

The Social Justice Movement in the Light of Scripture

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According to the tenets of the Social Justice movement, you should not be listening to me read this paper. I am white. I am male. I am heterosexual. I have been married to my wife (female) for almost 45 years and am the head of my home. I am a Christian. I own my own house and have investment savings. Therefore, my voice is not one that should be heard. Anything that I say that might challenge this movement in any way would be “whitesplain”! Yet, here we are.

I. What is the Social Justice movement?

Definitions

We must begin by defining our terms. After all, don't we all believe in "social justice"? Who among us would join in a march for "social injustice" and advocate for more oppression? When Christians hear or use the term “social justice”, they are using it one way, while many of its present-day advocates are using it another way. That is why many authors and speakers seek to distinguish between the two kinds of social justice by using such terms as “Social Justice A” and “Social Justice B”, or "Ideological Social Justice" and "Biblical Social Justice”, or "Critical Social Justice" and “Social Justice”, etc. In this paper I will use the terms “Ideological Social Justice” and "Biblical Social Justice”.

Ideological Social Justice is fast becoming the dominant worldview in North America. Allen defines it as **“the tearing down of traditional structures and systems deemed to be oppressive, and the redistribution of power and resources from oppressors to victims in pursuit of equality of outcome.”**¹ John MacArthur describes it in this way: "Everyone has the right to equal, upward mobility; equal social privilege; equal finances or resources. If you don't have these...the society is by nature unjust."² There is therefore no “social justice" for those who have been deprived of privileges, position, property, power, status, or prosperity. They are victims. All others are the oppressors, and must be called to account.

A New Worldview

It can be helpful to recognize the shifts in worldviews that have taken place in the last several centuries. Using the broadest of brushstrokes, up until the end of the 17th century, the “pre-modernist” view dominated, with God recognized as the supreme authority, or at least the belief in a spiritual being that transcended the universe. This viewpoint was shared by Christians, Muslims and Jews.

Then, at the beginning of the 18th Century, “modernism” entered the picture. Science became the supreme authority. Reality was now to be defined in material terms only. God and the spiritual world was no longer needed or wanted to fill this role.

This lasted until the middle of the 20th Century when the gradual shift was made from modernism to “post-modernism”. Now the supreme authority became, neither God nor science and matter, but man himself. Supreme authority was now vested in the

¹ Allen, p. 43.

² MacArthur, video.

sovereign, autonomous individual human. What I think and what I imagine to be true is true, but only true for me. All truth is relative.

But the **social justice movement is post post-modern** in that its proponents are very much convinced that truth does exist and that this truth is found in the lives and experiences of those segments of our population who are or have been oppressed. Oppressors do not know the truth. They must listen to and learn from the oppressed classes.

This latest worldview to appear on the scene stands in stark contrast to a Biblical worldview in a number of areas. Allen is extremely helpful here, and what follows is largely based on his analysis.³

Multiple Contrasts

For I.S.J. (ideological social justice), the *ultimate reality* is the human mind as it is found in the oppressed classes of society. In the Biblical model, God is the ultimate reality.

For I.S.J., who we are, our *identity*, is socially determined. We are who we are because of our race, sex, gender identity, etc. In the Biblical model, who we are is determined by our birth (creation) in the image of God, our union with Adam in sin, and by God's grace, our salvation through union with Christ.

For I.S.J., the *greatest problem* humanity faces is oppression. This oppression only and always comes from those people and institutions in positions of power. Evil resides in these power structures. However, the Biblical model states that all humanity is plagued with the problem of sin. This rebellion against God is lodged in every human heart, regardless of ethnicity, sex, or status in society.

For I.S.J., the *solution* to the problem is clear. It is revolution. The oppressed must unite, unmask, deconstruct and overthrow their oppressors at every level. (If this solution seems to be incomplete, that's because it is! There is much tearing down, but little or nothing about rebuilding.) In the Bible, the solution is clear and powerful. It involves personal repentance from sin and faith in the person and work of the Lord Jesus Christ.

For I.S.J., *salvation* is only offered to the oppressors, because the victims are always the innocent ones, the grieved ones. They need no forgiveness. They have done no wrong. As for the salvation offered to the oppressors, it is, at best, only a partial salvation. Oppressors must confess their part in the oppression, even if they have never personally been guilty. They must also make reparation to the victims, although this will never be enough. They must also support the revolution, although they will never be looked upon as fully forgiven and fully one with the victim classes. How different this is from the Biblical model, where grace abounds and covers all of our sins, and where full restoration to God's favour is promised through Jesus Christ.

