

# Just Us

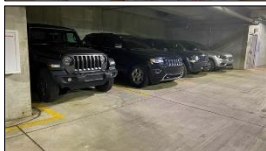
## Seeing Wrongs Right

July 30, 2023

Today we're training ourselves how to look to the Lord for justice. Because it's hard to take our eyes off *ourselves* when we feel we've been wronged. In fact, even *when* we invite God into our trouble, it's often in the form of the *self-centered question*, "**Why me?!**" So, today, we're gonna see if we can't correct that perspective by asking this instead: **Who else would you rather be?**



Because this question cuts to the core of our *complaint* and asks *us* to actually account for *everything* we think about when we say someone's getting the short end of the stick! Which happens all the time!



In fact, just the other day, this guy walks into a Seattle parking garage and this cool jeep catches his eye. So he hems and haws for a minute, but decides he *wants* it enough to *steal* it. So he tears past the attendant who takes a *picture* but doesn't *tell* anyone, and hooks up with his friends for a night of joyriding, meth-smoking, and redecorating their new toy with paint and markers. Eventually, they park it to go party *elsewhere* when *cops* spot it and take it to an impound. Then they notify the owner – who is told he has to pay \$700 to get his stolen, vandalized car back. But hey – if those thieves wanna get around *now*, *they* have to steal another car.



**Does that seem fair?** My 19-year-old didn't think so when it happened to him last month! **Why do the wicked get rewards while the victims get the bills?** It's a question we *all* wonder when we feel *wronged*. And our *instinct* for *justice* makes us *demand* an explanation from the part of our beliefs that *claims* to explain *why* things work the way they do. So of course, *the Bible* tackles the question *consistently*; take Psalm 73, where *Asaph* says:



I *envied* the arrogant when I saw the prosperity of the wicked. They have no struggles; their bodies are healthy and strong. They are free from common human burdens; they are not plagued by human ills. ... This is what the wicked are like— always free of care, they go on amassing wealth. [So what's his natural reaction?] Surely in vain I have kept my heart pure and have washed my hands in innocence. All day long I have been afflicted, and every morning brings new punishments. If I had spoken out like that, I would have betrayed Your children. When I tried to understand all this, it troubled me deeply – Psalm 73:3, 12-16 NIV

Make it make *sense*, Lord! What happened to *cause* and *effect* or *crime* and *punishment*? Even when we *try* to see what God's working, **sometimes it just seems He could've done better**. And like *Asaph*, we're left to constantly *wrestle* with the way He works. And even *prophets* struggle:

[Cuz *Habakkuk* cries out:] How long, Lord, must I call for help, but You do not listen? Or cry out to You, "Violence!" but You do not save? Why do You make me look at injustice? Why do You tolerate wrongdoing? ... Therefore the law is paralyzed, and justice never prevails. The wicked hem in the righteous, so that justice is perverted. – Habakkuk 1:2-4 NIV

And now we're *really* wrestling! Cuz *without* an answer, we start to tell *God* where *He* went wrong! **"Listen, Your law won't work if you punish the wrong people!"** Hello?! Anybody home? And I feel for Habakkuk, cuz as if he's not frustrated enough, you know what God offers as an answer? He essentially says, **"If you think that's bad, you won't believe what I do next!"**

"Look at the nations and watch— and be utterly amazed. For I am going to do something in your days that you would not believe, even if you were told. I am raising up the Babylonians, that ruthless and impetuous people, who sweep across the whole earth to seize dwellings not their own." Habakkuk 1:5-6 NIV



Wait, He's giving *more* bad guys a *helping* hand?! Well, He's *right* – that's both hard to believe and utterly *amazing*! *And yet*, every time we pause to *process* a shocking *injustice*, God gets us to *obsess* over the question He *wants* us to ask: **What on earth is God doing?**



Well, once we're openly looking for answers to injustice, God can do a lot! Cuz *that* conversation is an *opportunity* for Him to: 1.) **Show us who we're not**, 2.) **show us who He is**, and 3.) **Show us who we are**.



