

FBC POWELL, 8-13-17 AM NOTES
"A Biblical Worldview of Justice"
Various Scriptures
9 in Series

I. The Categories of Justice

A. Social Justice

Micah 6:8 "He has told you, O man, what is good; and what does the Lord require of you but to **do justice**, to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?"

"Kindness" (Hebrew *chesed*) - God's unconditional grace and compassion

"Justice" (Hebrew *mishpat*) - to treat people equitably

Leviticus 24:22 "There shall be one standard for you; it shall be for the stranger as well as the native, for I am the Lord your God."

Zechariah 7:10-11(NIV) "This is what the Lord Almighty said: 'Administer true justice; show mercy and compassion to one another. Do not oppress the widow or the fatherless, the foreigner or the poor. Do not plot evil against each other.'"

"The word *justice* means to prescribe the right way, to do things in an appropriate way. Deuteronomy 1:17 is a good expression of the concept. Moses said, 'You shall not show partiality in judgment; you shall hear the small and the great alike. You shall not fear man, for the judgment is God's.' Justice has to do with equity in judgment without regard for a person's status. It is the equitable application of God's moral law to all people without partiality." —Tony Evans

Romans 2:6 "Render to each person according to his deeds."

Deuteronomy 10:17-18 "For the Lord your God is the God of gods and the Lord of lords, the great, the mighty, and the awesome God who does not show partiality nor take a bribe. He executes justice for the orphan and the widow, and shows His love for the alien [immigrant] by giving him food and clothing. So show your love for the alien, for you were aliens in the land of Egypt."

Psalm 146:7-9 "Who executes justice for the oppressed; who gives food to the hungry. The Lord sets the prisoners free. The Lord opens the eyes of the blind; the Lord raises up those who are bowed down; the Lord loves the righteous; the Lord protects the strangers; He supports the fatherless and the widow, but He thwarts the way of the wicked."

B. Divine Justice

Genesis 18:25 "Far be it from You to do such a thing, to slay the righteous with the wicked, so that the righteous and the wicked are treated alike. Far be it from You! Shall not the Judge of all the earth deal justly?"

"It is sometimes said, 'Justice requires God to do this,' referring to some act we know He will perform. This is an error of thinking as well as of speaking, for it postulates a principle of justice outside of God which compels Him to act in a certain way. Of course there is no such principle...The truth is that there is not and can never be anything outside of the nature of God which can move Him in the least degree." —A. W. Tozer

II. The Delay of Divine Justice

Ecclesiastes 12:14 "For God will bring every act to judgment, everything which is hidden, whether it is good or evil."

Acts 17:31a "Because He has fixed a day in which He will judge the world in righteousness."

Jeremiah 12:1 “Righteous are You, O Lord, that I would plead my case with You; indeed I would discuss matters of justice with You: Why has the way of the wicked prospered? Why are all those who deal in treachery at ease?”

Revelation 6:9-11 “When the Lamb broke the fifth seal, I saw underneath the altar the souls of those who had been slain because of the word of God, and because of the testimony which they had maintained; and they cried out with a loud voice, saying, ‘How long, O Lord, holy and true, will You refrain from judging and avenging our blood on those who dwell on the earth?’ And there was given to each of them a white robe; and they were told that they should rest for a little while longer, until the number of their fellow servants and their brethren who were to be killed even as they had been, would be completed also.”

Luke 18:7-8a “Now, will not God bring about justice for His elect who cry to Him day and night, and will He delay long over them? I tell you that He will bring about justice for them quickly...”

2 Peter 3:8-9 “But do not let this one fact escape your notice, beloved, that with the Lord one day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years like one day. The Lord is not slow about His promise, as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing for any to perish but for all to come to repentance.”

“Shall we willingly endure the suffering of further delay so that others may obtain the mercy God extended to us...One day we will see the answer to the age-old question ‘How long?’ Only long enough to accomplish the greatest eternal good.”

