

Justice, Oppression and the Character of God
(Learning to follow the example of Jesus in suffering)
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Introduction: In Christ we do find a life filled with purpose and identity!

- A. What is my purpose in life? In what do I find fulfillment and am passionate about?
 - 1. The first step to a “anchored mind” is found here! **(Col 3:1-3)**
 - 2. We also have a need to belong! In our digital world we are bombarded with another purpose that offers fulfillment. Are we being pulled by the culture?
- B. Jesus knew the influence that men can have on people! **(Lk 12:1-3; Mk 8:15)**
 - 1. The “the leaven of Herod” is deception from a political system of thinking.
 - 2. A philosophy founded on anger and accusations is common to political thought.

I. Satan and the political culture of our times

- A. Satan is the accuser of our brethren! **(Rev 12:10)**
 - 1. He is filled with wrath and even accuses us before God! **(Zach 3:1-4)**
 - 2. Satan did not anticipate forgiveness through the sacrifice of Christ.
- B. Satan tried to destroy God’s people through accusations! **(Ezra 4:6)**
 - 1. How does Satan use accusations? He uses them to destroy! **(Jn 10:10)**
 - 2. Satan does not care if accusations are true, but he wants it to spread!
- C. Christians are in real danger to accepting this spirit of the evil one! **(Lk 9:54-55)**
 - 1. Consider the one that looks out and cares for others; one who rightly hates to see others mistreated and ostracized. How does Satan turn such a heart?
 - 2. He will redefine “justice” and “oppression.” He then will destroy any fair system of justice towards those accused. **(Isa 5:20-21)**
 - 3. This was done to Jesus! How did He respond? **(Acts 8:32-33)**

II. How God’s character teaches us about justice

- A. What does it mean for God to be just? **(Zeph 3:5; Isa 42:1-4)**
 - 1. All of God’s ways are right and thus is always based upon truth. **(Deut 32:3-4)**
 - 2. The foundation of God’s throne is justice. **(Ps 89:14)**
 - 3. Our world boldly says God’s moral standards are oppressive. **(Deut 6:24)**
 - 4. On this basis Jesus was the most oppressive person in history. **(Jn 15:18-20)**
- B. What does God teach us about accountability and justice? What is really fair?
 - 1. Justice begins with individual responsibility. I am not guilty for what others have done. **(Ezk 18:20-21; 2 Cor 5:10; Rom 14:11-12)**
 - 2. Accountability demands evidence and a just process. God promises that all men will be judged individually in a righteous process. **(Rom 2:5-6)**
- C. Why do men love justice?
 - 1. Being created in the image of God we have in our nature a recognition of fairness and a hatred of those that cheat and steal. Children say: “That’s not fair!”
 - 2. If we do not fear God, that desire can be perverted. **(Acts 26:9-11; 23:1)**
 - 3. A person who seeks to be just must act on principle (universal law) in all things. If he does not, Satan can take one’s desire for justice and emotionally turn them into instruments of great injustice. (Grace can be used as a cover for injustice!)

D. The evil of judging men by group identity.

1. It is taught that we should view others based on the “group” they are in. When others assign us to a group then we are declared as innocent or guilty based on another’s interpretation of history of that group.
2. I may then be declared “guilty” of things that I have not thought or done. (Ex. Racial stereotypes)
3. Many have dedicated their lives to false accusation and an ongoing rage. This is a terrible form of slavery! This will affect all relationships. **(Titus 3:3-5)**

People get addicted to feeling offended all the time because it gives them a high; being self-righteous and morally superior feels good. As political cartoonist Tim Kreider put it in a New York Times op-ed: “Outrage is like a lot of other things that feel good but over time devour us from the inside out. And it’s even more insidious than most vices because we don’t even consciously acknowledge that it’s a pleasure.”

E. How were God’s people instructed to respond to false accusation? **(Psa 109:2-4)**

1. Is it weakness to respond to accusations with love and prayer? NO!
2. Real peace comes from refusing to be overcome by evil! **(1 Pt 3:8-11)**
3. When we refuse to do this we will become like our accusers. This poison will enter our very “body” and “bones.” **(Psa 109:16-18; 1 Jn 3:15)**

III. Resisting a culture of endless accusations and anger

A. In this culture, “ammunition” for the battle is seeking charges to attack another.

1. What did the Pharisees diligently pursue? **(Lk 6:7; Mk 3:2)**
2. If you want something bad enough, you will find it. When love, justice and mercy are cast out, you can believe anything! **(Mt 23:23; 2 Thess 2:11)**
3. You may be in a position to stop loved ones from taking this path.

