

# Lessons in Social Justice

What Can We Learn from  
Their Judicial Procedures?

Deuteronomy 19:15-21



# Deuteronomy 19:15-17

A single witness shall not suffice against a person for any crime or for any wrong in connection with any offense that he has committed. Only on the evidence of two witnesses or of three witnesses shall a charge be established. If a malicious witness arises to accuse a person of wrongdoing, then both parties to the dispute shall appear before the LORD, before the priests and the judges who are in office in those days.



# Deuteronomy 19:18-21

The judges shall inquire diligently, and if the witness is a false witness and has accused his brother falsely, then you shall do to him as he had meant to do to his brother.

So you shall purge the evil from your midst. And the rest shall hear and fear, and shall never again commit any such evil among you. Your eye shall not pity. It shall be life for life, eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot.



# Corresponding Passages:

## Exodus 23:1-3

You shall not bear a false report; do not join your hand with a wicked man to be a malicious witness.

You shall not follow the masses in doing evil, nor shall you testify in a dispute so as to turn aside after a multitude in order to pervert justice; nor shall you be partial to a poor man in his dispute.



# Corresponding Passages:

## Numbers 35:30

If anyone kills a person, the murderer shall be put to death at the evidence of witnesses, but no person shall be put to death on the testimony of one witness.



# Main Idea

A righteous system of justice protects the innocent in particular and the community in general and represents the holy love of God.



# The Law

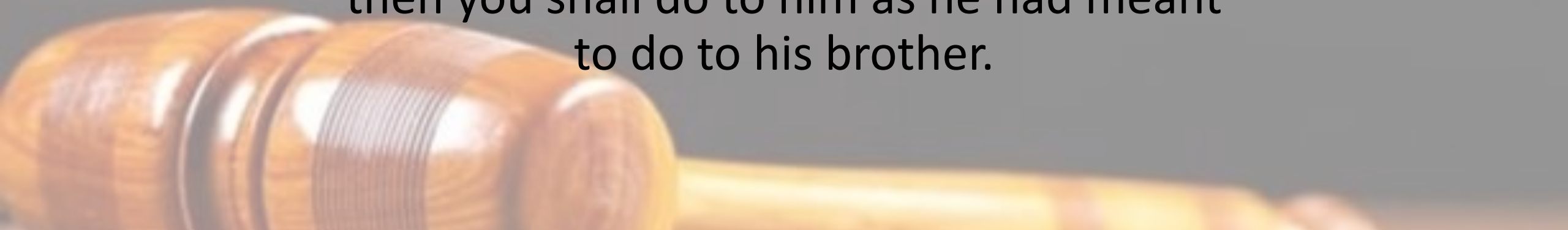
**Deuteronomy 5:20**

You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor.

## Application

**Deuteronomy 19:15 and 18-19**

A single witness shall not suffice against a person  
...if the witness is a false witness  
and has accused his brother falsely,  
then you shall do to him as he had meant  
to do to his brother.



A golden scale of justice stands on a wooden surface, with a wooden gavel resting on a book next to it. The scale has two pans hanging from a central beam. The gavel is made of polished wood and has a handle. The book is thick and has a dark cover. The background is dark, making the objects stand out.

**What do we learn from  
their judicial procedure?**

**That love and justice  
assume innocence until  
proof is presented.**



# Presumption of Innocence

## Deuteronomy 19:15

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# Only by the “Mouth”

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that he has committed. **Only on the evidence** of two witnesses

or of three witnesses **shall a charge be established.**



To “establish a charge” is to confirm it or to allow it to stand, as in a conviction.

