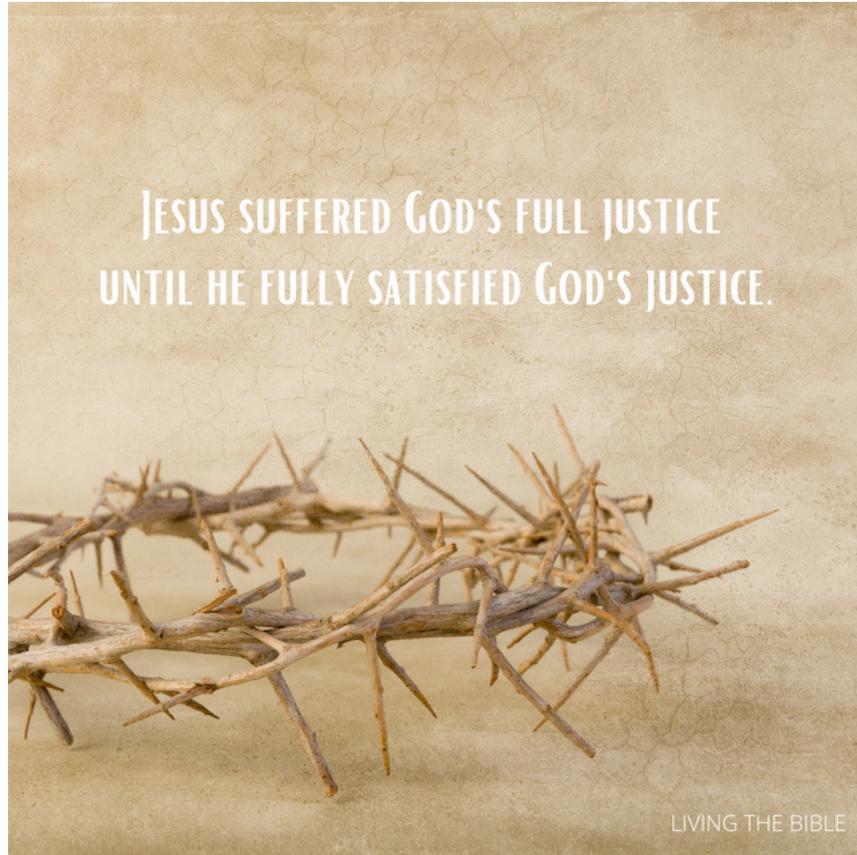

AN EYE FOR AN EYE

EXODUS 21:12-36



Human justice tends to over-punish or under-punish. That's true not only in our courts, but also in our families, our workplaces, and even in our personal relationships. Sometimes we over-punish; other times we under-punish. Sometimes we're too harsh; sometimes we're too soft. With over-punishing, the offender is punished too much. With under-punishing, the victim suffers all over again and evil is not deterred. Human justice is so faulty.

Like yourself, I've been the victim of painful injustice. I've been over-punished. I've been punished for things I did not do. I've seen evil go unpunished and the innocent punished when they should have been protected. But I've not been a perfect punisher either. I'm sure there are times when I've over- and under-punished.

It is possible to administer justice in a way that avoids both extremes. Let's turn to Exodus 21:12-36 where God gives us two principles of justice to help us avoid under- or over-punishing

LEARNING

PUNISH EXACTLY

At the center of this passage is God's fundamental principle of justice, that is, the punishment must fit the crime. **If there is harm, then you shall pay life for life, eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot, burn for burn, wound for wound, stripe for stripe** (Exodus 21:24-25). This exact justice means we must avoid under- and over-punishment. If someone takes a life, we don't take a tooth from them. If someone deliberately punches someone else, we don't take their life from them. The punishment must fit the crime. Not too much, not too little.

**WE MUST PUNISH EXACTLY
BECAUSE GOD WILL PUNISH EXACTLY.**

But are there never any special circumstances?

CONSIDER MITIGATION

Although the center of this passage is God's first, fundamental, and inflexible principle of justice, all around it are various qualifications and conditions to be considered when administering justice:

- **Measure the motive (13-14):** Was it deliberate and pre-meditated or not?
- **Value the victim (15-17):** What was the status of the victim and the relationship of the victim to the offender?
- **Count the cost (18-23):** How serious was the hurt, damage, or loss?
- **Research the responsibility (28-36):** Could it have been avoided with more care and forethought?

All of these mitigating factors must be taken into account when applying God's fundamental principle of eye for eye justice so that no one is over-punished or under-punished.

GOD WILL NEVER OVER-PUNISH
BUT NEITHER WILL HE UNDER-PUNISH

LOVING

This passage reveals God as the perfect judge who administers perfect justice to all. If you've ever been a victim of crime or injustice, you know how imperfect most human justice is. That's why we love to worship the God who one day will administer perfect justice. Perfect justice is so beautiful to victims of injustice.

Nowhere is God's perfect justice more beautiful than at the cross of Christ, where the perfect Christ was perfectly judged in our place without any mitigation. He paid life for life, eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot, wound for wound, stripe for stripe, and soul for soul. In doing so, he suffered God's justice for all his people until there was zero justice left to suffer. Jesus suffered God's full justice until he fully satisfied God's justice.

*For my life He bled and died, Christ will hold me fast;
Justice has been satisfied; He will hold me fast.*

LIVING

Do eye-for-eye justice with an eye on motive, victim, loss, and history, and remember with joy that God has perfectly judged the perfect Christ in your place.