And **first**, He shows us who we're *not*. Cuz we're coming in hot and bothered after He let the 'Jeep thieves' get away without paying a penny! But, **we're only upset if we think we know better**. So if we're *irritated* by an apparent *injustice* – on some level, we're saying we think *God* dropped the ball – and, that we should've been the judge. Because **frustration forces our true thoughts to the surface**. And as we argue all *our reasons* from our *perspective*, we can hear how obviously incapable we are at judging *what's* right. Just turn on the news! Cuz all our best arguments put together produces *politics*. And regardless of your stance, **we can all agree that we can't all agree!** And *that* should open the door to admitting we can't judge *justly*.



In fact, it's biological. **Our flesh itself brings a bias into our judgments** according to researchers who showed how a judge's *hunger* influenced justice. Turns out, chance of parole starts out at 65% but drops to nearly zero before lunch. Luckily, it leaps back to around 65% after lunch.

And furthermore, **our legal history is full of injustices arising from the impatience of our flesh**. Just watch yourself for a day to see how many snap judgments you throw out at the hint of an injustice. We're all like little Fred Savage in the Princess Bride when he interrupts Peter Falk reading his favorite book to his grandson **"Hold it grandpa, you read that wrong, she doesn't marry Humperdinck. She marries Westley. After all that Westley did for her, if she didn't marry him, it wouldn't be fair!"** and Peter Falk calmly asks, **"Who said life was fair?"** and Fred goes savage and yells, **"I'm telling you, you're messing up the story! Now, get it right!"** Like him, **we can't contain our outrage at injustice** even before we've heard the whole story!

So whenever we argue against injustice, at some point, we're forced to admit **our flesh is an obstruction of justice**. We're *not* patient or impartial and therefore: **We're not qualified to judge**.

And after seeing who we're *not*, it's much easier to **show us who He is**. Because when we see what's missing from our *character*, we can learn what's missing from our *sight*. Cuz **we have to come to the end of ourselves to see where God begins**. Remember when Asaph said "When I tried to understand all this, it troubled me deeply" – guess what, that only lasted:



Until I entered the sanctuary of God; [Kinda like you all did today!/] then I understood their final destiny. [Hey – that's what we're working on!] Surely You place them on slippery ground; You cast them down to ruin ... When my heart was grieved and my spirit embittered, I was senseless and ignorant; I was a brute beast before You. Yet I am always with You; ... You guide me with Your counsel, and afterward You will take me into glory ... Those who are far from You will perish; You destroy all who are *unfaithful* to You. But as for *me*, it is good to be near God. I have made the Sovereign Lord my refuge; I will tell of all Your deeds. - Psalm 73:1-28 NIV

**I tried. I failed. I went to God. THEN I understood!** And that "*then*" is a huge moment in every life! And Habakkuk had one, after he argued, too!

[Cuz eventually he conceded, saying,] I will stand at my watch and station myself on the ramparts [watchtower]; I will look to see what He will say to me, and what answer I am to give to this complaint. - Habakkuk 2:1 NIV

**I'll stand. I'll wait. I'll listen to God. THEN I'll have an answer!** Patience is a big problem for us but **once we know we don't know, THEN we'll want to know the One who knows!** Ya get that? We usually need to be driven to desperation before we're willing to wait and listen. But once we're there, **our drive to answer injustice becomes our desire to hear God**. And our question's tone turns from "Why did this happen to *ME*?" to "Why *DID* this happen to me?" Because we can begin to see – **He's the One who knows!**



And at this point in the process, He can begin to **show us who we ARE**. Because when we start hearing who *God* is, *our* identity is *also* revealed by the history we have together. And back in the beginning, *we* violated *God's* perfect *creation*. So to *restore* it, perfect *justice* demanded He simply *kill* off the *cause* AKA *humans*. The only problem was, He *loved* us. And killing us off would violate the perfection of His *love*. So, to *preserve* perfect love *and* justice, *He died* the human death that paid *off* the penalty *and* kept His loved ones *alive*. And now *we* don't owe *anything*, cuz **after Jesus paid, another payment would violate perfect justice**.