**Convictions are held off until evidence is presented because innocence is presumed.**



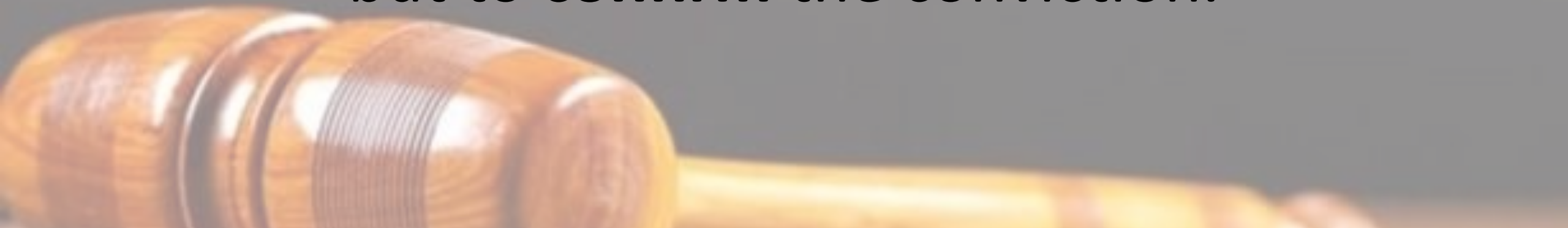
# New Testament Applications

Matthew 18:15-16

“If your brother sins, go and show him his fault in private;  
if he listens to you, you have won your brother.

But if he does not listen to you, take one or two more  
with you, so that *by the mouth of two or three witnesses  
every fact may be confirmed.*”

The witnesses are not there simply to convict  
but to **confirm** the conviction.



# New Testament Applications

## 1 Timothy 5:19

Do not receive an accusation against an elder except on the basis of two or three witnesses.

The church should presume the innocence of the elder until the evidence is presented.



# This is an expression of love!

## 1 Corinthians 13:4-7

Love is patient, love is kind and is not jealous; love does not brag and is not arrogant, does not act unbecomingly; it does not seek its own, is not provoked, does not take into account a wrong suffered, does not rejoice in unrighteousness, but rejoices with the truth; bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.





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**believes all things**, hopes all things, endures all things.



Love is inclined to put the best construction on the conduct of others until evidence proves otherwise.

How would your relationships change if your first reaction was to assume that their words or actions were well meaning?

A golden scale of justice, a wooden gavel, and a book on a wooden surface. The scale is on the left, the gavel is in the center, and the book is on the right. The background is dark.

**What do we learn from  
their judicial procedure?**

**That due process is essential  
for preservation of justice.**

**Due process** is a requirement that legal matters be resolved according to established rules and principles, and that individuals be treated equally under the law.



# Established Rules and Principles:

Deuteronomy 19:15

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# Sufficient evidence to remove doubt

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that he has committed. **Only on the evidence of two** witnesses **or of three** witnesses shall a charge be established.



# Established Rules and Principles?

**Deuteronomy 19:16-17**

If a malicious witness arises to accuse a person of wrongdoing, then both parties to the dispute shall appear before the LORD, before the priests and the judges who are in office in those days.



# A right to trial

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# Established Rules and Principles?

**Deuteronomy 19:18-19**

The judges shall inquire diligently, and if the witness is a false witness and has accused his brother falsely, then you shall do to him as he had meant to do to his brother.



# A fairly investigated trial

Deuteronomy 19:18-19

# The judges shall inquire diligently,

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is a false witness and has accused his brother falsely,  
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# A right to cross-examination

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**is a false witness** and has accused his brother falsely,  
then you shall do to him as he had meant to do to his brother.



**Proverbs 18:17**

The one who states his case first seems right,  
until the other comes and examines him.



