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Justice and Social Justice



Individual Topics - Steve Gregg

In "Justice and Social Justice," Steve Gregg emphasizes the difference between justice as a response to God and social justice as a concern for justice in social life. He notes that Christians who are not passionate about justice are not yet connected to God's values, and highlights the importance of justice in the Old and New Testaments. While both mercy and grace are important, justice should not be sacrificed, and the Church has a responsibility to bring forth justice on earth. Gregg also cautions against confusing individual justice with group justice, and promotes an understanding of justice based on individual responsibility rather than collective identity.

Transcript

All right, one of our people who's here asked me yesterday if I would teach today on the subject of justice and social justice. Certainly, social justice is in the news, if you understand that term. However, I just want to say that although the term social justice is innocuous and sounds good, I mean, frankly, all justice is social, unless we're talking about our just response to God, then it's, of course, something else.

But social life is where justice is expressed. And I've recently been in dialogue with some people on Facebook over some of the current upheavals around the country. And there are some people who have posted, very few, who have said, why don't you stay out of politics and just teach the Bible? And I think that this is, I think this represents a misunderstanding of what the Bible contains and what the role is of a person who teaches the Bible.

See, Jesus didn't say, make disciples teaching them the doctrine of the Trinity and the mysteries of divine election or who the Nephilim are or anything like that. He says, go and teach them to observe everything I have commanded you. The task of a Bible teacher is not to get lost in arcane abstractions of doctrine that have been controversial forever and don't have any practical value at all.

The purpose of a discipler is to teach people to observe what Jesus said and to do it. And the problem is, if if nobody would turn morality into political issues, I'd be very content

to say nothing about politics. I don't have any affiliation with any political party and I have no interest in politics per se, but I have interest in righteousness and justice because these are things that the Bible emphasizes, that Jesus emphasized.

We sometimes think the main purpose Jesus had was to come and get us safe so we can go to heaven. And we miss the whole point of what the kingdom of God is, what Jesus came to actually establish in the earth. Sure, there's a heaven beyond this, but Jesus hardly ever spoke of it.

He always spoke of how we are to behave in the kingdom of God, which he assumed we are in. At least the meek are, the poor in spirit are, his disciples are. And Paul spoke the same way, of course, that God has translated us out of the power of darkness into the kingdom of his own dear son, Colossians 1:13.

So in the kingdom of God, there are many social concerns because the kingdom of God is about love for your neighbor. And the principle law is love your neighbor as you would love yourself or love as Christ loved us. So love is, again, not a feeling.

We're not I'm not here to inspire you to certain feelings. I'm here to tell you how to live in love because love is practical. Jesus restated that commandment in Matthew 7, 12, saying, as you would, that men would do to you do likewise to them.

That's love your neighbor as you would love yourself put in practical terms. And there are no other terms. Love without practical behavior is not love.

In First John, it says, you know, if anyone says he loves his brother, but he sees his brother in need and does nothing for him. How does the love of God dwell in him? So obviously love is expressed in action. And if it's not expressed in action, it's simply not present.

We might have feelings and emotions and sympathies. But if we do nothing, then we are not fulfilling the duty of what Jesus commanded us to do. Now, Jesus was no different than his father.

And his concerns were the same as the father's concerns. Jesus didn't come to bring a new religion. He came to establish what God had commanded and predicted throughout the Old Testament.

And when Jesus came, he said, the time is fulfilled in the kingdom of God is ahead, which means this has been anticipated. The time is fulfilled suggests there's been some time of anticipation before the fulfillment. And that time was the Old Testament.

Now, I want to briefly go over some Old Testament material, because that's where we learn a great deal of what God thinks about justice. And we're talking about justice. I also want to point out that the New Testament makes it very clear that Christ's concern for

justice is no less than that of his father.

And that the kingdom of God is a kingdom in which justice is pursued. Let me take you first of all to Isaiah chapter five. This is a parable that Isaiah tells about a vineyard.

And Jesus later tells a parable of a vineyard, which is based on imagery from this particular passage. In Isaiah chapter five, you know, it's funny, I can't talk and turn pages at the same time. Very, very, can't multitask.

People say, you know, when you're on the radio, you do like a computer program that you look up stuff when people ask you. I couldn't do that. I'm talking.

I'm talking. I can't type something else in. If I don't know it, I don't know it, you know, but computers not going to help.

Okay, I'm there. Isaiah five, verse one. Now, let me sing to my well-beloved a song of my beloved regarding his vineyard.

