

Social Justice

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[0 : 01] Several years ago, I was speaking with a pastor of an all-black church in the state of Georgia, and his church was located just one mile from an all-white church of the same denomination.

Both churches held at the same confession of faith, and so apart from a few very minor cultural differences between the two churches, they were identical in every way.

And I asked the pastor whether or not the churches had ever considered joining together. Both congregations were relatively small, so joining the churches probably would have had some practical benefits for them. They were so close together, plus there was no disagreement or animosity between the two churches whatsoever. In fact, at least once a year, the churches would come together for a joint worship meeting where they would enjoy fellowship with one another, and for two or three days in a row, they would just meet together and worship. So why not do that every week? Frankly, this brother told me what I already knew. He said, the United States has a long history of segregation, especially in the South. And he said, people settled into their traditions long ago, and people don't like to break or change their traditions, and that's just the way it is.

He then threw in a joke about how white people are kind of boring when they worship, and having been to a few black services, I won't disagree with him. Near the end of the conversation, though, the pastor made a statement that has stuck with me ever since.

He said, whenever the two churches meet together for worship, I can't help but look around the room and think to myself, this is what heaven will be like. And I believe he's right. Today, we're considering the matter of social justice. Social justice. And before I attempt to even define that somewhat nebulous term, I would like to firmly establish the biblical worldview regarding not only justice, but several other relevant issues, including a few we've discussed in previous weeks.

[2 : 31] I have seven points to make before we specifically talk about social justice. First of all, let me once again stress that the Bible is our inerrant, infallible, and final authority for determining what is true and right, always. If any idea proves inconsistent with Scripture, we should never allow it to influence our beliefs or our behaviors. And keep in mind that some ideas are based on truth, but not necessarily the whole truth. And that can be problematic.

For example, I've heard some very unbiblical ideas based on the truth that God is love. Yes, God is love, but he's also just. He's also holy. He's also righteous. And we have to consider all of God in order to make some sort of case. Second, everyone has been created by God and for God.

We talked about this a few weeks ago. We all have value. We all have dignity because we bear his image. Socio-economic status, ethnicity, skin color, religion, sex, age, physical ability, any other characteristic we may possess neither negates nor contributes to our worth as a human being, as an image bearer of God.

We are all image bearers of God and have value and dignity by virtue of our creation. Third, God demands justice. He demands justice. It is not optional. It is absolutely imperative.

In Isaiah 1, God tells the people of Jerusalem what they must do to cleanse themselves and remove their evil deeds. And he says to them in Isaiah 1, 17, learn to do what is good. Pursue justice.

[4 : 41] Correct the oppressor. Defend the rights of the fatherless. Plead the widow's cause. Similarly, in Micah 6, starting with verse 6, the prophet tells the people of Judah, what should I bring before the Lord when I come to bow before God on high? Should I come before him with burnt offerings, with year-old calves? Would the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams or with 10,000 streams of oil? Should I give my firstborn for my transgression, the offspring of my body for my own sin?

Oh man, he has told each of you what is good and what it is the Lord requires of you, to act justly, to love faithfulness, and to walk humbly with your God. If you were to rank good works by degrees of importance, according to Micah, acting justly or pursuing justice would sit higher on the list than offering thousands upon thousands of sacrifice and devotion to God.

And we shouldn't be surprised, of course, because we are image bearers of God, and God is a just God. Thoroughly, thoroughly just. And he created us to be a reflection of himself, so he demands that we too be a just people. Before we move on though, let's be clear about what justice means. When we say God is just, we mean he is perfectly righteous, specifically in the ways he treats people. For instance, he does not show partiality. In Acts 10, Peter says, I truly understand that God does not show favoritism. When he deals with us, he does not consider those various characteristics I mentioned before, our socioeconomic status, our ethnicity, our skin color, religion, and so on.

He considers only the facts of the case, if you will. And he never shows partiality based on these irrelevant characteristics of the people in question. When we say God is just, we are also referring to his prohibition of unfairly mistreating people. In Zechariah 7, he says in verse 10, do not oppress the widow or the fatherless, the resident alien or the poor, and do not plot evil in your hearts against one another. Now, obviously, the people mentioned in that verse have enough disadvantages already. Yet, those disadvantages make them all the more susceptible to abuse.

