

What do you think? Injustice resolves injustice?
Do you make these 3 popular mistakes of "Christian" social justice?

- Can injustice demand injustice to remedy it?
- Does my experience of injustice qualify me to demand "justice" through injustice inflicted upon another?
- Can I require you to pay another's debts to me?
- Can I attribute guilt to you for a crime that you did not commit against me?
- Doesn't the Bible require Christ followers to do justice?

Tremors of Injustice in Christian Community

These questions identify tremors unfolding within the Christian community. Ethnic minorities plead for retributive justice from today's Christians for injustices committed hundreds of years ago.

Ethnic abuse victims suffer life-long injury from the injustices which professing Christians inflicted upon them and made worse by its callous, complicity, and concealment. Claims of injustice arise, too, over disparities of income, status, and education.

Although some victims can identify their offenders, popular movements today place guilt upon huge segments of the Christian community through postmodernism's cultural relativism: standards of right and wrong that depend upon one's cultural beliefs, not a Biblical, objective standard of truth. They demand repentance, retribution, and reparations today from innocent people for injustices committed, in some instances, centuries ago.

In the process, these "social justice" warriors transfer culpability upon Christians now for injuries committed in the past. This contradicts the truth that 2 wrongs do not make a right.

Zacchaeus's Gifts and Restitution

This popular movement seeks to justify its claims based upon the familiar story of Zacchaeus, a Jewish publican. It occurred during Christ's last year of earthly ministry. (1) Jesus headed towards Jerusalem for the last time before the religious leaders would crucify Him. As He passed through Jericho, crowds lined the path hampering Zacchaeus's view of Jesus.

To enhance his view, Zacchaeus climbed a Sycamore tree to enable him to see Jesus as He passed by. When Jesus came to the tree that Zacchaeus had climbed, Jesus spoke to him saying, "Zacchaeus, come down from the tree and take me to your house."

Somehow, through his meeting with Jesus, Zacchaeus experienced a life changing transformation. As a result, he told Jesus that he would give half of his riches to the poor.

Further, Zacchaeus said that he would restore 4 times the amount of money he had defrauded people. In that day, tax collectors stole taxes in excess of the proper tax from their subjects.

Christ commented that salvation had come to Zacchaeus.

Purpose of the Story

Why did the Holy Spirit prompt Luke to include this story in his gospel?

Luke stated that he wrote his gospel to Theophilus to give an orderly account of the events of Christ's ministry. (2) Jesus performed many miracles during His 3-year earthly ministry. Perhaps this story of Zacchaeus made the rounds because of its unusual results.

Zacchaeus was a chief tax collector who supervised other tax collectors who worked for him. Had he heard of Jesus' call of Matthew, a fellow tax collector? (3) When Matthew followed Christ, he invited other publicans to meet with Jesus. (4) Perhaps Zacchaeus attended that meeting, although Scripture does not say that he did. But, he no doubt heard about it.

Who would believe the stories of the life changing experiences of these hated persons? Who would want to believe them? Tax collectors? Thieves? Sinners? Traitors experiencing new life by faith in Christ? No chance.

The Holy Spirit moved Luke to record this amazing story of Zacchaeus to confirm it and the impact of Christ's message upon terrible sinners. Christ could change anyone's life.

Jesus said that He had come to call sinners to repentance, even those lying, stealing, defrauding tax collectors. (5) This story confirmed the power of Christ to transform even the worst of sinners.

Further, the Holy Spirit wanted to show to Theophilus and others who read Luke's gospel the effects of Christ's grace in a person's life. The one so changed would exhibit grace and mercy to others as well as obedience to God.

Jesus saw the change of Zacchaeus's heart that brought obedience to God plus grace and mercy to others.

Zacchaeus to the Rescue for "Social Justice?"

How can the Holy Spirit apply this story to your life and mine today? What does it say, if anything, about the present "social justice" discord in the Christian community?

All that was true then is true today. Doubters disbelieve the transforming power of Christ. Can He, does He change lives now? Without question, millions of people from history and in our current times, in diverse cultures, nations, and ethnic peoples world-wide confirm the reality of the life changing power of Christ in a person's life.

Sinners of every degree of perversity who trust Christ experience His power at work in their lives, converting them from rebels to Christ followers.

But, how does the story of Zacchaeus relate to the present “social justice” debate?

Mistake #1

This debate centers upon the fallacy that people today have culpability for past injustices. Its proponents demand “justice” for whole groups of injured peoples in society, injustices that arose because of

- ethnicity;
- financial disparity;
- educational opportunities;
- and more.

Many advocates of “social justice” within the Christian community pressure professing Christians to adopt their philosophy, one lacking Biblical support.

Some leaders demand reparations, repentance, and retribution from Christian organizations as well as professing believers for alleged injustices of the past. Others support the more aggressive organizers with complicit agreement through mutual leadership in organizations like “The Gospel Coalition” and “Christianity Today.”

Associations like “The Gospel Coalition” “Christianity Today” and their leaders publicize the assertive messages of the “social justice” advocates thereby granting tacit approval of their unBiblical assertions.

Mistake #2

In the attempt to develop Biblical authority for their message, which it lacks, these advocates use the example from the Bible of Zacchaeus’s change of heart to restore his victims and gifts to the poor as the pattern and prod to apply to the demanded “social justice” of today.