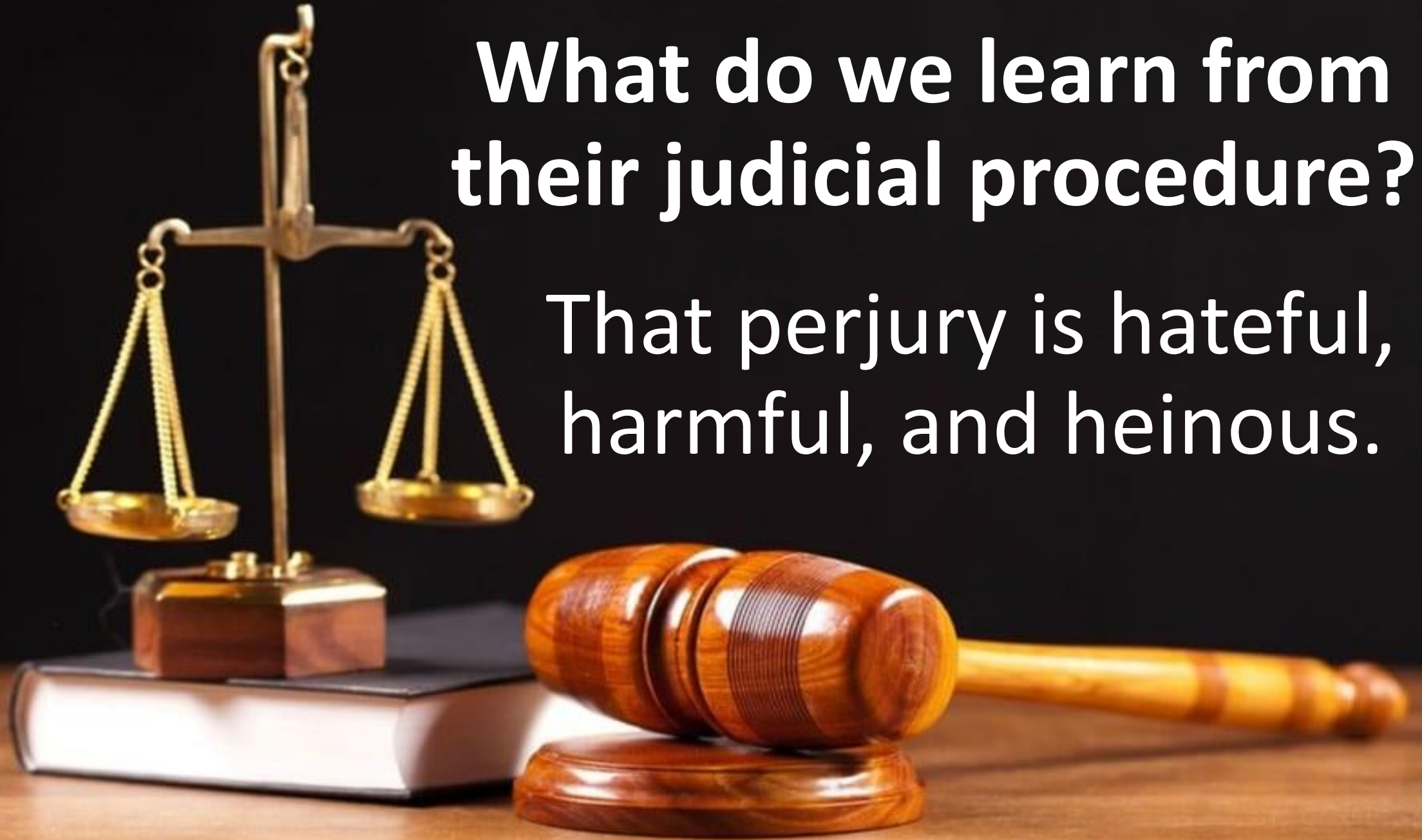
Rules and procedures were established to protect against the injustices of haste and the injuries of corruption.

**Are you willing to wait  
patiently for justice?**



**What do we learn from  
their judicial procedure?**

**That perjury is hateful,  
harmful, and heinous.**



# Perjury = bearing false witness.

## Deuteronomy 19:16-19

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# Perjury is Hateful!

