

Trending vs. Truth
Is "Social Justice" Biblical Justice? (Part 1)
Selected Scriptures
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Well, this morning, as I already mentioned, a major category 4 hurricane threatens to destroy portions of the Louisiana coast. This week as I read the news about that gathering storm, I realized that in a very real sense, hurricane Ida is a kind of metaphor for what's happening in our country. A metaphor for the devastating moral storms that are sweeping across our land leaving trails of destruction in their path. Just to remind you, after finishing our study of the book of Romans, we've taken a break this summer before we begin 1 John in a couple of weeks to consider a few of the major storms, the major moral issues, dividing our country and destroying our culture.

The last three times that I've taught, we've considered the Gender Issue. Lord willing, today and next Sunday, I want to examine another major moral issue that has taken our country by storm. And that is the Social Justice Movement. Now, as we begin, let me frame it this way: our culture has rejected the Biblical teaching about the sin of racism and the Biblical solution and has embraced, in its place, the Social Justice Movement and its Marxist philosophy. Now, many Christians are understandably tempted to support this movement. I say understandably because, as believers, of course, we understand that we should completely and utterly reject racism. We also have beating in our hearts a desire for justice - for true justice, for true social justice. But as we will discover today and next week, the justice that is offered in the Social Justice Movement is not Biblical justice. In fact, as we will learn, by God's standard, it is injustice.

Now, the proponents of the Social Justice Movement say that they want us to renounce racism and promote justice. Those seem like, certainly, worthy goals but one thing you have to understand is that we are talking two different languages. Their definitions of the key terms - both racism and justice - are unique. They reject the traditional definitions and hold only to those definitions that they have created. Their authorities are untrustworthy. They ignore the Scripture and support their ideas with the teaching of scholars in the fields of sociology and philosophy. Their diagnosis of the real problem is flawed. They teach that racism is not because of the fall and human depravity, but it is instead the external struggle for power and economic advantage. Their assignment of guilt is unjust. They don't assign guilt based on the heart and actions of individuals, but rather based on race and life circumstances. Their solution to the problem is completely worthless because their solution does not seek to root out societal injustices

but merely reverses the role or the roles of oppressors and oppressed. It completely ignores the real problem behind racism and injustice - the fallen human heart. And, in the end of it all, there's no forgiveness and no lasting change, only perpetual penance. That's the only solution.

Now as we begin, let me just make it clear that there are two very wrong reactions that, as Christians, we can have to the Social Justice Movement in our country. On the one end, one wrong reaction is to deny that the sin of racism - in Biblical terms that's the sins of prejudice, favoritism, and hatred - to deny that the sin of racism is still pervasive in the human heart and, therefore, in our culture and in all cultures. That's a wrong reaction. A second wrong reaction is to embrace the Social Justice Movement as both the right diagnosis of the problem and the right solution to the problem.

Now as we begin this study, I also want to begin with a couple of important caveats. The first caveat is this, and you understand this, this is a complex issue and simply cannot be exhaustively explained in two sermons. In preparation for these messages, I've read many articles and six books, both pro and con. And I just have to tell you, honestly, I found myself so frustrated this week because it's impossible to say everything I want to say in these two messages, but I don't want to have more messages on this issue. So, understand that my goal is not to exhaust this subject or you but to inform you of the main issues that are involved. A second caveat is that if, when I finish today, you feel that I've neglected something important, please don't draw any final conclusions until you've heard next week's message. Obviously, I can't say everything important today so please stay tuned and give me time. Hopefully, by the time I'm done, I will have covered the important issues. Thirdly, another caveat I want to give you is the first half of today's message is going to be more like a classroom as we seek to understand the sort of prevailing secular philosophy that's out there and then the second half of this message and next week we'll turn to the Scripture. So, please be patient with me. We are going to get there but I think it's crucial to understand what's actually being taught in our world. And then the final caveat I would give is this: I love that our church increasingly reflects the ethnic diversity of DFW. That's how it should be. You know, gathered around the throne someday, there are going to people of every tribe and tongue and nation. That's what the kingdom of Christ is like. I love that and it's been my fervent prayer that this issue and my addressing it, I don't want it to disrupt or endanger the sweet unity that we enjoy in Christ. Can we all commit together both to pray for that and to endeavor that in our own hearts and lives?

Now with that, with those caveats, let's begin our study of this issue as we have throughout this series on what's trending by considering, first of all, a functional definition. What does the Social Justice Movement teach?