For I.S.J., the first and greatest and only *commandment* is to agree with, to join with, to protect, defend, and promote the cause of the oppressed in society, whereas the Biblical imperative is to love the Lord our God with all our heart, soul, mind and strength and to love our neighbour as ourselves.

³ Allen, pp. 56-58.

For I.S.J., the *final authority* when it comes to truth is found in the voice of the victims of oppression. The more categories of victimization they fall into (intersectionality) the greater is their insight. This is sometimes referred to as “standpoint epistemology”. But in the Biblical worldview, God's Word, the Bible, carries absolute authority.

For I.S.J., all injustice must be addressed and stopped right here and now. There is no *future judgment*. But the Bible assures us that there is a final day of reckoning when all sin will be dealt with by the Judge of all the earth, including all genuine injustice.

Philosophical Roots – Marxism and Critical Theory

Another way that helps us understand I.S.J. is to see it as cultural *Marxism*. Economic Marxism, or Marxism 1.0 or Classical Marxism has its oppressors and its oppressed. The oppressors are the wealthy, capitalistic landowners, the bourgeois. Their victims, the oppressed, are the poor working class, the proletariat. The social justice movement has simply added more categories to their philosophy, and come up with a neo-Marxism, a Marxism 2.0. Now it is not just the poor who are oppressed, but also females, blacks, all ethnic minorities, the indigenous peoples, those of an alternate gender and the list goes on. Also, the categories of oppressors have grown under Marxism 2.0 beyond just the rich to include whites, males, sexual traditionalists, Westerners and others who belonged to the advantaged classes. Both versions of Marxism insist that revolution is the only answer and that there must be an equality of outcome that is achieved. Economic Marxism has miserably failed in its attempts as is evident when we look at Russia and China. Now we face cultural Marxism.

But we do need to add another piece to the disturbing I.S.J. puzzle. That piece is called "*Critical Theory*". Johnson puts it this way. “If the house of social justice is built on the foundation of classical Marxism, then the framing is constructed from critical theory. If we look below the surfaces of the “sexual revolution,” the feminist and gay rights’ movements, and the Black Lives Matter organization, we will discover the common infrastructure of critical theory.”⁴

Marx (1818-1883) was sure that communism would sweep the world and all nations would embrace his global classless society. When this didn't happen, Marx's successors, especially those who were part of the "Frankfort School" (the Institute for Social Research at the University of Frankfurt in Germany, founded in 1923), determined to find a way to ensure the spread of Marxist ideas, in part by rejecting “positivism and embracing relativism”.⁵

They rejected Marx's “*positivism*”, which claims that science is the foundation of all knowledge. After all, the scientific method itself is constructed by those in power, so it is automatically suspect. Instead they opted for *relativism*. They were “critical” of the knowability of truth and reality. Even language and definitions cannot be trusted, because they are the constructs of the oppressor classes. Ultimately then, it is the language and definitions of the oppressors that keep the oppressed under the thumbs of the oppressors. What needs to take place is a revolution that removes the power to create

⁴ Johnson, p. 42.

⁵ Johnson, p. 44

language and meaning from the hands of those presently in positions of authority (God, conservative leaders, police, white males, husbands, parents, church leaders, etc.) and place it in the hands of the victims. If this sounds gloriously inconsistent with their own relativism, it is! “You oppressors can’t know the truth, but we can!”

This restructuring of language and definitions shows itself in numerous ways. It is no longer acceptable to address children in some public school classroom as “boys and girls”. Applicants for a birth certificate in California are now asked not for the name of the “father” and “mother” of the child, but the name of “parent 1” and “parent 2”! (Shades of Dr. Seuss and Thing 1 and Thing 2!).

This “critical” approach to how and who in society defines what is true and what is not has now been expanded to cover a multitude of disciplines. We now have critical legal theory, critical history theory, critical gay theory, critical gender theory and critical race theory.⁶ It becomes even more specific, with critical race feminism, Latino critical race studies, American Indian critical race studies and queer critical race studies, etc.