My well-beloved, in this case, that's God. Isaiah is speaking of God as his well-beloved. Has a vineyard on a very fruitful hill.

He dug it up and cleared it out the stones and planted it with choices vine. He built a tower in its midst and he also made a wine press in it. So he expected it to bring forth good grapes.

But it brought forth wild grapes. Now, oh, inhabitants of Jerusalem and men of Judah, judge, please, between me and my vineyard. What more could have been done to my vineyard that I have not done in it? Why, when it then did it, when I expected it to bring forth good grapes, did it bring forth wild grapes? And now please let me tell you what I will do to my vineyard.

I will take away its hedge and it should be burned and break down its wall and it should be trampled down. I will lay it waste. It shall not be pruned or dug, but there shall come up briars and thorns.

I will also command the clouds that they rain no rain upon it. For the vineyard of the Lord of hosts is the house of Israel. And the men of Judah are his pleasant plant.

He looked for grapes, but he got wild grapes. But what is it? What does it say he's looking for? What are the grapes? He looked for justice. But what he found was the wild grapes of oppression.

He looked for righteousness, but he found weeping instead. So what he says is that God planted Israel like a person plants a vineyard. He gave it every advantage to produce good grapes.

Now he identifies the grapes. The good grapes he's looking for are justice and righteousness. These are two words in the Hebrew that are found together in dozens of passages.

Justice and righteousness are very similar to each other. They both in the Hebrew refer to on the one level civil justice, where in the courts of law there are not unjust punishments, but also personal justice, interpersonal, where you don't do unjustly to another person in your social life or whatever. Justice and righteousness, we're going to talk about those and what they are.

But I just want to point out that he says right here that what God is looking for from his people, from Israel, was justice and righteousness. Now in order to help them have a just society, he gave them every advantage. He threw out the Canaanites.

He gave them a temple and priests to teach them the law, gave them the law, sent prophets to them. Everything that he gave them was calculated to make them a people, special people, unlike the nations, in that they themselves would be the people who would bring forth justice in the earth, or at least they would practice justice. And God hates injustice.

God hates wrongdoing and unrighteousness. He doesn't hate people, but he hates those things that hurt people, like a parent would hate cancer in their child. God loves people, but injustice hurts people.

That's why God hates it, and he's passionate about justice. And Christians who are not passionate about justice have not yet connected with God's moods about these kinds of things and his outlook on things. So he's looking for justice, he's very angry when he doesn't get it, especially when he gave them every advantage, and they didn't do it.

Now, I told you that Jesus used a parable, or told a parable, that was using some of the imagery from this passage, and we can find Matthew's version of it in Matthew chapter 21. In Matthew 21, verse 33, you'll find that the opening words of this sound almost like the opening words of Isaiah 5. And Jesus expected his hearers to make the connection. Here, another parable.

Matthew 21, 33 says, There was a certain landowner who planted a vineyard and set a hedge around it and dug a wine press in it and built a tower, and he leased it to vine dressers, or tenants of the vineyard, and went to a far country. Now, the tenants are the new element. There were no tenants mentioned in Isaiah, but this is where the blame is relayed for the lack of fruit here.

It's the tenants who are tending the vineyard. He says, Now when the vintage time drew near, he sent his servants to the vine dressers that they might receive its fruit. The fruit, of course, is justice.

God's looking for justice. And the servants he sent were the prophets, who said to Israel, Hey, God is looking for justice. When are you going to turn it over to him? When are you going to give him what he has coming? But the vine dressers took his servants, beat one, killed one, stoned another.

Again, he sent other servants, more than the first, and they did to them likewise. So, this is the whole history of the Old Testament, of the prophets coming on behalf of God, saying, God is looking for justice. And if you read the prophets, you find that that is, in fact, their message in the Old Testament.

And they usually got beaten or killed or thrown out of the vineyard, as it says here. Last of all, he sent his son. Now, Jesus came to Israel as the last in a series.

Of course, he was the first of something else. He is uniquely the son of God, which the prophets were not. But he was the last messenger that Israel was going to get before they either turned up the fruit or they went down hard.

This is the last opportunity for Israel. Last of all, he sent his son to them, saying, they will respect my son. But when the vine dressers saw the son, they said among themselves, this is the heir.

Come and kill him. Let's kill him and we'll seize his inheritance. In other words, they were running the vineyard.

They didn't own it, but they wanted to act like they owned it. They weren't giving up any of the fruit to the owner. They wanted all of it for themselves.

