

## **God-Ordained Institutions: Civil Government, Part 3**

### **Introduction**

NJFK—Confronting Injustice without Compromising Truth Video Ad?

Civil Government—Fall  
Humanity's fallen nature makes necessary some kind of restraining authority.

*The most basic function of civil government is to punish those who do wrong and to praise those who do right (1 Peter 2:14; Romans 13:3).*

*The sin plague infects every human being but Jesus, and therefore taints every human government but His.*

God has ordained civil government, so believers submit to its authority because of their submission to Him (Romans 13:1-7; 1 Peter 2:9-17).

God holds both the governed and the governing accountable. All peoples and nations answer to Him. (Prophets, Proverbs, Psalms)

God not only raises up nations and their leaders; He also takes them down. (Daniel, Isaiah, Jeremiah)

When individuals and/or a people repent of their sin, God forgives them (e.g., Nebuchadnezzar, Nineveh).

Tonight, we want to establish a biblical lens for how we deal with justice issues. Very much at the forefront of our national life at present. Theories that have become dominant in many of our educational institutions now exercise tremendous influence on public opinion, debate, and activism. These trends have impacted politics and law, and because the churches are to shine as lights in the world, they have flowed into churches, including our own, as important to making our world a better place.

*Exercising biblical discernment in the cultural war over justice issues is not just an academic question. Ideas have consequences. If we get this wrong, we end up harming people and dishonoring God.*

Biblical truth is never merely theoretical. We are to act on it.

**First, any truly biblical view of justice must start with God.**

Any philosophy, movement, activity, or established system that leaves God out or contradicts what God has revealed cannot exercise true justice.

The efforts may be sincere and earnest. Thanks to common grace, they may correct some things that are wrong and establish some things that are right. But more often than not attempts divorced from God merely shift the problems from one area to another and often end up destroying more than they correct.

Why is this so?

To start with, we have to define what is right and what is wrong in order to have some means of measuring justice. **God is the only One who accurately establishes what is right and wrong.** He does so with perfection and in accord with absolute reality.

**Righteousness**, which by definition meets God's standards, **is inherently helpful** to human beings.

**Unrighteousness is inherently harmful** to human beings.

That is why the two greatest commands on which hang all the law and the prophets are love God with all your heart, soul, mind, and strength, and second, love your neighbor as yourself. Love does no harm to a neighbor. Therefore love fulfills the law.

That means that those who promote what God calls unrighteousness as love are

deceived and deceptive. **It is not loving to celebrate and support what God calls sinful. It is hateful and harmful.** It encourages what does harm to human beings.

**God establishes human dignity as His image-bearers.**

This is critical to exercising true justice.

When God's law defines what is right and wrong, then those who exercise power in a society whether officially or by public influence cannot make up the rules as they go. Might does not make right. Popularity does not make right. And history is full of obvious examples where those in power and those in the majority carried out terrible atrocities in the name of their definitions of right and wrong simply because they could.

So you find repeated strong warnings about taking advantage of the vulnerable in the Pentateuch, the historical books, the Psalms, the Proverbs, and the prophets.

Widows, orphans, sojourners, slaves, and the poor may not be able to afford legal protection from human beings. The Lord is their mighty advocate.

Leviticus 19:11-15, 35-36

<sup>9</sup> "When you reap the harvest of your land, you shall not reap your field right up to its

edge, neither shall you gather the gleanings after your harvest. <sup>10</sup> And you shall not strip your vineyard bare, neither shall you gather the fallen grapes of your vineyard. You shall leave them for the poor and for the sojourner: I am the LORD your God.

<sup>11</sup> "You shall not steal; you shall not deal falsely; you shall not lie to one another. <sup>12</sup> You shall not swear by my name falsely, and so profane the name of your God: I am the LORD.

<sup>13</sup> "You shall not oppress your neighbor or rob him. The wages of a hired worker shall not remain with you all night until the morning. <sup>14</sup> You shall not curse the deaf or put a stumbling block before the blind, but you shall fear your God: I am the LORD.

<sup>15</sup> "You shall do no injustice in court. You shall not be partial to the poor or defer to the great, but in righteousness shall you judge your neighbor.