—Randy Alcorn

John 5:28-29 “Do not marvel at this; for an hour is coming, in which all who are in the tombs will hear His voice, and will come forth; those who did the good deeds to a resurrection of life, those who committed the evil deeds to a resurrection of judgment.”

III. The Ultimate Justice

A. Eternity in Hell

Romans 3:10-12 “As it is written, ‘There is none righteous, not even one; there is none who understands, there is none who seeks for God; all have turned aside, together they have become useless; there is none who does good, there is not even one.’”

Galatians 6:7 “Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, this he will also reap.”

Nahum 1:3b “And the Lord will by no means leave *the guilty* unpunished.”

B. The Cross of Jesus Christ

“Think lightly of Hell, and you will think lightly of the cross. Think little of the sufferings of lost souls, and you will soon think little of the Savior who delivers you from them.”

—Charles Spurgeon

Matthew 27:46 “‘Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani?’ that is, ‘My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?’”

Sermon 9: A Biblical Worldview of Justice

Various Scriptures

Beneath what we think, say, and how we act, are some basic presuppositions and beliefs that we are calling our worldview. Everyone has a worldview. It may not be well thought through, able to be articulated, or even consistent, but we have one. I never cease to be amazed by how many *professing* Christians have a worldview that is definitely not in line with the Scriptures. If you truly are a Christian, it means that Christ is your Lord and the Bible is to be your guide in all things. How can you follow the Scriptures and how can you have a biblical worldview when you don't even know what the Bible says about the issues of life? Every believer should be obsessed with internalizing the Scriptures – reading, listening, memorizing, and meditating on them. We should be passionate about being guided by a biblical worldview in every area of life. In facing decisions, trials, or dilemmas our first question should be, “What does the Bible have to say about this?” When we see what the Scriptures say, that should settle it. As a Christian, it is *imperative* that you hold and live out a biblical worldview. Some would say that is fanatical. I would call it logical.

Thus far in this series we have looked at a biblical worldview of origins, authority, man, family, history, worship, and suffering. In this message, we will be examining a biblical worldview of justice.

What is justice? To have an accurate biblical worldview of justice we need to look at justice in two realms. First, there is justice in the way we treat others. I am calling that social justice. Second, there is Divine justice – the justice of God, especially in how it affects mankind.

I. The Categories of Justice

A. Social Justice

Social justice focuses on person to person horizontal justice. One of the verses I pray for many of our members on their birthday is Micah 6:8: “He has told you, O man, what is good; and what does the Lord require of you but to *do justice*, to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?” That is arguably the best summary in the Bible of how our God desires us to walk in this world. A key part of walking humbly with God is doing justice or acting justly (NIV). Let's look at some key words in Micah 6:8. The Hebrew word translated “kindness” (“mercy” NIV) is *chesed* in the Hebrew. It speaks of God's unconditional grace and compassion. The Hebrew word for “justice” is *mishpat*. In its various forms, it is used more than 200 times in the Old Testament. It's most basic meaning is to treat people equitably. An example would be Leviticus 24:22: “There shall be one standard for you; it shall be for the stranger as well as the native, for I am the Lord your God.” The Hebrew word translated “one standard” is the Hebrew word *mishpat*. This Hebrew word means that when it comes to earthly justice, every person is acquitted or punished as guilty on the merits of the case without prejudice concerning race or social standing. Everyone in society committing the same wrong should receive the same penalty.

This Hebrew word also means to give people their rights without prejudice. There is a good summary of this biblical concept of justice in Zechariah 7:10-11 (NIV): “This is what the Lord Almighty said: ‘Administer true justice; show mercy and compassion to one another. Do not oppress the widow or the fatherless, the foreigner or the poor. Do not plot evil against each other.’” In Old Testament times, these four groups (widows, the fatherless, the immigrant – foreigner, and the poor) had no status or social power in society. They were looked down on and often lacked the necessities of life. They were all too often ignored by the rest of culture and by governments. The Lord says that they are to be given justice as well as the wealthy.

