

Small Group questions: "Justice Driven by Creation and Redemption"
June 23, 2013

Genesis 1.26-27 Then God said, "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness. And let them have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over the livestock and over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth." 27 So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.

James 3.9-10 With it [our tongue] we bless our Lord and Father, and with it we curse people who are made in the likeness of God. 10 From the same mouth come blessing and cursing. My brothers, these things ought not to be so.

1 Chron 29.10-13 And David said: "Blessed are you, O Lord, the God of Israel our father, forever and ever. 11 Yours, O Lord, is the greatness and the power and the glory and the victory and the majesty, for all that is in the heavens and in the earth is yours. Yours is the kingdom, O Lord, and you are exalted as head above all. 12 Both riches and honor come from you, and you rule over all. In your hand are power and might, and in your hand it is to make great and to give strength to all. 13 And now we thank you, our God, and praise your glorious name.

Matt 5.43-48 "You have heard that it was said, 'You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.' 44 But I say to you, Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, 45 so that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven. For he makes his sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust. 46 For if you love those who love you, what reward do you have? Do not even the tax collectors do the same? 47 And if you greet only your brothers, what more are you doing than others? Do not even the Gentiles do the same? 48 You therefore must be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect.

James 1.9-10 Let the lowly brother boast in his exaltation, 10 and the rich in his humiliation, because like a flower of the grass he will pass away.

Deuteronomy 10.16-20 Circumcise therefore the foreskin of your heart, and be no longer stubborn. 17 For the Lord your God is God of gods and Lord of lords, the great, the mighty, and the awesome God, who is not partial and takes no bribe. 18 He executes justice for the fatherless and the widow, and loves the sojourner, giving him food and clothing. 19 Love the sojourner, therefore, for you were sojourners in the land of Egypt. 20 You shall fear the Lord your God. You shall serve him and hold fast to him, and by his name you shall swear.

1. What is the doctrine of Creation? What is essential in it, what parts can be faithful Christians hold different views on? (Note: don't spend too much time here, this is warm up, not the main point of the discussion.)
2. What role does "Creation" play in your life? How often does it inform your view of the world, how you make sense of personal, regional and global conflicts?
3. The sermon made four applications for our belief in Creation (how we see others, how we see ourselves, that God owns all things are we are merely stewards, and that God himself shows us his character in applying this doctrine (Mt 5.43-48). Discuss these. Which is most difficult for you? Where do you agree but find lingering problems to apply this? Practically in what context do you most violate these?
4. What can you do to strengthen your understanding, commitment and practical use of the doctrine of creation?

5. Reflect on Deut 10.16-20.
 - a. What is significant to the phrase: Circumcise therefore the foreskin of your heart, and be no longer stubborn. v.16?
 - b. What is unexpected about v.17-18?
 - c. V.19, asserts a unique idea in our redemption. What is it? What are the implications? What does it look like when we apply the same principle to our redemption in Christ? How can this be frightening? Why is this true?
6. The sermon spoke of how one pastor used this principle to speak to objections to living in light of the Bible's teaching on mercy and justice.
 - a. On acts 20.35. Objection 1. "My money is my own." Answer: Christ might have said, "My blood is my own, my life is my own" . . . then where should we have been? Objection 2. "The poor are undeserving." Answer: Christ might have said, "They are wicked rebels . . . shall I lay down my life for these? I will give to the good angels." But no, he left the ninety-nine, and came after the lost. He gave his blood for the undeserving. Objection 3. "The poor may abuse it." Answer: Christ might have said the same; yea, with far greater truth. Christ knew that thousands would trample his blood under their feet; that most would despise it; that many would make it an excuse for sinning more; yet he gave his own blood. Oh, my dear Christians! If you would be like Christ, give much, give often, give freely, to the vile and poor, the thankless and the undeserving. Christ is glorious and happy and so will you be. It is not your money I want, but your happiness. Remember his own word, "It is more blessed to give than to receive." Robert M. McCheyne on Acts 20.35.
 - b. What is McCheyne's main point here? What are its implications?
 - c. What are further implications to our redemption in Christ?