

What God Cannot Do



There are some things God cannot do. The all-powerful God cannot lie (Hebrews 6:18). He cannot deny himself and act contrary to his holy nature (2 Timothy 2:13). There is no injustice with God (2 Chronicles 19:7). He must therefore be just in the condemnation of the wicked. He must also be just in the salvation of his people. He cannot simply close an eye and pretend to forget all about our sins in order to be good to us.

Picture the scene. A criminal is brought before a judge. As the judge examines the evidence, it becomes evident that the accused is guilty of breaking the law and that he deserves punishment. However in his final ruling, the judge says, 'I know that you are guilty, I know that you deserve punishment, but I want to be good to you. I don't care what the law demands; I will let you go free.'

What shall we say about that judge? We may say that he is capricious, incompetent, corrupt and unjust ... but most certainly we cannot say that this judge is good! He is not doing his job as he ought to.

But let us imagine that in his sentence the judge declares that the man is guilty and he orders him to pay a hefty fine as demanded by the law. That is justice plain and simple. The man replies that he has no means to pay the penalty. At that moment the judge answers, 'Justice must be satisfied. The penalty must be paid. I also want to be kind to you. I have asked my son, and he has gladly agreed, to pay your penalty in full. Therefore you can go free.' In so doing the judge is showing himself to be both just and good!

That, and much more, is what God does to his people. He justifies them freely by his grace, even though they are undeserving. He does so only on the basis of the redemption in Christ Jesus (Romans 3:24). Jesus bought their freedom by paying the penalty demanded by the law. He died for their sins.

That is why the Scriptures gloriously declare that God is JUST and the JUSTIFIER of those who believe in Jesus (Romans 3:26). God is 'justifier' – he frees the ungodly who believes in Jesus from their guilt and the punishment in hell. God is also 'just' in showing such mercy – for he sent his Son to die on the cross to fulfil the law's demands on their behalf.

There are also some things that we cannot do! We cannot escape from the justice of God. Our sins must be punished – either in hell or on the cross. But this, by God's grace, we can do: we can confess our sin before him, admit our guilt, and appeal to his mercy and justice in Christ. We can look up to the cross of Jesus, the grand manifestation of the love and righteousness of God, and entrust our souls to him.