
Made in His Image: Justice

“His work is perfect, for all his ways are justice”

Key Text:

Ps. 146: ⁵ Blessed is he whose help is the God of Jacob, whose hope is in the Lord his God, ⁶ who made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that is in them, who keeps faith forever; ⁷ who executes justice for the oppressed, who gives food to the hungry. The Lord sets the prisoners free; ⁸ the Lord opens the eyes of the blind. The Lord lifts up those who are bowed down; the Lord loves the righteous. ⁹ The Lord watches over the sojourners; he upholds the widow and the fatherless, but the way of the wicked he brings to ruin. ¹⁰ The Lord will reign forever, your God, O Zion, to all generations. Praise the Lord!

Ps. 19: ⁷ The law of the Lord is perfect, reviving the soul; the testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple; ⁸ the precepts of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart; the commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes; ⁹ the fear of the Lord is clean, enduring forever; the rules of the Lord are true, and righteous altogether.

Micah 6: ⁶ “With what shall I come before the Lord, and bow myself before God on high? Shall I come before him with burnt offerings, with calves a year old? ⁷ Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams, with ten thousands of rivers of oil? Shall I give my firstborn for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?” ⁸ He has told you, O man, what is good; and what does the Lord require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?

- 1) Dominant animals prey on the weaker within the animal kingdom. An antelope who is peacefully grazing in an African Sahara is commonly chased down by a hungry lion or a mother giant panda can abandon one of her offspring for the betterment of the other. The stronger one will survive and the weaker will die.

But if humans were to act in similar ways towards other humans, it would clearly be unfair, unjust, criminal. Human beings cannot stand for injustice. Even at the youngest of ages, humans want things to be fair. As a parent, you might be the just judge yourself, determining what is fair in your house between a couple of boys fighting for who has the most gummi bears and why it's unfair that he has more or less than the others. Why do you think human beings crave justice when the rest of the animal kingdom could care less?

- 2) On one hand, the concept of *justice* can suggest *righteousness*, which comes from the Hebrew word *tsedek* or the Greek word *dikaio*s suggesting an ethical standard that refers to right relationships between people and treating others with dignity. For example, if I steal something, then I pay the consequences. Additionally, God's righteousness or justice, according to Grudem, suggests “that God always acts in accordance with what is right and is himself the final standard of what is right” (*Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine*). Consider the following passages: Deut. 32:4, Gen. 18:25, Isa. 45:19, Ps. 19:7-9, 1 Pt. 1:17.
 - a. What do we learn about the governance of God?
 - b. What is the standard that God governs against?
 - c. How does this compare to today's government and judicial system?

- 3) On the other hand, *justice* is used in Scripture under the Hebrew term *mishpat*, which can indicate seeking out the vulnerable people who are being taken advantage of and helping them, advocating for the vulnerable and making changes to prevent injustice. Read Ps. 146:5-10. What does the *mishpat* of God look like?
- 4) What can we learn from God's *just* discipline and what role does it have in our lives today (cf. Jer. 10:23, Heb. 12:6)? Can you think of a time when you experienced the discipline of God and what was the result?
- 5) **Key Text:**
Rom 3: ²³ for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, ²⁴ and are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, ²⁵ whom God put forward as a propitiation by his blood, to be received by faith. This was to show God's righteousness, because in his divine forbearance he had passed over former sins. ²⁶ It was to show his righteousness at the present time, so that he might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus.
- a. Without Jesus, what is our *just* verdict before God (cf. Jn. 3:36)?
 - b. Why can we stand justified before God (cf. 2 Cor. 5:21; Eph. 2:12-13; 1 Jn. 1:9, 2:1-2)?
 - c. If we become forgetful that we are justified in Christ, what can we quickly seek to justify? What forms of self-justification and keeping score can we be most prone to?
- 6) According to Micah 6:6-8, what is God's will for your life? What does "do justice" look like today? How can we apply *agape* love to doing justice?