

## Biblical Justice

*Psalm 119*

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**Bible Text:** Psalm 119:121-128  
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This morning, I want to encourage you to open your Bible to Psalm 119. As you're turning to Psalm 119, we're going to begin in verse 121. If you're a guest, if you're a visitor, if you're new to us here at First Baptist, I want to welcome you to a very strategic journey through what you and I know as the longest chapter in the Bible, 176 verses, 22 respective sections, and one overarching theme, the importance of and the primacy that the word of God needs and should have in our life.

Now, for those of you that are new to us, allow me to explain the two reasons we're walking through this chapter. Reason number one is if you're not aware yet, we as a church body, we are challenging ourselves to memorize, to put into memory the entirety of scripture from Genesis to Revelation. Today, for those of you who do not know, because we're reserving a respective chapter each, Portal 2 has opened up this morning meaning even though there's a few chapters left in the first portal, some of them are somewhat difficult and others and so we've opened up Portal 2. So if you want to get on board, you're not already on board and said, "Hey, I would love to memorize one of the gospels, the letters of the Apostle Paul," just to let you know Portal 2 is now active and we are excited about you becoming a part of this. Reason number two is we've discovered each and every week no matter what section we're in how relevant the word of God is to our lives, not just some long-standing ancient theological dissertation, but I mean it is applicable to each and every day of our lives.

And today, we're going to deal with a subject matter that our culture is obsessed with, justice. Everybody wants justice. We want economic justice. We want social justice. We want demographic justice. We want this justice. We want that justice. But today we're going to see what does the Bible say about justice. What does the Bible declare about this concept that everybody seems to pontificate about, but you're about to discover that most people have no clue what they're talking about. What is biblical justice? We turn to Psalm 119. We begin in verse 121.

121 I have done judgment and justice: leave me not to mine oppressors.  
122 Be surety for thy servant for good: let not the proud oppress me. 123  
Mine eyes fail for thy salvation, and for the word of thy righteousness. 124  
Deal with thy servant according unto thy mercy, and teach me thy statutes.

125 I am thy servant; give me understanding, that I may know thy testimonies. 126 It is time for thee, LORD, to work: for they have made void thy law. 127 Therefore I love thy commandments above gold; yea, above fine gold. 128 Therefore I esteem all thy precepts concerning all things to be right; and I hate every false way.

So when we talk about biblical justice, it begins with a requirement. What does it require of us? Well, it requires us to take and to hold a very specific position. Now, those of you that are seasoned veterans here, you know that my favorite word in the Bible is "but," okay? But we're not gonna go there today. In fact, look at verse 121, what is the word that is used? "And." Judgment or righteousness and justice. In other words, when that conjunction "and" is used, it means you cannot have justice apart from righteousness and judgment and you cannot claim to have righteousness and judgment and not live out justice. The position that it places you and I in, it is not an either/or, but it is a quote, both/and.

So what do these two terms even mean? Judgment, righteousness, means to simply render an objective decision or conclusion. Now there's a word in that definition that immediately disqualifies most people from talking about the subject matter, objective. It's not about you, your opinion, your preference, how you feel or what you think. I've got news for you, two plus two is four no matter how you feel about it, and according to the word of God, right is right and wrong is wrong, no matter what we think about it.

Now in Amos chapter 7, great little illustration, I'm sure you're familiar with it, particularly walking through Psalm 119, God compares this idea or this concept of judgment, an objective standard, to a plumb line, a plumb line, a device that's used in all types of contracting and building and remodeling, anything dealing with architecture and such. A plumb line tells us whether something is true or not in spite of our perspective, in spite of our want, our belief, or our desire. And what does the Bible say? In Amos chapter 7 it says, if you want righteousness, if you want judgment, there is an objective standard and it is not the majority opinion of this world. It is not feelings, emotions, anything other than the unadulterated, clear word of God. So if we're going to be in a position of both/and, we must first conclude this: you cannot have justice apart from the word of God. You can't do it. Our world wants it, but they want it without the objective standard. They want justice according to their standard, which leads to this issue, I would dare say most people advocating justice don't even know what it means. Justice does not mean your position prevails. Justice does not mean you get what you want.

Justice, by definition, is a quality of proper conduct that leads to equity You say, equity? Yeah, equity. Let me remind you of what Jesus said in Matthew chapter 7. Sermon on the Mount, four of the most famous words he says, or three, "Do not judge." We love that, don't we? We love that verse in our..., "Don't judge me. Don't judge that." People throw this in your face. You know the Bible says you can't judge anything. The Bible says do not judge. Jesus said do not judge. Let me tell you what Jesus said. Jesus said, "Do not judge lest you be judged for with the standard that you mete it will be rendered unto you." Here's what Jesus was saying and this is what disqualifies almost every person in

our culture for advocating for justice, that you hold others to the same standard you hold yourself. How many times have we seen the scandals of those who promote equity and we found out they spent it all on themselves, promote equity and found out that they were greasing the wheels behind the scenes. See, justice does not mean getting what you feel like you are due, justice means having equity among all according to an objective standard, which is the Bible. That itself disqualifies every non-biblical definition.

