

Is it fair?

Lord's Day 4

Reading: Hebrews 10:26-31

This is the third and last Lord's Day that deals with our truth about the misery of humanity.

The Lord's Day deals with our protests, a kind of challenge to God's ruling... and raises the questions and answers that we all, at some point in our life ask.

1. Isn't it unfair that God would ask us to do what he knows we can't?
2. Even if we are guilty, couldn't God just give us a suspended sentence since 'everyone is doing it'?
3. So God is righteous, but isn't he also merciful?

It's Not Fair?

"It's not fair?" Children often ask this question at an early age.

Example of Asher. (Stay up late; eat more food; do his own thing)

It's not fair that God demands of us what we are unable to do?

Isn't God demanding the impossible?

I think this question is asked by countless people,
in tones ranging from mockery to despair.

But now the real question: Is God fair?

This sort of question, if you think about it, attacks the person, the character, and the being of God.

This sort of question says God made a mistake in His requirements.

This sort of question says God isn't sovereign, all-powerful, and all-knowing.

This sort of question says God isn't holy, perfect, and just in all His ways.

With this sort of question man puts himself over God and dares to judge the Almighty's ways.

We can't answer the question ourselves,
appealing to our human sense of justice and fair play.

The question can't be answered by us because we are the ones with the sin problem...

Of course we want to downplay the problem and raise issues of a fair go for all.

If the Herald Sun was to conduct an opinion poll or survey asking if God is unfair...

You can imagine the response from people....99% said YES

So we can't ask ourselves...who do we ask?

The answer has to come from the other side...from God.

And to God it probably seems like a silly question...

Like the drunk driver saying to the policeman...

I couldn't help driving on the wrong side of the road, cause I'm drunk.

Only God, and not man, has the right to ask whether the requirements of the law are just or not.

God himself has a Zero tolerance policy to sin.

It is interesting that the concept of Zero tolerance is becoming a catch phrase in our community.

Zero tolerance to drugs

Zero tolerance to alcohol

Zero tolerance to abuse.

Zero tolerance to bullying at school.

God is a God of Zero tolerance.

God has a demand for purity

The micro chip production plant must be a cleaning company's worst nightmare.

When I worked in factories...

'good enough' was generally alright when it came to cleaning the factory...
except in our micro tolerance tool making measurement room.

That had to air-conditioned and filter cleaned

But even that had nothing on the microchip production plant.

In those places there is Zero tolerance for dust and dirt.

The production of those microchips that control just about everything we use demands precision in all areas of production.

With millions of transistors and circuitry on a tiny square,
one bit of dust can ruin the whole thing.

And so employees at such facilities leave their street clothes outside,
because of the potential of contamination.

They put on special lab clothes.

The ventilation systems are carefully maintained in a hyperclean fashion,
as are the walls, the floors - every square inch of these plants.

Perhaps this seems almost paranoid? Overkill? Not at all.

The product demands this standard....There's no way around it.

Impurity is simply NOT tolerated!

Zero tolerance to dust

Woe to the one who tries to get by with sloppy compliance.

They will be immediately terminated.

Dirt and microchips are incompatible.

God the creator of the universe and impurity, sin, are incompatible.

This is seen in the first pages of Scripture.

God creates humanity: pure and perfect; very good.

But the dirt gets in...

Our first human parents engage in an activity that was expressly forbidden.

The result?

They are tossed out of paradise,
the God-human relationship is shattered.

It shows so clearly that God can tolerate no amount of sin in his presence.

No impurity, no distortion of his standard, no disobedience.

The bible says, "*God is light. In Him is no darkness at all.*" (1 Jn 1:5)

No room for darkness, for evil, for wrong.

God has no room, a zero tolerance policy, for sin.

Jesus himself reflects this truth when He taught His followers,

saying "*Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect.*" [Mt 5.48]

God cannot - **and God will not** -

allow sin, impurity, imperfection, unholiness to remain in his presence unchecked.

He will not allow it anywhere near himself.

Only that which is perfect, or which has been cleansed of all unrighteousness will be allowed to behold his face.

All else will be banished to eternal punishment and condemnation, to the fires of God's righteous and wrathful judgement.

So this is the blunt reality...no need to appeal to fair play...

Do you want to see God, to be in his presence some day, to experience his guidance and power even now on earth?

Then: *Be perfect... as your heavenly Father is perfect.*

Now the catechism moves from understanding all of us as being guilty before God

With a hopeful question that God might overlook our disobedience.

Q10: Will God permit such disobedience and rebellion to go unpunished?

A: *Certainly not. He is terribly angry about the sin we are born with as well as the*

sins we personally commit. As a just judge he punishes them now and in eternity. He has declared "Cursed is the man who does not uphold the words of this law, by carrying them out."

In the question the sinner is looking for an escape route...
How can I escape God's justice and righteousness?

In Western society it is impossible to maintain a law to its full extent.
Our criminal justice system has a certain elasticity to it.
You cannot send everyone to jail.

For example, most everyone drives 10kph over the speed limit on the Hume Highway; that is normal and even expected.
Prosecutors don't want to press charges if someone steals less than \$50,000.
Most drug users don't face charges unless they are also a dealer.
You cannot send everyone to jail.

But is God's justice also elastic?

Neither God nor His justice is elastic.

God would not be God if He would change and alter His code.
Jesus says, "not the smallest letter, not the least stroke of a pen, will by any means disappear from the Law until everything is accomplished" (Mt 5:18).
This means that sin must be punished.

Many people don't like this teaching.
They don't want to hear that God punishes sin.
They deny that God punishes sin.

Do you know what that kind of thinking does?

To deny punishment for sin is to hit at the heart of the Gospel.
For at the heart of it lies the teaching that Christ came to earth to take on the punishment for sin.

