

Do we not just luuuuvvv David vs. Goliath stories—cheering for the outmatched underdog? This occurs a lot in sports, of course ... getting a thrill when the “little guys” prevail over a widely-favored powerhouse, like the American “miracle” hockey team over the Soviets in the 1980 Winter Olympics. That shared joy wasn’t just patriotism, but with “our team” victorious it was a feeling of sharing in that great win ... even if we were thousands of miles away. After all, we don’t say, “Our team won,” ... rather, “WE won!” Everyone loves a mouse that roars. Are not movies of the apparently weaker prevailing over the stronger one of the most common of themes—“Star Wars,” “The Lord of the Rings,” prisoner escapes, sports comebacks, etc. After all, we see ourselves in “the little guy,” and though the longshot may in reality rarely, if ever, win a great victory against forces arrayed against him, such periodic victories nonetheless revive hope and spur us to continue struggling against our own relentless life challenges.

But that shared thrill of victory is only genuine if won “fair and square.” If it’s found that our champion(s) cheated, there is disappointment, if not outrage, at the underhandedness. Yet people cheat nonetheless for other advantages that even false victory often provides: money (e.g., bribes to “take a dive,” gambling), power (politicians), or false glory, to name just a few.

It is often said that we live in one of the most litigious societies ever—everybody suing everybody for everything, even for the slightest of offenses. And when it’s a case of an apparent “David vs. Goliath”—an “aggrieved” person vs. a large corporation or entity—many can’t help but empathize, even if the charges are frivolous or even false: “Well ... Humongous, Inc., can afford it!” But regardless of the fact that Goliath can pay, should it have to? Does not real justice demand that truth and fairness be observed, no matter the parties or our emotional prejudice? Is perversion of justice acceptable just because we empathize with one party or the other?

Many, if not most, Christians believe that Jesus did not negate the necessity of following the moral law of the Old Testament—the Ten Commandments being the best known of these. Did He not tell the rich man that observance of the moral law is a requisite for eternal life? (Mark 10:17-22) And did He not, in fact, not only not negate, but even strengthen, requirements of moral law? (See the several instances of “You have heard it said...but I say to you...” in the first part of the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5)).

Now, we know instinctively that to pervert justice for the benefit of the powerful over the weak is contemptible. However, scripture reminds us that the reverse is also true—unjustly favoring the weak over the powerful: “You shall not render an unjust judgment; you shall not be partial to the poor or defer to the great: with justice you shall judge your neighbor.” (Leviticus 19:15-16) And in another place: “You shall not follow a majority in wrongdoing; when you bear witness in a lawsuit, you shall not side with the majority so as to pervert justice; nor shall you be partial to the poor in a lawsuit....You shall not pervert the justice due to your poor in their lawsuits. Keep far from a false charge, and do not kill the innocent and those in the right, for I will not acquit the guilty. You shall take no bribe, for a bribe blinds the officials, and subverts the cause of those who are in the right.” (Exodus 23:2-3,6-8)

The statue of the mythical goddess of Justice which adorns many courts is blindfolded and holding a scale in symbolizing that impartiality which characterizes true fairness and impartiality. Meting out justice is an extremely difficult burden for the conscientious person; he/she will always wonder: “Did I do the right? Did I take all into proper account? Did I really know all the facts? Was I deceived? Was I swayed by my own prejudices?” Thus, those who are tasked with ensuring justice deserve our prayers in the highest degree, for it is in their decisions that justice in society at large stands or falls. And this is not only for the judicial who adjudicate, but for the legislative who establishes, and the executive who enforces. After all, when justice falls by the wayside, so does freedom.

We begin, of course, by trying to ensure justice in our own lives—most adamantly within ourselves. It’s all too easy to lie, cheat and steal, but every transgression—revealed or not—diminishes ourselves—diminishes honor and righteousness which ought to be held dear, and which only the self can either retain or forfeit. And we Christians believe that no action goes unseen (“...you will have to give an account for [even] every careless word you utter...” (Matthew 12:36)) and no thought unheard (“God, through Jesus Christ, will judge the secret thoughts of all.” (Romans 2:16)). This is one reason that St. Paul writes: “...we take every thought captive to obey Christ...” (2 Corinthians 10:5) So let us always seek to do the right, the good and the just—both in action and thought—to be eased with mercy whenever we can do so justly and wisely, for “Blessed are the merciful, for they will receive mercy.” (Matthew 5:7)

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Depart from evil, and do good;  
so you shall abide forever.  
For the Lord loves justice;  
he will not forsake his faithful ones.

The righteous shall be kept safe forever...  
The righteous shall inherit the land,  
and live in it forever.

(Psalms 37:28-29)