Let’s examine this story in greater detail to guide our thinking.

According to the Law of Moses under which Zacchaeus lived, he had a personal, legal obligation to those from whom he had stolen by false accusation. In actuality, the term “false accusation” means that he defrauded them when he sued his victims in court, lied in his suit, and won the judgments that he sought against them.

The Law of Moses commanded him to repay those whom he had defrauded a restoration of:

- 120% of the original amount stolen; or
- 4 times the original amount stolen, e.g., 4 sheep for 1 sheep stolen; or
- 5 times the original amount stolen, e.g., 5 oxen for 1 ox stolen.

As you see, the repayment depended upon the type of theft.

Similarly, Roman Law, which governed tax collectors, required a retribution of 4 times the amount that a tax collector had stolen from a subject. This fine came due by the publican upon discovery of the publican's theft.

Zacchaeus paid his victims, and only those victims whom he had defrauded, the payment stipulated by Roman Law. That amount also equaled one of the demands for retribution under the Law of Moses for such crimes. (6) He did not pay for the injustices of others, even though those crimes existed. His guilt came from his own crimes, not the injustices of others.

Mistake #3

As to his gifts to the poor, he gave generously to them. The Law of Moses directed the individual responsibility of Israelites, not some form of "social justice," to care for the poor. It provided numerous options one could use but did not dictate any specific amounts or choices for gifts to the needy. Zacchaeus gave with great grace and mercy to those in need, without any compulsions.

These transactions revealed the life changing transformation of Zacchaeus, which Jesus verified.

Therefore...

Believers

The example of Zacchaeus provides insight for Christ followers on how the Holy Spirit can use this story in our lives.

- Christ followers show their life changing transformations by obedience to God.
- As Christ followers, we have a Biblical command to live and practice justice and an individual obligation to those whom we treat unjustly. (7)
- The example of Zacchaeus reminds us that as God has shown grace and mercy to us as Christ followers, so we must show grace and mercy to our brothers and sisters in need.

Unbelievers

The Holy Spirit can also use the example of Zacchaeus to unbelievers because it proves that the grace of God in Christ, as revealed in the gospel, extends to the worst of sinners, like you and me.

The gospel tells us that God sent His Son, Jesus Christ, to earth, born of a woman, to secure redemption for sinners and to reconcile them back to God. Sin and separation occurred in the Garden in Eden when Adam and Eve took of the forbidden fruit. Their sin separated them from God, which came upon all their posterity, including you and me.

During His life on earth, Jesus obeyed every command and demand of God, living a perfect and sinless life. "The life that He lived qualified Him for the death that He died." (8) When Christ died on the cross, He offered Himself to God as a substitutionary sacrifice on behalf of sinners like you and me. God accepted Christ's sacrifice in atonement for the sins of others.

Our inherited sinful natures and the sins that those natures commit separate us from God and require a suitable sacrifice to God to atone for them. The sacrifice of Christ fulfills that obligation on behalf of people like you and me.

Jesus commanded all people everywhere to repent and believe the gospel:

- the incarnation of Jesus;
- the sinless life of Christ;
- the substitutionary death of Christ on the cross;
- and His resurrection to new life.

Jesus promised to accept everyone who comes to Him in faith, turning from their sin, self-reliance, and rebellion against God.

Further, Jesus promised to send the Holy Spirit to indwell those who come to Him in faith. The indwelling Holy Spirit enables Christ followers to fulfill His commands.

As a young boy, I trusted Christ and His provision for me. I have experienced Christ's transforming power by the Holy Spirit in my life and attest to its reality.

I ask the Holy Spirit to come to you today:

- to give you the new birth that will regenerate you giving new life.
- to give you the faith to turn from your sinful nature's sin, self-reliance, and rebellion against God.
- to trust Christ's provision in His life, death, and resurrection as fulfilled for you and that will reconcile you to God.
- to come to you today and to indwell you as Christ promised so that He will begin to form Christ's life in you.

References

1. Luke 19.1-9
2. Luke 1.1-4
3. Matthew 9.9-13
4. Matthew 9.11
5. Matthew 9.13
6. Exodus 22.1
7. Micah 6.8
8. Major Ian Thomas

© Thomas P Hill. Website: www.masterministries.org.

Personal Information: Thomas P. Hill, M. A. in Ministry, Luther Rice Seminary; Online ministry since 1988; ministry to 200+ nations; author of 3 books: *False Prophets: Their Shameless, Insidious Conspiracy; Homosexuality, Christians, and the Church*; and *Keys To A Revolutionary Life* (available online at Tom's web site: www.masterministries.org). To invite Tom to speak at your college, church, or group, contact him by email at hill_tom@att.net .

Permissions: You are permitted and encouraged to reproduce and distribute this material in

any format, in whole or in part, provided that you do not alter the wording in any way and do not charge a fee beyond the cost of reproduction. For web posting, whether in whole or in part, a link to this document on our website is preferred but not necessary. Please obtain permission from Tom Hill for all exceptions to the above request.

Unsubscribe: If you no longer want to receive these emails, click "Reply" to his email and insert "Unsubscribe" in the "Subject" line. I will promptly remove your name from my email list.