When the son came, they said, hey, this is the guy who's in line to inherit this vineyard when his dad dies. Let's off him. And then when his dad dies, you know, possession is nine-tenths of the law.

We can probably hang on to this thing. That was a very great miscalculation on their part. It says, and they caught him and cast him out of the vineyard and killed him.

Therefore, Jesus says, when the owner of that vineyard comes, what will he do to those vine dressers? Now, this is what he's going to do to Jewish society when God comes in judgment in AD 70 upon them, and he did. And they said to him, he will destroy those wicked men miserably and lease his vineyard out to other vine dressers who will render to him the fruits in their seasons. Now, if you know what happened in AD 70, you know that miserably destroyed is putting it lightly.

Because of their killing the prophets, because they're killing his son, they were going to be judged. And Jesus, a few chapters later would say, and this will happen in this generation, which it did. But he says he's going to lease the vineyard out to others who will bring forth the fruits, that he's going to give the task of bringing forth justice that he

had given this or he's going to give it to someone else.

And Jesus said in verse 43, therefore I say to you, to the Jews, the kingdom of God will be taken from you and given to a nation bearing the fruits of it. So we are that nation. Peter said that in 1 Peter 2, verse 9, we are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation.

1 Peter 2, 9. We, the church, are the nation to whom he said he's giving his kingdom. Remember, Jesus said to his disciples, if you're not little flock, it's your father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom. So it's the Christians who are given the kingdom.

They are the nation. Who will, Jesus said, bring forth the fruit. Now that's a prediction.

And that means that before this is over, the church, the true church, not the institutional church, don't mix that up. The institutional church is an entirely other animal. The true body of Christ, the true followers of Jesus, they will bring forth justice in the earth in measure.

We don't know to what degree, but that is our task. The problem is, although many Christians have been about that business since the time of Christ, the majority of Christians haven't even known they're supposed to be doing that. It never occurred to them what they're here for.

I'm just here sitting on the bus stop waiting for the bus to heaven to show up. I think Jesus is coming maybe tomorrow. So I'm going to sit here and see if he comes.

Now, you're not here to sit on the bus, but you're here to do what Israel was supposed to do and failed to do, and which the church has to, in large measure, failed to do up to this point. But Jesus said the church will bring forth the fruit, he said. Now, the fruit is justice.

God identified that in Isaiah, and there's certainly many other places that say so. Let me show you some Old Testament passages. In Deuteronomy chapter 16, in verse 20, God is here speaking apparently to the magistrates, the rulers of the people.

This is a law for them. And he says in verse 20, You shall follow what is altogether just. That means you shall not deviate at all from justice principles, that you may live and inherit the land which the Lord your God has given you.

So the judges are charged with doing what is altogether just. In Micah, it's a minor prophet. In Micah chapter 3, in verse 1, the prophet says, And I said, Hear now, O heads of Jacob, and you rulers of the house of Israel, is it not for you to know justice? Micah 6, and verse 8, a very well-known verse.

It says, He has shown you, O man, what is good, and what does the Lord require of you? First on the list, do justly. Justice, first priority. Secondly, love mercy.

Thirdly, walk humbly with your God. That's what God wants. Jesus actually identified justice too, as one of the weightier matters of the law.

The first listed, when he lists them. In Matthew chapter 23, in verse 23, Jesus says, Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you pay tithe of mint and anise and cumin, or cumin, and have neglected the weightier matters of the law. Now notice, there are some matters of the law weightier in the eyes of God than others.

Jesus is going to tell us what the weightier ones are. Justice, mercy, and either faith or faithfulness. The same Greek word can be translated either way.

Most modern translations translate faithfulness, but it's *pistis* in Greek. So, the weightier matters of the law are justice, the weightiest of the weighty, and mercy and faithfulness. Now, God spares no words advocating the necessity of justice.

He's very concerned that justice should be done. But the problem is, the word justice has been hijacked in our modern world. I'm afraid that for a very long time, the justice obligation of the church was neglected in the conservative evangelical churches.

Because we just want to get people saved. We just want to tell them about Jesus, tell them how to, you know, get Jesus in your heart so you go to heaven. There's been a very great neglect for generations on the emphasis that Jesus himself had, which has to do with social relations with your brethren, and doing justly and so forth.

That's a weighty matter of the law, Jesus said. Now, that being so, back in the 70s or 80s, some of the churches of a slightly more liberal sort began to emphasize justice. But they had a version of it that's now called social justice.

