

A church's commitment to protect its members stems from a biblical understanding of who God is and what He commands from His people. The Lord is righteous and just. He loves righteousness and justice. God scorns the perversion of justice. This is especially true toward those who are vulnerable. He even goes so far as to pronounce a curse on those who pervert justice. In such cases, God commits Himself to be the oppressed one's refuge and avenger.

Clearly The LORD required sacrifice from His people, but also desired integrity in just dealings with one another, again, especially the vulnerable. The New Testament reaffirms all these values. Jesus cautioned about causing the little ones to stumble. He was critical of the superficial orthodoxy of the Pharisees as they neglected the weightier aspects of righteousness. James warned against practicing partiality and described genuine religion as holy living and the care of orphans and widows (again, those who are vulnerable).

God's church should love what He loves and love like He loves. As imitators of God the church should walk in love and holiness, which includes the removal of all sexual immorality, impurity, and filthiness from her midst. Those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of Christ and God. (see Eph 5:1-21)

Toward that end, the church would do well to:

1. Expect and inspect holiness from her leaders.
2. Protect those entrusted to her care.
3. Redeem those who have been violated.
4. Pursue righteousness and justice along with mercy and redemption.

Applicable scripture references organized by topic.

### **God is just and righteous**

- Righteousness and justice are the foundation of your throne; faithful love and truth go before you. – Psa 89:14 CSB
- The LORD protects resident aliens and helps the fatherless and the widow, but he frustrates the ways of the wicked. – Psa 146:9 CSB
- God in his holy dwelling is a father of the fatherless and a champion of widows. – Psa 68:5 CSB

### **God loves justice and righteousness**

- He loves righteousness and justice; the earth is full of the LORD's unfailing love – Psa 33:5 CSB
- "And the King will answer them, 'Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me.' – Mat 25:40 CSB
- But let justice flow like water, and righteousness, like an unfailing stream. – Amo 5:24 CSB

### **God hates the perversion of justice**

- ‘The one who denies justice to a resident alien, a fatherless child, or a widow is cursed.’ And all the people will say, ‘Amen!’ – Deu 27:19 CSB
- Do not deny justice to a resident alien or fatherless child, and do not take a widow’s garment as security. – Deu 24:17 CSB
- “Do not act unjustly when deciding a case. Do not be partial to the poor or give preference to the rich; judge your neighbor fairly. – Lev 19:15 CSB

### **God has always been concerned for the vulnerable in society**

- This is what the LORD says: Administer justice and righteousness. Rescue the victim of robbery from his oppressor. Don’t exploit or brutalize the resident alien, the fatherless, or the widow. Don’t shed innocent blood in this place. – Jer 22:3 CSB
- Abandon your fatherless; I will preserve them; let your widows trust in me. – Jer 49:11 CSB
- “The LORD of Armies says this: ‘Make fair decisions. Show faithful love and compassion to one another. Do not oppress the widow or the fatherless, the resident alien or the poor, and do not plot evil in your hearts against one another.’ Zec 7:9-10 CSB
- This is what the LORD says: Administer justice and righteousness. Rescue the victim of robbery from his oppressor. Don’t exploit or brutalize the resident alien, the fatherless, or the widow. Don’t shed innocent blood in this place. – Jer 22:3 CSB
- Provide justice for the needy and the fatherless; uphold the rights of the oppressed and the destitute. Rescue the poor and needy; save them from the power of the wicked.” – Psa 82:3-4 CSB

### **God wants His people to pursue justice and mercy more than sacrifice**

- Doing what is righteous and just is more acceptable to the LORD than sacrifice. – Pro 21:3 CSB
- Learn to do what is good. Pursue justice. Correct the oppressor. Defend the rights of the fatherless. Plead the widow’s cause. – Isa 1:17 CSB
- Mankind, he has told each of you what is good and what it is the LORD requires of you: to act justly, to love faithfulness, and to walk humbly with your God. – Mic 6:8 CSB

### **True righteousness pursues the weightier matters**

- Pure and undefiled religion before God the Father is this: to look after orphans and widows in their distress and to keep oneself unstained from the world. – Jas 1:27 CSB
- How happy are those who uphold justice, who practice righteousness at all times. – Psa 106:3 CSB
- Speak up, judge righteously, and defend the cause of the oppressed and needy. – Pro 31:9 CSB

- Hate evil and love good; establish justice at the city gate. Perhaps the LORD, the God of Armies, will be gracious to the remnant of Joseph. – Amo 5:15 CSB
- “Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! You pay a tenth of mint, dill, and cumin, and yet you have neglected the more important matters of the law—justice, mercy, and faithfulness. These things should have been done without neglecting the others. – Mat 23:23 CSB / Luk 11:42

### **God’s church should pursue righteousness and protect the vulnerable**

- “See to it that you don’t despise one of these little ones, because I tell you that in heaven their angels continually view the face of my Father in heaven. – Mat 18:10 CSB
- “But whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in me to fall away—it would be better for him if a heavy millstone were hung around his neck and he were drowned in the depths of the sea. – Mat 18:6 CSB / Mar 9:42 / Luk 17:2

### **God Himself ultimately redeems and restores the broken-hearted and renders judgment to the violator**

- Now may the God of peace himself sanctify you completely. And may your whole spirit, soul, and body be kept sound and blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. He who calls you is faithful; he will do it. – 1Th 5:23-24 CSB
- The heavens proclaim his righteousness, for God is the Judge. *Selah* – Psa 50:6 CSB
- He executes justice for the fatherless and the widow, and loves the resident alien, giving him food and clothing. – Deu 10:18 CSB
- For the wrongdoer will be paid back for whatever wrong he has done, and there is no favoritism. – Col 3:25 CSB
- Commit your way to the LORD; trust in him, and he will act, making your righteousness shine like the dawn, your justice like the noonday. – Psa 37:5-6 CSB
- Therefore, whatever you want others to do for you, do also the same for them, for this is the Law and the Prophets. – Mat 7:12 CSB