

Greetings church,

In this fifth chapter, Christopher W. Morgan offers a stark contrast from the authors of the first three chapters continuing in the vein of chapter 4's author, Brian J. Tabb. He established, right from the get go, what he will seek to prove in the remainder of the chapter with his overview of James, and corroborates it later on. "James does not fit contemporary categories ... James's integrated holistic approach does not neatly fit into contemporary polarizations. In fact, James's integrated approach corrects such false dichotomies."¹ What are these dichotomies? The inconsistencies that many Christians have between what they say with their mouths and their lack of displayed, or tangible, love for others.

One of the first things that Morgan points out is found in a quote from Jeffrey Mooney. "Justice, though not exclusively so, primarily appears in Scripture as an ecclesiological paradigm rooted in the person of God rather than a civic paradigm rooted in common humanity or citizenship."² It is my opinion that this is an incredibly important point. World history and our nation's history shows clearly that appeals to justice simply have no solid foundation or footing when trying to do so from a human or citizenry perspective. Humans enslave other humans and have done so throughout history. Citizens practiced segregation against other citizens and have done so throughout history. Humans deny basic human rights to other humans and have done so throughout history. Citizens deny basic human rights to other citizens and have done so throughout history. The history of human behavior proves Mooney's point beyond a shadow of a doubt. The *only* hope for justice is if it is rooted in the person and character of the Triune Godhead; Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.³

Morgan, in his evaluation of James, takes to task the rich. "The rich are the oppressors, defrauders, and persecutors of believers (Jas 2:5-7; 5:1-6), even blasphemers of Christ (Jas 2:7) The rich in James are wicked, and they will be severely punished by the just God (Jas 5:1-6)."⁴ This suggests that monetary wealth is *not* something given by God as a reward for faithful believers, but that wealth actually impedes justice as it is counter to the person of the Triune Godhead. I wonder if anyone has stopped or slowed down enough to consider that the wealth of this nation is, perhaps, not making it great but morally corrupting it? James goes on to not just take the rich to task but those who show the rich and wealthy deference or partiality! "Ridiculously, they are showing partiality to the rich who are exploiting them."⁵ This, to my eyes, succinctly sums up one of the problems in the United States today that is preventing a more widespread justice movement; deference to the rich and wealthy who are the ones exploiting the masses.

Finally, Morgan is sure to include James's lack of patience or tolerance, frankly, for hypocrisy. Justice and holiness is holistic. It is *not* limited to personal piety. Leviticus 19, which James quotes and references, is clear that being holy, being set apart, is not limited to one's personal life. It's all well and good to set yourself apart from the things of the world that would threaten to corrupt you. *AND* we all need to recognize and accept that being set apart, holy, carries forth broader societal

¹Morgan, Christopher W. *Justice in James* in Let Justice Flow Like Water: Toward a Theology of Biblical Justice. Editors Joshua M. Greever, D.A. Horton, and Justin McLendon. B&H Academic, Brentwood, TN; 2025. pp 119 & 133

²ibid, p 120

³This means that if a downturn in, or utter lack of, justice is observed in a society it is because there is a low number of people in that society who are rooted or grounded in who God is, regardless of whatever people may claim.

⁴Morgan, Christopher W. *Justice in James* in Let Justice Flow Like Water: Toward a Theology of Biblical Justice. Editors Joshua M. Greever, D.A. Horton, and Justin McLendon. B&H Academic, Brentwood, TN; 2025. pp 123

⁵ibid, p 126

implications. We are tasked with carrying our personal piety out into the rest of the world. Not to use it as a judgment or cudgel against those whom we might deem “less holy”, but to use it as a method of invitation into something bigger, something greater, something more just than we ourselves can create. “Love fulfills the law, esteems others, and exposes the hypocrisy of partiality. Such love springs from authentic faith.”⁶ And *this* is what justice looks like.

In Christ’s Service,
Pastor Eddie

⁶Morgan, Christopher W. *Justice in James* in Let Justice Flow Like Water: Toward a Theology of Biblical Justice. Editors Josha M. Greever, D.A. Horton, and Justin McLendon. B&H Academic, Brentwood, TN; 2025. p 128