

The Good News of **Divine Justice**

A Survey of the Book of Romans





Justice in Romans

- Paul repeatedly uses “justice” terminology (i.e., words built on the Greek root *dik-*) in Romans.
 - The most basic NT word translated “justice” (Gr. *dikē* or *katadikē*) occurs four times and usually means “vengeance” (Acts 25:15; 28:4; 2 Thess 1:9; Jude 7).
 - The twelve words built on the “justice” root (Gr. *dik-*) in Romans make up 27.5% of the total usage in the entire NT (77 out of 280)—even though Romans is only 5% of the NT!
- Romans 1:16–17 is commonly referred to as “the theme verses of Romans,” and it emphasizes the importance of “justice” (“righteousness”).



Justice in Romans

- The justice of God contrasts with the injustice of mankind, which evokes his wrath—and his mercy (Rom 1:18–19, 28–32; 2:5–11; cf. 5:8–9)!
- Justice describes the consistency of God, guaranteeing that he will always do what is right (just) and right (justify) what is wrong.
- Justice also describes the condition and action of those whom God has justified. (As an aside, justice in Romans is always a spiritual, not social, idea.)



Justice and Justification

- Paul begins the main thought of Romans by describing the sinful condition of mankind and the appropriate divine response—wrath (1:18–3:20).
 - The wrath of God is revealed against all who practice injustice and suppress truth, namely rebellious and hypocritical Jews and Gentiles (1:18; cf. v. 20; 2:1).
 - God impartially identifies all people (Jews and Gentiles) as unrighteous and deserving of wrath (3:9–10; cf. vv. 22b–23).

“Judgment is never God’s intended last word” (John Oswalt).



Justice and Justification

- But the justice of God offers justification to anyone (Jew or Gentile) who accepts the good news of Jesus Christ (Rom 3:21–4:25; cf. 1:16–17).
 - The Bible links the justice of God not only to his wrath but also to his mercy (1:16–17; 3:25b–26; cf. Ps 33:5; 1 John 1:9).
 - The faithfulness of Jesus Christ (i.e., his atoning sacrifice) fully and finally reveals the righteousness of God and makes justification possible (Rom 3:21–26; cf. vv. 27–31).

God remains just when he declares the unjust to be just because the faithfulness of Jesus appeases his wrath (Isa 53:11). But the unjust must respond in faithfulness.



Justice and Justification

- Justification occurs when sinners respond in faithfulness to Christ, which includes ...
 - Hearing and believing the proclamation of the good news of God and Christ (Rom 1:16–17; cf. v. 15; 10:8–11, 14–15, 17).
 - Confessing the lordship of Jesus (10:9–10; cf. 1 Tim 6:12).
 - Repenting of sin (Rom 2:4; cf. 6:1–2, 12–14).
 - Being baptized into Christ Jesus (6:3–7; cf. 10:12–13; Joel 2:32; Acts 2:21, 38; 1 Cor 6:9–11)

The so-called Romans Road fails to answer fully its fourth question (“How do we receive salvation?”) as it ignores the necessity of repentance and baptism, which Paul includes.



Justified and Justifying

- The just begin and continue to live by faithfulness, thus enjoying peace with God, sanctification of the Spirit, and hope of glory (Rom 1:17; cf. Hab 2:20).
 - Jesus Christ makes peace with God possible so that the justified no longer need to fear wrath and condemnation (Rom 5:1, 9; 8:1; cf. vv. 31–39).
 - The Spirit leads and empowers the just to conform themselves to the image of Christ (Rom 8:2–17, 26–27; cf. 15:13).
 - God the Father promises to work for the good (eternal glory) of his justified ones—regardless of their temporal circumstances (8:28–30; cf. vv. 18–25).



Justified and Justifying

- Because God has justified them, the just long (1) to save (“justify”) the enemies of God and (2) to unite with the people of God (Rom 9:1–15:13).
 - Paul (and all other faithful Christians) wanted to preach the good news to sinners so that they might be saved (i.e., justified; Rom 9:1–2; 10:1; 15:15–21).
 - Since the kingdom of God is primarily concerned with justice (righteousness), the just do not judge one another regarding matters of opinion (14:1, 17; cf. 16:17).
 - In sum, the just offer their bodies and minds to God and prioritize the love of others (12:1–2, 9–10; 13:8–10).



Conclusion

- The good news of the faithfulness of Jesus reveals the righteousness of God, and it is good news because it promises justification to the faithful.
- God will judge us according to our works; we must therefore render “obedient faithfulness” to Christ (and the gospel) to be saved (Rom 2:6; 1:5; 16:26).
- Have you been justified? God is just and wants to justify you. You must come to him in faithfulness (belief, confession, repentance, and baptism)!

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