The Roman Catholic Church is very strong on social justice issues. Liberal Protestant churches are too. And of course, even people who are not in any kind of church are now talking about social justice.

But it's become a term that is misleading. I want to talk about what justice is, and what social justice has come to mean. And they're not the same thing.

All right? Let's look over at Proverbs 17 and verse 15. It says, He who justifies the wicked, and he who condemns the just, both of them alike are an abomination to the Lord. Now, what he's saying is, wicked people ought not to be justified, because they're guilty.

Just people ought not to be condemned. What is it when you condemn an innocent person? It's injustice. What is it when you release a guilty criminal? That's an injustice too.

Justice clearly means, and any dictionary will tell you so, and it's true, justice means that

persons get what they earn. You work hard, you get paid. That's justice.

You work hard and your boss withholds your money, that's injustice, because something is owed. That somebody gets what's owed to them is justice. Now, we often think in evangelical churches, unfortunately, where justice has been turned into a negative, because we want to emphasize we all deserve to die.

I mean, the great emphasis in evangelicalism is, you know, we're all hell-bent sinners, and we all deserve to die, and therefore we need the grace of God, so we get what we don't deserve. And we rejoice in the fact that in that respect, we won't get what we deserve, because we deserve something bad. But it's almost like we never talk about justice in a positive sense.

Justice doesn't just mean that bad people get punished. It means that innocent people are rewarded. It means that every person gets what they justly deserve.

Now, grace and mercy can be more than just, but we're never allowed to be less than just. You see, if I give you what you deserve, I've treated you justly. If I forgive you for some injustice you've done to me, I'm being merciful.

I'm not exacting justice, and I have that right. Mercy is my prerogative. But in daily dealings with people, we need to be aware of whether we are treating them justly or unjustly, because if it's unjustly, we're no better than Israel, and God might as well tear down the hedge and have the wild beast trample us down like he did Israel.

He has created a people that he said will bring forth the fruits of justice and righteousness in the earth, and we'd better be those people. So justice means I give people what they deserve. Now, if they really deserve punishment from me, and very few people do, but if they do, I can show mercy.

Again, I'm not averting justice. I'm not violating justice if I show mercy, because I have the prerogative to show mercy if someone's done something to me. That's my business.

If I say, you deserve to die, you deserve me to punch you in the nose, but I'm just going to show mercy because I just don't want to do that to you. That's my business. I'm doing no wrong.

That's the point. We could say that justice means initially do no wrong. If you let somebody walk who's hurt you, you're not doing any wrong.

But Christians guided by a justice passion are going to make sure that I don't do anything wrong to someone else. I want to make sure that anything I owe you, I make sure I don't defer to pay you. If I borrow your book, I want to give it back to you the way it came to me because you deserve it back the way you lent it to me.

If I damage it, I'll buy you a new one. That's it. What is justice? What are the rights? Basically, justice means you're giving people what is theirs by right.

And what rights are there? Now, I was raised, again, in a certain evangelical stream that always wanted to emphasize, we have no rights. We're dead. We've been crucified with Christ and dead men have no rights.

Well, does that mean it's okay for people to come and kill me because I don't have a right to my life anymore? If I have no right to it, you can kill me and do no wrong. You do no wrong. If I have no right to my property, you could steal from me and you've done nothing wrong because I didn't have any right to it.

You have as much right to it as I do. No, that's not the way the Bible talks about justice. The Ten Commandments, especially the latter six, are all about justice.

In fact, they're hardly about anything else. Honor your father and your mother. Why? Because you owe it to them.

You happen to be indebted to them. And that's why Paul tells Timothy in 1 Timothy 5, if a widow has orphans or sons, let them repay them. You owe your parents.

You might not like your parents. You might not get along with your parents. But you're deeply indebted to your parents, not just for bringing you into the world, but for giving up the best years of their youth to keep you alive when you couldn't do anything for yourself.

You're forever indebted. And honor your father and mother simply means pay back the debt you owe. That's justice.

If you don't pay a debt you owe, that's injustice, all right? How about thou shalt not murder? Is there any human rights suggested in that commandment? Why is it wrong to murder? Because you have a right to live unless you forfeit it by committing a capital crime. There are things you can do to give up your rights, to forfeit them. If you commit a crime worthy of death, then you don't have your right to live anymore.

But if you haven't done that, nobody has any right to kill you. You have human rights. You have a right to your life.

The very fact that God forbids murder proves this. In fact, he doesn't forbid capital punishment. Why? Murder and capital punishment both involve killing a human being.

