

Biblical Justice: What Is It?

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On September 20, 2001, just nine days after terrorists attacked the United States in four hijacked passenger jets, President George W. Bush addressed a joint session of congress. In that speech President Bush stated, “Whether we bring our enemies to justice or bring justice to our enemies, justice will be done.”

His point was clear; the United States would hunt down and inflict punishment upon those responsible for this heinous crime.

Sadly, this common way of viewing “justice” has infected Christian thought and far too many well meaning Christians view God’s justice like that of George W. Bush.

But thankfully, God is not like President Bush (or like me for that matter). God is love. His nature, His character, His being is love! He operates by always seeking to heal and restore and, as such, Biblical Justice is exactly opposite that of the world.

Jesus said to Pilate that His government was not of the world, yet Christianity mistakenly represents God’s methods as being no different than those of the world. (Jn 18:36)

But, unlike the world, God’s justice is always an expression of His character of selfless love!

- “Defend the poor and fatherless; Do justice to the afflicted and needy.” (Psalm 82:3)
- “Wash yourselves clean. Stop all this evil that I see you doing. Yes, stop doing evil and learn to do right. See that justice is done—help those who are oppressed, give orphans their rights, and defend widows.” (Isaiah 1:16-17 - GN)
- “The LORD is waiting to be kind to you. He rises to have compassion on you. The LORD is a God of justice.” (Isaiah 30:18 - God’s Word)
- “This is what the LORD says to the dynasty of David: ‘Give justice each morning to the people you judge! Help those who have been robbed; rescue them from their oppressors.’” (Jeremiah 21:12 - NLT)

What do you hear in these passages? Is justice punishing the oppressors, or delivering the oppressed?

Biblical Justice is *delivering the oppressed NOT punishing the oppressor!*

Then where did the idea originate that justice is punishing the oppressor rather than delivering the oppressed?

When Constantine converted, Christianity became infected with Imperial Rome’s view of God’s law. In other words, when Constantine converted Christianity accepted the idea that God’s law is like Rome’s, imposed by a powerful ruler over his subjects to control behavior and test obedience.

Christianity lost the truth that God’s law is the law upon which life is built, the law of love emanating from the character of God Himself. God’s law is the design principle or protocol upon which life is constructed to operate. Like the law of respiration, if you break this law, you die.

Consider the two different concepts of God’s law - the design protocol upon which life is built, like the law of respiration, or an imposed law like Rome. Then consider, what justice looks like, what the just action to take is, when either type of law is broken.

If you saw a loved one, depressed and suicidal, jump off a building, and you had opportunity to intervene, what would be the “just” or “right” action to take? Get a gun and shoot them as they fall to inflict punishment for breaking the law of good health, or to inflate a large air mattress to save them?

What if you walk in and see a depressed and suicidal stranger who just hung himself or herself and was dangling from a rope, thus breaking the law of respiration, what would be the “just” or “right” action to take? Would it be “right” or “just” to pour gasoline on them and burn them to punish them for breaking the law of respiration? Would it be “just” or “right” to cut the rope and save them?

This is Bible justice - delivering or saving the oppressed! God’s law is the natural law upon which life is built to operate. Breaking this law automatically results in death, unless the Designer intervenes to heal and restore. Thus we find God, working through Christ, not to punish sinners, but to *deliver* those oppressed by sin!

But when we accept Imperial Rome’s version of God’s law, as an imposed law, then we distort the Divine character and teach that when the law gets broken God must use His power to inflict punishment upon lawbreakers. God’s justice is no longer seen as delivering the oppressed, but like George W. Bush hunting down and destroying the oppressors.

God is love - His nature, His law is love. It ever has been and ever will be. Don't be fooled by the values of a sinful world. Return to a God of genuine justice, a God who loved the world so much He sent His only Son, not to condemn the world, but to deliver the oppressed through Him! (Jn 3:16,17)

<https://www.historyplace.com/speeches/gw-bush-9-11.htm>