

THE BEREANS

ACTS 17:11

James 1:9-10
Lesson #24
Social Justice & the Cross
03/26/2023



2 Timothy 3

“1 . . . in the last days difficult times will come. 2 For men will be . . . 5 **holding to a form (optics) of godliness**, although they have denied its power. Avoid such men as these.”

(Matt.23:3 - They don't practice what they preach.)

Four distortions of godliness

1. It's all about **emotional experience**.
2. It's all about **sacramental tradition**.
3. It's all about **legalistic discipline**.
4. It's all about **social reform**.

General observations

1. **Social ethics is a major theme in Scripture.**
2. It is centered, almost exclusively, on the **dynamics within the faith community.**
3. When the Scripture does speak of social justice in the Roman empire, it **speaks of peacemaking not systemic reform.**
4. We can assume that the Scripture is **coherent, consistent, and authoritative on this subject.**
5. **Could we be missing the point?**



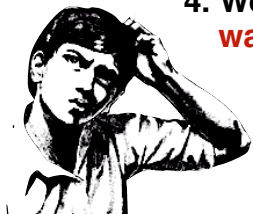
Consider

1. The **future is dark** for this life **Matt.24.**
2. Our hope is not in this world, **but in Christ's return (1 Cor.15:19).**
3. We are called to **suffer in this life (1 Pet.2:21).**
4. We are commanded to **wait on the Lord (2 Pet.3:13).**

5. We have a strong impulse **to live for the "present" (1 Cor.4:8-13).**

James 1

“9 But the brother of **humble circumstances** is to glory in his high position; 10 and the **rich man** is to glory in his humiliation, because like flowering grass he will pass away.”

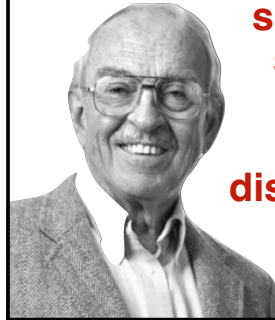


1 Corinthians 1

“²⁶ For consider your calling, brethren, that there were not many wise according to the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble; ²⁷ but God has chosen the foolish things of the world **to shame the wise**, and God has chosen the weak things of the world **to shame the things which are strong**, ²⁸ and the base things of the world and the despised, God has chosen, the things that are not, that He might **nullify the things that are**, ²⁹ that no man should boast before God. ³⁰ But by His doing you are in Christ Jesus, who became to us wisdom from God, and righteousness and sanctification, and redemption, ³¹ that, just as it is written, “*Let him who boasts, boast in the Lord.*””

When our hope is in reforming this world we run the risk of mocking the Cross rather than the world.

“When we want to effect change, we almost always contact people with influence, prestige and power.



When God wanted to save the world, he selected slaves, prostitutes and sundry other disadvantaged folk.”

Ron J. Sider
“Rich Christians in an Age of Hunger”

John 14:27

“Peace I leave with you; My peace I give to you; not as the world gives, do I give to you. Let not your heart be **troubled**, nor let it be **fearful**.

How does the world seek peace?

Political / social reform -

- of this world and life

“No justice, no peace”

“the Kingdom before its time and without its King”

John 14:27

“Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you; not as the world gives, do I give to you. Let not your heart be **troubled**, nor let it be **fearful**.

God’s strength through our weakness

Peter, before Pentecost
a man of the sword.

Paul, before a thorn in the flesh
a man with visions of paradise.

Peter, after Pentecost
a suffering servant.

Paul, after a thorn in the flesh
a man of strength through weakness.

James 2

“¹ My brethren, do not hold your faith in our glorious Lord Jesus Christ with *an attitude of* **personal favoritism**.”

“² For if a man comes into your assembly with a gold ring and dressed in fine clothes, and there also comes in a poor man in dirty clothes, ³ and you pay special attention to the one who is wearing the fine clothes, and say, “You sit here in a good place,” and you say to the poor man, “You stand over there, or sit down by my footstool,”

⁴ have you not made distinctions among yourselves, and become **judges with evil motives?**”

James 2

“⁵ Listen, my beloved brethren: did not God **choose** the poor (have nots) of this world *to be* rich in faith and heirs of the kingdom which He promised to those who love Him? ⁶ But you have **dishonored** the poor man (have nots). Is it not the rich (have lots) who **oppress** you and personally drag you into court? ⁷ Do they not **blaspheme** the fair name by which you have been called?”

Jesus Revolution

the Cast

Kelsey Grammer
plays **Chuck Smith**

Jonathan Roumie
plays **Lonnie Frisbee**

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The Prince of Peace

did not change his circumstances or ours, nor did he cultivate hope through politics or force, but he modeled a peacemaker Spirit and shared it with all who would place their faith in him.