To deny punishment for sin is to deny the reason for Christ's coming.

There will be a judgement...it is coming.

The verses we read together from Hebrews give us a stark reminder of that too.
We finished the reading with the harsh words:

'It is a dreadful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.'
Sobering words.

I think that we live in a world that sometimes downplays.

This passage from Hebrews teaches us, with no reservations, and certainly no apologies, that God isn't playing around.

God is serious about our sin.

How different then what we'd like to believe.

We'd so love to believe that God is the Great Rule-Bender;
that he would set standards but then be flexible about the whole thing
and sort of turn a blind eye to our minor discretions;
that He would sweep sin under some cosmic carpet.

Today we don't talk a lot about being judged and punished.

We talk, rightly, about God forgiving our sins.

We, rightly, talk about being saved by grace.

When we believe in Jesus, and accept him as Lord and Saviour...

We are washed clean, we have a clean slate, a new start....

But there is still a work for us to do.

The problem is that from the time we accept Christ to the time we start sinning again is sometimes pathetically short.

And that's where the problem comes in.

When we fail, as we will surely do,

we're supposed to have the good grace to realize it, admit it, and repent.

But if we keep on sinning, brush it off as paid for by Christ, and don't even bother to feel guilty or sorry, then we're in big trouble.

One of the most famous sermons ever written about God's judgment came from a preacher back in about 1741. Jonathan Edwards was a Puritan, who wrote 'Sinners in the Hands of An Angry God'.

There are many accounts of what happened as he preached that sermon...

People running to the front of the church and pleading with Edwards to pray with them for salvation before he even finished his sermon.

What was it about the sermon that impacted people so powerfully?

Let me read you an excerpt from his sermon.

'Your wickedness makes you as it were heavy as lead, and to tend downwards with great weight and pressure towards hell; and if God should let you go, you would immediately sink and swiftly descend and plunge into the bottomless gulf, and your healthy constitution, and your own care and prudence, and best contrivance, and all your righteousness, would have no more influence to uphold you and keep you out of hell, than a spider's web would have to stop a falling rock. Were it not for the sovereign pleasure of God, the earth would not bear you one moment; for you are a burden to it; the creation groans with you;... And the world would spew you out, were it not for the sovereign hand of him who hath subjected it in hope. There are black clouds of God's wrath now hanging directly over your heads, full of the dreadful storm, and big with thunder; and were it not for the restraining hand of God, it would immediately burst forth upon you. The sovereign pleasure of God, for the present,

stays his rough wind; otherwise it would come with fury, and your destruction would come like a whirlwind, and you would be like the chaff of the summer threshing floor.' (Jonathan Edwards, "Sinners In The Hands Of An Angry God." Enfield, Connecticut, July 8, 1741)

In reaction to this Jonathan Edwards writes,

'O sinner! Consider the fearful danger you are in: it is a great furnace of wrath, a wide and bottomless pit, full of the fire of wrath, that you are held over in the hand of that God, whose wrath is provoked and incensed as much against you, as against many of the damned in hell. You hang by a slender thread, with the flames of divine wrath flashing about it, and ready every moment to singe it, and burn it asunder; and you have no interest in any Mediator, and nothing to lay hold of to save yourself, nothing to keep off the flames of wrath, nothing of your own, nothing that you ever have done, nothing that you can do, to induce God to spare you one moment.' (Jonathan Edwards, "Sinners In The Hands Of An Angry God." Enfield, Connecticut, July 8, 1741)

So don't get sucked in by people trying to tell you that God is love and full of mercy and that your sin, your rebellion, your foul-ups, stains, twists and distortions of life don't matter; that He'll overlook them. **NOT SO!!**

Our forefathers thought about that too, and wrote --

Q11: But isn't God also merciful?

A: God is certainly merciful, but he is also just. His justice demands that sin, committed against His supreme majesty, be punished with the supreme penalty - eternal punishment of body and soul.

The pure, holy God demands purity and holiness, **ONLY** purity and holiness, in His presence.

Leaving you and I in a bad spot.

Because if we accept this as true then every door to heaven is nailed tightly shut.

For there isn't a single human being who can come even remotely close to perfect purity and holiness.

Every door is nailed tightly shut.....

But the good news is that there is hope for our hopeless state!

There is salvation for all who confess their sins and turn to the Savior.

Every door is nailed tightly shut.....

Except for one.

His name is Jesus.

He said, "*I am the Way, the Truth, the Life. No one can come to God except through me.*" (Jn 14)

In him, and in him alone, is life.

God is perfectly pure and holy. He is totally just and will not, *cannot*, toss aside the rules of Cosmic Justice..... Pure, holy, just.

But He is also perfectly faithful and merciful.

So, even in the face of our unfaithfulness to Him,

God provides a door through which we can find forgiveness and freedom.

Jesus entered the dock in our place.

He faced all the wrath of God.

He carried human guilt.

And he walked the road to execution, to condemnation by heaven and earth.

He walked that in our place.

The payment was made.

Justice was satisfied.

Freedom and life are available.

Available for all those who will accept the free gift of forgiveness and new life from Jesus.

Imperfect people like you and I who continually trip over our moral feet have a way to enter the perfect purity of heaven.

We have assurance that if we come through Jesus we need not fear God.

God sees us through Jesus - pure and clean.

So we may approach Him freely.

And so falling into the hands of the Living God is no longer a dreadful thing.

It is a peaceful thing.

A longed-for thing.

A marvellously good thing.

Through Jesus it becomes the thing we long for more than anything.

It becomes that on which we build our lives.

It becomes that which defines our identity.

It becomes that thing which controls what we will say and do today
what we will think, say and do tomorrow.

Through Jesus we'll be able to leave here singing of the faithfulness of God.

Through Jesus.

And only through Him.