

God's Judgement & Mercy

by Alan Redpath

The sermon emphasizes that the target of God's judgment is the self and the sin of which every one of us is capable of committing, and that God's sovereignty and authority will ultimately prevail.

Duration: 35:12

Scripture: Genesis 3:15, Exodus 20:17, Numbers 35:1, Isaiah 16:5, Matthew 6:33, Revelation 21:4, Revelation 22:3

Topics: "Mercy Of God"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher discusses the concept of God's judgment and the target of that judgment. He emphasizes that listening to the law only makes people desire to break it, leading to the need for God's judgment. The preacher also highlights the trail of God's justice throughout the Bible, showing how God relentlessly pursues justice while also offering mercy. The sermon concludes by urging listeners to reflect on their own lives and acknowledge the need for God's judgment and sovereignty.

Transcript

16th chapter of Isaiah, and in the fifth verse, which the King James Version says, And in mercy shall the throne be established. The Revised Version says, A throne shall be established in lovingkindness. A throne shall be established in lovingkindness.

The Bible's a very wonderful book. It has one great theme that runs right through it from beginning to end. It's a theme of God's redemptive plan.

It's the purpose of which we heard last Sunday night from Pastor Crichton, of giving to us in Jesus Christ a new sovereignty. Restoring the dominion of God which he had before sin came into the world, and causing us once again to live under the authority of Jesus Christ, and therefore in the place of blessing and power. The whole theme, and the whole music, the whole drama, if you like, of redemption in the pages of the Bible has that one great purpose in mind, and you see it unfolding page by page.

It is good, as you turn to any portion of Scripture, just to for a moment to pause and to ask yourself, how is this theme revealed here in this particular chapter? And I want tonight to look behind the scenes in this text, and to show you how wonderfully God's sovereignty was working out in these days. How tremendously God was working to a plan, in spite of all the opposition to it. Between the 13th and the 23rd chapters of Isaiah, there are contained ten messages of judgment against heathen nations and corrupt people, the judgment of God.

Ten burdens they're called actually, in these chapters, and they proclaim the ultimate sovereignty of God over all the world, and over all men that he has ever created. And I do want to impress upon you tonight, as I speak to you, that it isn't a question of whether or not you are going to submit to the authority of Jesus Christ. The only question is when you're going to do it.

It isn't a question of whether you will. God will have the last word with us all. Before him, our risen Lord, every knee shall bow.

I must either acknowledge him here in time on earth as my Savior, or bow before him one day as my judge. The issue is not whether I will acknowledge his sovereignty, but when am I going to do it. He will ultimately be Lord.

And in the face of every discouragement, and every opposition, and every power against him carrying through his plan, the Bible gives us the record of that plan being carried through in triumph and in victory. And here I have chosen of these ten burdens, or judgments if you like, in these chapters, this one in this chapter, and in the preceding chapter, which has to do with the people of Moab. Here's an illustration of the very thing about which I've been talking.

Here's an example of God's sure judgment upon sin, and yet of his mercy and loving kindness to the sinner. Here's a tremendously, to me at least, a thrilling illustration of God working out his plan through the centuries. Some people seem to imagine that because God does not punish sin, the moment sin is committed that we can get away with it.

Because the punishment of sin is delayed, well perhaps God after all doesn't do it. But here's an example from the pages of the Bible of how God deals with sin ruthlessly, and yet in mercy. How he exerts his sovereignty and insists upon his absolute authority in life, and yet does it in mercy and in loving kindness.

And here as we speak and think together about the judgment of God upon this people of Moab, that great civilization which God brought down into absolute shattering ruins because of their sin. I'm reminded that the prophet says in the fifth verse of the previous chapter, my heart shall cry out for Moab. A sense of burden, a sense of concern, and you know when God speaks in judgment, he speaks with a tear.

As the Lord Jesus stood and faced Jerusalem and wept over it and said, how often would I, but ye would not. Somehow as I've thought about this, this tremendous judgment of God upon this civilization, I see it simply as an illustration of the way God deals with you and with me, determined ultimately to have the sovereignty. And yet every opportunity is taken to show mercy if only we would listen and heed his voice.

Let's just quietly then think this through a moment tonight, because I think it's a very thrilling story of how God deals with this, this people of Moab. Let me speak to you in the first instance about what I would call the target of God's judgment. What is God aiming at when he judges? What is he doing? What is the focal thing at which he's hitting? What is it that he's determined ultimately, completely to destroy? The target of God's judgment.