Now before we look at what it is, let's first consider as I often do, what it's not because some Christians are carelessly labeling true believers with Biblical commitments as if they have embraced the Social Justice Movement unfairly. They're accusing them of that. In his really helpful book, Christianity and Wokeness, Owen Strachan includes a list of what "wokeness" or embracing the Social Justice Movement is not. He points out that if you have these priorities, it doesn't mean that you have capitulated and become a social justice warrior. He points out, for example, that it's not wanting societal harmony across backgrounds and skin colors. That's not "wokeness" It's not seeing massive failings in American and Western history - namely, long and sustained patterns of racist thought and practice. It's not being troubled by Christians complicity with racism in the past. It's not wanting greater justice in a world that is filled with injustice. It's not grieving the needless deaths of human beings who are made in the image of God. None of those things, having those priorities is not buying into the Social Justice Movement. Those are proper Christian responses. So don't hear people expressing those things and think that they have bought into the Social Justice Movement.

So, what is it? Well, let's start with a basic definition. At the heart of the Social Justice Movement is a secular philosophy called the Critical Race Theory - and I'm going to deal with this in more length in a moment - but let me just start with a definition. This is a friendly definition from the UCLA Luskin School of Public Affairs. This is not its enemies. These are those who hold to this view. And this is what they write, "CRT, the Critical Race Theory, recognizes that racism is ingrained in the fabric and system of the American society. The individual racist need not exist to note that institutional racism is pervasive in the dominant culture. This is the analytical lens that CRT uses in examining existing power structures. CRT identifies that these power structures are based on white privilege and white supremacy which perpetuates the marginalization of people of color." Now, we're going to take some of that apart a little more in a moment but what I want you to see here, in this definition, is that it is a comprehensive worldview.

Now let's begin by considering some key vocabulary because, as we just learned with the Gender Issue, those in the Social Justice Movement don't use traditional definitions of some really important key words. They redefine words to fit their system. And so, we can be using the very same words, think we're saying the same thing when, in reality, we're talking two different languages. So, let's start with some important definitions.

First of all, the word "justice" itself. Biblical justice is conformity to God's standard. That's the meaning of the word for righteousness in scripture. It's conformity to God's standard. And in scripture, Biblical

justice takes two forms. First of all, when it comes to absolutely everyone, scripture requires us to treat others in keeping with the God-given standard. We are to, in Micah 6:8, “to do justice,” or, “to do justly.” That is, we are to treat others in the ways that God has demanded that we treat them. We are to love our neighbor as ourself. We are to carry out the spirit of the Ten Commandments and all of the other commands about how we are to relate to others. That is Biblical Justice. In one sense, conformity to God's standard. The other expression of Biblical justice has to do, specifically, with those in authority. Various authorities, whether in the home or in the government, authorities are required to treat everyone equally before the law in their decisions, Deuteronomy 10:17. We are - those in authority - are to make sure that they're considering of individual cases and their decisions of those cases are characterized by the standard of law, by fairness before the law. That's Biblical justice.

So, what is “justice” in the Social Justice Movement? Again, this would be their definition, “Justice is the destruction of oppressive systems and the redistribution of power and resources from the oppressors, the majority, to the oppressed, the minority, to achieve an equal outcome.” We'll talk about why that's true in just a moment. But that is, as you can see, an entirely different definition of justice.

Let's move on to the word “racism.” Webster's defines racism this way, “it is the belief or doctrine that inherent differences among the various human races has determined cultural or individual achievement, usually involving the idea that one's own race is superior and has the right to rule others.” That is the traditional definition and understanding of racism. Robyn D'Angelo, a leading academic and voice for the Critical Race Theory has an entirely different definition of racism. She writes, “racism is a far-reaching system that functions independently from the intentions or self-images of individual actors.” Now, when you look at those definitions and you look at others out there that are offered to describe the justice or, excuse me, that the describe racism in CRT you'll find some key differences between a traditional definition of racism and the new definition. The two key ones, I think, are these. First of all, traditional racism - a traditional understanding - is that it is an individual response but in the new definition, it is a collective response. It is a systemic or structural response. The other difference between racism in these two definitions is that, typically, traditional racism has referred to this as a universal issue. In other words, there is no human being who cannot demonstrate this sin. In the new definition of racism, only those in the majority can demonstrate racism. If you're in the minority, that is impossible. Now, these are key changes and, by the way, there's a huge current push to change all of the dictionary definitions - and, by the way, this is still the definition in Webster's, Oxford's dictionary and so forth - to change all of those dictionary definitions to fit this new Theory.

Now, there are a couple of other definitions I need to give you. I wish I didn't, but we need to do it because they're part of the words that are used in the definitions that are given - even that I've already shared with you. So let me look at them briefly. First of all, "white privilege." This means that whites are born with society balanced in their favor and, therefore, with advantages, prejudices, and assumptions that make them oppressors, whether they know it or not. White supremacy - anything that supports or promotes white privilege. White fragility - the inherent inability of a person in the majority to reasonably discuss race because of that person's privilege. In other words, because you are in the majority, you have no real sense of what oppression is and, therefore, you are not in a position to really discuss it because you intuitively only understand the privileged. Standpoint epistemology is the idea that the lived experience of those in the minority outweighs objective evidence and reason when discussing issues of oppression. So, in other words, the very fact that a person is in the minority -whatever that minority may be and whatever cultural contracts - they are the only ones who can truly understand what oppression is and say, "yes, I am being oppressed at this moment." Even if there is a discussion to say, well, let's look at the objective evidence to see if that measures out, that's not valid because, if you're in the majority, you don't have the capacity nor the standpoint to determine that. And then, finally, woke or wokeness is being awake to systemic oppression, that's taught in the CRT and embracing the need for the redistribution of power from the oppressor to the oppressed. Now, if you don't understand all of that, that's okay, but I want you to get the big picture and we're going to fill out a little bit more as we move along. That's a functional definition.

