faith always produces works and obedience to God.
 - It restores us to God so that we serve Him as God.
 - If we are not serving Him, we have not been saved.
 - This is brought out in Exodus 19:5-6:
 - **Ex 19:5-6: “Now therefore, if you will indeed obey My voice and keep My covenant, then you shall be a special treasure to Me above all people; for all the earth is Mine. And you shall be to Me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.”**

TRANS> So God is going to tell Abraham about His plan to judge Sodom because He has chosen Abraham to a righteous kingdom of His own people.

- And this raises a question that we must think through...
- C. Why is it helpful for the people who belong to God to be informed about God’s judgment of places like Sodom and Gomorrah?
- We don’t have these direct prophecies now, but we have the record of them that God has left with His people in His word—
 - but how does it help us to know of God’s judgment upon these nations?
 - Why are we given this information in His word?
1. Remember what I told you is revealed about God in His announcement of judgment upon Sodom...which is true of all such announcements...
 - It reminds us that He hates sin.
 - It reminds us that He judges sin—that it cries out for judgment.
 - It reminds us that He will be very careful to be just in His judgments.
 2. This kind of information is useful—even essential—for us to know...
 - Here are four ways it helps us...

- a. First, we need to know about God’s just judgment so that we will know Him!
 - That He is a God who hates sin and who judges sin with justice is one of the first things you must understand about the true God.
 - The fallen human heart is an idol factory.
 - We like to make up our own versions of God that we are comfortable with—that is why there are so many false religions...
 - And one of the first things to deny (or just forget about) is that God is a God who hates sin and who judges it severely.
 - We are not comfortable with that about God, so we ignore that and forget that and come up with a new version of God in our imagination.
 - By God having tell us again and again that He is wiping out this nation or sending judgment on that nation for their sin,
 - He keeps before us that He is a God who hates and judges sin so that we can know Him as He is and be His people.
- b. Secondly we need to know about God’s just judgment so that we will praise Him for it.
 - God’s hatred of sin and His judgment of sin is one of the most praiseworthy things about Him.
 - But it is one of the things that is least often praised about Him.
 - It amazes me to look even through a good hymnal like the Trinity hymnal that we use for our gathering music and notice how praise for God’s judgment of sin is hardly there...
 - Even the Psalm selections in that hymnal often have verses about judgment omitted.
 - That is why after the call to worship, we sing from the psalms that God has given us to praise Him...
 - so that we can get the right emphasis in our praises of Him!
- c. Thirdly, we need to know about God’s hatred of sin and justice in judgment so that we will be warned!
 - It is as if God is saying to Abraham,
 - I have known you that you might command your household to keep my way and to do justice and judgment *instead of being like Sodom and Gomorrah!*
 - Sodom and Gomorrah did not keep God’s way!
 - They did not do justice and judgment!
 - And as God’s people, we need to see what happens to those who do not keep God’s way.
 - We need to see that God hates sin and judges sin with severe judgment so that we will continue in His grace.
 - God says, *“This is what happens to those who do not command their household to keep my way!”*

- d. Fourthly, we need to know about God's hatred of sin and justice in judgment so that we will warn others to flee from the wrath to come.
 - There are people all around you who are going to Hell if they don't repent and trust in the Lord Jesus!
 - We would go there too if God had not rescued us.
 - We need to care for the lost—much more than we do!
 - We need to plead with God for their repentance and we need to plead with them.
 - It is an awful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.

TRANS> So you see how important this revelation that God gives to Abraham about His judgment of Sodom is!

- The LORD does not reveal what is superfluous—and I want you to consider that...
3. The LORD has filled the scriptures with revelation about Him as a God who hates sin and judges it in justice...
 - a. I have already spoken of what Amos said about the prophets—**Amos 3:7 Surely the Lord GOD does nothing, unless He reveals His secret to His servants the prophets.**
 - Large chunks of books like Isaiah and entire books like Nahum or Revelation are about God's judgment of the wicked!
 - We need to pay attention to what God says!
 - b. The Psalms are full of declarations about God's justice and judgment.
 - c. Jesus preached about it and warned us that it would be better to go through life maimed than to perish in Hell.
 - d. But the supreme revelation of God's judgment and justice is in the cross!
 - It is in the cross that we see what Jesus had to endure because of His peoples' sins—
 - He is the Son of God, and it was necessary that He be cut off and forsaken, even He, the Son of God, to turn away God's wrath from sin.
 - Praise be to our God for His justice and judgment!
 - He is a holy God!
 - And praise be to Him for His mercy in taking us to be His people through faith in Jesus Christ.
 - e. And now we await the final revelation of His judgment and justice which will come on the last day when Jesus returns in all His glory...
 - Then He will pour out His wrath upon the wicked and we will see just how just our God is and how much He hates sin!

