

Greetings church,

We're starting our journey through a new book this week. The concept of justice has always been confusing to me. In our country and culture we claim that justice is impartial and yet so many people's lived experience is that the justice system of this country is not impartial but rigged against them. Additionally, justice, as practiced in the United States, attempts to correct behaviors through punishment and yet God endured punishment on our behalf so we wouldn't have to. Still further, we observe that some crimes are allowed in this country while others are not; justice is applied unequally across a broad spectrum. My suggestion in a recent sermon that the truth of justice is accountability within the broader context of God's steadfast love was really intriguing to me and so I decided to pursue it further. Thus, our new book going forward is Let Justice Flow Like Water: Toward a Theology of Biblical Justice. I hope our reading together prompts new insights, new wisdom, and helps us to chart a path forward together.

Here's how the editors define the problem of pursuing justice. "... we face a significant obstacle in our pursuit of justice: we ourselves are not inherently just, and we consistently fail to love one another in right ways."<sup>1</sup> I agree with their statement and I appreciate their honesty and vulnerability in confessing that we, humanity, have a long way to go in these matters. In the best case scenario, as I noted in the first paragraph, we practice true justice inconsistently. In the worst case scenario, we don't even try. Here's the *hope* that we have: "In the death of Christ we are therefore freed both from the penalty and the power of our sin, so that now we are free to imitate our Father in loving and pursuing justice"<sup>2</sup>.

Here is what the editors are suggesting: despite their own confession that we are inherently unjust, that does not preclude us from pursuing and even loving justice anyways. We are not allowed to throw up our hands and let those who would use injustice to their advantage to run rough shod over the rest of us. Loving and pursuing justice is *formational*. You've heard me talk about this before. We are not yet fully formed, individually nor corporately, we are actively being formed; we are still *becoming* who God made and intends us to be. The fancy theological word for this is *sanctification*. We are still in the process of being sanctified and what the editors are suggesting, to my eyes, is that loving and pursuing justice is part of our sanctification. To re-word what I quoted the editors saying, we are saved and justified, *once*, by Christ, so as to be freed to pursue our sanctification in Christ.

Here is how they are going to organize their book in helping all of us to love and pursue justice. "... we want to look *back* at what God has done for us through the death of Christ; *around* at what God is doing among us through the Spirit who enables us to live with justice; and *forward* to what God will one day do when he completely restores all things and eradicates injustice."<sup>3</sup> They find this framework in Romans 8:1-25. "... we aim to show that justice, rightly understood, is an essential part of our sanctification, for it is propelled and fueled by the past redemptive work of Christ, the present life-giving work of the Spirit who dwells within us, and the future hope of our consummate redemption."<sup>4</sup> You guessed right; we too are part of the one, big, beautiful story.

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<sup>1</sup> Let Justice Flow Like Water: Toward a Theology of Biblical Justice: Introduction. B&H Academic, Brentwood, TN; 2025. p.2

<sup>2</sup> *ibid*, p. 2

<sup>3</sup> *ibid*, p. 2

<sup>4</sup> *ibid*, p.2

In Christ's Service,  
Pastor Eddie