

In search of...

Truth & Right

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Justice, Revenge, & Mercy

The Psalmist, in Psalm 89:14, says of God, "Righteousness and justice are the foundation of your throne; steadfast love and faithfulness go before you." When you think about the term justice, what comes to mind? Perhaps a court of law; after all, hopefully that is where we find justice being served. Have you ever taken a good look at a courthouse? You really should sometime. You can examine and appreciate the architecture and stonework, and while you're taking it all in, be sure to notice the statue of "lady justice."

The design may differ in some of the smaller details (I'm not really sure), but three things remain constant: one, the statue is blindfolded, to show that true justice is blind (i.e. not biased), "The wicked accepts a bribe in secret to pervert the ways of justice." (Prov. 17:23) Two, you will notice that the statue is always holding a set of scales, to

show all matters of each case being balanced out, to come to a fair decision. "But is he does not listen, take one or two others along with you, that every charge may be established by the evidence of two or three witnesses." (Matt. 18:16). Finally, you can see that the statue is holding a sword. This is to show the power to enforce justice. "for he is God's servant for your good. But if you do wrong, be afraid, for he does not bear the sword in vain. For he is the servant of God, an avenger who carries out God's wrath on the wrongdoer." (Rom. 13:4)

All of that being said, just what is justice? To be brief, justice is doing what is right according to the law. It can be viewed as consequences for actions that violate that law as well. Sadly, as was quoted in the Scriptures already (and as we all are probably well aware of), justice can be perverted and left undone. Lawyers, juries,

and judges are human beings just like you and I, and they can and do make mistakes, deliberately or not. To see true justice carried out is far rarer than it should be.

When it comes to spiritual matters, specifically, our souls and sin, all that we can hope for is to be found justified, and that can only happen by the blood of Jesus. "Now before faith came, we were held captive under the law, imprisoned until the coming faith would be revealed. So then the law was our guardian until Christ came, in order that we might be justified by faith." (Gal. 3:23-24) You see, sin does not work like so many think; our good deeds & moments do not balance out our sins. Even if the ratio were a thousand to one with the good outnumbering the bad, we would still have sin on our soul and thus still be found unrighteous. Being justified by Christ means having our sins taken away, as if they never happened at all. That is the righteousness that comes from God.

But what, then, about revenge? Isn't it the same thing as justice? No, not at all, because while justice relies on a set law, revenge is based upon our feelings (what we personally think someone deserves). Those who seek revenge are not interested in the law, just in lashing out to make themselves feel better because they have been wronged or hurt in some way. Revenge is biased, the

exact opposite of what justice is supposed to be. Concerning revenge, God's Word is very clear: "Repay no one evil for evil, but give thought to do what is honorable in the sight of all. If possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all. Beloved, never avenge yourselves, but leave it to the wrath of God, for it is written, 'Vengeance is mine, I will repay, says the Lord.'" (Rom. 12:17-19) So it is easy for us to see that it is not our place to take revenge when we feel wronged, but that passage can make us wonder: if revenge is so wrong for us, then why does the Lord describe Himself as taking vengeance? Well, the answer is actually pretty simple: He is God, the Creator, and He is perfect. We are not.

You see, if you or I went out and took vengeance against someone for something they said or did, we would be basing that on our idea of their actions & intentions, and many times we misjudge situations. We would also say that what we do to them is fair, evening the odds, when in fact we could very easily let our emotions control us and take things too far. But with God, He is able to judge fairly and accurately; "For the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and of spirit, of joints and of marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart. And no creature is hidden from His sight, but all are naked and exposed to

the eyes of Him to whom we must give account.” (Heb. 4:12-13) And, one more thing, we know that in taking His vengeance God cannot “get carried away” or “take things too far.” He is perfect, and is righteous.