Let's examine social justice as it is to be carried out in governments. In the Bible, ideal social justice is “the rule of God's moral law in society.” The only way that social justice prevails is under a biblical worldview. When man's laws differ from God's law, there may be human justice, but not biblical justice. In the Bible, justice is not some nebulous “fairness” that assumes that there is no absolute truth. Justice, social justice only works when it is grounded in the righteousness of God.

That is why we often find justice and righteousness together in the Bible. In short, biblical social justice is the manifestation of the righteousness of God.

Allow me to give an example. It is not justice for the government to sanction same-sex marriage. Actually, it is injustice because it sanctions as “righteous” what God says is “unrighteous.” The sanctioning of what God says is unrighteous is, in reality, a perversion of justice. [Much of this paragraph is taken from erlc.com/resource-library/articles/When-the-Pursuit-of-Justice-Isn't]

Tony Evans has a clear word here:

The word *justice* means to prescribe the right way, to do things in an appropriate way. Deuteronomy 1:17 is a good expression of the concept. Moses said, “You shall not show partiality in judgment; you shall hear the small and the great alike. You shall not fear man, for the judgment is God’s.” Justice has to do with equity in judgment without regard for a person’s status. It is the equitable application of God’s moral law to all people without partiality.

[Tony Evans, *What a Way to Live*, page 391]

All through the Scriptures, God is clear that He does not show partiality in judgment. Romans 2:6 says that God will “render to each person according to his deeds.” A biblical worldview of justice results in our “rendering to each person according to his deeds.”

Allow me to illustrate what happens when laws relating to social justice do not reflect the righteousness of God. In our nation, the laws relating to abortion do not agree with the righteousness of God. When we start examining the issue of abortion, we see those who say, “This is my body; it is unjust to force me to carry and deliver a child that I do not want.” On the other hand, those who are against abortion say, “It is extreme injustice to take the life of an innocent human being who is created in the image of God just because the mother would be inconvenienced by carrying the baby full term and then giving birth.” Our government in this case stands opposed to the righteousness of God revealed in His Word. I believe this is the main reason that the blessing of God has been withdrawn from our nation.

A biblical worldview of social justice is based on the Scripture, not on the government. Because abortion is legal doesn’t mean it is just. How we treat and relate to others must be based on a biblical worldview grounded in the justice of God revealed in Scripture. We treat others equitably (characterized by justice and impartiality) whatever their status is in society.

Parents, one of your tasks is to give your children a biblical worldview of social justice rooted in the Word of God. I am so thankful for my parents doing that. I remember, when I was about ten years old, that a young girl in our small community was taken out of her home because she was not being cared for. She was sent to the Baptist Children’s Home in Franklin. My mother’s first cousin was the social worker that handled this little girl’s case. This social worker, who was a member of our church, told the church about her and we, as a church, took responsibility for helping support her at the orphanage. Though we lived close to the poverty level ourselves I remember my dad writing a regular check to this girl (Brenda) just for some spending money to get something she wanted. My brother and I were taught compassion for the really poor. My maternal grandfather – a coal miner for much of his adult life, and my grandmother, always had enough to help others. We were taught and were given a living demonstration of helping the genuinely poor. Kathy and I sought to teach and model for our children biblical social justice. I am thankful for opportunities especially through our Norwood Campus for ministering to immigrants.

This is not a minor thing – God delights in social justice and He judges injustice toward the poor and downtrodden. Social justice, treating others as our equals puts God’s justice on display.

Deuteronomy 10:17-18: “For the Lord your God is the God of gods and the Lord of lords, the great, the mighty, and the awesome God who does not show partiality nor take a bribe. He executes

justice for the orphan and the widow, and shows His love for the alien [immigrant] by giving him food and clothing. So show your love for the alien, for you were aliens in the land of Egypt.”