And leftists who don't know anything about justice, they think it's inconsistent for me to be favorable toward capital punishment, but unfavorable toward abortion. They say, well, you're not for abortion because you're pro-life, but if you're pro-capital punishment, isn't that pro-death? Not at all. I don't want anyone to suffer capital punishment unless

they killed someone, and I'm pro-life.

The life they took has value, as much as theirs, not less. And, you know, Jewish thinking always was, I think, quite clear on this. If a man kills another man and he remains alive, society has treated the criminal as having a life worth more than the victim.

So that sounds familiar. The right to life forbids murder. It does not forbid capital punishment because a person who commits murder has forfeited their right to life.

So this is not about pro-life. This is about pro-justice. The next commandment, you should not commit adultery, it has many things woven together, including sexual purity and faithfulness and so forth, but it's also a matter of justice.

You can address adultery and marital faithfulness from a number of angles and be correct, as long as you're not contradicting one of the other ones. But when it says you shall not commit adultery, it's a command that you should not wrong your neighbor. You should leave your neighbor's wife alone.

A man who commits adultery with his neighbor's wife is committing an injustice, among other things. The woman he's with is committing an injustice and unfaithfulness. If the man who's committing adultery also has another wife somewhere else, he's unfaithful too.

There's a number of crimes involved in adultery, but justice and injustice are certainly wrapped up in that because when people marry, they promise that they've made something. And when they commit adultery, they break that promise. You break your promises, you make a contract and break the contract, that's not just.

You're violating your spouse's rights. How about thou shalt not steal? Is there any human right suggested in that particular command? Doesn't that say something about property rights? If I don't have any right to my property, then you can just walk into my house any time you want and carry out anything you want. Because I have no right to it.

You don't either, but neither of us do. So you have as much as I do. However, if I earned something or got it lawfully, the Bible assumes that it's mine.

Now, God may certainly ask me to give it up. That's the point of giving up your rights. That's the point of having died and being crucified with Christ.

It doesn't mean you have no rights, it means that you're called upon to lay them down from time to time out of love for your brother. I have the right to my money if I earned it, but if I see someone who needs it more than I do, he doesn't deserve it, but I'm going to give it to him anyway. That's not justice, that's mercy.

You see, the way the social justice narrative has been framed today is as if everyone

who's rich really owes something to everyone who's poor. It doesn't matter how the poor person became poor or how the rich person became rich. It's just there's an inequity there.

There's inequality there. And justice requires that that be redressed and that the rich man have his money taken from him by the government, if he doesn't give it up voluntarily, and redistribute it. I just want to say that taking someone's property doesn't become less theft if you happen to be a government official or a legislator.

In fact, it's more obnoxious if you're a legislator because you're giving somebody else's money away. You're taking one man's money and giving it to someone else and you're not giving any of your own. You've got your own tax shelters, you're not doing it.

You're taxing people of money that really belongs to them because they earned it, and giving it to people who didn't earn it. Now, am I heartless toward the poor? No, I will not tell you how much I give to the poor. I imagine I give more than probably, I don't know, maybe anyone in this room probably don't know who gives what.

But the truth is, I'm not heartless toward the poor. But I'm not favorable toward a burglar coming in and taking my money at gunpoint and giving it to his favorite charity, which may be an abortion clinic. And a government who doesn't come with a gun but just makes a law and threatens to send a gun if I don't pay up is just as much an armed robber as anyone else.

I know that people don't think of it this way often enough, but there's no way to look at it differently if your eyes are open. If I take your money at gunpoint and give it to somebody else I think deserves it more than you do, I'm a robber. If I do it by legislation, or I vote in candidates, I'm a poor person, I vote in candidates who take your money and give it to me, it's just the same kind of robbery.

It's just been laundered. Your money's being laundered before it gets to me, and it looks legit. It's not legit.

It's theft. People have rights to their property. Let me show you something that Jesus said in another parable in Matthew chapter 20.

I don't want to read this whole parable because we don't have the time, but it's a parable that you all know about how a man went out and hired some people to work in his vineyard in the morning, hired some more later, and some more later, and some more later, at different times of the day, and each of them got the same coin. It's what he promised to the first ones, and then the ones who worked less got the same coin, which made the ones who worked all day feel a little bit resentful. It says in verse 13, he, the master, answered to them and said, Friend, I'm doing you no wrong.

Did you not agree with me for a denarius? Okay, we're under contract. You work a day, I

give you a denarius. You agreed to that, right? I gave you a denarius.