Equality of outcome

One additional note of importance is that when I.S.J. advocates speak of justice and equality for all, they are not thinking so much about equality of process as they are of equality of outcome. We believe in justice for all. That is why Lady Justice appears with scales in her hand and a blindfold over her eyes. But insisting on equality of outcome is another matter. The I.S.J. movement insists that no one should have more power, privilege, property, money, or advantages over anyone else.

Try applying this to the N.H.L.! Everyone on the team should have exactly the same playing time, should be given the same pay, should be fed the puck the same number of times, and should never be penalized any more than any other player on the team. There should be no captain and at the end of the game, neither team wins or loses, but everyone receives a beautiful participation trophy! All of this, of course, must happen no matter how gifted, how hard working, how experienced, or how well or how poorly they play on any given day. There must be equality of outcome!

II. A Biblical Challenge to I.S.J.’s Tenets

Just as a creationist and an evolutionist have the same facts available to examine, yet come to radically different conclusions because of their presuppositions, so I.S.J. advocates and Biblical social justice advocates are dealing with the same facts that face us in society. Yet, we analyze them very differently and offer radically different solutions as we examine these facts.

It is quite clear that great injustice and oppression exists in our sinful world. Thus it has been, is, and ever will be. There is oppression of women, children, the poor, the elderly, foreigners, minorities, etc. (and Christians!). Those in power and those who form the majority do often oppress those who are weak and in minority groups. Even as I write this, it was on the morning news that Afghanistan’s Taliban-run government has suspended university access to all female students.

⁶ Johnson, pp. 47, 48

The Source of Oppression

But it is also clear that the reason for oppression is not because the oppressors happen to be white or male or heterosexual or rich, but rather because they are sinners. Sin comes not from the category you belong to, but from the heart. “For out of the heart come evil thoughts, murder, adultery, sexual immorality, theft, false witness, slander.” (Mat. 15:19).

Having Authority does not Automatically Make You an Oppressor

Also, the assumption that being in a position of authority automatically makes you an oppressor is unfounded. God is in the highest position of authority and is never guilty of oppression or unjust dealings. Neither is this true of godly rulers, husbands, parents, police officers, bosses, or church elders as they reflect Christ. Those who occupy a position of authority in government, in the workplace, in the home or in the church may indeed be tempted to take advantage of their position and abuse that authority, but it is sin in the heart, not having authority, that results in oppression. Therefore to automatically assign guilt because you belong to a certain section of society is unjustified.

Being Oppressed does not Make You Morally or Spiritually Blameless

Another related error that the I.S.J. movement encourages is that the victims, the oppressed, should regard themselves as the innocent ones, the blameless ones. Evil is found only in those who occupy positions of power. Therefore, whatever the victims do in their battle against oppressors or those with opposing viewpoints is regarded as justified. This may include public defamation, shaming, mob action, humiliation, silencing free speech, shutting down businesses, false accusations, ruining reputations, and other actions that are sinful in the eyes of God. This kind of sin is justified because it is committed in pursuit of a supposedly good cause. The end justifies the means. Or does it?

The Scriptures are clear that in the Day of Judgment we are individually held accountable for our actions no matter what social grouping we were a part of. “So then each of us will give an account of himself to God.” (Rom. 14:12). “For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may receive what is due for what he has done in the body, whether good or evil.” (2 Cor. 5:10.) It is very dangerous when those who consider themselves “victims” fail to face the fact that they, too, have sinned and will have to answer to God for all that they have done.

Many Differences are Due to Human Responsibility and Divine Sovereignty

There is an assumption in the I.S.J. movement that no group of individuals should ever have more advantages than any other group. Equality is one of their buzzwords. But this does not square with the Biblical view of either human responsibility or divine sovereignty.

Human responsibility is emphasized in:

Proverbs 10:4 A slack hand causes poverty, but the hand of the diligent makes rich.

Proverbs 12:24 The hand of the diligent will rule, while the slothful will be put to forced labour.

Proverbs 21:5 The plans of the diligent lead surely to abundance, but everyone who is hasty comes only to poverty.

Divine sovereignty is recognized in:

1 Samuel 2:7 The LORD makes poor and makes rich; he brings low and he exalts.

Job 1:21 "...Naked I came from my mother's womb, and naked shall I return. The LORD gave, and the LORD has taken away; blessed be the name of the LORD."