It's why **there's no longer any fear or condemnation for anyone who joins the body of Christ**.

[Like Paul says:] God made Him who had no sin to be sin for *us*, so that *in Him* we might become the righteousness of God. - 2 Corinthians 5:21 NIV

But don't miss *how* that *happened*: **supreme justice only works in our favor because of the earthly injustice Jesus endured**. He paid a penalty He *didn't deserve* so we could avoid the punishment we *did*. So now – when we're with Him – justice is served when we stay alive! And therefore, *that* relationship with Him, *defines us*. Because it's the basis of our life!

**So who am I? I am loved, alive, and freed by grace! Cuz I am a follower, friend, and child of God!**

And the only price we have to pay is whatever it takes to humble our heart and come to *Jesus*. So, if you have that relationship, let me ask you again: **Who else would you rather be?** Are you jealous of the ‘*Jeep thieves*’ in *your* life cuz *they* got away while *you* had to pay? Then you’re still not seeing supreme justice because your eyes are pointed in the wrong direction! And you’ll stay frustrated until you come close enough to the Lord to see how He’s trying to set you straight! Did you catch what clicked in what Asaph and Habakkuk saw?

Those who are far from You will perish ... as for me, it is good to be near God. - Psalm 73:1-28 NIV



You bet it’s good – **the closer the better when you’re relying on a relationship to save your life!** And as for those who are far from Him, ‘*Jeep thieves*’ might not have to pay an *earthly* price, but each self-serving injustice just increases the distance to the same answer that *they* need to settle all *their* anger and frustration.



Before you blow up, look at what the Lord is really showing *you* about *them*. **Getting away with earthly injustice also means getting away from a life-saving Savior!** And do you think that brings joy? No! That’s why there’s meth, vandalism, and stealing in their life! **They’re as desperate to find an answer to their pain as anyone else** – but *they’re* running in the *wrong* direction to find it. And *every* day they wake up *further* and more *frustrated* because *every* day they *increase* the price *they’d* have to pay to *humble* their heart and come to Jesus.



And even *if* their anguish brings them to *believe*, just think about what a *real* relationship with Jesus *does* – to all of us! As we draw near to Him, He strips away our *injustices*, *selfishness*, *anger*, and every other action *not* rooted in *love*. And as we all know, every step of *that* sanctification is *tough*! And each *wrong* step these offenders *took* means another to *make up* on their way *back*.

So **their punishment is being them; your reward is being you.** And in the same way that *God* can't demand *another* payment for our offense, *we* shouldn't ask for *another* punishment for *theirs*. They're already enduring either the pain of a *hopeless* life *without* Jesus, or the pain of a *monumental* transformation *with* Jesus! He's got justice covered! And He doesn't need our *help*, He just needs our *attention*. Because **supreme justice is between just us and the Lord.**

Everything else is just a *reminder* to take our eyes off *ourselves* and *others* so we can make our way back to *Him* and find what *we're* looking for. So instead of complaining “Why me?!”

Why not rather be wronged? Why not rather be cheated? ... Do you not know that wrongdoers will not inherit the kingdom of God? – 1 Corinthians 6:7-9 NIV

If you *did*, you wouldn't care about righting earthly *wrongs* nearly as much as you would righting your eternal *relationship*. Because **when you're God's kid, there's no one else you'd rather be!**

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Father God, thank You for loving me in spite of my sin; forgive me and cleanse me by the sacrifice of Your Son, my Savior; and free me and lead me by Your Spirit and Word, as I seek to trust and follow Jesus Christ, as the Lord of my life. Amen.