



**Part 2: True Worship and Justice**  
**Isaiah 58:1-12, James 1:27**

**True knowledge of God motivates us to live justly.**

**I. The Danger of Believing in God**

In our post-Christian culture, many say there's a great danger in believing in God. Some argue that religion is the cause of many evils and injustices in our society. Those who are burning bibles in Portland hold that view.

Ironically, we are in a series looking at how the Gospel of Jesus Christ motivates us to do justice and guides us into the kind of justice God desires.

We might raise the thought with them that a belief in a Creator is what has actually served as the foundation for rights and justice. This is one of the great gifts of the Bible and the Judeo-Christian faith to humanity. It's the fact that we believe all people are made in God's image and that they deserve to be treated justly.

***True knowledge of God motivates us to live justly.***

Whatever conversations we might have with those fearful or suspicious of religion, we can at least agree that the Bible actually agrees that a certain kind of belief in God and a certain kind of faith are dangerous.

Q: Why is there a danger in believing in God? Because man has a dominant tendency to turn God's covenant of grace into a contract for God's blessing.

Rather than respond to God's radical grace in salvation, man often wants to find religious and moral activities to try to earn God's blessings or manipulate Him into blessing us. This is the default mode of the human heart, whether a person is religious, spiritual, agnostic, or atheistic.

This was exactly what the Israelites had done in the covenant relationship with the LORD (see Isaiah 58:1-3).

## II. **True Knowledge of God is to Know His Radical Grace (Jeremiah 9:23-24, James 1:27)**

The Israelites knew Yahweh/the LORD not only as the One great Creator but also as the One great Savior. Their entire relationship as a covenant people was based on God's radical grace in rescuing them from Egyptian slavery and calling them His own people (Exodus 19-20, Deuteronomy 7:7-9).

Example: If I introduce myself to someone, I will likely reveal two things to them – who is most important to me and what I do... this is the way the LORD likes to introduce Himself as well...

God revealed Himself as the God who defends the powerless and the most vulnerable people (Psalm 149:7-9, Deuteronomy 10:17-18). We saw this last week in the way God uses His power to save us in Jesus Christ.

***He upholds the cause of the oppressed and gives food to the hungry. The Lord sets prisoners free, the Lord gives sight to the blind, the Lord lifts up those who are bowed down, the Lord loves the righteous. The Lord watches over the foreigner and sustains the fatherless and the widow, but he frustrates the ways of the wicked. Psalm 146:7-9***

*For the Lord your God is God of gods and Lord of lords, the great God, mighty and awesome, who shows no partiality and accepts no bribes. 18 He defends the cause of the fatherless and the widow, and loves the foreigner residing among you, giving them food and clothing. Deuteronomy 10:17-18*

The Israelites lifestyle reveals they have not really come to know the Lord because they are not reflecting His character and ethics (Isaiah 58:3b-4, Jeremiah 9:23-24, 22:3).

***This is what the LORD says: "Let not the wise boast of their wisdom or the strong boast of their strength or the rich boast of their riches, but let the one who boasts boast about this: that they have the understanding to know me, that I am the Lord, who exercises kindness, justice and righteousness on earth, for in these I delight," declares the LORD. Jeremiah 9:23-24***

## III. **God's Grace Motivates Us to Live Justly (Isaiah 58:6-7, 9-10)**

True knowledge of God is reflected in the way we live – our priorities and commitments – especially in whether we care about justice for the poor, oppressed, and vulnerable (Isaiah 58:6-7, Luke 11:39-42, James 1:27).

**“Religion that God our Father accepts as pure and faultless is this: to look after orphans and widows in their distress and to keep oneself from being polluted by the world.” James 1:27**

“Spending” ourselves (Isaiah 58:10) = relationships are necessary.

Relationships with the poor, vulnerable, and oppressed are more important than money because relationships are the pathway to true knowledge of another person, compassion, and love.

“Get close enough to the poor and injustice to have tears, and follow your tears.”

#### **IV. The Great Surprise (Isaiah 58:8-12)**

According to Jesus, the paradox of the Gospel – in losing our lives, we find our lives (Luke 9:23-25).

See the promises of living justly ...

Example: Stats on teen suicide ... in the U.S., suicide is the 2nd leading cause of death among the ages of 10-24 (The Parent Resource Program, The Jason Foundation). In three years, 2016-2019, Colorado had the highest increase in suicide in the U.S., seeing a rise of 58% (Colorado Public News).

In South Denver, there may not be a lot of injustice, but there is a lot of pain. What if one of the Lord’s solutions to our pain was to “spend ourselves” on behalf of the poor, vulnerable, and oppressed?

This is exactly what God has offered us in Jesus Christ ...

***“He has shown you, O man, what is good. And what does the Lord require of you? To do justice and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God.” Micah 6:8***

#### **Recommended:**

1. Book: *“Generous Justice”* by Tim Keller
2. Article: *“Systemic Racism, God’s Grace, and the Human Heart: What the Bible Teaches About Structural Sin”* by Albert Mohler ([publicdiscourse.com](http://publicdiscourse.com))