<sup>33</sup> "When a stranger sojourns with you in your land, you shall not do him wrong. <sup>34</sup> You shall treat the stranger who sojourns with you as the native among you, and you shall love him as yourself, for you were strangers in the land of Egypt: I am the LORD your God.

<sup>35</sup> "You shall do no wrong in judgment, in measures of length or weight or quantity. <sup>36</sup> You shall have just balances, just weights, a just ephah, and a just hin: I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt.

## 2 Samuel 23:3-4

<sup>3</sup> The God of Israel has spoken;  
the Rock of Israel has said to me:  
When one rules justly over men,  
ruling in the fear of God,  
<sup>4</sup> he dawns on them like the morning light,  
like the sun shining forth on a cloudless  
morning, like rain that makes grass to sprout  
from the earth.

## Psalm 10:12-18

<sup>12</sup> Arise, O LORD; O God, lift up your hand;  
forget not the afflicted.  
<sup>13</sup> Why does the wicked renounce God  
and say in his heart, "You will not call to  
account"?  
<sup>14</sup> But you do see, for you note mischief and  
vexation,  
that you may take it into your hands;  
to you the helpless commits himself;  
you have been the helper of the fatherless.  
<sup>15</sup> Break the arm of the wicked and evildoer;  
call his wickedness to account till you find  
none.  
<sup>16</sup> The LORD is king forever and ever;  
the nations perish from his land.  
<sup>17</sup> O LORD, you hear the desire of the afflicted;  
you will strengthen their heart; you will  
incline your ear  
<sup>18</sup> to do justice to the fatherless and the  
oppressed,

so that man who is of the earth may strike terror no more.

Psalm 82:1-4

<sup>1</sup> God has taken his place in the divine council; in the midst of the gods he holds judgment:

<sup>2</sup> "How long will you judge unjustly and show partiality to the wicked? *Selah*

<sup>3</sup> Give justice to the weak and the fatherless; maintain the right of the afflicted and the destitute.

<sup>4</sup> Rescue the weak and the needy; deliver them from the hand of the wicked."

Psalm 89:14

Righteousness and justice are the foundation of your throne; steadfast love and faithfulness go before you.

Proverbs 21:3, 6, 7, 10, 15

<sup>3</sup> To do righteousness and justice is more acceptable to the LORD than sacrifice.

<sup>6</sup> The getting of treasures by a lying tongue is a fleeting vapor and a snare of death.

<sup>7</sup> The violence of the wicked will sweep them away, because they refuse to do what is just.

<sup>10</sup> The soul of the wicked desires evil; his neighbor finds no mercy in his eyes.

<sup>15</sup> When justice is done, it is a joy to the righteous but terror to evildoers.

Proverbs 22:22-23

**22** Do not rob the poor, because he is poor,  
or crush the afflicted at the gate,  
**23** for the LORD will plead their cause  
and rob of life those who rob them.

Proverbs 24:11-12, 23-25, 28-29

**11** Rescue those who are being taken away to  
death;  
hold back those who are stumbling to the  
slaughter.

**12** If you say, "Behold, we did not know this,"  
does not he who weighs the heart perceive  
it?

Does not he who keeps watch over your soul  
know it, and will he not repay man according  
to his work?

**23** These also are sayings of the wise.

Partiality in judging is not good.

**24** Whoever says to the wicked, "You are in  
the right,"

will be cursed by peoples, abhorred by  
nations,

**25** but those who rebuke the wicked will have  
delight,

and a good blessing will come upon them.

**28** Be not a witness against your neighbor  
without cause,

and do not deceive with your lips.

**29** Do not say, "I will do to him as he has done  
to me;

I will pay the man back for what he has  
done."



## Isaiah 10:1-3

<sup>1</sup> Woe to those who decree iniquitous decrees,  
and the writers who keep writing oppression,  
<sup>2</sup> to turn aside the needy from justice  
and to rob the poor of my people of their  
right,  
that widows may be their spoil,  
and that they may make the fatherless their  
prey!  
<sup>3</sup> What will you do on the day of punishment,  
in the ruin that will come from afar?  
To whom will you flee for help,  
and where will you leave your wealth?

