

GLOBAL LIFE CAMPAIGN™

Why was Jesus Crucified? Love or Justice?

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Good Friday is this week, the day we remember when Jesus Christ was crucified. Those of us who believe in Jesus view the cross as the greatest display of God's love for us and the world. And it was! But why did Father God believe it was necessary to sacrifice His Beloved Son for us? What in His nature, to be absolutely consistent with who He is, compelled Him to do so?

This month's *Sanctity of Human Life* (of GLC Series) focuses on answering those questions – the answers reveal the nature of God and the sacred and priceless value He places on human life.

Unchanging love, unfailing love, everlasting lovingkindness, and eternal love are words from Scripture or words we use to describe the loving nature of Almighty God. "God is love" (1 John 4:8, 16). That's who He is! Yet He is also unchanging in His holiness, righteousness and unflinching commitment to justice in all generations since the beginning. In fact, "Righteousness and justice are the foundation of (His) throne; lovingkindness and truth [faithfulness] go before (Him)" (Psalm 89:14; 97:2). These qualities of love, righteousness and justice emanate from Him, from the core of His nature, and are perfectly in balance in Him. God is always loving and everything He says and does flows out of His heart of love. He is always righteous and just, and everything He says and does is consistent with His own impartial Law, commandments and statutes, which are born out of His love. For the LORD "loves righteousness and justice; the earth is full of the lovingkindness of the LORD" (Psalm 33:5). These qualities are inherent and inseparable in the nature of God.

But not in us! In our fallen nature we have a distorted view of God, and those of us who know Him are prone to view Him in one way or the other, as loving or as righteous and just; but not one of us can ever seem to get these character qualities in perfect balance.

Righteousness and justice are incredibly important to God, and are mentioned about 1,700 times in Scripture. That's a lot! Righteousness is a big word that means right relationship with God and with people. The best definition I've found – which I think describes the character of Jesus and ought to more and more describe our character who follow Him – is in the original 1828 Webster's Dictionary:

"Purity of heart and rectitude of life; conformity of heart and life to the divine law. *Righteousness*, as used in Scripture and theology, in which it is chiefly used, is nearly equivalent to holiness, comprehending holy principles and affections of heart, and conformity of life to the divine law. It includes all we call justice, honor and virtue, with holy affections; in short, it is true religion."

Justice is accurately recognizing a wrong done by one person to another person, impartially investigating the wrong, and then rendering a righteous and equitable judgment based on fixed and unchanging principles of law. That's what God does, and will do so with us individually at the Final Judgment when "we will all stand before the judgment seat of God" (Romans 14:10).

Why? Because we are born in sin, separated from God (Psalm 51:5). "Your iniquities have made a separation between you and God, and your sins have hidden His face from you so that He does not hear" (Isaiah 59:2).

So, God is righteous, and we are not. According to His standard of righteousness, and His righteous judgment, we are guilty and condemned to death – "for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God," and "the wages of sin is death" (Romans 3:23; 6:23).

How then can we be saved? How can the righteousness and justice of God be perfectly and fully fulfilled in a way to restore us in right relationship with God? This is humanly impossible! Because we are imperfect – terribly flawed – we cannot redeem ourselves or anyone else.

But God can and did! This is the immeasurable love of God, in which His righteousness and justice are upheld, that He formulated and fulfilled a 4,000-year plan to send His Beloved Son, as the perfect Lamb of God, to be "the propitiation for our sins; and not for ours only, but also for those of the whole world" (1 John 2:2). "For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life" (John 3:16).

Jesus Christ's death on the cross was:

- The greatest display of the immeasurable and everlasting love of God for mankind.
- The greatest display of God's unwavering commitment to uphold His righteousness and justice, based on His Law and its universal application to all mankind and all nations.
- The greatest display of the true cost to atone for human sin, even the smallest of sins.
- The greatest display that Jesus Christ and His shed blood alone can atone for the sin of every person, and for the sins of a nation.
- The greatest display of the immeasurable and eternal value of every human life.

Think about these truths as we remember Jesus; our Greatest Friend gave His life for us.

SDG and for the sanctity of human life,

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