They're easy to take advantage of, and God warns, don't even think about it. Do not take advantage of these people. Why not? Because God is just, and he demands justice from us, and we should also say that his justice will prevail in the end. Justice will win out in the end. To the oppressors, he says, it is just for God to repay with affliction those who afflict you, and to give relief to you who are afflicted. And to those who are, who help and defend the oppressed along the way, he says, God is not unjust. He will not forget your work and the love you demonstrated for his name by serving the saints. So, in short, justice is the righteous application of God's law. It's the righteous application of God's law. God is just, and as his image bears, he demands that we too be just, and this justice he demands is defined by his holy law, by his word. Again, scripture is our final authority, which means we cannot define justice according to our own terms. We can't say what it means and what it doesn't mean. So, no matter how fair or righteous or just an idea may seem, if the Bible does not define it as just, it isn't justice. It simply isn't justice. So, the Bible is our authority, God created man in his own image, and justice is imperative. Fourth, God's law is the only standard of unchanging righteousness.

[9 : 36] I'm primarily speaking about the Decalogue, or the Ten Commandments, which Jesus summarized by saying in Matthew 22, love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind.

This is the greatest and most important command. The second is like it, love your neighbor as yourself. All the law and the prophets depend on these two commandments.

This point about God's law is necessary to make because people have a bad habit of imposing new laws, laws that don't exist in scripture. Now, we may present them as biblical truth, and we may even derive them from the Bible as misguided as our interpretations may be, but they're not biblical. They're not actually in scripture. They are not God's commands. So, we don't have any right to impose them on others or require repentance from people who have violated these laws that we've invented.

Fifth, we are all sinners. We are all sinners. We have all fallen, sinned and fallen short of the glory of God. Every last one of us is guilty of violating God's law. Ever since Adam fell into sin, the entire world has been corrupted by sin and its consequences. So, everything from our personal relationships to our institutions, it's all affected by sin. In other words, we will not find a perfect person, we will not find a perfect relationship, and we will not find a perfect institution in this fallen world.

Even so, the universality of sin doesn't mean each person has committed every sin. And it doesn't mean we are necessarily predisposed to particular sins. It doesn't mean that we are morally culpable for someone else's sins. Previous generations, for instance.

[11 : 49] Yes, we are sinners because we are children of Adam, but we are also sinners because we personally sin. Consider Ezekiel 18.

When confronted with their guilt, the people of Israel were very quick to say, the fathers eat sour grapes and the children's teeth are set on edge. In other words, the fathers ate the sour grapes, but

it's the children who taste the sourness.

That was their claim. That was their proverbial way of saying, don't blame us for the sins of our fathers. Don't blame us for the sins of previous generations. And how does God respond?

As I live, this is the declaration of the Lord God, you will no longer use this proverb in Israel. Look, every life belongs to me. The life of the father is like the life of the son.

Both belong to me. The person who sins is the one who will die. While the sins of previous generations may very well have consequences that affect subsequent generations, we are, in fact, accountable to God for our own sins.

[13:09] And we all have them. We can't repent for our parents. We can't repent for our grandparents. Furthermore, we may collectively sin as a group or a nation.

That is a possibility. But we are ultimately responsible for our personal, individual sins, which actually brings us to my sixth point.

Sixth, the promise of the gospel is that Christ will save anyone and everyone who genuinely turns from sin and trust in him alone for salvation.

Anyone and everyone. The apostle Paul says, I am not ashamed of the gospel because it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes.

Everyone who believes. Later, he quotes the prophet Joel in Romans 10 and says, Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved. It doesn't matter who you are.

[14:14] Jew? Gentile? Rich? Rich? Poor? Slave? Free? Male? Female? Young? Old? Black? White?

It doesn't matter even what you've done in the past. In 1 Corinthians 6, Paul says, Don't you know that the unrighteous will not inherit God's kingdom?

Do not be deceived. Do not be deceived. No sexually immoral people, idolaters, adulterers, or males who commit homosexuality. No thieves, greedy people, drunkards, verbally abusive people, or swindlers will inherit God's kingdom.