Children are not Responsible for the Sins of their Fathers

Another Biblical truth is that God does not hold individuals responsible for the sins of their fathers. Ezekiel 18 spells this out clearly. A father is described who is very sinful, who "oppresses the poor and needy" (vs. 12). "...he shall surely die; his blood shall be upon himself." (vs. 13b). But what if he fathers a son who acts very differently from him? "He does not eat upon the mountains or lift up his eyes to the idols of the house of Israel, does not defile his neighbor's wife, does not oppress anyone, exacts no pledge, commits no robbery, but gives his bread to the hungry and covers the naked with a garment, withholds his hand from iniquity, takes no interest or profit, obeys my rules, and walks in my statutes; he shall not die for his father's iniquity; he shall surely live...The soul who sins shall die. The son shall not suffer for the iniquity of the father, nor the father suffer for the iniquity of the son. The righteousness of the righteous shall be upon himself, and the wickedness of the wicked shall be upon himself." (vss. 15-18, 20).

By Their Fruit You Shall Know Them

The fruit of the I.S.J. movement is extremely distasteful. It is **divisive**. It encourages groups to focus on what makes them different. There is no appeal to a common humanity or to what we share with others around us. It fosters a spirit of **bitterness** by focusing on all the various ways in which "my group" has been oppressed. Count your many grievances, name them one by one! It encourages a **discontented** spirit. It is far removed from Paul's approach in Philippians 4:11-13 where he says, "for I have learned in whatever situation I am to be content." ¹² I know how to be brought low, and I know how to abound. In any and every circumstance, I have learned the secret of facing plenty and hunger, abundance and need. ¹³ I can do all things through him who strengthens me." It is very **self-centred**. It is constantly looking at how others have mistreated me and my section of society and at what they should do to make it up to me. It runs in the opposite direction of Phil. 2:4 "Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others."

III. A Biblical Theology of Biblical Social Justice

No one would deny that there genuinely are social issues that call out to be addressed. Oppression of various vulnerable individuals and groups of people does take place. God sees that oppression and is Himself the perfect example of concern and sympathy. Psalm 146:5-9 declares,

⁵ Blessed is he whose help is the God of Jacob, whose hope is in the LORD his God, ⁶ who made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that is in them, who keeps faith forever; ⁷ who executes justice for the oppressed, who gives food to the hungry. The LORD sets the prisoners free; ⁸ the LORD opens the eyes of the blind. The LORD lifts up those who are bowed down; the LORD loves the righteous. ⁹ The LORD watches over the sojourners; he upholds the widow and the fatherless, but the way of the wicked he brings to ruin.

A Significant Biblical Hendiadys – Justice and Righteousness

There is a repeated pairing of two words in the Old Testament, a hendiadys (the expression of a single idea by two words connected by “and”). This pairing is “justice and righteousness”. It occurs some forty times in the Old Testament. And as Dr. Peter Gentry asserts, this pairing conveys the meaning of “social justice” in a Biblical sense. It means the upholding of God’s holy standards, especially those that relate to the proper treatment of our fellow humans, loving our neighbour as ourselves.⁷

Found Originally and Perfectly in the LORD

The following verses ascribe justice and righteousness to God:

Psalm 89:14 “Righteousness and justice are the foundation of your throne; steadfast love and faithfulness go before you.”

Psalm 103:6 “The LORD works righteousness and justice for all who are oppressed.”

Jeremiah 9:24 “but let him who boasts boast in this, that he understands and knows me, that I am the LORD who practices steadfast love, justice and righteousness in the earth. For in these things I delight, declares the LORD.”

Were to be Found in Israel, His Old Covenant People

God therefore gave instructions to Israel under the law to make sure they cared for the weak and vulnerable in society. They were to reflect His character.

Exodus 22:21-23 “You shall not wrong a sojourner or oppress him, for you were sojourners in the land of Egypt. You shall not mistreat any widow or fatherless child. If you do mistreat them, and they cry out to me, I will surely hear their cry,”

Deuteronomy 26:12-13 “When you have finished paying all the tithe of your produce in the third year, which is the year of tithing, giving it to the Levite, the sojourner, the fatherless and the widow, so that they may eat within your towns and be filled, then you shall say before the LORD your God, ‘I have removed the sacred portion out of my

⁷ Gentry, audio adult S.S. lesson.

house, and moreover, I have given it to the Levite, the sojourner, the fatherless, and the widow, according to all your commandment that you have commanded me. I have not transgressed any of your commandments, nor have I forgotten them.”