So that's the position, that for justice to take place, there must be an objective standard, which is scripture, and there must be equity, which is an outpouring of it, that does not lead to, promote, or edify what we would call hypocrisy. So what's the priority? Well, all the way back in the Old Testament, Micah chapter 6, a little minor prophet, not minor because the message is somewhat less than, but just because of the length they're in. It's one of those famous verses. It's one of those verses that we love to frame and put on the wall, put on a coaster. What does God require to do? Remember what he says? "Do justice, have mercy, and walk humbly with your God." The priority is that we are to live a life that doesn't just desire, doesn't just hope for, but actually advocates and promotes that which is just, that which is right, that which is proper, and you cannot do so according to God apart from his word. There is no such thing in the Bible as subjective justice. It doesn't exist. There is justice according to "Thus saith the Lord." So that is the requirement when we speak of this issue; we must embrace both of them, not exclusively one of them.

So, what's the request that is made? There's a fascinating request in verse 122. "Be surety for thy servant." It's interesting the Bible would use that word "surety" or in our terminology today be the guarantor of. You know, we see the same concept in Ephesians chapter 1 where it addresses our faith in Jesus Christ, that though we believe in him now we've never stepped foot down the into the quote pearly gates, he has been surety. He has been a guarantor. He has promised that even though we have not seen it, it is a reality and is real and it exists. In other words, when it comes to judgment, when it comes to justice, when it comes to these concepts, there is this request for surety, there's a request for a guarantor and here's why: because anybody who looks at this subject matter with any type of objectivity realizes we're absolutely incapable of doing what the Bible just asked us to do. You know why? You have opinions. You have preferences, and dare say some of you even got a few agendas out there somewhere.

But he says, "God, I need surety." Now I'm sure at some point in your life, you've been on one of either side of being surety for somebody, a guarantor for somebody. I've had that opportunity, privileged several times in recent years because as we go through this process of adolescence into adulthood, as we move out of our parents' home, and we establish a place somewhere else, I've got news for y'all, landlords don't think they'll pay. Landlords don't believe that if they knock a hole in the wall, they'll actually fix it. I mean, who knew better about 19-year-olds than landlords? So it's true. So what happens? I tell you what happens. I get an email. Oh yeah. I get an email that says you have somebody who's asked you to be a guarantor, to be surety. Are you willing to pay the price if they don't own up to their end of the bargain?

Now why is that so important? Because here in Psalm 119, there is a clear, honest admission that none of us are in a position to say, "I will always be objective and I will always possess equity." We can't do it. You say, "We can do it?" No, you can't. You know why? I'm about to prove it to you. My wife is the most beautiful woman in the world. Some of you are, "Uh-uh, that's my wife." We just had an equity issue right there. We'll get to heaven and let God sort that out one day.

But nonetheless, my point is when he says, "I need surety," he's basically saying all of us are in a position where we must realize when it comes to these issues, there is absolutely not one human being who on their own can fulfill those definitions. We can't do it. We need somebody to be our surety. We need somebody to say, "I'll pay the price. I'll foot the bill." Because they can't. Well this is where it becomes a priority because you go all the way in the book of Hebrews chapter 7, verse 22, you know what it says about Jesus Christ? It says he offers us a better covenant and he is the surety of our soul. You know what that means? That means that you and I, as human beings, we are going to covenant with somebody. We are going to covenant with something. You say, "Well, I don't know. I'm kind of an independent soul." No, no, you're not and here's why, because when you agree with those positions, when you agree with those entities that so advocate justice in this and that, what you're saying is, "If you don't believe me, just go to their website. Just read this book. Just listen to this podcast." You know what you're saying? "They're my surety. They're my guarantee. They're the ones who've got my back." And the priority in Hebrews chapter 7 is this, the only one who is qualified to render objective judgment and impartial equity is Jesus Christ. There's no other one.