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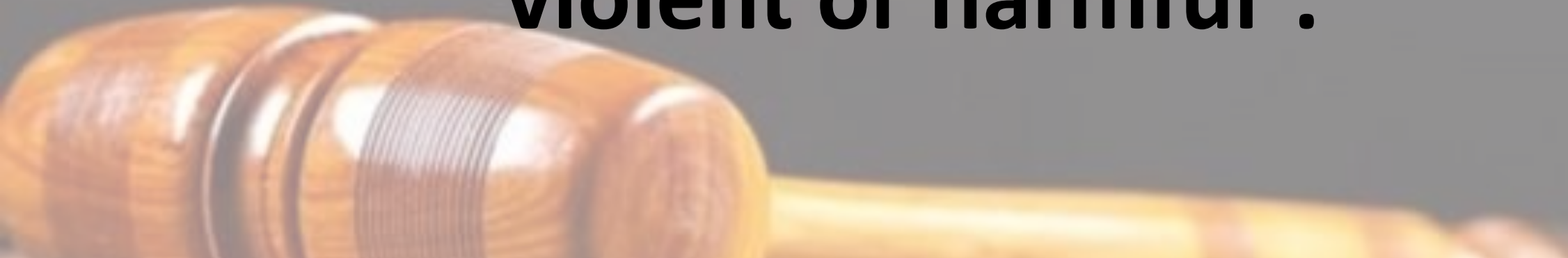
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**Malicious literally means  
“violent or harmful”.**



# Perjury is Heinous!

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What harm is done to a society when lying about others, either in a court of law or in the court of public opinion, is not punished but rewarded?

**Lies don't multiply  
when lying is fruitless.**

**What do we learn from  
their judicial procedure?**

**That justice is proportional.**





# A Principle of Proportionality

Deuteronomy 19:21

Your eye shall not pity.

It shall be life for life, eye for eye, tooth for tooth,  
hand for hand, foot for foot.

This has been misunderstood  
as a code for vengeance.



Life for life is justice applied.

Life for tooth is justice abused!

This proposition is meant to protect the principle that punishment should be proportional to the crime.

**Life for tooth isn't justice;  
it's vicious!**

# What about Jesus?

Matthew 5:38-39

You have heard that it was said,  
“AN EYE FOR AN EYE, AND A TOOTH FOR A TOOTH.”

**But I say to you**, do not resist an evil person;  
but whoever slaps you on your right cheek,  
turn the other to him also.

**Jesus was not speaking about judicial venues  
but about personal vendettas.**



**What do we learn from  
their judicial procedure?**

**That justice is impartial.**



# A Principle of Impartiality

Deuteronomy 19:21

**Your eye shall not pity.**

It shall be life for life, eye for eye, tooth for tooth,  
hand for hand, foot for foot.



This is **NOT** prescribing  
an *attitude* for jurists!

It **IS** prescribing the practice  
of equal treatment under the Law.



# Equal Treatment

**Exodus 23:1-3**

You shall not bear a false report; do not join your hand with a wicked man to be a malicious witness.

You shall not follow the masses in doing evil, nor shall you testify in a dispute so as to turn aside after a multitude in order to pervert justice; nor shall you be partial to a poor man in his dispute.



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# Equal Treatment

**Leviticus 19:15**

You shall do no injustice in judgment;  
you shall not be partial to the poor nor defer to the great,  
but you are to judge your neighbor fairly.



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# Here is profound current relevance!

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# Social Media??

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# Current Cultural Pressures??

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**What do we learn from  
their judicial procedure?**

**That the love of God  
is made most manifest in the  
justification of His people.**

**Deuteronomy 19:19**

**So you shall purge the evil from your midst!**

**Where would this leave you?**



## **Ephesians 2:1-3**

And you were dead in your trespasses and sins, in which you formerly walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, of the spirit that is now working in the sons of disobedience. Among them we too all formerly lived in the lusts of our flesh, indulging the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, even as the rest.





# Under righteous condemnation!

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and **were by nature children of wrath**, even as the rest.



## Ephesians 2:4-5

**But God, being rich in mercy**, because of His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in our transgressions, made us alive together with Christ.

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**God's justification of sinners is for the magnification of His great love!**



## Romans 5:8-9

But **God demonstrates His own love** toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from the wrath of God through Him.



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we shall be saved from the wrath of God through Him.



**What is your ground for  
your justification?**





# Conclusions

“...that it may be well with you.” (19:3)

You cannot expect it to be well with you or with your neighborhood or with your nation if you do not ground *your own understanding* of justice in God's Word and act accordingly.

The wellness of your soul is dependent, not on your innocence, but on God's holy love and justice found at the cross of Christ!