Israel’s Failure

In spite of having a God who practices justice and righteousness and having numerous commandments that called for Israel to be like Him, what was the end result for God’s old covenant people? Here is the testimony of Scripture:

^{NKJ} **Ezekiel 22:7** "In you they have made light of father and mother; in your midst they have oppressed the stranger; in you they have mistreated the fatherless and the widow.”

Isaiah 5:7 “For the vineyard of the LORD of hosts is the house of Israel, and the men of Judah are his pleasant planting; and he looked for justice, but behold, bloodshed; for righteousness, but behold, an outcry!”

Isaiah 59:8-9 ⁸ The way of peace they do not know, and there is no justice in their paths; they have made their roads crooked; no one who treads on them knows peace. Therefore justice is far from us, and righteousness does not overtake us; we hope for light, and behold, darkness, and for brightness, but we walk in gloom.”

Zechariah 7:9-11 ⁹ "Thus says the LORD of hosts, Render true judgments, show kindness and mercy to one another, ¹⁰ do not oppress the widow, the fatherless, the sojourner, or the poor, and let none of you devise evil against another in your heart." ¹¹ But they refused to pay attention and turned a stubborn shoulder and stopped their ears that they might not hear.”

The Success of the Coming Messiah

What could not be achieved in Israel by the LORD’s example or by the giving of the law could only be accomplished by the coming of the Messiah. His reign would be characterized by the very righteousness and justice that Israel lacked. As is written:

Isaiah 9:7 “Of the increase of his government and of peace there will be no end, on the throne of David and over his kingdom, to establish it and to uphold it with justice and with righteousness from this time forth and forevermore. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will do this.”

Jeremiah 23:5 "Behold, the days are coming, declares the LORD, when I will raise up for David a righteous Branch, and he shall reign as king and deal wisely, and shall execute justice and righteousness in the land.”

Will be Found in the New Jerusalem – The Church

But this story of justice and righteousness was not to end with the King. It was to fill His kingdom and be displayed by His people. Again we read,

Isaiah 33:5 The LORD is exalted, for he dwells on high; he will fill Zion with justice and righteousness.”

That is exactly what we find Jesus doing when He comes and introduces the kingdom of God. His followers are blessed because they are merciful (Mat. 5:7) and they are peacemakers (Mat. 5:9). Their righteousness exceeds that of the scribes and

Pharisees (Mat. 5:20). They treat others the way they would like to be treated (Mat. 7:12). They are amazingly forgiving toward those who sin against them (Mat. 18:21, 22). They learn from Jesus that true greatness is found in serving others, even sacrificing themselves for the good of others (Mat. 20:26-28). Jesus is starting to bring about the transformation of Zion. He is filling its citizens with justice and righteousness, with love for God and for their neighbours.

His apostles and the inspired New Testament writers continue to emphasize the beauty of this new Jerusalem. They are those who visit orphans and widows in their affliction (Jam. 1:27; cf. also Acts 6:1ff. and 1 Tim. 5:3-16). They are strongly exhorted never to show favouritism to the rich over the poor when they come to their assemblies (Jam. 2:1-5). They are to feed the hungry and clothe the naked (Jam. 2:14-17; cf. also Rom. 15:25-27; Gal. 2:10). Barriers that used to cause friction and division are broken down as a new and powerful unity is formed, where “there is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus (Gal. 3:28). Those in positions of authority are never to abuse that authority. In this new kingdom, husbands are told, “Love your wives, and do not be harsh with them.” (Col. 3:19). Fathers are exhorted, “Do not provoke your children, lest they become discouraged.” (Col. 3:21). Masters are told, “Treat your bondservants justly and fairly.” (Col. 4:1).

Biblical Social Justice and the Day of Judgment

We see how important righteousness and justice are to God in that He requires clear evidence of this Biblical social justice on the Day of Judgment. His sheep, those who are blessed by the Father, who will inherit the consummated kingdom of God, are those to whom it can be said:

Matthew 25:35-36 “For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, I was naked and you clothed me, I was sick and you visited me, I was in prison and you came to me.”

