

When You Feel Like God Is Unfair, Remember This

We all have friends who feel God has been unfair to them. Readers of my previous articles (search "Paul Renfro") will understand why I have insight into this. Whether it is birth defects, disappointing relationships, economic disadvantage or the many other occasions of life, we can wonder if God is fair. And when other people see what happens to us, they can have the same question.

There is a simple way to help each other resolve these feelings. Simply ask one question: "what agreement did God violate?"

Fairness is an issue only when an agreement exists. It need not be a written agreement. Socially, we have agreements to respect the lines on the road according to their color. We identify somebody as unfairly cutting us off when they break the agreement. Husbands and wives, another agreement with unwritten terms, can feel unfairness if each other does not play their part.

Both unwritten and written agreements allocate to each participant a part to play, and if one fails to do so, the other person says, "That's unfair." If it happens more than once, we even say, "You are unfair" to the other person.

The important requirement of fairness is that everyone involved in the agreement commits themselves to do their part.

You can think an agreement exists between you and another person, when in fact there is no agreement. (Our common word for this is "assume.") We can impose expectations on other people to which they have not agreed. In this context, fairness does not apply. In fact, if there is an unfair person, it is the one who imposes expectations on the other

without them agreeing.

So what agreement has been made between us and God? When we say God has been unfair to us, or to another person, what agreement are we referencing in such a judgment on God?

I was born with birth defects. Was there between God and me or has there ever been an agreement that God would not let people be born with birth defects? It's a simple answer: no. Was there an agreement between my parents and God that no birth defect would affect their son? Another simple answer: no. Can I say God was unfair to me? Only if I fool myself into thinking there was some such agreement.

My wife and I have been faithful tithers for over 40 years. Yet we have also experienced numerous economic hardships. Was God unfair to us? Only if God and we agreed that people who tithe should have no difficulties. Are you aware of any such teaching in Scripture? Didn't Jesus faithfully tithe and yet say that the fox has a hole while He has no pillow?

Those who judge God as unfair are always presuming that an agreement exists with Him.

Job was such a person. The book of Job is not about God's justice, but about His fairness. Job's sacrifices, his covenant with his eyes, his faithful tithing and his just behavior were things he did as his part in the agreement he assumed with God.

But when everything went wrong, and he began to complain, did Job ever say, "God, you told me that I would never lose my children? We agreed I would never lose my money or my flocks or my servants or my house?"

He did not. His troubles exposed that he had imposed expectations upon God. God had not entered any agreement to which Job could appeal. Job simply felt like he had an IOU from God, and God didn't honor it. But it was an IOU that

existed only in Job's mind because God never agreed to it.

God's retorts to Job emphasize His own unaccountability. God doesn't say anything about His justice when He replies to Job. God's point is that no one can impose expectations upon Him, slap an IOU on Him or judge Him.

We can raise the same complaint of unfairness that Job did, when in fact there is nothing that He agreed to. There's no IOU on Him for us to claim. Instead, we have simply imposed our expectations upon Him and now judge Him for failure to comply. The classic example Jesus gave is the claimants of Matthew 7:20-22 who thought they had God's tacit agreement but in fact only imposed their supposed IOU on Him.

As Paul put it, God is the potter and we are the clay (see Rom. 9:20-22). When we complain about God's unfairness, it's as if we are the potter and He is the clay.

His answer to our complaints of unfairness is the same as His answer to Job's: Who are we to judge Him? {eoa}

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