What did he say? "If I be lifted up, I will draw those who I really like unto me." Nope. He said, "If I be lifted up, I will draw all men unto me." Aren't you grateful that Jesus Christ knows what justice is? You know what he knows? Objectively, all have sinned. There's not a one of you that's better or worse than him. We've all messed up. And aren't you glad he has equity? He's willing to save anybody, not just those people. In other words, when we talk about this request, "God, I need you to be my surety," you're saying, "God, I need you to treat me as it says here with mercy. I don't deserve it, but I'm pleading with you. Do not hold me to a different standard and do not see me any different." You know what he says, "That's fine. All have sinned. If you call unto me, I'll save you." Last time I checked, that is pretty solid biblical justice.

So what happens? What happens for those of us who've already believed? What about those of us who may be on the edge today saying, "You know, I've got some questions, I've got some issues." Can I be honest with you, there is great risk with doing this and I'll show you here in this passage. What does it say here in verse 124? "Deal with thy servant." Now it said earlier in verse 122, it talked about "be surety for thy servant." That's a pretty unique position. Now, don't get me wrong, and for those of you that are pretty theologically-minded, work with me. I know that John chapter 1, verse 11, I know it says that when we call on the name of the Lord, when we believe on Jesus, we become the, quote, sons of God. I know that. I know that in Romans chapter 8, when we believe, I know that it says that we're no longer enemies, that we are his children, we are adopted, and we're joint heirs. I get all that. I'm not talking about that construct. I'm talking about

the position of a servant. What does a servant do? A servant does whatever the owner asks. That's the role of a servant. In other words, when somebody says, "I am a servant, I'm asking you for surety, do good unto your servant," you're basically saying, "I am willing to embrace, I am willing to take a position," listen to this, "that the owner is right and the servant is wrong." Now in our culture today, you know what we're told every time we turn around? That you're always right and if you want to find anybody who will agree with your right, all you gotta do is go on social media. You'll find somebody who thinks you're right. But that's not the position of a servant. In fact, there may be some of you here that have an ancestry similar to mine. We've got the empirical evidence, you go back several generations, there was an individual in our family who held the esteemed position of a sharecropper. You talk about a servant. You know, a sharecropper didn't own anything. A sharecropper didn't possess anything. So what was the role of a sharecropper? The role of the sharecropper was to do whatever the owner of the land told him to do and guess what? What if the servant, what if the sharecropper went up to the boss man and said, "Brother, we plowing the field wrong." You know what he's going to say? "Bye." How many of us stare at the word of God and say, it's the 21st century, we need to get updated? How many of us stare at the word of God and say, well, that might be good for you religious people, but it's not good for me? Do you see what's happening there? See, the risk is if we believe, we take the position of a servant that says, "If God said it, I believe it, I live it, quote, so be it."

You know, there's a famous story in the Old Testament, the book of Esther, in fact, what we know is Purim, one of the longest lasting religious celebrations in the known world. Esther was the queen. Esther was the one who shared the bedroom with the king. The king had a dear friend, a man by the name of Haman, who came to him and said, "You know what? I want to exterminate all the Jews." Isn't it funny for people who say the Bible's outdated, we still singing that song in our world today, are we not? If you don't believe me, just pick up last night's news, they're still trying. That being said, he plotted, he planned, he created a means by which to do so. Esther, she had an uncle, his name was Mordecai. Now according to the Bible, I guess this is a compliment, it says he was old gray and fat. It's not a bad aspiration if you think about it. And what did he do all day? He sat at the gate and he gave wisdom. He'd seen it. Been there, done that, and had a double extra large t-shirt to go with it. He was ready. One day, Esther comes by, the queen, and he confronts her. He says, "Do you realize what's going on?" She said, "Yeah, I've heard about Haman. I've heard what's happening." He said, "You do know you're Jewish, right? You do know that if this comes to fruition, it doesn't matter if you're the queen of the earth, you're going to go to the guillotine just like me?" So what did he say? He said, "Go into your husband, go into the king and plead with him against this." Remember what she said? "I don't have an appointment. What if it's not convenient? What if he gets upset and he casts me out?" And Mordecai says, "If you don't do it, you will die. If you do do it, we might live." Verse 14, chapter 4, "For such a time as this, you were born." In other words, when we understand the risk, I've got news for you Christians, the world wants to take your head off whether you know it or not and you can appease the world, you can please the world, you can compromise with the world, you can say, "Oh, give me just a few more days," you're going to the guillotine one day. So guess what? We might as well just bow up and say it's what the Bible says, so be it. Get it over with, please make it painless.

In other words, the risk is in the position of a servant. We don't make the rules, much less bend the rules. He established it.

So what's the priority here? I love how this passage ends, the last two verses. "I love your commandments more than gold," fine gold, purified gold, really expensive gold. You know what that means your priority is? You ready for this one? You can't be bought. You can't be bought with money. You can't be bought with position. You can't be bought with fame. You can't be bought with reputation. The priority here is as a believer in Jesus Christ who says, you know what, this world needs judgment, this world needs justice, you must say, "I can't be bought."

