

Prov. 17:15, 23, 26: He who justifies the wicked & he who condemns the righteous are both alike an abomination to the LORD . . . ²³ The wicked accepts a bribe in secret to pervert the ways of justice . . . ²⁶ To impose a fine on a righteous man is not good, nor to strike the noble for their uprightness.

Intro: "I want justice!" Have you ever cried out those words in your life? Murder of loved ones; Had something stolen; Physical harm done to you; You've been wronged in any way; Hit & run accident. "I want justice!" Anger!

Webster's 1828 On Justice: The virtue which consists in giving to every one what is his due; practical conformity to the laws & to principles of [righteousness] in the dealings of men with each other; honesty; integrity in commerce or mutual intercourse . . . Distributive justice belongs to magistrates or rulers, & consists in distributing to every man that right or equity which the laws & the principles of equity require; or in deciding controversies according to the laws & to principles of equity. [obeying just laws; punishment when you don't; fairness; truth; integrity; honesty; righteousness; equity; equality; no partiality; doing what is good & right]

God is a just & righteous God Who justifies the wicked so that we will be just & righteous saints.

1. God Is A Just And Righteous God

- **Ps. 89:14:** Righteousness & justice are the foundation of your throne
- **Isa. 45:21:** there is no other god besides me, a righteous God & a Savior; there is none besides me.
- **Deut. 32:4:** The Rock, his work is perfect, for all his ways are justice.
- **Isa. 30:18:** Therefore the LORD waits to be gracious to you, & therefore he exalts himself to show mercy to you. For the LORD is a God of justice; blessed are all those who wait for him.
- **Gen. 18:25:** Shall not the Judge of all the earth do what is just?
- **Ps. 96:13:** He will judge the world in righteousness, & the peoples in his faithfulness.
- **Jer. 9:24:** But let him who boasts boast in this, that he understands & knows me, that I am the LORD who practices steadfast love, justice, & righteousness in the earth. For in these things I delight, declares the LORD.
- **Rom. 3:26:** It was to show his righteousness at the present time, so that he might be just & the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus.
- **2 Thess. 1:6:** Since indeed God considers it just to repay with affliction those who afflict you.
- **Heb. 6:10:** For God is not unjust so as to overlook your work & the love that you have shown for his name
- **Rev. 15:3:** Just & true are your ways, O King of the nations!
- **1 Jn. 1:9:** If we confess our sins, he is faithful & just to forgive us our sins & to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. **GOSPEL!**

Ezek. 33:11-20: Say to them, As I live, declares the Lord GOD, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way & live; turn back, turn back from your evil ways, for why will you die, O house of Israel? "And you, son of man, say to your people, The righteousness of the righteous shall not deliver him when he transgresses, & as for the wickedness of the wicked, he shall not fall by it when he turns from his wickedness, & the righteous shall not be able to live by his righteousness when he sins. ¹³ Though I say to the righteous that he shall surely live, yet if he trusts in his righteousness & does injustice, none of his righteous deeds shall be remembered, but in his injustice that he has done he shall die. ¹⁴ Again, though I say to the wicked, 'You shall surely die,' yet if he turns from his sin & does what is just & right, ¹⁵ if the wicked restores the pledge, gives back what he has taken by robbery, & walks in the statutes of life, not doing injustice, he shall surely live; he shall not die. ¹⁶ None of the sins that he has committed shall be remembered against him. He has done what is just & right; he shall surely live. ¹⁷ "Yet your people say, 'The way of the Lord is not just,' when it is their own way that is not just. ¹⁸ When the righteous turns from his righteousness & does injustice, he shall die for it. ¹⁹ And when the wicked turns from his wickedness & does what is just & right, he shall live by this. ²⁰ Yet you say, 'The way of the Lord is not just.' O house of Israel, I will judge each of you according to his ways."

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2. God Hates All Injustice And Unrighteousness

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a. Prov. 17:15: He who justifies the wicked & he who condemns the righteous are both alike an abomination to the LORD: Greg Bahnsen: Justifying the criminal & incriminating the just are both abhorrent to God.

We are told here that God's hates two things – they are both an abomination to Him:

1) Justifying the wicked: Justifying the wicked is when you don't punish the wicked. Justifying the wicked is when you have district attorneys & judges who give light sentences & allow criminals to go free after multiple violent crimes & convictions & they end up killing & raping innocent people. It's when you declare the wicked righteous.

- **Exod. 23:6-7:** You shall not pervert the justice due to your poor in his lawsuit. ⁷ Keep far from a false charge, & do not kill the innocent & righteous, for I will not acquit the wicked.

- **Deut. 16:18-20:** You shall appoint judges & officers in all your towns that the LORD your God is giving you, according to your tribes, & they shall judge the people with righteous judgment. ¹⁹ You shall not pervert justice. You shall not show partiality, & you shall not accept a bribe, for a bribe blinds the eyes of the wise & subverts the cause of the righteous. ²⁰ Justice, & only justice, you shall follow, that you may live & inherit the land that the LORD your God is giving you.