Who are these people called Moabites? Do you know anything about their history? Do you remember how they began? Let me put the picture before you. Let's trace it through the Bible and see how through century after century God spoke to them, dealt with them, exercised his authority, and when they ultimately refused to repent when his purpose had been fulfilled, he ruthlessly judged. Who are these people? Let me remind you.

He is a man, an old man, at least we would call him old, but those days comparatively I suppose quite young. And he's on a journey through a desert, and alongside him is a younger man, his nephew, Abraham and Lot. And God has called Abraham into a land of promise, and Lot, his nephew, is coming with him.

And as they walk through that journey, presently there becomes argument and strife concerning all material things, their cattle, and it's quite obvious that God would have Abraham separate from Lot. And so Abraham turns to his nephew and gives him the choice of the land that is before him, and offers to him to choose in any direction, any country, any place he may desire. And Lot looks around to the north, the south, the west, the east, and eventually decides on a fertile plain that lies almost at his feet.

It reminded him of the land of Egypt to which Abraham had taken him. It seemed that there was an immediate prospect of gain as he looked into the fertile valley, the direction in which Abraham, going after all, was so uncertain, the future it seemed to be so unsure. And so the only safe thing to do, thought Lot, is to choose this land where I'm now in, this fertile valley.

I know that there's a very unpleasant civilization there, I know there's a city of wickedness called Sodom, but that doesn't matter, I can keep clear of it. And so Lot made his choice like many another man has made his choice, like perhaps you and I have made our choice, God forbid. But maybe somebody here tonight tells them, tells them the immediate and forsaken the eternal, tells them the thing that seems to be at their feet, the immediate prospect of success, regardless of what it might lead them to.

And Lot made his choice. And it's this tense, remember, towards Sodom. And it wasn't very long before, before Lot was not only in Sodom, but Sodom was in Lot.

It wasn't long before the spirit of the place, and the corruption, and the sin of it, and the vice of it, and the immorality of it got into his whole soul, and Lot sank lower and lower. Yet God would not destroy that city until Lot had escaped, indeed he couldn't. God had to preserve this man for a very special reason that we'll see in a few moments.

And so the destruction of Sodom was delayed, and Lot was delivered and escaped, but you remember his wife was turned into a pillar of dust. But eventually Lot got free from Sodom with two of his daughters, that was all Lot, and two girls. And then the story doesn't bear repeating.

The whole, the whole sanctity of marriage, the whole principle of the propagation of the human race, the whole sacredness of childbirth was absolutely violated, because Lot had a child by his daughter. And the child's name was called Moab. And so the Moabite began.

And the origin of their history was in the violation of the most sacred relationship on earth, was in the corruption of the marriage pie, was in the cutting across of all recognized principles of morality. And it was there that Moab began its existence, his existence. A man had chosen a worldly thing.

A man had refused, though he knew the way he had refused, to walk with God. He had chosen the immediate, the present. He had said that he would be perfectly able to keep himself away from the vice and the temptation of the city, but he had found himself utterly beyond, utterly unable to prevent the landslide that took place.

And Lot went down, and the spirit of Sodom got into his very character and nature, and presently he gave birth to a son, and he called him Moab. And Moab began. The story of Moab began in corruption, and in

immorality, and in the breakdown of the sanctity and the decency of marriage.

Interestingly enough, through history of this people, they were renowned for their pride. The sixth verse of this chapter, if you were to glance at it a moment, says, we have heard of the pride of Moab. He is very proud.

It seems as if through the centuries their hearts have been hardened. I think the most striking commentary upon this people of Moab is in the 48th chapter of the prophecy of Jeremiah, and the 11th verse, where we read, Moab has been at ease from his youth. He hath settled on his leave, hath not been emptied from vessel to vessel, neither hath he gone into captivity.

Therefore his taste remained in him, and he is not changed. Borrowing language from the vineyard, where with new wine, the wine is emptied from vessel to vessel, to prevent it becoming pale and stagnant, but not so with Moab. The commentary of God's prophet and God's messenger upon these people was a proud people, a complacent people, a self-righteous people, an unrepentant people, a self-satisfied people.

And through all the history of this, of this civilization, their taste remained in them, the unsavoury taste of a proud, rebellious, and sinful heart. We have heard, said Jeremiah, of the pride of Moab. He is very proud, and his loftiness, and his arrogancy, his pride, and his haughtiness of heart.

In the history of the people of God, if you were to trace it through the Old Testament, the history of Israel, Moab was always their enemy. Israelites were commanded not to go near them, not to touch them. When they went through the wilderness journey, they were to avoid their territory, to have no contact with them whatsoever.