TRANS> So you see that it is God's way of telling His people of His judgment against the sin of the nations—

- that they might know Him, that they might praise Him, and that they might not sin against Him themselves!
- And now we will consider how Abraham responded when he heard about God's plans to judge Sodom...

III. Abraham's response is a fine example for us.

A. As soon as Abraham hears what God is going to do, he responds.

1. He sees the two angels going on to Sodom to carry out the LORD's work and he turns to the LORD...
 - You can see that in verse 22: **Then the men** [that is, the angels] **turned away from there and went toward Sodom, but Abraham still stood before the LORD.**
 - As Abraham sees them go, fear wells up in his heart for Sodom!
 - Surely he is thinking of his beloved nephew Lot and of his wife and children who are in Sodom...
 - And so Abraham comes before God to plead with Him for mercy to the righteous.
 - We will look at his plea in just a moment...
2. But first I want to make a couple of observations about Abraham's approach...
 - a. First, you can see that he believes what God has said...
 - He does not ignore it or deny it or pretend that he does not understand.
 - You know how people today get all confused about the plain teaching of scripture on Hell—because they don't want to face it.
 - But Abraham does not do this—he believes that God will judge.
 - b. Secondly, you see all the way through how Abraham approaches God with boldness and humility at the same time...
 - On the one hand, he boldly dares to repeatedly ask God the question the he has; but on the other, he keeps saying things like,
 - verse 27: **“Indeed now, I who am but dust and ashes have taken it upon myself to speak to the Lord.”**
 - You almost get the impression that he is thinking, “What am I doing, talking to God like this?”
 - Likewise, in verse 32, he says, **“Let not the Lord be angry, and I will speak but once more...”**
 - He does not forget that he is speaking with God...
 - Yet, God has taken him into His friendship by grace and has revealed this to him, so Abraham finds boldness to approach Him with his concerns.
 - You ought to approach God in the same way.

B. Well now let's take a look at Abraham's concern...

1. He gets straight to the point...*will God slay the righteous along with the wicked?*
 - a. You can see how he puts it in verses 23:
 - **Gen 18:23: And Abraham came near and said, “Would You also destroy the righteous with the wicked?”**
 - Be sure that you understand what Abraham means by “the righteous” and the “the wicked.”
 - He certainly does not suppose that there is anyone that is perfectly righteous.

- Abraham builds altars and offers sacrifices because he knows that he is a sinner who must have atonement.
 - Noah did this too, even though he was called a righteous man...in fact, he was a righteous man because he looked to God's mercy.
 - The distinction that Abraham is making between the wicked and the righteous is a distinction that is made all the way through scripture...
 - *The righteous* are those who have repented of their sins and returned to God as their God—
 - And who are looking to Him for forgiveness by blood atonement which was represented by the animal sacrifices.
 - *The wicked* are those who have not repented of their sins and who do not truly look to God for forgiveness.
 - For many years after the flood, most people in the ancient world continued to offer sacrifices of atonement,
 - but increasingly they had drifted away from God and from true faith in His salvation.
 - They came up with idolatrous versions of God like I spoke about before—by ignoring things like God's hatred of sin.
 - Their worship become more and more perverted as they began to worship God in various superstitious ways and to change the truth about God into what they wanted Him to be.
 - b. So Abraham, knowing that righteous Lot is in Sodom, asks the LORD if He will destroy the city if there are 50 righteous people there...
 - Surely God will not judge if there are 50 righteous people.
 - Surely He will not judge the righteous who look to Him with the wicked who have rejected Him—as if there is no difference.
 - You see what Abraham says in verse 24-25: **“Suppose there were fifty righteous within the city; would You also destroy the place and not spare it for the fifty righteous that were in it? ²⁵ Far be it from You to do such a thing as this, to slay the righteous with the wicked, so that the righteous should be as the wicked; far be it from You! Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?”**
2. Consider Abraham's argument here!
- a. See how he picks up on the fact that God has said that He is careful in His judgments and thoroughly investigates before He judges.
 - He believes God's revelation about this and he uses it in his bold prayer.
 - He knows that Lot is there, and Lot is a righteous man...
 - b. Essentially, he is telling God that He *cannot* destroy the righteous with the unrighteous.
 - That kind of boldness is proper to use with God.
 - He Himself often speaks of it as His obligation to forgive those who come to Him for forgiveness—