Now, taking all of that into consideration (the fact that God is righteous and practices true justice- thus making Him the only one capable of exacting revenge), does the story end there? Thankfully not. You see, as much as the Lord is just, He is also described countless times in both Old and New Testaments as being merciful. Grace is often defined as unmerited favor, that is, receiving something good even though we do not deserve it. With that in mind, it is easy for us to likewise define mercy as not receiving something bad even though we DO deserve it. “For He who said, ‘Do not commit adultery,’ also said, ‘Do not murder.’ If you do not commit adultery but do murder, you have become a transgressor of the law. So speak and so act as those who are to be judged under the law of liberty. For judgment is without mercy to one who has shown no mercy. Mercy triumphs over judgment.” (James 2:11-13)

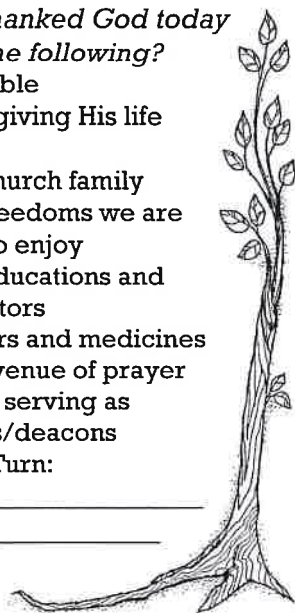
Thanks be to God that He shows us mercy! If He only ever judged us according to what we deserve, we would never see Heaven. Have you been justified by the blood of Jesus? If not, why not?!

Jarred Currence

**DEAR GOD,
I WANNA TAKE A
MINUTE, NOT TO ASK
FOR ANYTHING FROM
YOU, BUT SIMPLY TO
SAY THANK YOU,
FOR ALL I HAVE.**

*Have you thanked God today
for any of the following?*

- The Bible
- Jesus giving His life for us
- Our church family
- The freedoms we are able to enjoy
- Our educations and educators
- Doctors and medicines
- The avenue of prayer
- Those serving as elders/deacons
- Your Turn:



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Monthly Challenges

DIRECTIONS: Each first Sunday of the month, we will have challenges that you should attempt to complete by the end of the month. If we all, as members, complete these challenges, our church will grow in spirit and in number.

1) MEMORIZING BIBLE FACTS

2 Cor. 4:6 "For God, who said, 'Let light shine out of darkness,' has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ."

It is important for Christians to have knowledge of God's Word. This month, our challenge will be to memorize some facts from the Scriptures so we can recall them at a moment's notice. Here are some things we should commit to memory:

- a) **The twelve sons of Israel-** Reuben, Simeon, Levi, Judah, Dan, Naphtali, Gad, Asher, Issachar, Zebulun, Joseph, Benjamin
- b) **The apostles of Jesus-** Peter, Andrew, James, John, Philip, Thomas, Matthew, Bartholomew, James, Simon, Thaddaeus, Judas, Matthias, Paul
- c) **Examples of conversion-** The 3,000 on Pentecost, Acts 2:1-41; The 2,000 at Solomon's Porch, Acts 3:1-4:4; The Samaritans, Acts 8:4-25; The Ethiopian Eunuch, Acts 8:26-40; Saul of Tarsus, Acts 9:1-19; Cornelius and his Household, Acts 10:1-48; Two Households at Philippi, Acts 16:6-34; The Athenians, Acts 17:16-34; The Corinthians, Acts 18:1-11; The Twelve disciples of John, Acts 19:1-10
- d) **The plan of salvation-** Believe, Heb. 11:6; Repent, 2 Pet. 3:9; Confess, Rom. 10:9; Immersion, Acts 22:16; Remain faithful, Rev. 2:10

2) USING YOUR BIBLE IN THE WORLD

Share the following verses with someone who does not attend this congregation at least twice this month:

Matthew 16:24-27

24 "Then Jesus told his disciples, 'If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. **25** For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will find it.

26 For what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world and forfeits his soul? Or what shall a man give in return for his soul? **27** For the Son of Man is going to come with his angels in the glory of his Father, and then he will repay each person according to what he has done.'"