IV. The Tasks Before Us

1. Recognize when I.S.J. is Right

There definitely are problems with sinful injustice in our world and our nation that still need to be addressed. When these issues are drawn to our attention by those involved in the I.S.J. movement, we must listen and learn. Surely the church and church leaders need to always be ready to humbly receive information about sinful behaviour that we can address and correct. We are to love righteousness and hate iniquity, no matter who identifies it for us. In every generation and culture the church of Jesus Christ has been blind to certain areas of sin that seem quite evident to other cultures or later generations of believers. May we become more aware of our own shortcomings.

2. See how Wrong I.S.J. Is

I.S.J. is wrong at so many crucial points, and therefore dangerous. It is wrong in its diagnosis of the source of the problems we face by failing to see the inherent sinfulness of the human heart. It is also in error when it comes to the solution to these problems, which essentially focuses on the deconstruction of all existing power structures. It is also wrong and dangerous in the methods it chooses to employ, methods which divide society into competing self-interest groups, encourage violent demonstrations, allow for lawlessness, support reverse bullying, suppress freedom of speech in those who differ, and ignore arguments and facts that don't support their cause.

3. Resist Jumping on the Woke Church Bandwagon

There is growing pressure on churches and parachurch organizations to realize that things go better with "Woke"! If you're not woke, you're not with it. If you're not woke, you must de facto be in favour of the oppression of women, of blacks, of indigenous peoples, and of LGBTQIP2SAA. Who wants to be accused of that? So you must issue statements and publish articles that support the cause. You must join in marches and protests. However, in the process, the energy and the focus of the church and related organizations is being unmistakably drawn away from Christ and the Gospel. The great commission has not changed. We are to "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you." (Mat. 28:18b-20a). Paul was focussed on one thing, even in the midst of an empire full of social injustice. That was, "I decided to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ and him crucified." (1 Cor. 2:2).

4. Realize the Likelihood of Growing Persecution

We believe in God-ordained authority structures. We believe in God's authority as expressed in His Word over all humanity. We believe that a husband is the head of his wife. We believe that parents have authority over their children. We believe that the government has authority over its citizens and that police have authority to enforce the laws of the land. We believe that male elders have authority in the church. The I.S.J. movement is strongly opposed to these kinds of authority structures and wants them torn down. What will this clash of values lead to? God knows.

Also, we oppose the ongoing redefinitions and restructuring of language that is taking place. How can you speak of a "marriage" and a "uniting" of two men or of two women, without altering the fundamental meaning of words? These two can never become "one flesh".

In addition, we are becoming more likely to be accused of microaggressions in its various forms, microassault, microinsult and microinvalidation. Will calling a particular lifestyle sinful become illegal in the near future? Will the Bible, or portions of it, be banned as "hate literature"? Commenting on Bill C-250, the Evangelical Fellowship of Canada warns in its briefing notes, "As it stands, Bill C-250 has the potential to silence

reasonable debate on issues like marriage and school curricula and restrict the legitimate expression of moral and religious views on sexual practices.”⁸

Will history repeat itself? Friedrich Engels, cowriter with Karl Marx of the *Communist Manifesto*, when identifying the person he hated most in this world, pointed to none other than C.H. Spurgeon!⁹ Today’s preachers may not be far behind.

5. Quit Dreaming the Impossible Dream

There never has been and never will be a Christian nation in our world, including the U.S. and Canada. Biblical social justice will never characterize society as a whole. Unregenerate humanity will always produce sour grapes and not delicious fruit.

Israel is the perfect illustration of this. No nation on earth ever had such clear revelation as to how it should live. They had God-given laws. No nation ever saw the power and provision and protection of God like Israel did. No nation ever had so many inspired prophets addressing it and calling it to walk in justice and righteousness. But in spite of all these privileges, Israel miserably failed to be God’s holy people. What Israel really needed was a new covenant, new and transformed hearts, the indwelling Spirit, and faith in the person and work of the coming Messiah! To think otherwise is to misunderstand the entire message of the Old Testament, in fact, the whole Bible!

This world and our nation, Canada, could be clearly instructed in what it looks like to live and act in a Biblically socially just way, but that would not change a thing. In fact, it would actually make society worse acting than before. As Paul asserts, “...I would not have known what it is to covet if the law had not said, “You shall not covet.” But sin, seizing an opportunity though the commandment, produced in me all kinds of covetousness.” (Rom. 7:7b-8a).