B. This culture is very quick to accuse! **(Jude 9)**

1. The Romans had a process that when applied, would defeat slander. Righteousness takes time and effort! **(Acts 25:16; Prov 18:17)**
2. When you blindly follow a party then when your “leader” makes an accusation then no further investigation is needed! **(Jn 18:29-30)**

C. This culture is quick to incite “mob action!” **(Ex 23:1-2; Acts 19:32)**

1. We should not go “public” as a first act! “Why are you not doing something!”
2. Even if legitimate problems are raised, Satan’s goal is the same, to destroy your enemy and enslave the victor! He conquers both!
3. We must be very careful about our social media or discontinue it entirely.
4. In the 1930’s several articles warned against “petitions” and majority rule. I would add to that signing “open letters” and the internet! **(Lk 9:54-55)**

D. All of this is contrary to God’s nature and His wisdom. (HS Ex.) **(1 Pt 2:11-12)**

IV. How should we respond to oppression and injustice?

A. Persecution is one of the greatest opportunities for growth! **(Rom 5:3-4; Phil 1:29)**

1. We can be joyful while having our goods and reputation plundered? Why?
2. We follow the example of our Lord. (Ex. Door-to-door) **(Heb 10:32-35)**

B. My identity is not to be found in remembering injustices! **(Rom 8:18; 35-37)**

Conclusion: Have we come to know and trust God? **(Heb 11:24-27)**

10 Reasons Why Political Anger is not Worthy of Disciples of Christ
by Garner Hall

1. Disciples of Christ should be known for their love, not their political anger **(Jn. 13:35)**.

2. Disciples of the first century were apolitical in the sense of not trusting in politics to achieve their ends because Christ's kingdom is not of this world **(Jn. 18:36)**.

Some reason that this example "doesn't count" because they couldn't influence their world politically, but we can in a democracy. Jesus could! However, he chose not to use political means to attain his goals while on the earth.

3. Christians invest their time and resources in the spiritual kingdom **(Matt. 6:33)**. Earthly kingdoms come and go. They go through cycles of corruption and reform. Christ's kingdom is eternal.

4. The Christian's weapons and battles aren't carnal **(2 Cor. 10:4; Eph. 6:12)**.

5. Political anger takes away the peace that passes all understanding **(Phil. 4:7)**.

6. Political anger affects our efforts to reach the lost with the gospel **(1 Cor. 9:22,23)**. This is especially true in larger cities.

7. The way to overcome evil is with good, the gospel of love, not with political pressure **(Romans 12:21)**.

8. To identify ourselves with a political figure of the left or the right as if he or she were the solution to our countries' problems is to marginalize Jesus Christ **(Jn. 14:6)**. He is the only solution to man's greatest problem – sin.

9. Political anger shows too much attachment to the things of this world **(1 Jn. 2:15)**.

10. "The anger of man doesn't achieve the righteousness of God" **(Ja. 1:20)**.

Common Cognitive Distortions

A partial list from Robert L. Leahy, Stephen J. F. Holland, and Lata K. McGinn's Treatment Plans and Interventions for Depression and Anxiety Disorders (2012).

- 1. Mind reading.** You assume that you know what people think without having sufficient evidence of their thoughts. "He thinks I'm a loser."
- 2. Fortune-telling.** You predict the future negatively: things will get worse, or there is danger ahead. "I'll fail that exam," or "I won't get the job."
- 3. Catastrophizing.** You believe that what has happened or will happen will be so awful and unbearable that you won't be able to stand it. "It would be terrible if I failed."
- 4. Labeling.** You assign global negative traits to yourself and others. "I'm undesirable," or "He's a rotten person."
- 5. Discounting positives.** You claim that the positive things you or others do are trivial. "That's what wives are supposed to do—so it doesn't count when she's nice to me," or "Those successes were easy, so they don't matter."
- 6. Negative filtering.** You focus almost exclusively on the negatives and seldom notice the positives. "Look at all of the people who don't like me."
- 7. Overgeneralizing.** You perceive a global pattern of negatives on the basis of a single incident. "This generally happens to me. I seem to fail at a lot of things."
- 8. Dichotomous thinking.** You view events or people in all-or-nothing terms. "I get rejected by everyone," or "It was a complete waste of time."
- 9. Blaming.** You focus on the other person as the source of your negative feelings, and you refuse to take responsibility for changing yourself. "She's to blame for the way I feel now," or "My parents caused all my problems."
- 10. What if?** You keep asking a series of questions about "what if" something happens, and you fail to be satisfied with any of the answers. "Yeah, but what if I get anxious?," or "What if I can't catch my breath?"
- 11. Emotional reasoning.** You let your feelings guide your interpretation of reality. "I feel depressed; therefore, my marriage is not working out."
- 12. Inability to disconfirm.** You reject any evidence or arguments that might contradict your negative thoughts. For example, when you have the thought *I'm unlovable*, you reject as irrelevant any evidence that people like you. Consequently, your thought cannot be refuted. "That's not the real issue. There are deeper problems. There are other factors."