

Divine Justice Part 4
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Who is getting away with What?
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Editor's Note: The follow comments were addressed to a woman, who after reading Divine Justice, asked if the final restoration of all means that the unrighteous "get away with" what they've done. John uses this as a springboard to express what and who we cannot get away from. Jan Antonsson

The larger question that must be addressed is not what anyone can "get away with," but what is it from which none of us can escape? There is a destiny that every man and woman, and really all creation, cannot avoid, and that is to be "filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord" (Hab. 2:14); knowledge, in this case, meaning experiential, intimate knowledge; communion in and with all that makes God, God, as it were.

In our natural creatureliness, two paths lie before us, the one being that which is native to us (sharing in the life and glory of God), and that which is alien to us, that being a death-existence devoid of the intimate, experiential knowledge of God. In Adam, we already took the latter path, but in Christ, that rebellion and ensuing death is swallowed up in victory and we (the new man) behold the "glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ" (II Cor. 4:6).

In the New Testament record this destiny is clearly and explicitly stated with great boldness by Paul in the Book of Romans in his affirmation to the saints in Rome, that whom God foreknew, he also predestined to become conformed to the image of His Son. Paul clearly teaches that as the destiny of the believer. But what few understand is that he does not, in his over-all teaching, explain such destiny as exclusive to the believer, but rather particular to us in this age, for "we are first-fruits in Christ; not God's pets, but God's patterns," as E. Campbell Morgan succinctly insisted.

We, those who have been brought to faith in God by the faith of Christ during this age of grace, cannot ultimately escape, fall from, avoid or miss the destiny of being conformed to the image of Christ. This is Father's edict. It must be. It must come to pass. The sequence is clear in Romans, Chapter Eight. First God foreknows us as glorified in Christ and upon that ground He predestines us to the same. Further building upon the foundation of His eternal purpose, He called, justified and glorified us (all past tense, please note). It's a done deal, in Christ.

To repeat, it is first our predetermined destiny and also the destiny of all creation.

The judgment of God enters to insure that the edict of God be carried out. There are countless ways and things that God enlists in His corrective judgment whereby He leaves us no escape from conformity to the image of Christ. The consequences of sin, designed by God, finally and ultimately militate against our flight from our God-ordained destiny. Some of the judgment occurs in this life; some after this life and it differs from individual to individual.

So often when this kind of question is raised, I sense a residue of misunderstanding clinging to our mentality. For so long, the gospel was presented to us as a way to escape "going to hell" and the way to "go to heaven." Interestingly, these expressions and the concepts behind them are foreign to New Testament thought. The issue of the gospel has to do, not with getting to some blissful place in the cosmos and escaping from some awful place, but it has to do with becoming whole, in spirit, soul and body, so as not to perish, so as not to have the human personality disintegrate into a poor, pathetic, shrunken, diseased, counterfeit of that person we were generated and created to be. Salvation has to do, not with going somewhere, but with being and becoming a certain quality of humanity, the Jesus quality of humanity, a quality of humanity in union with God and "having the glory of God" as its inheritance.

This has been accomplished in Christ and is now unfolding in all the world. The idea of justice or judgment being a matter of "God's gonna get you for that" is a pathetic distortion from the dark ages. Divine Justice is a matter of Father saying "I'm gonna get you for myself and I won't let you get away with anything less."

One further thought: The Son of God is the image of God and we were created in that image, created in Christ. We are predestined to be conformed to the image of Christ. Now notice carefully; the image of God is Christ and the image of Christ is His body, the church. In the mystery of Divine Being, The Person and the Image are One. The Lord Jesus Christ is the fulness or completeness of Deity in bodily form and we are the fulness or completeness of Christ in corporate bodily form.

Our destiny is to be conformed to that image; to be the kind of persons who are built up together in love into the mature body of Christ that we might with our Head, the Lord Jesus, give full expression to all the cosmos of the glory of our God and Father.

Stay tuned for more serious, seminal samplings.

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