And such were some of you. And such were some of you. But you were washed.

You were sanctified. You were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God. That's what you were. That's not what you are anymore in Christ.

[15:18] Never mind who you are. Never mind what you've done in the past. If you were washed. If you were sanctified. If you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God.

Even your connection to Adam becomes a rather moot point. Just as in Adam all die, so also in Christ all will be made alive.

In other words, we can't possess a characteristic or commit a particular sin that would make us unredeemable at some point.

That means we can't repent from and turn to Christ to be saved. Well, that may seem like an obvious point to make. We see even in Scripture people who struggled to believe that.

Think of the Pharisees who scoffed at Jesus for eating and fellowshiping with tax collectors and sinners. Obviously, they had no care.

[16:19] They had no compassion for those sinners and tax collectors. Because I think in their heart of hearts, they didn't believe those people could be saved. Or were worthy of it.

Think of Jonah who witnessed the surprising repentance of the wicked citizens of Nineveh.

According to Jonah 4, Jonah was greatly displeased and became furious when he saw that God relented from the disaster he had threatened them with.

You know, just when we think someone is unredeemable and all hope is lost for that person, God comes along and says, I'll show you.

God is able to raise up children for Abraham from stones if he sovereignly wills. Jesus said as much. You are saved by grace through faith.

And this is not of yourselves. It is God's gift. Not from works. Not because you deserve it. Not for anything you can boast about.

[17:29] But all by God's grace. And if we come to the cross for salvation, we must come empty handed. Because we don't have anything to offer.

More to the point, no one has anything to offer. No one. Not the self-righteous Pharisees.

Not the most religious in the world. Not the Pope in Rome. No one has anything to offer. All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.

And the way of salvation is the same for everyone. Well, my seventh and final point is that salvation unites us to Christ as well as fellow believers.

We're united to one another. Paul says there is one body and one spirit. Just as you were called to one hope at your calling. One Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all who is above all, through all, and in all.

[18 : 34] Regarding the body of Christ, the church, unity is certainly a significant theme throughout the New Testament. It has also been one of the greatest challenges within the church.

And it really has been from the beginning. This can be a real struggle for us. Initially, the primary source of tension was between Jewish and Gentile believers.

And you have to keep in mind that prior to their conversions, the religious, cultural, even political divides between Jews and Gentiles was massive. There was a big chasm between them.

For the Jews in particular, they had been taught for many, many generations that everything about the Gentiles was evil and unclean and unholy. So, you know, I've seen people divided over much less than that.

So what happens when you bring these two groups together into the body of Christ? Old habits die hard. And you have a potential recipe for division, which is one of the things that we see happening in the New Testament church of the first century.

[19 : 44] Perhaps you remember the story of Paul confronting Peter in Antioch. He tells the story in Galatians 2 and says, When Cephas, or Peter, came to Antioch, I opposed him to his face because he stood condemned.

For he regularly ate with the Gentiles before certain men came from James. However, when they came, he withdrew and separated himself because he feared those from the circumcision party.

Then the rest of the Jews joined his hypocrisy, so that even Barnabas was led astray by their hypocrisy. But when I saw that they were deviating from the truth of the gospel, I told Cephas in front of everyone, If you who are a Jew live like a Gentile and not like a Jew, how can you compel Gentiles to live like Jews?

Peter was effectively dividing the church by ethnicity, which Paul argues is a deviation from the truth of the gospel.

Though it may not be obvious at first glance, such a division in the church is in fact a gospel issue because it undermines what Christ has accomplished through his death and resurrection.

[21 : 04] Let me show you in Ephesians 2. Paul says to Gentile believers primarily, Remember that at one time you Gentiles in the flesh, called the uncircumcision by what is called the circumcision, which is made in the flesh by hands, remember that you were at that time separated from Christ, alienated from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world.

But now in Christ Jesus, you who were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ. For he himself is our peace, who has made us both one and has broken down in his flesh the dividing wall of hostility by abolishing the law of commandments expressed in ordinances, that he might create in himself one new man in place of the two, so making peace and might reconcile us both to God in one body through the cross, thereby killing the hostility.

