

Romans Lesson 50

Who is the “Good Person” in Romans 5:7?

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DIO CHRYSOSTOM

οἷον οἱ τῶν δημοσίων τι καταλύοντες οἰκοδομημάτων, ὃ τις τῶν καθ' ἓνα ἐποίησε χαριζόμενος ὑμῖν, μᾶλλον ἢ δόξειαν¹ τὸν ποιήσαντα ἀδικεῖν ἢ τὴν πόλιν. οὐκοῦν ὁ αὐτὸς λόγος καὶ τῇ πόλιν ἢ τι τῶν ιδιωτῶν τιμὴν δεδωκυῖα πρὸς τὸν ἀφαιρούμενον τοῦτο. τοιγαροῦν² ὑμεῖς πρὸς ἐκείνους, ὧν τὰς εἰκόνας ἀνεστήσατε, καὶ τὴν πόλιν, οἶμαι, τὴν δεδωκυῖαν ἀδικεῖτε, τοῦτ' ἔστιν ἑαυτούς. ἀλλ' ὁ μὲν εἰς ἄλλον ἁμαρτῶν ὥστε ἑαυτὸν ὠφελῆσαι κακία μόνον ἔστιν ἔνοχος ἐν⁴ τοῖς πολλοῖς· ὁ δ' ἑαυτὸν ἀδικῶν ἐν οἷς ἕτερον, τῆς μὲν πονηρίας ὑπερβολὴν τινα ἔδειξεν, ἐκ περιττοῦ δὲ ἀνόητος δοκεῖ.

Πρὸς τοῦτω δ' ἂν ἴδοι τις καὶ ἕτερον· ὁ μὲν ἀφαιρούμενος ἁπλῶς ὃ τις ἔχει δικαίως, ὅτῳ δὴποτε τρόπῳ κτησάμενος, κατ' αὐτὸ τὸ πρᾶγμα ἁμαρτάνει, φύσει τι ποιῶν ἄτοπον· ὁ δὲ τῶν ὑφ' ἑαυτοῦ δεδομένων ἐν μέρει τιμῆς καὶ χάριτός τινα ἀποστερῶν οὐ μόνον τὸ κοινὸν τοῦτο παραβαίνει, καθ' ὃ προσήκει μηδένα βλάπτειν, ἀλλὰ καὶ χρηστὸν ἄνδρα ἀδικεῖ, καὶ τοῦτον ὃν ἥκιστα αὐτῷ προσήκεν. οὐδαμῇ γὰρ ἰδεῖν ἔστι τοῖς φαύλοις τὰς τιμὰς διδομένας οὐδὲ ὑφ' ὧν μηδὲν εὖ πεπόνθασιν. ὅσῳ δὴ χειρόν τὸ τοὺς ἀγαθοὺς ἀφαιρεῖσθαι τιμὰς ἢ τὸ τοὺς ἀλλοιούς, καὶ τὸ τοὺς εὐεργέτας βλάπτειν τοῦ τὸν τυχόντα ἀδικεῖν, οὐδένα λανθάνει.

Καὶ τοῖνυν καὶ τοὺς Ἐφεσίους, εἰ τις ἀφέλῃ

¹ δόξειαν Dindorf: δόξει EB, δείξαιεν M.

² καὶ Jacobus: καὶ εἰ EB, καὶ M.

³ τοιγαροῦν Emperius: ἀρ' οὖν EB, ἀρα M.

⁴ ἐν added by Weil.

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Besides this, one might consider another point also. The man who simply takes away from any one that which is **justly** in his possession, no matter how he got it, errs in this very act, since he is doing a thing which is by its very nature unseemly; but the man who deprives any one of what he himself has given in the way of honour and gratitude, not only violates that universal principle which says that we should injure no one, but also does wrong to a good man, and that, too, the man whom he ought least of all to wrong. For in no case do you see honours being given to worthless men or to those from whom no benefit has been received. How very much worse it is to rob good men of honours bestowed than to rob anybody else, and to injure your benefactors than to injure any chance person, is something that nobody fails to see.

ROMANS 5:7

7	μόλις	γὰρ	ὑπὲρ	δικαίου	τις	ἀποθανεῖται
	scarcely	For	for	a righteous person	one	will die
	g3433	g1063	g5228	g1342	g5100	g0599

ὑπὲρ	γὰρ	τοῦ	ἀγαθοῦ	τάχα	τις	καὶ	τολμᾷ
for	though	-	a good person	perhaps	one	even	would dare
g5228	g1063	g3588	g0018	g5029	g5100	g2532	g5111

ἀποθανεῖν

to die
g0599

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THE GOOD AND THE JUST IN ROMANS 5:7¹

Andrew D. Clarke

In Romans 5:6–8 Paul contrasts the greatest acts of human heroism on behalf of a good or righteous man with the far greater act of self-sacrifice which was made by Jesus Christ on behalf of us sinners. The thrust of Paul's argument highlights God's action in his Son. So clear is this thrust that a number of commentators have tended to skip over the possible difficulties of verse 7, to concentrate on the impact of verses 6 and 8.²

In fact, the argument of verse 7 has appeared to many somewhat incongruous, and has led interpreters to adopt a number of quite different stances. The verse can be divided into two clauses—7a, 'for scarcely will anyone die for a δίκαιος; and 7b, 'though for δ ἀγαθός someone might possibly dare to die'.

I. Romans 5:7 in recent interpretation

The main problem in this verse has been determining whether a contrast is being drawn between δίκαιος and δ ἀγαθός, or whether, in essence, these two nouns are synonymous. There are six principal lines of interpretation commonly adopted.

The majority of commentators argue that the nouns are essentially synonymous, with some arguing for complete identity between the two types of people.³ Thus verse 7b simply

¹References throughout giving only author and page number will be to the person's commentary on Romans.

²Y. Landau, 'Martyrdom in Paul's Religious Ethics: An Exegetical Commentary on Romans 5:7', *Immanuel* 15 (1982–83) 25, points out that since the intended comparison in vv. 6–8 is clear, the exegetical difficulties of v. 7 are often overlooked. W.G. Kümmel, *Exegetical Method: A Student Handbook* (ET; New York, Seabury Press 1981) 63, suggests that no real certainty regarding the meaning of 5:7, despite it being the *crux interpretum*, can be attained; F.F. Bruce, *The Letter of Paul to the Romans* (Leicester, IVP 1985) 117, offers little discussion of the clause concerning δίκαιος. C.K. Barrett, *The Epistle to the Romans* (London, A. & C. Black 1984) 106, suggests that the details of v. 7 are insignificant, and moves quickly on to v. 8.

³Amongst these are some of the older commentators, including Calvin. More recently H.A.W. Meyer, *Critical and Exegetical Handbook to the Epistle to the Romans* (ET; Edinburgh, T. & T. Clark 1879) 232; Bruce, 117, who suggests that

Tyndale Bulletin, Vol. 41, Issue 1, 1990

1 <https://archive.org/download/diochrysostomwit03diocuoft/diochrysostomwit03diocuoft.pdf>

2 <https://tyndalebulletin.org/article/30507-the-good-and-the-just-in-romans-5-7.pdf>

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