I've done you no wrong, right? I did what we agreed to. He says, Take what is yours and go your way. If I wish to give to this last man the same as to you, is it not lawful for me to do what I wish with my own things? Is this not an affirmation of personal property rights? Jesus expects his audience to realize this man has a good case.

It's lawful for him to do what he wants with his own things. Now, if he wants to give to charity, well, it'll be pleasing to God if he does it with the right heart. We should give to charity.

We should help the poor. There shouldn't be any problem with poverty if people are voluntarily showing the kind of charity that they are capable of and ought to do. But it's not the place of a government or any other third party to come and say, You're not being charitable enough, so I'm going to take your money.

I'm going to be charitable with your money. There's no virtue in it. In fact, it's a crime.

And, you know, people can argue against that. Any leftist who listens to this lecture will say, Oh, you're wrong about that. Prove it.

The law of Moses, the Ten Commandments, are all about justice and rights. The right of parents to be honored by their children because it's owed to them. The rights of people to their own life, not to be molested by others.

The right of a man and woman to have their spouse left alone by outsiders. The right of everyone to their own property and to disperse it as they wish, even if they do it badly. They'll answer to God for that.

Bad stewardship? God will answer. You'll answer to God for that. But you don't answer to anybody else for it.

It's lawful for you to do what you want with your own money. Now, God, of course, can lay bigger obligations on us as Christians. They'll never be in the area of injustice, but in the area of mercy.

God will never tell me to take somebody else's money. That's an injustice. But he might tell me to give mine to someone else.

That's mercy. Mercy is more than just. But anything that's less than just is not mercy.

It's less than just for a government to take someone's money that they earned. That's less than just. And give it to someone else.

They're not being more than just. They're not being merciful. It's not merciful to give away what isn't yours to give away, what you got by robbery.

And as inflammatory as that may sound, it simply is the case. Now, this is what justice is. It means that we stand for innocent parties, and we stand in favor of legal penalties for people who commit crimes.

That's justice. That's what the government is ordained by God to do, to punish evil doers, Paul said. So that's real justice.

But what is social justice? Well, the way the term is used now, more often than not, is identified with identity politics. True, people sometimes use the word social justice who aren't talking about identity politics. But nine times out of ten, if not more than that, they're talking about identity politics.

What's that mean? It means if you have a racial identity or a sexual identity or an economic identity, you're a poor person, the people in that identity group have collective rights and claims against people of other groups. So that if, let's say, you're part of a race that was your ancestors were slaves, just theoretically. I've got someone here like that.

Okay, well, that was not very nice of the people who kept them in slavery. That's actually an injustice. But it strikes me that that's an injustice that was redressed over 100 years ago through a lot of white bloodshed.

I mean, it's not as if the whites haven't paid a price for that horrible crime. We can't keep exacting that price on their children and grandchildren, great-grandchildren. That's like the Hatfields and the McCoys.

There's an offense by two people, and then that goes on for generations. Why? That's just because everyone's blinded by anger, hatred, and irrationality. But rationally thinking, if my ancestors were badly treated, and mine were, I was Irish, I mean, half Irish.

I have ancestors who came to this country and the Irish in New York were very badly treated. I'm not going to go looking for those people who treated my ancestors badly and say, hey, you owe me. They never did anything to me personally.

And justice means if you do something to me personally, you personally should be punished. That's justice. But if you say your ancestors or your collective group did, some of them did things to people of my collective identity group, therefore your whole group owes us something.

That's what's called social justice. The idea that you're part of a group that seems to be aggrieved, that some of your members may still be. I mean, take the complaints that black people have about racial violence.

There is racism. There is horrible racism. There are certainly black people who have been

horribly treated, and a great number, probably a lot more than most ethnic groups in our country.

But not all black people have been. Some have. Not all.

The ones who have should have a legal case against those who mistreated them, the individuals, not the whole race. God doesn't practice racial justice or group justice. Let me show you something that God said, and which most of you know, in Ezekiel chapter 18.

Ezekiel chapter 18, verse 20. It says, But the soul who sins shall die. The son shall not bear the guilt of the father, nor the father bear the guilt of the son.

The righteousness of the righteous shall be upon himself individually, and the wickedness of the wicked shall be upon himself. This doesn't even extend to immediate relatives, much less the whole race and generations to come. If a man does a wicked thing, he should die for that.

If it's a capital thing, he should die for it. He should at least be punished for it. People should be punished for wicked things they do.

