

# THE GOSPEL AND JUSTICE



## PART 1: THE CROSS, JUSTICE AND POWER Luke 9:18-26

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*Justice is so important to the Lord that it is the foundation of His throne, the reason for the cross, and His call to His people.*

### I. Introduction

Q: What does justice have to do with the Gospel of Jesus Christ? How should we think of terms like “social justice”?

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

The concept of justice runs throughout the Bible, and the call on God’s people to live justly or “do justice” is a central aspect of faithful discipleship to Jesus.

***“He has shown you, O man, what is good. And what does the Lord require of you? To do justice and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God.” Micah 6:8***

In a culture that is screaming at each other, it can be overwhelming even to know what we should think about justice. Here’s a quick summary and preview of what the Bible means by a commitment to justice:

- **Equal treatment for all**
- **Special concern for those without power**
- **Radical generosity**

### II. The Cross, Justice, and Power (Luke 9:18-26)

I want to make three basic observations from this Scripture that I believe should serve as a constant guide for us as we wrestle with the concept of Biblical justice as followers of Jesus.

See context: Jesus is identifying Himself as Israel’s Messiah/ Anointed King (Luke 9:18-20).

**A. The Cross is Necessary to Bring God's Justice  
(Luke 9:21-22, Romans 3:21-26)**

Jesus says he “must” be crucified and resurrected for our salvation (Luke 9:22). Paul tells us that the cross is the means by which God brings His justice to rebellious sinners like me and you (Romans 3:21-26). The necessity of the cross for salvation and true justice with God, along with the resurrection, are the central truths of Christianity.

If you are a Christian who is surprised to hear that God's call to do justice is a central aspect of discipleship, or you are turned off by the phrase “social justice,” let me offer you a potential reason for your confusion.

In the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, there have been two theological movements that have emerged. Both undermine the necessity of the cross in favor of a different “gospel.” (See “Systemic Racism, God's Grace, and the Human Heart: What the Bible Teaches About Structural Sin” by Albert Mohler in the [publicdiscourse.com](http://publicdiscourse.com)).

- Liberal Protestants started the “Social Gospel” movement rejecting the traditional concepts of sin and the need for the atonement of Christ in our place ... making their goal the improvement of society based on the example of Jesus' unselfish love. The mission of the Church was no longer to see unsaved people reconciled to God and see God's Kingdom justice and righteousness on earth, but only to work for “social justice.”
- The second movement is called “liberation theology,” started by some Roman Catholics and Liberal Protestants who took the “Social Gospel” a step further in the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century – they began to analyze society through a Marxist understanding of social revolution – every issue is viewed within the dynamic of oppression and liberation. Western society as a whole and Orthodox Biblical Christianity are seen as systems of organized oppression (The organization Black Lives Matter operates in this philosophy).

**B. God Paradoxically Uses His Power to Save Us  
(Mark 10:35-45, Philippians 2:5-11)**

Consider the radical paradox of how God uses His power to save sinners and bring about justice: In His Son, He relinquishes His right to total power and humbles Himself on a cross. He makes Himself vulnerable to the point of death to save those like us who are spiritually destitute, oppressed, prisoners, and powerless!

Paul tells us this is actually a reflection of God's glory that He is willing to use His power this way (Philippians 2:11).

### C. **Jesus Commands us to Relinquish our Power in the Same Way (Luke 9:23-26)**

There are many applications of Jesus' call to die to ourself and follow Him. One clear application is that we must relinquish to Jesus all that we are and have to be used as He commands.

Those of us who in God's providence have material, social, financial power, must relinquish it to Jesus for His Kingdom purposes and glory.

***[To grow as disciples of Jesus, we must become] "concerned about the most vulnerable, poor, and marginalized members of our society, and [make] long-term personal sacrifices in order to serve their interests, needs, and cause. This is, according to the Bible, what it means to 'do justice.'" Tim Keller, Generous Justice.***

### III. **Our Motivation is the Gospel**

Our motivation for doing justice can never be guilt or shame. It must be the Gospel: by the power of God's grace waking us up, we see ourselves and God in the true light. We see that we were hopeless before God – estranged, condemned, powerless, and spiritually destitute apart from Jesus Christ.

But God in Christ used His power in the cross and resurrection to save us – to declare us just, forgiven, redeemed, reconciled, and adopted daughters and sons, who reflect His character by living justly.

Let's humble ourselves before Jesus as our Savior and praise Him for our salvation. Let's humble ourselves before Jesus as our Lord – let's respond to His call to sit with Him in the justice room and learn from Him how to live.

Memory Verse: *"He has shown you, O man, what is good. And what does the Lord require of you? To do justice and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God."* Micah 6:8

Recommended:

1. Book: *"Generous Justice" by Tim Keller*
2. Article: *"Systemic Racism, God's Grace, and the Human Heart: What the Bible Teaches About Structural Sin" by Albert Mohler (publicdiscourse.com)*