



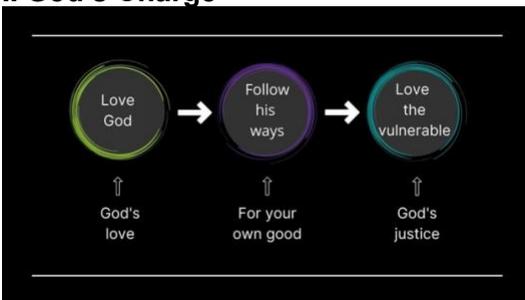
Part 6: God's Good Justice

Deuteronomy 10:12-22

God's good, radical, and scandalous justice is the retribution of wrongs, but even more importantly, it is the restoration of the vulnerable.

With the war in Ukraine there are currently 14 million people who have been forced from their homes, 6 million who have fled the country, and more than 4,000 civilians who have been killed. There is deep anguish and trauma; we are saddened, our hearts ache, it feels wrong, it's unfair and unjust. But where does this cry from our hearts come from?

I. God's Charge



- A. Love God
 - V. 12, “to love him, to serve the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul” This command to love God with our whole being echoes the words of the Shema in Deuteronomy 6.
 - **Why?** Because He first loved us. Deuteronomy 10:14-15, 7:7-8, 9:4-5
- B. Follow His Ways
 - V. 12 “to walk in obedience to him, to observe the Lord’s commands.”
 - **Why?** Because it is “for your own good” (v. 13)
- C. Love the Vulnerable
 - Deut. 10:17-19, to love the foreigners is expounded to orphan, widow, and strangers later in Deuteronomy.

- **Why?** Because of God's justice. We love and follow a God of justice to be a people of justice. This is grounded in the character of God who shows no partiality, accepts no bribes, and defends the vulnerable.

II. God's Good, Radical, and Scandalous Justice

"It is hard for us to understand how revolutionary this was in the ancient world. Sri Lankan scholar Vinoth Ramachandra calls this 'scandalous justice.' He writes that in virtually all the ancient cultures of the world, the power of the gods was channeled through and identified with the elites of society, the kings, priests, and military captains, not the outcasts. To oppose the leaders of society, then, was to oppose the gods. 'But here, in Israel's rival vision,' it is not high-ranking males but 'the orphan, the widow, and the stranger' with whom Yahweh takes his stand. His power is exercised in history for their empowerment. So, from the ancient of times, the God of the Bible stood out from the gods of all other religions as a God on the side of the powerless, and of justice for the poor." – Timothy Keller, *Generous Justice*

- A. Deuteronomy is a blueprint and constitution for a people as they enter into a new land creating a social, economic, and legal system. The word "justice" (*mishpat*) is retributive justice and restorative justice. Retributive justice is consequences for wrong. Restorative justice is concern, generosity, and advocating for the vulnerable and changing social structures to prevent injustice. In Deuteronomy, it primarily speaks of restorative justice.
- B. Deuteronomy 14:29-29
 - 10% of the year's produce every three years is set aside for foreigners, fatherless, and widows.
- C. Deuteronomy 15
 - Every seven years (Year of Jubilee) they should cancel all debts of fellow Israelites.
 - Freeing servants – a brilliant social security net for those who are in debt or destitute. After six years, they are let go to be liberally supplied animals, produce, and wine.
- D. Deuteronomy 16:18-20
 - Joshua Berman, in his book *Created Equal: How the Bible Broke with Ancient Political Thought*, points out the radicalness of the judiciary. The fact that you appoint a judge indicates that anyone could be appointed, that it was not based on class or rank.
 - Judges are not to pervert justice or show partiality or accept a bribe. They follow justice and justice alone. This in many ways protects the innocent and vulnerable.
- E. Deuteronomy 19
 - City of Refuge – in a ruthless revenge culture, it created a safe space while tempers cool down.
 - You shall not move boundary stones

- Witnesses – a matter must be established by at least two or three witnesses.

F. Deuteronomy 27:19

- God's heart and concern the foreigner, the fatherless and the widow.

How does Jesus fit into God's story of justice?

- We see the justice of God in the OT, His heart and ways to stand for the orphan, widow, and stranger. But does Jesus make any difference? Does He change our view or motivation for justice?
- The Bible Project video – Justice (<https://bibleproject.com/explore/video/justice/>)

Small Group Discussion Questions

1. What is one thing that you learned about God's justice? Was there anything that surprised you?
2. Have you ever experienced injustice in your life? How did it make you feel?
3. How can you be more a part of God's justice in this broken world? Is there anything within your community, place of work, city, or country that you can be a part of God's justice?