## Amos 5:11-15, 21-24

<sup>11</sup> Therefore because you trample on the poor  
and you exact taxes of grain from him,  
you have built houses of hewn stone,  
but you shall not dwell in them;  
you have planted pleasant vineyards,  
but you shall not drink their wine.  
<sup>12</sup> For I know how many are your  
transgressions  
and how great are your sins—  
you who afflict the righteous, who take a  
bribe,  
and turn aside the needy in the gate.  
<sup>13</sup> Therefore he who is prudent will keep silent  
in such a time,  
for it is an evil time.  
<sup>14</sup> Seek good, and not evil,  
that you may live;

and so the LORD, the God of hosts, will be with you,

as you have said.

**15** Hate evil, and love good,  
and establish justice in the gate;  
it may be that the LORD, the God of hosts,  
will be gracious to the remnant of Joseph.

**21** "I hate, I despise your feasts,  
and I take no delight in your solemn  
assemblies.

**22** Even though you offer me your burnt  
offerings and grain offerings,  
I will not accept them;  
and the peace offerings of your fattened  
animals,  
I will not look upon them.

**23** Take away from me the noise of your  
songs;  
to the melody of your harps I will not listen.

**24** But let justice roll down like waters,  
and righteousness like an ever-flowing  
stream.

Amos 8:4-6

**4** Hear this, you who trample on the needy  
and bring the poor of the land to an end,  
**5** saying, "When will the new moon be over,  
that we may sell grain?

And the Sabbath,  
that we may offer wheat for sale,  
that we may make the ephah small and the  
shekel great  
and deal deceitfully with false balances,

**6** that we may buy the poor for silver  
and the needy for a pair of sandals  
and sell the chaff of the wheat?"

Micah 2:2

**2** They covet fields and seize them,  
and houses, and take them away;  
they oppress a man and his house,  
a man and his inheritance.

Micah 3:1-3

**1** And I said: Hear, you heads of Jacob  
and rulers of the house of Israel!  
Is it not for you to know justice?—  
**2** you who hate the good and love the evil,  
who tear the skin from off my people  
and their flesh from off their bones,  
**3** who eat the flesh of my people,  
and flay their skin from off them,  
and break their bones in pieces  
and chop them up like meat in a pot,  
like flesh in a cauldron.

Zechariah 7:9-10

**9** Thus says the LORD of hosts, Render true  
judgments, show kindness and mercy to one  
another, **10** do not oppress the widow, the  
fatherless, the sojourner, or the poor, and let  
none of you devise evil against another in  
your heart.

He not only forbids abusing the vulnerable.  
He forbids neglecting them, as well.

He judges individuals and whole nations for their sins against vulnerable people.

Further, God decries lying in court, practicing partiality, and engaging in bribery.

He calls out greed, robbing the poor, taking real estate that belongs to others, and violence against the innocent.

**The fallenness of our race means that all individuals, institutions, and people groups are beset with sin and therefore have practiced injustice at some level.**

There is not an ethnicity on the planet that has not practiced injustice and does not do so.

That means that you cannot determine the guilt of individuals, people groups, or institutions by the ethnicity to which they belong.

Marxism defines history as a class struggle between the landowners and the working class.

Nazis, the Arian race and the Jews.

White supremacists, between white and non-whites.

Hinduism—the caste system from Brahmins to untouchables.

Critical Race Theory—arbitrary classing people as oppressors or oppressed according to ethnicity, gender, sexual practice

*Dividing people into classes and pitting them against one another, as if one group is righteous and superior and the other is wicked and inferior, is sheer deception.*  
Be very careful not to get sucked into defining people by the groups to which they belong, often by no choice of their own whatsoever.

It establishes a false self-righteousness. It promotes false guilt. It obscures any path to true redemption, and substitutes instead a path to conflict, mistreatment, and violence. It is wicked at the core and destructive in its effect.

**Redemption through Christ provides forgiveness and re-establishes the righteous character and conduct that promotes true justice for the good of humanity.** Nothing less will do so. Common grace mitigates the failures, but systems reflect sinful individuals. To fix the system you must redeem the individual sinner and transform him/her into a saint.

Levi (Matthew)  
Saul (Paul)  
Zacchaeus

1 Peter 2

Titus 3

Book Recommendation:

Thaddeus Williams. *Confronting Injustice without Compromising Truth.*