The only thing that can truly change a person is the Gospel of Jesus Christ. That’s why the church’s main task is to proclaim the gospel, not to try to “Christianize” Canada by calling on Canada’s peoples and leaders to walk in paths of justice and righteousness. That didn’t work in Old Testament Israel and it certainly won’t work in present day Canada.

We’re not saying that Christians should be silent in the face the injustices that are so evident in our society. We are grateful to God for all those who seek to do what they can to remedy those injustices. We applaud Wilberforce’s labours for the abolition of slavery. We support Dr. Martin Luther King’s battle for civil rights and Desmond Tutu’s antiapartheid stand. But the point is this: we are not truly loving our neighbour until we have sought to point them to Christ, who alone can rescue us from our slavery to sin,

⁸In this briefing, the EFC goes on to say, “Two freedoms are at stake in this debate: 1. The freedom to read, preach and distribute sacred texts. When officials from the Department of Justice were asked by the Justice Committee whether Bill C-250 could be used to criminalize parts of the Bible, they could not give a definitive answer. The freedom to read, preach and distribute sacred texts such as the Bible and the Qur’an must be clearly protected. 2. The freedom to publicly discuss and comment on sexual morality. Discussing and developing norms for sexual behaviour is one of the central social roles of religion. All religions do this, whatever their particular views on homosexual behaviour. If C-250 is passed as it stands, there is a real risk that these important conversations will be shut down and religious instruction in Canada will be profoundly limited. “

⁹ David Aikman, *The Delusion of Disbelief* (Carol Stream, IL: Salt River, 2008), 106-107.

redeem us from our indebtedness caused by sin, clothe us with His righteousness, give us the water of life to forever quench our thirsty soul, and through His poverty make us rich!

The apostle Paul was quite aware of the slavery that existed in the Roman Empire. But eliminating it was not his main passion. He writes in 1 Cor. 7:21-22a, “Were you a bond-servant when called? Do not be concerned about it. (But if you can gain your freedom, avail yourself of the opportunity.) For he who was called in the Lord as a bondservant is a freedman of the Lord.”

We must understand that the Old Testament prophets were in a unique position. They were called to address a nation that had committed itself to God in a covenant relationship. The nation had agreed to keep all the words of His law. But they had broken their side of the covenant. The prophets were calling them back to covenant faithfulness, to righteousness and justice. But this call was doomed to fail. Israel and the world needed a Saviour! We who are present-day preachers are not ministers of the Old Covenant. Our task is not to call our nation back to covenant faithfulness. Canada never agreed to that to begin with. We are called to be ministers of a new and better covenant. We are sent out to preach the unsearchable riches of Christ. Our task is not to turn Canada into a Christian nation, but to call Canadians to Jesus Christ and through Him to bring them into His holy nation, the church of Jesus Christ.

6. Become God’s Truly Just and Righteous Nation

The only truly Christian nation is the church, God’s new covenant nation. As Peter reminds us, “But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvellous light.” (1 Pet. 2:9). It is within this holy nation that true social justice is and must be displayed for a watching world to see. As we read in Amos 5:24, “But let justice roll down like waters, and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream.”

It is our joy and privilege and opportunity to display to a watching world the kind of love for our neighbours that can only be found in the lives of those transformed by Christ and the Gospel. Wherever our churches are located, we should always, as we have opportunity, be doing “good to everyone, and especially to those who are of the household of faith”. (Gal. 6:10). “We love because he first loved us.” (1 Jn. 4:19). It is telling that immediately after the 3,000 were saved on the day of Pentecost and the early church was formed we read, “And all who believed were together and had all things in common. And they were selling their possessions and belongings and distributing the proceeds to all, as any had need.” (Acts 2:44, 45).

Clearly, in Christ there is a unity, an equality, a forgiveness, a contentment, a joy, a holiness, a humility, a hope, a fellowship, a peace that is found nowhere else. May we display these beautiful qualities as Christ’s church to such a degree that those outside would cry out to know our secret. But it is no secret what God can do. In Christ, through the Gospel, He can transform the lives of sinners and make them into a company of believers who more and more love and practice Biblical justice and righteousness!

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