And whenever Israel disobeyed and had contact with Moab, they got themselves into trouble. Solomon chose one of his many wives from the Moabites. The whole story, the whole parable, the thing that the Holy Spirit seeks to get home to our hearts, is God's insistence of separation from sin.

And the whole target at which God is striking in judgment is the target of sin, of sinful nature, of the corruption of the flesh, of a people who are arrogant, proud, complacent, self-satisfied, and yet deep down in their soul, who are guilty of this awful crime, this awful vice. God's target all through history, and God's target today, the flesh, the self in us, you and I, as we really are. Of course, it's a sordid picture.

Of course, it's an unpleasant, grim background to our story tonight. But let's just wait a minute. Isn't it really the background to multitudes of lives in Chicago today, even, even nominal Christian people? Isn't it the background of many people who profess a great deal of religion, and yet deep down there's this, there's this sin, there's this corruption? Wherever there has been, wherever there has been the breakdown of the sanctity of, of sex, a man reaps what he sows.

No man breaks the sanctity, the sanctity of life and escapes the inevitable judgment of a holy God. Nobody. It may not be visited on him, but it will be visited as it was in the case of Moab upon one generation after another that succeeded.

No man plays fast and loose with his own personal moral life and escapes the consequences. Nobody. Here is the thing at which God is striking.

Here is the target, God's target of judgment. Here is the thing today in Chicago at which the hand of God strikes, and it may be the thing in your life as you listen to me tonight. Be sure of this, wherever any man or woman plays with the sanctity of sex, God never lets him escape.

And the judgment is brought not only upon him, but his children right through one generation after another. The target of God's judgment. Why? Because the most sacred thing that God ever did was to give man and to give woman the power to propagate life, and to do that out of God's will and out of God's plan and away from God's method is to cause you that.

The target of God's judgment. The self. The self and the sin of which every one of us in this place is capable of committing any minute but for the grace of God.

The animal in us, the self-like, the lower nature, whatever you call it, the physical in every one of us, the capacity in us all for sin, the thing that pulls us down, the lust, the passion, the flesh, any name you like to give it, you can't give it too bad a name, that is the target at which our holy God is ruthlessly determined to strike that it might be destroyed. The target of God's judgment. And here is Moab, the living expression of it.

And through all the centuries God has been speaking to them and the moment has come in this chapter that we are reading when the hand of God in exactly three years time was going to strike and destroy the whole civilization, a throne shall be established. In loving time. Ah yes, for centuries it appeared as if they got away with it.

For centuries it appeared as if God had forgotten to do anything about it. Oh no, for his hand was upon them in judgment the moment, God's moment, was about to strike. The target of God's judgment.

The very following thing. Tonight I just wonder if the hand of God and the sword of God's justice and the target of God's judgment is directed against somebody listening to my voice tonight. Somebody who's violating, violating in their whole life, in their thought life, in their personal life, the sanctity of sex.

Oh yes, you're training to go into the pastured are you? You better get that issue settled before you go in my friend. You're training to go into the ministry, to the mission field, you're in business, you're in Christian work and Christian service. Ah but nobody knows about you.

Why no, but the target of God's judgment is directed against you. For years perhaps you've practiced it all but escaped. For years you've been able to keep it hidden under the surface and somehow you've imagined that you've cleverly escaped the issue but the target of God's judgment is directed and God's hour has yet to come.

In that situation a throne shall be established. I want to ask you in the second place if you will to look with me. Oh to trace, to trace the trail of, the trail of divine justice.

There's the origin of the situation, there's the background of the picture, here's the beginning of the story, here's the background of this people upon whom God was just about to fall with absolute judgment and destruction. There's the beginning of it. Pride, self-complacency, self-righteousness, in spite of the fact that beneath it all there was this corruption.

But God says a throne shall be established. The target of God's judgment in relation to every one of us in this place tonight is the flesh, the soul's life, that which pulls us down time and time again and God in that

situation is going to establish a throne. That unruly mob, that unruly mob must be brought to heel and God must assume authority.

Now interestingly enough as you trace through if you would to the old testament and the story of Moab, you would always find that God said to his people, hands off, leave them to me. This is a situation far too big for you to cope with, you can't deal with it, leave them in my hands. Interestingly enough it was in the very territory which the Moabites live that Moses rehearsed God's law.

The eastern bank of Jordan in the thirty-fifth chapter of the book of Numbers in the territory of Moab, under the very ear of the Moabites, think of the background of their life, their looseness and their sin and their vice and corruption. In that situation, listening to it as it were, God rehearsed his law. He brought to bear upon them in that wild, loose situation, Moses rehearsed the law of God.