And he came and preached peace to you who were far off and peace to those who were near. For through him we both have access in one spirit to the Father. So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God.

Clear enough, right? The gospel says Christ unites believers together. So any distinctions that may have existed, they lose their meaning at this point.

When you are brought into the body of Christ, those distinctions lose their meaning. And any attempt to restore some sort of meaning to those distinctions undermines the gospel itself.

[22 : 58] Now to be clear, we can recognize distinctions. Don't misunderstand me. I believe we should recognize differences between us.

God, he made us different, right? In some cases he made us very different. He gave us a variety of hair colors, a variety of eye colors, skin color.

We've got different sizes. Our geographical origins usually impact who we are. We have a lot of differences.

And just as we praise God for the beauty of various kinds of flowers, for instance, I think we should praise him for the beauty of our distinct features.

Regarding skin color, for instance, I don't believe it honors God to act as though we're colorblind. I know what we mean by that, and I know what we're trying to say or do when we think that way, but we have to understand one person is beautiful because he or she is an image bearer of God with dark skin, and another is beautiful because he or she is an image bearer of God with light skin.

[24 : 15] God made us different. Praise him for that. Recognize the beauty in all people, all image bearers of God. So the problem is not that we recognize distinctions.

The problem arises when we use those distinctions to create divisions, particularly in the church, especially in the church.

We may actually segregate people based on those distinctions, or perhaps we apply different standards to different groups. Regardless, what God has joined together, let not man separate, right?

Okay, so I know I've made seven points, and that's a lot to remember, so let me summarize real quickly. The Bible is our authority, number one. Number two, we are all image bearers of God. Number three, we must always pursue justice. God demands justice. Number four, God's law is our standard for righteousness.

[25 : 22] Number five, we are all sinners. Number six, the gospel is an offer to salvation for anyone without discrimination.

And number seven, those united to Christ are united to one another. With these points in mind, let's compare this biblical worldview with the ideology of social justice.

Now, as I said before, social justice is a somewhat nebulous term. You can read a hundred articles on the subject and never find a clear definition of the term itself, which causes a pretty big problem. Lots of people are talking about social justice without defining it, without telling us what it means or without necessarily understanding what it is.

Naturally, we hear the word justice, especially those of us in the church, for reasons I've already cited, and we assume social justice, whatever it is, must be a good thing.

[26 : 35] Because justice is a good thing. The truth is, however, social justice has very little to do with actual justice. The Oxford English Dictionary defines social justice this way.

Social justice, a noun, chiefly politics and philosophy, justice at the level of society or state as regards the possession of wealth, commodities, opportunities, and privileges.

See also distributive justice. I'll provide one more definition from an academic who believes in and espouses this ideology.

So this definition does not come from an opponent of social justice. It comes from an expert on the subject, I suppose, who teaches it. He says, Now, a few years ago, I was talking with a young man about this subject, and I provided him these definitions.

And his response was, Huh. I expected there to be some mention of racism. While victims of racism may be implied in these definitions, he's right.

[28 : 14] There isn't any explicit mention of racism, or even oppression, as the Bible would define it, anyhow. Yet, if we were to ask any one of the many Christians who have joined the social justice movement over the past several years now, I suspect his or her reason would have everything to do with racism and oppression.

The church, after all, loves justice and hates injustice, as we should. So if you offer the church a movement that seems to fight for justice, that defends the oppressed, you are likely to gain a few supporters.

The problem is, social justice has only the appearance of biblical justice. They are not the same. If they were, we wouldn't need the term social justice.

We would just call it justice. Furthermore, if we think the social justice movement is really about racism, or the historic oppression of black people, at least in this country, we are looking at this ideology's, only the most recent iteration of it.

For example, Black Lives Matter is probably the best known organization to emerge from the social justice movement. And the name says it all, right?

[29 : 49] Black Lives Matter is all about fighting systemic racism, right? Let me read from the original mission statements published on their website back in 2019.

I can't guarantee it's worded exactly the same way today, but this was from 2019. It says, our continued commitment to liberation for all black people means we are continuing the work of our ancestors and fighting for our collective freedom because it is our duty.