They should not be punished for wicked things other people did. As popular as it is, to state the case otherwise, the Bible forbids it. You can't even be rightfully punished for your father's sin, much less your grandfather, great-grandfather, go back however far you want.

Justice is individual. Every idle word you speak, you'll give account to it on the day of judgment. Your individual behavior is what needs to be evaluated, and the penalties should go to those who don't practice it.

If you look at Deuteronomy chapter 24, this is the same thing we saw in Ezekiel, only it's codified into the law of Israel. It's again instruction to the courts about how to exercise justice. In Deuteronomy 24 and verse 16, The father shall not be put to death for their children, nor shall the children be put to death for their fathers.

A person shall be put to death for his own sin. Now this is not about capital crimes, of course, but the principle extends all the way down. If criminal penalties are owed, whether it's death, imprisonment, fines, repayment, well, that's for the criminal to pay, not for his son or his father or neighbor who happens to be of the same race or of the same opinion as him.

The person who does it is the one who's penalized. If you look over at Exodus chapter 23, and I'm really fairly close to done here. Verses 3 and 6. Again, this is instruction to courts, but it should be practiced, of course, in our private lives as well, in private justice relations.

Exodus 23, 3. You shall not show partiality to the poor man in his dispute. Verse 6. You should not pervert the judgment of your poor in his dispute. What's that mean? The second one means you shall not rule against a poor man because he's poor.

The first one means you should not rule in favor of a poor man because he's poor. In other words, his poverty has nothing to do with what he deserves. He deserves the consequences of his actions.

And it's true, it's much more often that the courts will punish a rich man in favor of a poor man, regardless of where the guilt lies because there's obviously, I mean, that's today. In the old days, they punished the poor man more than the rich. And maybe that happens more often.

I don't know what's more common in courts, but I know what's talked about more. I know that perhaps the injustice in the courts historically has been that the judgment of the poor has been perverted against them. And whoever can bribe the judge, whoever's rich enough to bribe the judge gets what he wants.

And that's obviously a classic form of injustice in the courts in every society. But the other part is talked about more today. It's almost like it's advocated that we need to judge in favor of a poor man because he's poor.

So let's say a man is killed by the cops. And let's say it turns out the killing was not justified. The cop is in error.

He did the wrong thing. Now, shall we say that everybody of that cop's race should be punished for, you know, frankly, by those who are of the victim's race? Well, who knows? I mean, certainly not, but who knows whether the victim was even killed for his race? What if the victim was actually a criminal? It may be that it was unfair to kill him, but he might not have been approached by the police at all if he was an innocent man. We don't know.

You have to hear more than just what the race was of the perpetrator and the victim. You need to know why was the arrest being made? Did it have anything to do with racial concerns at all? You see, in our day, we simply say certain races have been marginalized and oppressed historically, and nowadays we owe it to them to judge in favor of them without even looking into the question of what they deserve or what they're owed or what are the facts of the matter? And since there's, you know, the white race, of course, is a very privileged race. I know an awful lot of white people that don't seem very privileged to me.

You know, people who live in trailer courts and stuff like that don't seem real privileged, but there's an awful lot of... The thing that's so crazy about this is there's people of every race. God bless you, brother. There's people of every race who are doing well.

There's people of every race who are senators and presidents and, you know, judges and wealthy people, corporation owners. Every race, there's representation of them in those fields. And there's people of every race who are poor.

But the whole suggestion that... Remember when Joe Biden said... What did he say? He said, you know, poor kids, they can be as smart as white kids. Remember that statement? One of Joe Biden's statements. Yeah.

Poor kids can be as bright as black kids. Well, I'm sure they can, but what's that got to do with anything? Is he saying poor kids are necessarily black and they're not white kids? He's obviously making that contrast. I think it is often thought blacks, they're poor.

Blacks, they live in the ghetto. Blacks, they're underprivileged. Well, that certainly is true of a lot of blacks.

You'll actually find some Hispanics too, and whites, and even Asians who are in ghettos. My daughters live in Koreatown in LA, and it's pretty ghetto-like. You know? I'm not saying all Koreans live in ghettos.

Certainly not. Most Koreans, I think, in this country are very prosperous and do very well, but there's ghettos. Ghettos are not a function of race.

Poverty is not a function of race. Poverty comes from many kinds of injustices. But to assume that something happens because of race and that we automatically take the side of the race that has historically, their people have been oppressed is to do the foolish thing that Biden warns against.