It was in the territory of Moab that Moses died. Though they fought many times to rebel against God and his way, though they indeed you remember on one occasion tried to curse the Israelites by hiring Balaam to do it, they never succeeded. They fought against God for centuries but they were doomed to fail.

And in that wonderful sixtieth psalm, David with a sense of tremendous authority and disdain said concerning Moab, Moab shall be my watchdog. I'll use them for the most servile God's imagination. Their rebellion against God was absolutely futile.

Their rebellion against God's verdict concerning them was utterly useless. He tracked them down relentlessly and followed them through one generation after another, telling his own people to keep their hands off because they could not possibly do it themselves that God undertook to deal with. He was doing just this, my friends, in the territory, in the territory of your life, that self-life of yours, that animal life, that physical life, in the territory of life which time and time again has pulled you back and pulled you down to sin.

You know what God is doing with that? He's only got one thing to do with it. It's to pronounce in that life of yours the sentence of judgment. He has no other message for self than death.

And in that territory, in that area of your life where there has been looseness and lightness, it is there that God's word comes and God's law is rehearsed. And there in the corridor of your soul you hear the echo of God's Spirit speaking to you about sin and attaching to the sin of that life of yours guilt and pronouncing the sentence of judgment and the sentence of death over the area of your life where there's been lawlessness and sinfulness. If one concern is to get every one of us to agree with his verdict about ourselves, there is none right.

No, not one. I think of the language, for instance, an example of this very thing, the language of the Apostle Paul. He said once in the seventh chapter of Romans, I was alive, he said, without the law once.

But when the commandment came, sin revived and I died. What had happened? In the area of Paul's life where there had been no law, he had heard the word of God, the law of God rehearsed, and heard the law say, thou shalt not covet. And the result of that was that within him there was created a desire to covet.

And Paul saw that the law brought guilt and a sense of responsibility, and he knew that it had tracked him down and found him a sinner. We fight constantly against the admission of what we are, but it's a losing battle. And in the territory of your heart and of mine where there's been lawlessness and looseness, the first thing that God does is there to pronounce the law upon you, the sentence of death and of

condemnation, and to speak the word of absolute authority.

A throne shall be established. Thou shalt not kill. Thou shalt not commit adultery.

And God speaks with the voice of absolute sovereign authority in the area of your life where there has been lawlessness. The law says thou shalt not covet, and you come to discover that the very listening to the law only makes you desire to break it. In your heart you come to agree with the verdict of God.

But the only answer, only answer to that life of yours is the judgment of God's death. A throne shall be established. I wonder how many more battles in life you and I are going to lose before we give in and admit that God is right.

How many more battles we're going to fight and lose day by day until we agree with the sentence of God concerning ourselves. The trail of God's justice all through the book. Tracking down this people, tracking them down, pinning them in, bringing them, bringing them to agree with his verdict concerning themselves until, until one day the hand of God strikes in judgment.

A throne shall be established. The trail of God's justice. Yes, the target of God's judgment is upon that self-life of yours, and he's been hitting at it and speaking to you and telling you that he's going to assert his sovereignty and his authority and all through the years of your life.

When perhaps you have successfully covered things of which you are desperately ashamed, God has been seeking to rehearse the law in that territory to declare the fact that you're guilty and to ask you to agree with his verdict. But wait a minute. A throne shall be established in loving-kindness.

The triumph, the triumph of God's loving-kindness. A throne shall be established in loving-kindness. That doesn't mean in leniency, not at the expense of righteousness.

No, the throne of God insists on absolute righteousness. If I look through the territory of Moab, the story of Moab, how wonderful it was to watch God dealing in loving-kindness. It was in the territory that was occupied by this people that Joshua allotted the land of promise to the people of God.

The Moabites, lawless, proud, arrogant, sinful, corrupt, heard, heard at one moment the sentence of death. They heard the pronouncement of the law guilty and then they stood by and they watched God's leader Joshua offering to the tribes, to the people of God, the land of blessing and the land of promise. In the very place where death was pronounced, life was offered.

I have set before you blessing and cursing, therefore choose blessing, choose life. Life and death, blessing and cursing, and in that very territory of Moab, of lawlessness and sin, they heard the pronouncement of judgment, but they heard also the offer of life. But even more significant, say, why didn't God destroy Lot and his daughters? Why didn't he, why didn't he destroy them there at the very beginning of history? Why didn't he just wipe them out for their sinfulness? Why did God say to his people as they came through the wilderness, leave Moab alone, don't touch them.