And that is precisely what we would expect to read, right? Skipping down, however, the statement takes a surprising turn. A bit later, it says, we are self-reflexive and do the work required to dismantle cisgender privilege and uplift black trans folk, especially black trans women, who continue to be disproportionately impacted by trans antagonistic violence.

And in case you're not familiar with the term cisgender, it refers to someone who actually identifies as his or her biological sex. Now, perhaps that part of the statement doesn't raise any red flags for unbelievers, but for a Christian, that should give us every reason to pause, take a step back and think, maybe I should examine this movement a bit deeper before I support it.

The statement continues, not only does it want to dismantle cisgender privilege, as they call it, but it also goes on to say, we disrupt the Western-prescribed nuclear family structure requirement by supporting each other as extended families and villages that collectively care for one another, especially our children.

[31 : 54] Disrupt the Western-prescribed nuclear family structure. that is, one man, one woman, married, living together, raising children.

When I first read that sentence about three years ago, I knew there was a problem. More to the point, I knew that Black Lives Matter, but more importantly, the fundamental ideology behind the entire social justice movement was not primarily about racism or legitimate oppression.

That may be the form it takes, at least right now, and that may be the reason so many Christians have been tempted by it, but there's more to this movement than meets the eye.

So I will attempt to simplify without oversimplifying the various ideas behind social justice. I will describe the building blocks, if you will.

Excuse me. Now, you're likely familiar with the name Karl Marx. Marx developed an idea known as conflict theory. Conflict theory.

[33 : 13] Now, first of all, it's crucial to understand that the word theory in this context is not an abstract noun. It's not, I have a theory about this or that. In conflict theory, the word theory is a proper noun and it refers to an entire set of ideas and ethics and methods.

It's the entire framework for understanding how one thinks and acts. In short, it's a worldview. It's a worldview. In the case of conflict theory, Marx suggested we should view all of society as one big power struggle between the haves and the have-nots.

Every social class is competing for a limited supply of resources and privileges. Unsurprisingly, then, he adamantly opposed everything from capitalism to Christianity.

He saw it all as divisive and oppressive. As time passed, proponents of Marxism realized that capitalism continued to thrive despite previous assumptions that it was doomed for failure.

They all thought it would collapse upon itself because of this power struggle. Marxists believed it was only a matter of time before those oppressed have-nots would rise up and remake the system.

[34 : 38] When that failed to happen, many Marxists, they went back to the drawing board and critical theory was born. Critical theory took Marx's conflict theory, which was already unbiblical on its own, and attempted to add practical means for tearing down the current system.

You see, if conflict theory addressed the problem, critical theory defined the problem with even more specificity, and offered a so-called solution, namely, revolution.

Critical theory does not believe in reform, never reform. It believes the only way to fix the system, if the system is broken, and they believe every system is broken, is to utterly destroy the system and build a better system in its place.

worse yet, critical theory doesn't believe in objective truth, and you can see how that would become problematic.

In her book, *Is Everyone Really Equal?*, Robin DiAngelo says, an approach based on critical theory calls into question the idea that objectivity is desirable or even possible, and that is a core component of this worldview.

[36 : 10] Objective truth is the enemy of critical theory. Now, building upon critical theory, perhaps you have heard of critical race theory, or CRT.

CRT essentially takes the worldview I've already described and adds a racial component. Briefly stated, CRT believes racism exists even when individual racists do not exist.

So, racism can exist without racists. The system itself, they say, is inherently racist, and consequently, white people, for the most part, are the benefactors.

We benefit. It also very openly questions the legitimacy of Western liberalism, legal reasoning, constitutional law, and a number of other very important ideas that our own nation is built upon. Now, I know I'm covering a lot of ground in a very short span of time, so let me summarize this. The Marxist critical theory worldview believes all society is involved in one big power struggle.

[37 : 29] capitalism, for instance, is a problem because some people work harder than others. Some people have more money and more resources than others.

A constitutional republic is a problem because it perpetuates a ruling class. Someone has to be in charge. Christianity is a problem because it lends itself to these other ideas and further keeps the so-called oppressed in bondage because they have to submit to the Bible's teachings.

CRT sees whiteness as a problem because white people have historically been the evil capitalists and the politicians and the pastors and, of course, slave owners in this country.

