

Question: Hello. I would like to ask you why God in the Old Testament is so strict, sometimes even absolute, and God in the New Testament is so gentle?

Answer: When comparing the Old to the New Testaments the first misconception among readers is that God in the Old Testament God purely is a God of wrath, and the God in the New Testament is purely a God of mercy.

Let us recall that the Old Testament is chock full of lyrical passages reflecting God's unsurpassable love, e.g., the Song of Songs, the Psalms, the Prophetic Books, etc. Let us not forget that what you refer to as the 'strictness' of God in the O.T. is not foreign to what some refer to as the 'harshness' of Christ in the N.T. when he openly denounced the hard-hearted Jewish leaders – issuing seven woes against them, when he lamented those who lead others into sin, rebuked the wealthy, condemned hypocrites and foretold disasters for unbelieving communities. These words of Christ were all part of his effort to wake us up, so that we might not perish for all eternity in the flames of hell.

A second misconception is the belief that everything recounted in the Old Testament is the will of God. This is not so. Of the many biblical examples that demonstrate this truth consider but three for purposes of brevity. Moses made it a law for men to divorce their wives for just about any reason, and yet Jesus reveals that this was not a law of God (divine law: Mt. 19:8), but a law of man (ecclesial law: Deut. 24) on account of the hardness of men's hearts; consider also the actions of Jephthah who made a vow to God that he should not have made and then, after regretting it, blamed his daughter for being the cause of the trouble, as he felt compelled to keep his vow (Jud. 11:30-35); or consider David's wars that brought much bloodshed in the name of God, which God revealed were not all pleasing to him: *"David said to Solomon: "My son, it was my purpose to build a house myself for the honor of the Lord, my God. But this word of the Lord came to me: 'You have shed much blood, and you have waged great wars. You may not build a house in my honor, because you have shed too much blood upon the earth in my sight. However, a son is to be born to you. He will be a peaceful man, and I will give him rest from all his enemies on every side. For Solomon shall be his name, and in his time I will bestow peace and tranquility on Israel. It is he who shall build a house in my honor; he shall be a son to me, and I will be a father to him, and I will establish the throne of his kingship over Israel forever.'"* (1 Chron. 22:7-10).

So what might at first sight appear as a purely 'strict' God in the O.T. and only a merciful God in the N.T., when examined more carefully, does not appear to be so at all. There is one God in three Persons of the both the Old and New Testaments whose will is one and immutable among the three divine Persons and whose unconditional love for mankind is eternal.

Let us not forget that on account of our first parent's Original Sin and expulsion from Eden into this land of exile, the three divine Persons began the work of restoration that takes time: they began to progressively purify, illuminate and unite mankind, bereft of the preternatural gifts of infused knowledge, immaculacy and immortality. Thus the Father who created the universe progressively revealed himself to mankind and purified him through the works of the law; the Son who redeemed mankind revealed himself to him and gradually illuminated him through the grace and the new law; the Holy Spirit who sanctifies mankind, unites him with God through the

outpouring of the gifts. Indeed it was not until after the coming of the Saviour of mankind Jesus Christ that the outpouring of the Holy Spirit occurred (Jn. 16:12), not before. So until this outpouring occurred upon mankind the gates of heaven were closed to all humans and for good reason.

With respect to Original Sin, after Adam and Eve failed to pass the test of loyalty to the will of God that he had set before them, as they chose to follow Satan rather than God, they were expelled from Eden as God had forewarned (Gn. Gn. 2:16-17), and they forfeited said preternatural gifts. As a result they and we their offspring endure sin's consequences, e.g., ignorance, concupiscence, weakness, and all the other ills that plague our human nature today, but not without hope, as a future Redeemer has been promised them. Thus God, no longer able to trust them, sent them into this exile where the long journey began for them to try to recover, little by little, the great knowledge of God and the perfect union of wills with Him that He has once freely infused in them. This toil and struggle to which God subjected them was an eternally merciful act, as Adam and Eve should have been condemned for all eternity. But instead of condemning them, God, as noted, promised a Redeemer and began to send them the prophets who would serve to progressively illuminate the minds and strengthen the wills of all wayfarers for all future human generations.

Because the outpouring of the Holy Spirit did not occur until after the resurrection of Jesus Christ, Satan's activity was less hampered in the O.T. than in the N.T., for the Holy Spirit who is the advocate (Paraclete) intercedes and acts on humanity's behalf, not only more now than in the O.T., but more now than ever before in human history. Indeed in these End Times of the greatest outpouring of evil, there is the greatest outpouring of gifts and grace. St. Paul alludes to this when affirming, "where sins abound, grace abounds all the more" (Rom. 5:20).

In Christ,

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