And the last thing is in the last verse, "I hate every evil way." There's an old adage, I'm sure you've heard it, you dance with the devil and you're gonna get dirty. It just depends on how dirty you're gonna get. It says, I hate every evil way. What does that mean? That means that as a believer in Jesus Christ who claims that you believe the Bible, you cannot turn the cheek at evil. You cannot remain silent at evil. You cannot advocate it. You can't promote it. You can't celebrate. You say, "But, but, but, but..." There is no "but" here. There's an "and" here. There's no "buts." There's an "and." And the risk, the risk is that which he, Jesus, was willing to do on your behalf. What was the requirement? There must be blood shed. What was the request? Matthew 26, "Father, if there's any other way..." What was the risk? For the joy that was set before him went to the cross so that you and I could have an objective standard, a saving faith, an eternal relationship. So the question today is this, if he was willing to risk it all, why are we not willing to risk what little we have?

Let's pray with our heads bowed, our eyes closed. Maybe today as we talk about a subject matter that obviously our world has twisted and turned so prevently, maybe today the Spirit of God took the word of God and did a work on your heart where you realized that somehow, someway, you've taken your life, you've taken the life that you see after this life and you've compared it to somebody else, you've given a standard based on this opinion, that opinion, you realize today as we talked about, the Bible makes it clear we've all sinned and Jesus is the only answer. He's the only one who's gonna right it in the end and he's the only one that can right it right now. The Bible says, not Baptist, the Bible says, whoever calls on the name of the Lord will be saved. Whoever. That doesn't mean, well, what about these people and what about those people? No, it says whoever calls on the name of the Lord will be saved. So maybe today's the day. Maybe today's the day we'll say, "You know what, God? You risked it all for me, and I'm willing to put it on the line for you." It doesn't mean that you read a script. It doesn't mean you repeat a phrase after me or somebody else, although there's necessarily nothing wrong with that. What it means is that you just come before God with a just unashamed heart's cry. You pour out your soul to him. Maybe your heart's cry today will go a little something like this, "God, today I recognize, just like your word says, I've got a sin problem. God, I've been places I should have never been, participated in things I should have never been a part of. God, you know the words that have come out of my mouth, the thoughts that have been in my mind, how contrary, how against they are of your word. God, your Bible says that the wages of my sin, the result of my sin is death but the gift of God is eternal life through

Jesus Christ our Lord. God, today I believe I'm never gonna be good enough, I'm never gonna be righteous enough. Lord, if it were not and it is not for Jesus Christ I am damned for all of eternity, so God, I'm pleading with you, save me, forgive me. Lord, I believe, I believe you loved me so much that you came on my behalf, you lived a sinless life on my behalf. God, today I believe that when you allowed yourself to be nailed to the cross you bore the pain, the punishment of my sin. And God, I believe that three days later, like we celebrated two weeks ago, when you walked out of that grave, when you rose from death, you made it possible, you made it feasible for my sin to be forgiven and my soul to be saved. God, today, I don't have all the answers to the struggles, the disappointments, the issues, the problems, the conflicts of this life but I do know one thing, I've got a sin problem and the only one who can fix it is Jesus. So the best way I know how, I'm asking you to forgive me, I'm asking you to save me. I just wanna turn my life over to you."

With our heads still bowed, our eyes still closed, you might be that person today. Maybe you're here in person, maybe you're online for the very first time, you cried out for Jesus to save you. In a moment, I'm gonna pray for us, we're gonna stand and sing together. I just wanna invite you wherever you are, if you're on our campus, just to step out and step forward. I'll be here, others as well. We'd love to celebrate with you, we'd love to pray with you, pray for you. Or maybe today you say, "Pastor, I'm a part of that group. That's already a part of my life. It took place years ago." But maybe like this young lady today, you're like, "You know what? It's time to bear testimony of my faith. I'd like to talk to somebody about that baptism thing." Or maybe today you're like folks we meet each and every week saying, "You know, this is my church home, this is my family. What does it mean to kind of lock that down?" Or maybe today you're just hurting. Maybe you're bothered. Maybe you're tapped out and you need somebody to pray with you and pray for you. We would love to be a part of that in your life.

*Heavenly Father, as we come to this time in our service, it seems so trite, but thanks. Thanks that no matter what we're bothered with, the lostness of our soul, the waywardness of our life, the disbelief of whatever's happening around us, that there is nothing that you cannot and are not worthy and capable of addressing, solving and fixing. Lord, I pray today that the only voice we would respond to is yours. It is in the name of Jesus Christ we pray, amen.*