What's the solution? revolution? The Marxist critical theory worldview says revolution is the only solution. The only solution.

If we are to achieve what it believes to be a utopian society, think John Lennon's imagined. If we are to create this utopian society, we must burn the current system to the ground.

[38 : 50] reform won't cut it. That's why we haven't heard calls to reform, for example, the police, which has been a big subject in the last couple of years.

Reform won't cut it. No, it's defund or abolish the police. That is why mobs are allowed to wreak havoc on city streets, destroying private property and hurting people and violating the rights of others, all in the name of so-called justice.

Revolution is the only answer to them. Now, out of all of this comes another layer we call intersectionality. Almost everyone is a victim.

Almost everyone belongs to an oppressed group. If you're black, for instance, you have one victim point. If you're a woman, you have one. If you're trans, you have one. If you're gay, you have one. If you're not especially good-looking, you have one.

If you're disabled, and so on, the more points you have, the more oppressed you are under the current system. That's intersectionality.

[39 : 58] You remember what I read from Black Lives Matter? The reason they are pro-LGBTQ, an anti-nuclear family, is not because they are fighting against genuine injustice, but because they see the world through a Marxist critical theory, CRT, intersectionality lens, and the only solution is to destroy the current system.

Furthermore, they know the best way to do this is to, number one, destroy the nuclear family, which is at the very foundation of human civilization by God's design, and number two, wrap the entire movement in something as virtuous-sounding as justice.

Once again, I'll read the definition of justice, of social justice. According to the Oxford Dictionary, social justice is justice at the level of society or state as regards the possession of wealth, commodities, opportunities, and privileges.

William Young says social justice is state redistribution of advantages and resources to disadvantaged groups to satisfy their right to social and economic equality.

So, social justice isn't about the just treatment of individuals necessarily. It's not an extension of Martin Luther King Jr.'s dream where he longed for a day when he would see his children judge not by the color of their skin but by the content of their character.

[41 : 40] Social justice is not about equal rights. It's about equal stuff. Equal stuff. It's about the forceful redistribution, we heard that in both definitions, of stuff based on a very arbitrary view of oppression.

Worse yet, this unbiblical ideology has crept into many churches. And that's what concerns me most. Ironically enough, the movement claims to seek equality while promoting segregation within the body of Christ.

It effectively rebuilds the dividing wall of hostility between people because of what? Skin color? I thought we were past this. Christ destroyed that dividing wall of hostility. And yet we're drawing a meaningful distinction once again between black and white Christians.

Social justice says white people are sinful by virtue of their skin color. It says one can be guilty of sins he or she may have never committed.

[42 : 59] And though God has already forgiven him, it says he must seek forgiveness not necessarily from God but from his black brothers and sisters. how does one repent? No one has

given an answer because there isn't one.

Meanwhile, the Marxist CRT unbelievers outside of the church are watching and eagerly waiting for the church to collapse under the strain.

the Bible is our authority but social justice has developed its own extra biblical canon. We are all image bearers of God but social justice wants to undo the progress we've made in this country by reestablishing distinctions between our inherent worths as people.

we must always pursue justice but social justice isn't interested in biblical justice it isn't fighting for equality it's fighting for equity God's law is our standard for righteousness but social justice has invented its own commandments its own ideas about what is right.

We're all sinners but social justice says some people are worse sinners and some people deserve a free pass. The gospel is an offer of salvation to everyone without discrimination but social justice promotes discrimination.

[44 : 37] Once again it attempts to undo the progress we've made in this country by really swinging the pendulum too far in the other direction. And lastly those united to Christ are united to one another but social justice is tearing us apart.

Now this isn't the intention of Christians who have succumbed to the movement's temptations but it is the inevitable result. And it is in fact division that is the intent of those who started and have continued to push this movement.

That's the point. Burn the system down. And I realize this subject can be terribly confusing and there are a lot of components to it and we only had so much time this morning but I pray that I have not made matters more confusing but have provided at least a little clarity.

I'm over my time. We're dismissed. We're toddlers to stop from all period of threatening to area to Present home and reveal that mín well to ■ to the stone