Psalm 146:7-9: “Who executes justice for the oppressed; who gives food to the hungry. The Lord sets the prisoners free. The Lord opens the eyes of the blind; the Lord raises up those who are bowed down; the Lord loves the righteous; the Lord protects the strangers; He supports the fatherless and the widow, but He thwarts the way of the wicked.”

B. Divine Justice

One of the attributes of God is His justice. In the Scriptures, God’s justice and righteousness are difficult to distinguish from each other; they are practically synonyms. Perhaps the justice of God in relation to man is best described by Abraham as he was interceding for Sodom after God’s declaration that He would destroy the city. Genesis 18:25: “Far be it from You to do such a thing, to slay the righteous with the wicked, so that the righteous and the wicked are treated alike. Far be it from You! Shall not the Judge of all the earth deal justly?” God is just. In His judgment, He always acts according to justice. As we focus on divine judgment, I want you to clearly see that the justice of God is one of His perfections, His attributes. A. W. Tozer said it this way:

It is sometimes said, ‘Justice requires God to do this,’ referring to some act we know He will perform. This is an error of thinking as well as of speaking, for it postulates a principle of justice outside of God which compels Him to act in a certain way. Of course there is no such principle... The truth is that there is not and can never be anything outside of the nature of God which can move Him in the least degree.

[A. W. Tozer, *The Knowledge of the Holy*, page 93]

II. The Delay of Divine Justice

The Scripture is clear that divine justice will come.

Ecclesiastes 12:14: “For God will bring every act to judgment, everything which is hidden, whether it is good or evil.”

Acts 17:31a: “because He has fixed a day in which He will judge the world in righteousness.”

A biblical worldview of justice must answer the question of why God doesn’t just reward every good and punish each evil as it happens? Why does God delay justice against sinners? I love the prophet Jeremiah. When he had a problem, he just took it to the Lord and “Lord, I’ve got a problem with this; help me out here” (a paraphrase of course).

Jeremiah 12:1: “Righteous are You, O Lord, that I would plead my case with You; indeed I would discuss matters of justice with You: Why has the way of the wicked prospered? Why are all those who deal in treachery at ease?” We not only see God’s people here on earth struggling with why He delays justice, listen to what John observed in Heaven during the coming time of the great tribulation.

Revelation 6:9-11:

When the Lamb broke the fifth seal, I saw underneath the altar the souls of those who had been slain because of the word of God, and because of the testimony which they had maintained; and they cried out with a loud voice, saying, “How long, O Lord, holy and true, will You refrain from judging and avenging our blood on those who dwell on the earth?” And there was given to each of them a white robe; and they were told that they should rest for a little while longer, until the number of their

fellow servants and their brethren who were to be killed even as they had been, would be completed also.

Even these already with the Lord didn't understand the postponement of God's justice against the wicked.

The Bible is clear that when the Lord brings about his justice, it will happen quickly. Luke 18:7-8a: "now, will not God bring about justice for His elect who cry to Him day and night, and will He delay long over them? I tell you that He will bring about justice for them quickly..." Once God acts, it will happen quickly, but God is in no hurry. He dispenses justice in His time. Someone put it this way, "The wheel of God's justice grinds slow, but it grinds exceedingly fine." We must learn to accept God's delay in bringing justice and trust that He is never early or late. He is always exactly on time.

Think about it; what we consider too long a time to wait for justice is not long by God's standards. 2 Peter 3:8-9 says "But do not let this one fact escape your notice, beloved, that with the Lord one day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years like one day. The Lord is not slow about His promise, as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing for any to perish but for all to come to repentance."

