

## Biblical Justice versus Social Justice

Romans, Part X

Romans 2:1-16, Part Two

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### I. Introduction (cf. Is 42:4)

### II. God Impartial Judgment (Gen 18:25; Ps 96; Is 11)

*“For the LORD your God is God of gods and Lord of lords, the great God, mighty and awesome, who shows no partiality nor takes a bribe”* (Dt 10:17). God’s judgment is both impartial and individual. He renders *to each one* according to *his deeds* (Rom 2:2, 5, 6, 11, 16). And this is good news:

*<sup>10</sup>Say among the nations, “The LORD reigns; The world also is firmly established, It shall not be moved; He shall judge the peoples righteously.” <sup>11</sup>Let the heavens rejoice, and let the earth be glad; Let the sea roar, and all its fullness; <sup>12</sup>Let the field be joyful, and all that is in it. Then all the trees of the woods will rejoice before the LORD. <sup>13</sup>For He is coming, for He is coming to judge the earth. He shall judge the world with righteousness, And the peoples with His truth.* (Ps 96:10-13)

### III. God’s Demand for Justice

#### A. A people who love and practice justice (Gen 18:19; Mic 6:8)

The prophet Micah memorably summarizes our duty: *“He has shown you, O man, what is good; and what does the Lord require of you but to do justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with your God?”* (Mic 6:8) We are called to love and practice justice.

#### B. Principles of Justice

##### 1. You shall not bear false witness (Ex 20:16; Dt 19:15-21)

The Ten Commandments summarize God’s moral law and serve as the basis for all \_\_\_\_\_ societies. The ninth commandment declares, *“You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor”* (Ex 20:16). We are to respect the reputation of our neighbor and to speak of him only that which is true. To bear *false witness* in courts of law is criminal (Dt 19):

*<sup>16</sup>If a false witness rises against any man to testify against him of wrongdoing, <sup>17</sup>then both men in the controversy shall stand before the LORD, before the priests and the judges who serve in those days. <sup>18</sup>And the judges shall make careful inquiry, and indeed, if the witness is a false witness, who has testified falsely against his brother, <sup>19</sup>then you shall do to him as he thought to have done to his brother; so you shall put away the evil from among you. <sup>20</sup>And those who remain shall hear and fear, and hereafter they shall not again commit such evil among you. <sup>21</sup>Your eye shall not pity: life shall be for life, eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot.*

##### 2. You shall not show partiality (Ex 23:1-9; Lev 19:15-16)

We are to be loyal to the \_\_\_\_\_ no matter who is accused or who else is doing the accusing. We are to practice *communitive justice*, *“living in right relationship with God and others. Giving people their due as image-bearers of God”* (Allen, 24).

*<sup>1</sup>You shall not circulate a false report. Do not put your hand with the wicked to be an unrighteous witness. <sup>2</sup>You shall not follow a crowd to do evil; nor shall you testify in a dispute so as to turn aside after many to pervert justice. <sup>3</sup>You shall not show partiality to a poor man in his dispute. <sup>4</sup>If you meet your enemy’s ox or his donkey going astray, you shall surely bring it back to him again. <sup>5</sup>If you see the donkey of one who hates you lying under its burden, and you would refrain from helping it, you shall surely help him with it. <sup>6</sup>You shall not pervert the judgment of your poor in his dispute. <sup>7</sup>Keep yourself far from a false matter; do not kill the innocent and righteous. For I will not justify the wicked. <sup>8</sup>And you shall take no bribe, for a bribe blinds the discerning and perverts the words of the righteous. <sup>9</sup>Also you shall not oppress a stranger, for you know the heart of a stranger, because you were strangers in the land of Egypt.* (Ex 23:1-9)

#### An Outline of Romans

- I. Introduction
  - A. Opening Greeting (1:1-7)
  - B. Travel Plans (1:8-15)
  - C. Theme (1:16-17)
- II. Credenda: “The Righteous by Faith” Shall Live
  - A. God’s Wrath vs. Unrighteousness (1:18-3:20)
  - B. The Revelation of God’s Righteousness (3:21-5)
  - C. The Triumph of God’s Righteousness (6-8)
  - D. The Universality of God’s Righteousness (9-11)
- III. Agenda: The Righteous “Shall Live by Faith”
  - A. Transformed not Conformed (12-13)
  - B. Patient not Proud (14-15:13)
- IV. Conclusion
  - A. Paul, Minister to the Gentiles (15:14-21)
  - B. Travel Plans (15:22-33)
  - C. Closing Greetings and Benediction (16)

This demand for impartiality and righteousness is repeated throughout the Scriptures.