Why, why should he? Ah, what was God doing? What's the story of the Bible? Isn't it the story of redemption through the Lord Jesus Christ? Isn't it the story that amidst sin and corruption God was working to out of it all a Messiah, the Lord Jesus? Isn't the story of the Old Testament the story of a seed of sin and evil, and a seed which God had chosen, the two going side by side? And isn't the conflict of the Bible that Satan all through history was seeking to destroy God's seed to make it impossible for the

Messiah to come? It's a thrilling picture sometimes to study Old Testament and to watch how God's seed, God's plan, God's line of succession time and time again was nearly broken, nearly spoiled, and at the last minute only escaped. Why did God say leave the Moabites alone? Why didn't God destroy Lot and his daughters? I'll tell you, one day Satan had nearly, nearly won the victory. One day it almost seemed as if that line through which God was bringing us of fire was going to be broken completely.

And do you know where God found one person that that line of succession might be maintained? He found it in Ruth. In Ruth, from the people of Moab. And Ruth, the Moabite, turned to the living God from her gods and said, my, thy people shall be my people, thy God shall be my God.

And up from this tribe, this civilization which was utterly corrupt and utterly sinful, God got hold of one girl that repented, one girl that turned from her evil and proper God to the true Jehovah. And that girl became in succession to the Lord Jesus Christ himself. Oh, the marvelous plan of God's overshadowing and protection of his purpose and of his will.

A throne shall be established, he's Lord and Sovereign, but it's going to be established in loving kindness. And from that civilization of utter corruption, he found one soul, one girl. And through that girl there was born a child, and down through the ages, one day there was born a faith.

A throne shall be established in loving kindness. You see, my friends, all through the pages of the book, it's the principle of the cross at work all the time. The cross, not simply an incident outside a city wall two thousand years ago, but a principle along which God is working with every life all through history.

At the very place where the law has sentenced and condemned to death, in that very place grace saves and delivers and keeps. In the very place where Moses pronounces the sentence of judgment, there Joshua offers the land of blessing and of life. In the very place in your heart where God speaks with absolute sovereignty and says, thou shalt not, and brings to bear his law upon the lawlessness of your life, in that very place the life of Jesus Christ is incarnate in a man who like Ruth will repent and turn to God.

I say that the whole principle of the cross weaves itself right through the story, the wonderful thrilling story of the Old Testament. It's so enthralling, let me just say this to you tonight. Here's this tremendous picture of this civilization of Moab.

Here they are, a godless people, a sinful people, a corrupt people, a people who have violated all God's principles of decent living and standard of conduct, a people who in spite of that have been proud and arrogant, a people upon whom God is insisting that he shall be lord and sovereign and he will exert his rule, and yet in it, as he ruthlessly pronounces the sentence of death and judgment, he opens the way to blessing and deliverance, and out from such a civilization, he shows how he does it, by taking Ruth and making her to be in his purpose, a one through whom one day Jesus is to be revealed to the world. That's the mercy of God, the loving kindness of God. I wonder tonight if you see the principle of the cross operating in your heart, the lawlessness of this self-nature of yours that has played fast and loose with life, violated God's principles of life and conduct so often.

That's you, that's the principle of the whole business, that's the tragedy of it all, and a throne shall be established there, God's sovereignty there, and in that place in your life where he pronounces the sentence of death, he offers to you the land of fullness of blessing in Jesus Christ, for at the cross, a throne was established in loving kindness, mercy and truth kissed each other, and now the God who pronounces death to yourself in your life, the God who offers fullness of life in his indwelling spirit, and

that's what baptism means. That's the very thing that you're going to watch in just a moment. Oh, that God may have spoken to your heart from his word tonight, and shown you that there's only one thing he can do with self and that slave, cause it to be crucified, and I'm to ascend to his verdict and die to it all, the lawlessness of self, and in its place receive with open hands of the gift of God his fullness of blessing and fullness of life, his loving kindness and his mercy.

Let's pray together, shall we? Lord Jesus, make these things real to us tonight, that the self in us may truly accept the verdict of a holy God and die, and in the place where there's been the sentence of death, there may come the land of fullness of blessing, even Jesus himself in all his indwelling power and grace, that the throne of thy sovereignty may be set up in us in loving kindness and in mercy. In loving kindness, Jesus came, my soul in mercy, to reclaim. From sinking sands he lifted me, from shades of night to plains of light, O praise his name, he lifted me.

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