Randy Alcorn said it well, "Shall we willingly endure the suffering of further delay so that others may obtain the mercy God extended to us... One day we will see the answer to the age-old question 'How long?' Only long enough to accomplish the greatest eternal good." [Randy Alcorn, *If God Is Good*, page 335-336]

Learn this, the Bible never promises immediate justice; it promises ultimate justice. This is key to a biblical worldview of justice. We read in John 5:28-29: "Do not marvel at this; for an hour is coming, in which all who are in the tombs will hear His voice, and will come forth; those who did the good deeds to a resurrection of life, those who committed the evil deeds to a resurrection of judgment." Nothing slips by God. He doesn't forget about justice! [Some of the material in point II was taken from Randy Alcorn, *If God Is Good*, chapter 34]

III. The Ultimate Justice

If we fast forward to the end of time as we know it, there are only two possibilities as to ultimate justice.

A. Eternity in Hell

Dr. D. James Kennedy calls the doctrine of hell the most unpopular subject in the world. I would have a hard time arguing with him. The vast majority of our culture rejects the concept of a literal hell as described in the Bible. One of the ways our culture deals with hell is to trivialize or make light of it. We use it as a description of hard times or even as a curse word. We say, "My marriage is hell." or "Going through that surgery was hell." I can assure you that no matter how bad your marriage was or is, it's not as bad as hell. I understand that surgery can be extremely difficult, but it is not hell. In addition to using hell to describe some earthly trial, we use it as a curse word. We say, "hell yes" or "hell no." When extremely angry, we flippantly tell someone to "go to hell." That desensitizes us to the real and awful and literal place.

Hell exists not as a blot on God's character, but as a testimony that sin is unspeakably ugly and God is perfectly holy and just. Though it sounds hard to accept, hell will glorify God. What is the glory of God? His glory is the sum total of His perfections. Anything or anyone that magnifies or displays any of God's perfections displays God's glory. Does hell display any of God's perfections? Yes! It displays His holiness, His justice and His wrath that flows out of His justice. If hell is not real, then Jesus will be robbed of His glory. To deny hell is to cheapen the sacrifice that Jesus made on the cross.

When we deny hell, we deny God's justice. Without hell, there is no justice for Hitler, Stalin, Pol Pot (the Cambodian killing fields), or Jack the Ripper. Some see hell as fitting for Hitler, Stalin, and serial killers, but not for people like me. God responds with Romans 3:10-12: "as it is written, 'There is none righteous, not even one; there is none who understands, there is none who seeks for God; all have turned aside, together they have become useless; there is none who does good, there is not even one.'" When we understand the holiness of God and the justice of God, we begin to see the necessity of hell. Galatians 6:7 says, "Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, this he will also reap." Without hell, that verse makes no sense. If hell is just annihilation, that would be like telling Hitler, "For all your sins and the atrocities you carried out, your punishment is to cease consciousness and be annihilated." That doesn't sound a lot like justice!

Hell will not be an eternal blot on the character of God; it will be an eternal reminder of God's justice. Hell will be an eternal testimony to the sinfulness of man and the justice of God. When we deny hell, we deny God's perfect justice. Nahum 1:3b: "And the Lord will by no means leave *the guilty* unpunished."

A biblical worldview of justice must include the doctrine of hell.

B. The Cross of Jesus Christ

There is an alternative to hell. That alternative is to come to the cross of Christ. Charles Spurgeon said, "Think lightly of Hell, and you will think lightly of the cross. Think little of the sufferings of lost souls, and you will soon think little of the Savior who delivers you from them." [Charles Spurgeon, *2200 Quotations from the Writings of Charles H. Spurgeon*, page 98]

There is a sense that on the cross Jesus suffered the hell of all who would repent of sin and come trusting in Him alone for salvation. When Jesus was crucified, He cried out in Matthew 27:46: "'Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani?' that is, 'My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?'" Being an infinite being, Jesus' separation from the Father for a finite period of time was the equivalent on our spending eternity separated from God.

When Jesus was raised from the dead, it was the testimony from the Father that the debt was truly paid for all who would come to Him. Justice demands either hell or the cross. There is no other option. I say, "Hallelujah for the cross!"