

Justice versus Forgiveness

- Only Christianity addresses justice
 - All religions which include reincarnation envision justice as dictating one's future state, but justice itself is never accomplished because the injustice of the past is not satisfied.
 - Islam demands justice as a human characteristic, but absolute justice is not addressed.
 - Only Christianity recognizes that human attempts at justice are flawed because the ripple effects of evil are not accounted and absolute atonement among humans is not possible (Hebrews 7:19, 9:9).
- Jesus' faith made Him the acceptable sacrifice for justice
 - This is the importance of the “faith in” versus “faith of” passages. Our faith cannot satisfy justice because our debt was incurred through right-and-wrong.
 - Jesus' faith could satisfy justice because the ramifications of His faith allowed Him to avoid the pitfalls of life (sin, Hebrews 4:15), so He had no debt to right-and-wrong and could pay off the debts of others by paying off the system of right-and-wrong (Hebrews 7:27).
 - The words used in connection with Jesus' sacrifice are redemption (Hebrews 9:12 – 28), atonement (Romans 5:11), and justification (Romans 3:20 – 30).
 - By paying off the right-and-wrong system, all people were redeemed, not just the faithful (1 John 2:2).
 - Hebrews makes a big point that Jesus died once for all. If He died for each person individually, He would need to die repeatedly from the time of Adam until the end of time (Hebrews 9:26). Instead, He paid off the system, which could have occurred at any point in history before Judgment.
- Our faith makes us eligible for forgiveness
 - Forgiveness does not address justice. Ephesians 1:7 includes both ideas, but not as parallel thoughts, but as the completion of a process.
 - Illustration: Someone convicted of a crime receives a sentence. On our legal, human scale, this theoretically “pays the debt to society.” However, the effects of the crime are not reversed, only partially compensated. Further, the ex-con faces a life of discrimination, barred from many jobs, from voting, and from free association.
 - Jesus' sacrifice paid our debt to justice. Our faith pushes aside the future repercussions. God may be expected to distrust us after our many failures. Forgiveness pushes that potential distrust to the side so that we may enjoy a relationship of mutual trust and selfless concern.
 - We tend to stress our trust of God, acting on that which He promised without being able to see exactly how the promise works. But He must trust us as well, setting aside well-deserved distrust. This is the heart of forgiveness.