He that answers a matter before he hears it, it's a shame and a folly to him. Many people pass judgment when they hear about a crime. Immediately, they say, oh, I know who needs reparations for this deal.

I know who's got to go to jail for this. Maybe so. Sometimes we do know.

Sometimes it's obvious. But even when it's obvious, it's not always obvious whether it's a social injustice in the sense of a racially-motivated thing. Human interactions are much more complicated than that.

That's why when there are trials, there's evidence sought. There's testimony sought. There's juries have to argue over the evidence because it's complicated and it's an oversimplification.

Social justice, as it is advocated today, is a criminally oversimplified version of justice. In fact, in many cases, it's simply another form of injustice. It's people who would regard themselves as social justice warriors who are breaking windows and looting and so forth.

I'm not saying all social justice people are, but the people who are doing it certainly

would call themselves that. They're doing it in the name of social justice. And yet, what justice is there in that? The storefront that they destroyed, the store they burned down, might have been owned by a Korean family or a black family or a white family.

It doesn't really matter what color they are because they didn't do anything to deserve it. This is not justice. This is criminal.

This is justified injustice, is what it is. And we need to think clearly because if God wants us to bring forth the fruit of justice in the world, we can't be swept away with notions of justice that the enemy created in order to bring disharmony, in order to bring injustice, in order to bring civil war or whatever. The enemy wants that so badly so he created a parody of the word justice.

And I only say this because I know I'm hearing from Christians or people who say they're Christians. I don't know what they are, but maybe they're Christians and they don't seem to understand anything about justice. And since that's the primary assignment of the church is to bring forth justice in the earth, and it isn't happening because some Christians don't even know what justice is.

I consider this to be a fault of the churches. I don't know if I've ever been in a church where they taught what justice is and what the obligation is of Christians to practice justice. It's just not, and why not? It's as plain as the nose on your face in the Bible.

And yet, you know, I guess maybe you won't get as many people in the church if you force them to be just. I don't know what it is, but I know that Christians have not been disciplined in this area apparently adequately, and it is the fault of the churches for not doing it, but it's also the fault of the individuals because they have Bibles. You know, back before the Bible was in print, you could forgive those medieval Christians for being subnormal Christians.

They didn't have a Bible. They had to follow what the priest said to do, and it was often in a language that they couldn't understand, Latin. But now we have Bibles.

It's true. The clergy still have responsibility and bear guilt for neglecting their duty, but anyone who has a Bible can't slough off their responsibility on the preacher. You got a bad preacher, read the Bible yourself.

I've sat under a lot of bad preachers in the sense that they were negligent, but I read my Bible myself, and anyone can do that if they want to. So we need to be a people who do bring forth justice, and there's one other passage I want to read and we'll be done, and that's in Isaiah chapter 42. Isaiah 42 is a messianic prophecy.

It is quoted in Matthew chapter 12, I believe, as being fulfilled in Jesus' ministry. Jesus is the character in view, and his activities that are described here had to do with what he was initiating in his ministry. Chapter 42, verses 1 through 4, Behold my servant whom I

uphold.

Now as I read this, count the number of times the word justice is used in connection with Jesus' ministry. Behold my servant whom I uphold, my elect one in whom my soul delights. I have put my spirit upon him.

He will bring forth justice to the Gentiles. He will not cry nor raise his voice nor cause his voice to be heard in the street. A bruised reed he will not break, a smoking flax he will not quench.

He will bring forth justice for truth. He will not fail nor be discouraged until he has established justice in the earth, and the coastline shall wait for his law. This time about the global commission of the church.

The nations of the world are waiting to hear from Christ, waiting for his rule, waiting for us to bring the message to the kingdom. And what's the effect of that? Justice. And by the way, justice has to a very large degree invaded that part of the world that has been affected by Christianity.

There's still plenty of injustice. There's a lot of people who aren't Christians, but virtually all modern concepts that are valid of justice have come to us from civilization through the influence of the church. Unfortunately, the church is not very consistent in following what it preaches in some cases, but it is the gospel of Jesus Christ that has made Western civilization embrace somewhat more sensible patterns of justice than you'll find in, let's say, the Muslim world, the communist world, which rejects Christianity, and many others that don't, they don't have the light of scripture.

Jesus is the light of the world, and he brings justice to the nations, and he does it through us, because we're his body, we're his hands and his feet. And so, again, if you read the Bible through alerted to the fact that God is concerned about justice, you'll see it everywhere. And you'll see it in the teaching of Jesus, too, and Paul, and the rest.