- **Deut. 25:1-2:** If there is a dispute between men & they come into court & the judges decide between them, acquitting the innocent & condemning the guilty, ² then if the guilty man deserves to be beaten, the judge shall cause him to lie down & be beaten in his presence with a number of stripes in proportion to his offense.

- **Rom. 13:1-5:** Let every person be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, & those that exist have been instituted by God. ² Therefore whoever resists the authorities resists what God has appointed, & those who resist will incur judgment. ³ For rulers are not a terror to good conduct, but to bad. Would you have no fear of the one who is in authority? Then do what is good, & you will receive his approval, ⁴ 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. ⁵ Therefore one must be in subjection, not only to avoid God's wrath but also for the sake of conscience.

- Remember Jesus' trial before Pilate: Pilate & the people justified the wicked – they let Barabbas go free!

2) Condemning the righteous: Condemning the righteous is when you punish people who are innocent.

Condemning the righteous is when someone has done nothing wrong, but you punish them anyway for something they did not do. It's when someone is framed to make it look like they did the crime & punished when they are innocent: (*The Fugitive*). It's when governments punish Christians for praying outside abortion clinics. It's when governments authorize parents & doctors to have the right to choose to execute their own children by abortion!

- Jezebel & Ahab condemned Naboth; Shadrach, Meshach, & Abednego; Daniel in the lions den; Peter & Paul

- **Heb. 11:35-38:** Women received back their dead by resurrection. Some were tortured, refusing to accept release, so that they might rise again to a better life. ³⁶ Others suffered mocking & flogging, & even chains & imprisonment. ³⁷ They were stoned, they were sawn in two, they were killed with the sword. They went about in skins of sheep & goats, destitute, afflicted, mistreated – ³⁸ of whom the world was not worthy – wandering about in deserts and mountains, & in dens and caves of the earth.

- Herod, Pilate, the Jews & Gentiles condemned Jesus! The cross is the greatest sin & injustice in the universe!

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b. Prov. 17:23: The wicked accepts a bribe in secret to pervert the ways of justice: One of the ways Prov. 17:15 is carried out – the wicked are justified & the righteous are condemned – is through bribery.

- **Exod. 23:8:** you shall take no bribe, for a bribe blinds the clear-sighted & subverts the cause of those who are in the right.
- **Isa. 1:23-24:** Your princes are rebels & companions of thieves. Everyone loves a bribe & runs after gifts. They do not bring justice to the fatherless, & the widow's cause does not come to them. ²⁴ Therefore the Lord declares, the LORD of hosts, the Mighty One of Israel: "Ah, I will get relief from my enemies & avenge myself on my foes."
- **Isa. 33:15-17:** He who walks righteously & speaks uprightly, who despises the gain of oppressions, who shakes his hands, lest they hold a bribe, who stops his ears from hearing of bloodshed & shuts his eyes from looking on evil, ¹⁶ he will dwell on the heights; his place of defense will be the fortresses of rocks; his bread will be given him; his water will be sure. ¹⁷ Your eyes will behold the king in his beauty

Prov. 17:23: The wicked accepts a bribe in secret to pervert the ways of justice.

c. Prov. 17:26: To impose a fine on a righteous man is not good, nor to strike the noble for their uprightness: This proverb states it's not good to do what Prov. 17:15 forbids: condemning the righteous. Imposing a fine on righteous people who have done no wrong (that's condemning the righteous) & striking the noble for their uprightness (that's also condemning the righteous). All of that is not good!

Fines were a form of punishment in Israel: Exod. 21:22: When men strive together & hit a pregnant woman, so that her children come out, but there is no harm, the one who hit her shall surely be fined, as the woman's husband shall impose on him, & he shall pay as the judges determine.

Flogging was a form of punishment in Israel: Deut. 25:1-2: if the guilty man deserves to be beaten, the judge shall cause him to lie down & be beaten in his presence with a number of stripes in proportion to his offense.

Eric Lane: Henry & Bridges follow AV ("strike princes") & think it means people rising against their rulers for imposing just punishments, which would be as much a perversion of justice as rulers imposing unjust punishments. However, it is more likely that the word "noble men" (officials) refers to nobility of character (cf. Isa. 32:5-8) & is thus parallel to line 1. It is all about abuse of power, either for financial gain or increase of authority.