<sup>15</sup>You shall do no injustice in judgment. You shall not be partial to the poor, nor honor the person of the mighty. In righteousness you shall judge your neighbor. <sup>16</sup>You shall not go about as a talebearer among your people; nor shall you take a stand against the life of your neighbor: I am the LORD. (Lev 19:15-16)

3. Your judges shall judge righteously (Dt 1:16-17; 16:18-20; Heb 2:2)

The third principle is that judges are to judge righteously. They are to imitate God. They are to practice *distributive justice*, “*impartially rendering judgment, righting wrongs, and meting out punishment for lawbreaking.*” (24) So consider Moses’ words in Deuteronomy 1:16-17:

<sup>16</sup>“Then I commanded your judges at that time, saying, ‘Hear the cases between your brethren, and judge righteously between a man and his brother or the stranger who is with him. <sup>17</sup>You shall not show partiality in judgment; you shall hear the small as well as the great; you shall not be afraid in any man’s presence, for the judgment is God’s. The case that is too hard for you, bring to me, and I will hear it.’

We observe these same basic principles in Deuteronomy 16:

<sup>18</sup>You shall appoint judges and officers in all your gates, which the LORD your God gives you, according to your tribes, and they shall judge the people with just judgment. <sup>19</sup>You shall not pervert justice; you shall not show partiality, nor take a bribe, for a bribe blinds the eyes of the wise and twists the words of the righteous. <sup>20</sup>You shall follow what is altogether just, that you may live and inherit the land which the LORD your God is giving you.

Judges were to follow *what is altogether just*. The principle of justice that was to guide judges was reciprocity, the so-called *lex talionis* (cf. Dt 19:21).

*The principle of an eye for an eye is that on which Israelite law is based. It is one of the most misunderstood and misinterpreted principles in the O.T., owing to the fact that it is popularly thought to be a general command to take vengeance. Such an understanding is completely wrong. In neither the O.T. nor the N.T. is a man entitled to take vengeance. That is a matter which must be left to God. The principle of an eye for an eye is a legal one which limits vengeance. It is for the guidance of the judge in fixing a penalty which shall befit the crime committed. Hence it is the basic principle of all justice which is legally administered. (Wright in Rushdoony, 582)*

#### IV. The Injustice of Social Justice

A. What is Social Justice?

*Ideological social justice* is a close companion of what is called Critical Theory or Identity Politics.

*“Modern Critical Theory... tends to divide all humanity into two categories. You are automatically either an oppressor or an oppressed, based not on any act or intention of your own, but simply on your race, gender, sexuality, or social status. The theory proposes the imposition of moral obligations on the oppressors and the bestowing of new and expanded rights for the oppressed. The ultimate objective is a society liberated from the tyranny of merit – a society where one is rewarded based on class, gender, race, or sexuality rather than initiative and diligence” (McDowell, 34).*

B. Why is it unjust?

*Ideological social justice* undermines the biblical emphases on *impartiality* and *individuality*. “*People are treated differently based on the groups to which they are assigned. Verdicts of guilt or innocence are largely based not on individual behavior, but on group affiliation.*” (Allen, 88)

C. What does it foster?

Notice, therefore, that the fruit of ideological social justice is rampant \_\_\_\_\_.

*Ideas have consequences. True ideas, like biblical justice, are essential building blocks for free, prosperous, and flourishing nations. Bad ideas, like ideological social justice, are terribly destructive, rending the social fabric, exacerbating hostility, and ultimately destroying relationships. It is imperative that Christ-followers, who are called to be ministers of reconciliation (2 Corinthians 5:17-20), carefully discern the difference between biblical justice and the ideology of social justice. Both use the word “justice” but mean vastly different things by it. (Allen, 14)*

#### V. Conclusion