

The Difference Between Justification and Justice

Romans 13:4-7

Justification is just a fancy word for what it means to be saved by Christ. A Christian is a person who has been transformed by Jesus Christ into an absolute new creation. Those who are serious about their Christian faith will often ask, *“How can a Christian, who has been taught to ‘love your enemies’ and ‘turn the other cheek,’ support capital punishment?”* The answer to that question is found when a Christian knows the difference between his responsibility as a child of God and government’s responsibility as a minister of God. Christian’s tasks should never be confused with government’s tasks.

I. The church proclaims justification; the government provides justice.

“If thou do that which is evil, be afraid; for he beareth not the sword in vain: for he is the minister of God, a revenger to execute wrath upon the evil-doer” (v.4).

(A). Justice carried out by government is the basis for all civilized societies.

This is why when God gave Israel laws to live by as a nation He said, *“Eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, burn for burn”* (Ex. 21:24). Punishment should match the crime. This is the principle of justice that governs nations.

(B). Justification in heaven does not negate justice carried out on earth.

The word *“avenged”* in v. 4 is from the root word for *“justice.”* If a person commits a capital crime, and then is saved, *he should still be put to death.*

II. The individual is blessed by justification; the nation is blessed by justice.

There are an untold number of blessings a justified sinner receives from God’s hand. So it is with governmental justice. There are untold blessings to society through the right use and implementation of capital punishment. A junior at OBA, Alan Ford, recently wrote a paper on capital punishment and said, *“Just because crime is still rising while capital punishment is carried out, doesn’t mean that it doesn’t work.”* *“The Death Penalty is a warning, just like a lighthouse throwing its beams out to sea. We hear about shipwrecks, but we do not hear about the ships the lighthouse guides safely on their way. We do not have proof of the number of ships saved, but we do not tear down the lighthouse”* **Poet Hyman Barshay**. What are the benefits?

(A). **Laws are taken seriously** (we are a republic, not a democracy).

(B). **The offender offends no more** (a serial murderer can no longer kill).

(C). **The evil doer lives in fear of the state** (Romans 13:4).

III. The sinner without justification is destroyed; the state without justice is destroyed.

We as Christians are to keep the gospel supreme, but we also have other duties:

(A). **We are to participate in government . . .**

This is why we should work to elect leaders who have a sense of law and order, right and wrong, and are not afraid to punish those who violate laws.

(B). **We are to pay our taxes . . .**

The non-payment of taxes is transgression of God’s commands (vs. 5-7).

(C). **We are to pray for our leaders . . .**

Whoever becomes “the higher power” is due our respect and submission