- that on the basis of His covenant promise, it would not be righteous for Him to punish those who truly confess their sins and look to Jesus for forgiveness...
 - For example, in 1 John 1:9, it says: **If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.**
 - By saying that He is faithful *and just* to do this, it tells us that He would not be just if He did not forgive us.
- c. Those who know God often use this kind of argumentation with Him.
- It honours God because we are pleading on the basis of His holy character and unshakable covenant promises.
 - The fact is, that God often sets things up so that we will pray to Him in this way...
 - as He did, for example, when He told Moses that He would wipe out Israel and start over with a new nation...
 - Moses essentially says,
 - “You can’t do that—you promised to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob that your kingdom would come through their seed!”
 - And the LORD relents and does not destroy Israel.
 - Abraham is using the same approach here—arguing that it would be wrong for God to wipe out the righteous who trust in Him along with the wicked who reject Him.
 - It is a very good argument.
- d. And you see that God acknowledges the argument!
- He assures Abraham that if there are 50 righteous people in Sodom, Sodom will not be destroyed!
 - So Abraham seems to have gained his point...
3. But now Abraham has an interesting problem.
- a. He had thrown out the number 50 as a relatively low number...
- Surely in the five cities of the plain that were joined to Sodom there were at least 50 people who trusted in God... weren’t there?
 - But then Abraham starts to think—*what if there are just a few less than that?*
 - Will God destroy it if there were only 45? Will He round up?
- b. And you can see how Abraham proceeds—
- He keeps reducing the number—and then perhaps wondering if perhaps there are even less than...
 - He gets all the way down to ten...
 - But then the LORD ends the conversation by moving on toward Sodom.
 - Abraham is left with some certainty that God will not judge the righteous with the wicked...
 - But wondering if there are even ten godly people in Sodom.

- We learn from this that things are not always as cut and dry as we want them to be...
 - We do not always see the whole picture.
- c. And of course we know what actually happens...
 - The LORD does not destroy the righteous with the wicked, but He does destroy the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah.
 - He spares Lot and his family by dragging them out of the city before the judgment falls!
 - He goes in and rescues Lot, his wife, and his daughters—only four people—and Lot’s wife ends up being found among the unrighteous.
 - We will look at that in detail next week...

Conclusion: So what do we come away with from this passage?

- We come away with the realisation that we need to accept the testimony of God when He tells us that He hates sin and judges it with justice...
 - We need to believe this, even though it is unpopular to believe it...
 - And we need to command our children to keep the way of the LORD and to do justice and righteousness—repenting of their sin and embracing God’s salvation lest they be destroyed by God’s judgment...
 - And we need to praise God for justice and righteous judgment as the judge of all the earth who always does right...
 - And we need to warn the wicked and call them to repentance...
- And we also come away from this passage with the assurance that God will never punish the righteous with the wicked.
 - He will always make a distinction, and we honour Him when we plead with Him to have mercy on those who call on His name.
 - It does not mean that we will never endure temporal judgments—even the killing of our bodies—
 - but it does mean that for those who trust the LORD, the judgment will not at last hurt them but help them.
 - Righteous Daniel was taken into captivity with the many wicked in Israel, but the exile did not hurt him—it strengthened him...
 - And there were other righteous men who died when Jerusalem fell, but it was only that they might depart to be with the LORD.
 - The principle is that God will always judge righteously and that He will never judge the righteous with the judgment aimed at the wicked.
- But before I close, let me stress one thing again...
 - The hope of the righteous is not in their own works, but instead it is in the LORD who promises to save them by His grace.
 - They have repented and come to Him to be His people, and are looking to Him to take away all their sins and restore them.
 - And now that Jesus Christ has come and suffered on the cross, we rely upon Him and His cross for our justification.
 - **No one is righteous unless they rely on Jesus whom God has provided for our salvation.**