

"Beer For My Horses" by Toby Keith and Willie Nelson

What is "Justice"? Justice is an extension of God's character ... Deuteronomy 32:4
The LORD is a Rock; His deeds are perfect. Everything he does is just and fair. He is a faithful God who does no wrong; how just and upright he is!

Justice: If we are to reflect justice in our society, we must be ...

- Unchanging. "He is a rock."
- Perfect. "His deeds are perfect."
- Consistent. "Everything he does ..."
- Faithful. Continually dependable.
- Exemplary. Others should be able to follow our example of "no wrong."

So, this is the problem with human justice ... we're not God, obviously. Let's investigate this song's lyrics and discover God's plan for justice.

A) We live in a broken world.

It's all too familiar ... [Play snippet #1]

Well a man come on the 6 o'clock news
Said somebody's been shot, somebody's been abused
Somebody blew up a building
Somebody stole a car, Somebody got away
Somebody didn't get too far yeah
They didn't get too far

Proverbs 16:11, The LORD demands accurate scales and balances; he sets the standards for fairness.

I selected this Bible verse because it shows us the difference between "us" and God. We want to set our own standards ... but God sets what is truly fair. Crime has as its root self-promotion ... deciding that what I want I deserve, no matter what, and just grabbing it. That brokenness goes back to Adam and Eve looking at the "forbidden fruit" and saying "I want that ..."

So, how do we answer this kind of brokenness?

B) The answer to wickedness: Justice.

Willie Nelson has the answer to wickedness: public lynching! Seriously, the song says his grandpa said “that’s how we did it back yonder days ...” Listen. [Play snippet #2]

Grandpappy told my pappy, back in my day, “son
A man had to answer for the wicked that he done”
Take all the rope in Texas
Find a tall oak tree, round up all of them bad boys
Hang them high in the street
for all the people to see that ...

Well, the reality is that plenty of people have been lynched out of anger, instead of justice.

A Christ-like response to wickedness can be found in Romans 12:17-20 (NLT)
¹⁷ Never pay back evil with more evil. Do things in such a way that everyone can see you are honorable. ¹⁸ Do all that you can to live in peace with everyone.

ILLY: The George Zimmerman case in Sanford, Florida is an example of “vigilante justice” run amok. A good-intentioned neighborhood watchman kills a young man, Trayvon Martin. It’s not how it’s supposed to work, on many different levels. The answer to wickedness is NOT to join in. Live honorably. Do your part for peace.

NOTE: There are times when others will not permit you to remain peaceful, yes. But there is never a time when you should be looking for tall oak trees, like Willie Nelson’s grandpappy did.

C) Where do we draw the “hard line” of Justice?

Let’s listen to the chorus of our song: [Play snippet #3]

[Chorus:]
Justice is the one thing you should always find
You got to saddle up your boys
You got to draw a hard line
When the gun smoke settles we’ll sing a victory tune
We’ll all meet back at the local saloon
We’ll raise up our glasses against evil forces
Singing whiskey for my men, beer for my horses

Here's the problem of exacting justice ... where is that "hard line"? Usually it's laid down at your feet and not mine.

Matthew 7:3, Jesus said, "And why worry about a speck in your friend's eye when you have a log in your own?"

God Himself has drawn that "hard line" in the arena of justice ... and here it is:
GRACE.

Romans 5:21, So just as sin ruled over all people and brought them to death, now God's wonderful grace rules instead, giving us right standing with God and resulting in eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Sin's ruined this world; BUT, Grace is redeeming it! Grace is NOT, "do what you want" or "behavior doesn't have consequences." Our actions are vitally important ... behavior does have consequences. "You do the crime" ... "you do the time." Grace says though, you're past does not have to dictate your future.

D) God settles all accounts.

Vigilante justice, the kind promoted in this song, is absolutely wrong. The reality is that sometimes the bad guys win for a while, in spite of our law enforcement efforts. Listen to this last verse of the song ... [Play snippet #4].

We got too many gangsters doing dirty deeds
We've got too much corruption,
too much crime in the streets
It's time the long arm of the law
put a few more in the ground
Send 'em all to their maker and he'll settle 'em down
You can bet he'll set 'em down 'cause

[Chorus (x2)]

Romans 12:19-20, Dear friends, never take revenge. Leave that to the righteous anger of God. For the Scriptures say, "I will take revenge; I will pay them back," says the LORD.²⁰ Instead, "If your enemies are hungry, feed them. If they are thirsty, give them something to drink. In doing this, you will heap burning coals of shame on their heads."

Until God settles up you get to pour hot coals on their heads! How cool is that!

A closing prayer ... "Dear God, give us Your view of Justice and help us take a greater interest in Grace. We know Your heart is moved by the plight of the little guy and the victim. Make us honorable in the face of wickedness, and help us leave room for Your perfect Justice. In Jesus' name, amen."