It would be viewed, by many, as “foolish” and an “obstacle” to social justice, but to the “called” it would be the power and wisdom of God. *1Cor.1:24*

He called political zealots, to become “peacemakers”, who would share his suffering and his power, but not change the Roman Empire’s systems.

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We live in an environment with two different perspectives.

The world demands that ethical teachings are deemed relevant, only when reduced to **political action that changes circumstances.**

The Word and Way of the Cross addresses social injustice - by changing, not the circumstances, but the **human response to the circumstances.**

This is critical to our understanding of Biblical social justice.

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John 16:33

“These things I have spoken to you, that **in Me you may have peace. In the world you have tribulation**, but take courage; I have overcome the world.”

1 Corinthians 7

“20 **Let each man remain in that condition in which he was called.** 21 Were you called while a slave? Do not worry about it; but if you are able also to become free, rather do that. 22 For he who was called in the Lord while a slave, is the Lord’s freedman; likewise he who was called while free, is Christ’s slave. 23 **You were bought with a price; do not become slaves of men.** 24 Brethren, let each man remain with God in that condition in which he was called.”

15

Romans 12

Paul’s great commission

vs 1a

1. Grace of God deeply sensed

vs 1b-2

2. Cross of Christ willingly carried

vs 3-5

3. Body of Christ rightly discerned

vs 6-8

4. Gifts of the Spirit properly used

vs 9-13

5. Love for the brethren openly shown

vs 14-21

6. Response to the world graciously given

Our platform for social reform

The order is important

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Romans 12

“14 Bless those who persecute you; bless and curse not. 15 Rejoice with those who rejoice, and weep with those who weep. 16 Be of the same mind toward one another; do not be haughty in mind, but associate with the lowly. Do not be wise in your own estimation. 17 **Never pay back evil for evil to anyone.** Respect what is right in the sight of all men. 18 **If possible, so far as it depends on you, be at peace with all men.** 19 Never take your own revenge, beloved, but leave room for the wrath of God, for it is written, “Vengeance is Mine, I will repay,” says the Lord. 20 **“But if your enemy is hungry, feed him, and if he is thirsty, give him a drink; for in so doing you will heap burning coals upon his head.”** 21 Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.”

The concern is not “justice” but “peacemaking”.

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1 Peter 3

“13 Who is there to harm you if you prove zealous for what is good? 14 But even if you should suffer for the sake of righteousness, you are blessed. *And do not fear their intimidation, and do not be troubled,* 15 but sanctify Christ as Lord in your hearts, **always being ready to make a defense to everyone who asks you to give an account for the hope that is in you, yet with gentleness and reverence;** 16 and keep a good conscience so that in the thing in which you are slandered, those who revile your good behavior in Christ may be put to shame. 17 For it is better, if God should will it so, that you suffer for doing what is right rather than for doing what is wrong.”

**Our testimony is not our circumstances
but our response to them.** 18

1 Peter 2

“18 Servants, be **submissive** to your masters with all **respect**, not only to those who are good and gentle, **but also to those who are unreasonable.** 19 For this finds favor, if for the sake of conscience toward God a man bears up under sorrows when suffering unjustly. 20 For what credit is there if, when you sin and are harshly treated, you endure it with patience? **But if when you do what is right and suffer for it you patiently endure it, this finds favor with God.**”

Jesus as example (the Way of the Cross)

“21 For you have been called for this purpose, since **Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example for you to follow in His steps,** 22 *who committed no sin, nor was any deceit found in His mouth;* 23 and while being reviled, He did not revile in return; while suffering, He uttered no threats, but **kept entrusting Himself to Him** who judges righteously; 24 and He Himself bore our sins in His body on the cross, that we might die to sin and live to righteousness; for by His wounds you were healed. 25 For you were continually straying like sheep, but now you have returned to the Shepherd and **Guardian of your souls.**” 19

James 1

“9 But the **brother of humble circumstances** is to glory in his high position;”

**The “have nots”
are to show their spiritual wealth
by not equating it with stuff.**

“10 and the **rich man** *is to glory* in his humiliation, because like flowering grass he will pass away. 11 For the sun rises with a scorching wind and withers the grass; and its flower falls off and the beauty of its appearance is destroyed; so too the rich man in the midst of his pursuits will fade away.”

**The “have lots”
are to be one with the “have nots”
by not holding on to their stuff.**

20

Social Justice

**Social Injustice is a setting
for “power ministry” by both
the “have nots” & “have lots”.**

The WAY of the Cross

**Walk by it.
Don’t get in the way of it.**

**Are we mocking the way of the world,
or the Way of the Cross?**

21

When asked what she had done to reduce poverty she said,

“I have spent most of my life trying to be one with the poor.”



Mother Teresa

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A Berean’s look at ...



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