

## God's Justice

### I. Basic Understanding of Justice

#### A. Passages that speak to God's justice

1. Dt 32:4: He is a faithful God who does no wrong, upright and JUST is he
2. Ps 97:2: "Righteousness and JUSTICE are the foundation of his throne.
3. Rev 19:1-2: Salvation belongs to our God, for true and JUST are his judgments.

#### B. Basic definition of justice

= "Doing what is right and fair"

#### C. Images of Justice

1. A judge who always weighs the evidence and makes a fair decision regardless of personal preference.
2. A parent who treats their children with equity and fairness (doesn't play favorites)

#### D. God is a God of justice and he has hard-wired a sense of justice into each of us

### II. The implication of God's justice for the vulnerable and needy

#### A. In the OT, justice is often paired with a mention of orphans, widows, aliens, poor, etc

1. They are the ones most vulnerable to injustice

Nicholas Wolterstorff: "Injustice is not equally distributed"

2. People of privilege and resource are more able to defend themselves from injustice (Example: rich people can more easily afford good legal counsel)

#### B. God longs for justice and works for justice on behalf of vulnerable & marginalized

See Dt 10:17-18, Ps 146:7-9, Ps 68:4-5

#### C. There is a special place in God's heart for the poor, vulnerable, marginalized

1. He doesn't love them more than the rich, but his justice requires he give particular attention to them
2. Analogy: as a parent, if one child has two blankets and one has none, you give special concern to the one who has none (not because you love that child more but because you love your children equally)

### III. God calls his people to have that same heart of concern for the vulnerable

To "do justice" by them (= to use our strength, resources, position on their behalf)

#### A. God's laws to Israel

1. Gleaning (Lev 19:9-10)
2. Tithing (Dt 14:28-29)
3. Sabbatical Year: release of slaves every 7<sup>th</sup> year (Dt 15:12-15)
4. Year of Jubilee: every 50 years property returned to original owners (Lev 25:10)

#### B. God's concern when Israel did not do justice on behalf of the vulnerable

1. Israel's sin (see Amos 2:6-7, 4:1, 5:12)
2. God was especially concerned with their religious activity when that was not accompanied by justice and concern for the poor and vulnerable (Amos 5:21-23; Isaiah 58:2-8; Micah 6:8; James 1:27)

#### IV. Implication for us today

##### A. The church has always been on the front end of caring for the vulnerable

Examples: early church taking in abandoned children, caring for poor and needy, fighting the slave trade, fighting abortion, providing education, orphanages, free wheelchair mission, etc

##### B. How can we respond today?

###### 1. Start with what God has already put in front of us

Who are the vulnerable people in your life that you can reach out to?

###### 2. Find ways to expose ourselves to people outside our circles who are vulnerable

“For many of us, the problem is not that we don’t care for the poor; it’s that we don’t know the poor.”

### Discussion Questions

1. As you consider the idea that our God is a God of justice, what tensions or issues does his justice raise in your own mind?
2. Consider God’s call to his people, Israel, to do justice for the poor in the midst of their regular religious activity (see Amos 5:21-23, Isaiah 58:2-8, Micah 6:6-8). How specifically are you convicted, challenged, or encouraged by those passages?
3. Who have been the most inspiring advocates of justice on behalf of the vulnerable in your own life? What have you learned about justice from their example?
4. For you personally, how might you more intentionally develop a life where you are expanding your regular circle of contacts to include those who are poor, vulnerable, and marginalized?