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3. God Is The Justifier Of The One Who Has Faith In Jesus Christ

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Exod. 34:6-7: The LORD passed before him & proclaimed, "The LORD, the LORD, a God merciful & gracious, slow to anger, & abounding in steadfast love & faithfulness, ⁷ keeping steadfast love for thousands, forgiving iniquity & transgression & sin, but who will by no means clear the guilty

a. The great dilemma: Rom. 4:4-5: Now to the one who works, his wages are not counted as a gift but as his due. & to the one who does not work but believes in him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is counted as righteousness

God seems to do what He says is an abomination to Him! He justifies us – the ungodly wicked! And to do it, he condemned the righteous on the cross: **Acts 4:27-28:** for truly in this city there were gathered together against your holy servant Jesus, whom you anointed, both Herod & Pontius Pilate, along with the Gentiles & the peoples of Israel, ²⁸ to do whatever your hand & your plan had predestined to take place.

What they all meant for evil, God meant for good! But how is this righteous & not an abomination to God?

b. The answer to the great dilemma: Rom. 3:23-26: for all have sinned & fall short of the glory of God,²⁴ & 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 & the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus.

God justifies sinners, the wicked, by imputing or counting all of their sins to His Son's account & then punishing His Son on the cross for our sins! And so all of our sins can be forgiven in a just & righteous way.

God condemned His own Son on that cross, the righteous, innocent One, by imputing or counting all of the sins of all those who would ever repent & believe in Christ – God counted all those sins as if they were Jesus' sins & punished Jesus for our sins! And so all of our sins can be forgiven in a just & righteous way because Jesus, Who was made sin, was punished in our place!

God also justifies sinners, the wicked, by imputing or counting all of Christ's righteousness to all those who repent & believe in Christ! We get His righteousness! He gets our sins & is punished! All by imputation! This is the great exchange! "In my place condemned He stood!" This is penal substitutionary atonement!

- **Isa. 53:6:** All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned – every one – to his own way; & the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all.

- **2 Cor. 5:21:** For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

If you are in Christ Jesus by faith alone, God has declared you righteous forever! All of your sins are forgiven! And God's Spirit dwells in you & His just law is written on your hearts & you are united to Christ so that you are empowered to do justly, love mercy, & walk humble with your God!

J. C. Ryle On Justification & Sanctification: Similar: (a) Both proceed originally from the free grace of God. It is of His gift alone that believers are justified or sanctified at all.

(b) Both are part of that great work of salvation which Christ, in the eternal covenant, has undertaken on behalf of His people. Christ is the fountain of life, from which pardon and holiness both flow. The root of each is Christ.

(c) Both are to be found in the same persons. Those who are justified are always sanctified, and those who are sanctified are always justified. God has joined them together, and they cannot be put asunder.

(d) Both begin at the same time. The moment a person begins to be a justified person; he also begins to be a sanctified person. He may not feel it, but it is a fact.

(e) Both are alike necessary to salvation. No one ever reached heaven without a renewed heart as well as forgiveness, without the Spirit's grace as well as the blood of Christ, without a meetness for eternal glory as well as a title. The one is just as necessary as the other.

Different: (a) Justification is the reckoning & counting a man to be righteous for the sake of another, even Jesus Christ the Lord. Sanctification is the actual making a man inwardly righteous, though it may be in a very feeble degree.

(b) The righteousness we have by our justification is not our own, but the everlasting perfect righteousness of our great Mediator Christ, imputed to us, and made our own by faith. The righteousness we have by sanctification is our own righteousness, imparted, inherent, and wrought in us by the Holy Spirit, but mingled with much infirmity and imperfection.

(c) In justification our own works have no place at all, and simple faith in Christ is the one thing needful.

(d) In sanctification our own works are of vast importance and God bids us fight, and watch, and pray, and strive, and take pains, and labour. Justification is a finished and complete work, and a man is perfectly justified the moment he believes. Sanctification is an imperfect work, comparatively, and will never be perfected until we reach heaven.

- (e) Justification admits of no growth or increase: a man is as much justified the hour he first comes to Christ by faith as he will be to all eternity. Sanctification is eminently a progressive work, and admits of continual growth and enlargement so long as a man lives.
- (f) Justification has special reference to our persons, our standing in God's sight, and our deliverance from guilt. Sanctification has special reference to our natures, and the moral renewal of our hearts.
- (g) Justification gives us our title to heaven, and boldness to enter in. Sanctification gives us our meetness for heaven, and prepares us to enjoy it when we dwell there.
- (h) Justification is the act of God about us, and is not easily discerned by others. Sanctification is the work of God within us, and cannot be hid in its outward manifestation from the eyes of men.

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Christ Jesus Is Our God Who's Just
He's Truly Man With Perfect Trust
In God His Father's Plan Robust
Yet His Own Son Would Die For Dust
In Him God's Angry Sword Would Thrust
Christ Died And Rose For The Unjust
By Faith Alone In Him We're Just

Now We Repent From Every Lust
We Hate All Sin With True Disgust
Do Righteousness And God Entrust
For Him Who Is Our Only Must
He's Made Our Hearts For Him Combust
Who Is Our God Who Made Us Just!