Secondly, let's consider its philosophical formation: how did this concept develop?

The Social Justice Movement grew into its current form in three basic stages. It began with Marxism. Karl Marx wanted to construct a worldview that was consistent with his atheism. If you doubt that, we read The Communist Manifesto written in 1848. Here's one quote, "communism abolishes eternal truths." That is the goal of Marxism. Marx's endeavor was to replace God with a solely materialistic worldview, get everything metaphysical, everything divine out of the picture and let's instead just look at the physical and let's interpret the world based on physical realities. Now, when he looked at the problems that people deal with in this life, Marx said the basic problem with people is not sin. It is, instead, the fault of society's institutions - government, family, and so forth. Our problems, he said, are institutional. They are structural. They are systemic. I don't want to spend a lot of time here, but here's Webster's definition of Marxism, "it is the system of economic and political thought developed by Karl Marx along with Frederick Engels, especially the doctrine that the state throughout history has been a

device for the exploitation of the masses by a dominant ruling class. That class struggle has been the main agency of historical change.” In other words, revolution. The haves, Marx said, have more than the have-nots because the have-nots are forced to live in a rigged, unfair system. The solution, Marx said, was communism - revolution accompanied by the destruction of existing authorities and the rebuilding of a new Communistic authority.

Marxism eventually gave birth to a second stage in this development and that is the Critical Theory. In 1923, a network of Marxists, disillusioned with classical Marxism because it hadn't become all that they had hoped, began what's called the Frankfurt School in Frankfurt, Germany. These key individuals included Antonio Gramsci, Herbert Marcuse, Max Horkheimer - three men. Their goal was to implement Neo-Marxism around the world. It was in the year 1937 that one of them horde Horkheimer coined and defined the expression, “Critical Theory” in an essay that he wrote. The Critical Theory, also called Cultural Marxism, grows out of classical Marxism and argues that, in every society there are the oppressors and there are the oppressed. The oppressors, the privileged, keep in power by enforcing their values and norms. Now Marx focused on economic inequalities and saw oppression happening through economic and political power. The Critical Theory and the Frankfurt School, they added inequalities between ethnic groups, the sexes, and gender identity groups. Those in the majority are privileged and oppressive of those in the minority, or underprivileged and oppressed. And by the way, that's not just true in America. That's not just true with the predominant races here. That's true in every culture, at some level, whatever country you choose. They argued that those in power use knowledge and language as tools of oppression to maintain power. Jeffrey Johnson, in his helpful book writes this, “it's not necessarily jails or prisons that keep the have-nots oppressed. It is language itself that is holding them down. The haves defined the meaning of words, and such prescribed meaning is what keeps the have-nots in line and submissive and” - listen to this. This is important. This is the heart of Critical Theory – “any authoritative meaning that passes itself off as objective truth is inherently discriminating and oppressive.” Now, in the 1930s, these professors in the Frankfurt School fled Germany because of Adolf Hitler. Eventually, they came to the United States and settled, in 1935, in New York at Columbia University where they began to teach. From there, during the following decades throughout the 20th century, they worked tirelessly to spread this philosophy across the academic world in America and beyond. And folks, they were wildly successful. If you doubt that, just go online and Google the Critical Theory or the Critical Race Theory studies in universities and you'll see it permeates the academic world. Undoubtedly, it permeates your dear old alma mater as well.

Now, this Theory eventually became the basis in the third stage of this development, the Critical Race Theory. In the Critical Theory, at the top are privileged oppressors. at the bottom are oppressed victims. In the Critical Race Theory, this is applied to race, to sex, and to gender. Scott Allen in his helpful book on this subject writes this, “white, heteronormative males have established and maintained hegemonic power structures to oppress and subjugate women, people of color, and sexual minorities” - meaning LGBTQ+ and others. So that's the idea. White, heteronormative males have established these power structures to oppress women, people of color, and sexual minorities. Tom Ascol writes in another helpful book By What Standard writes, “men, heterosexuals and cisgender” – cisgender is a person who says my gender identity matches my birth sex – “whites, men, heterosexual and cisgender, czar all majority groups, therefore, according to CRT, inherently oppressive just by belonging to those groups.” Now, you'll notice that the Critical Race Theory goes beyond race. When the Sexual Revolution joined forces with cultural Marxism, they came to the decision that those who hold, like us, traditional morality are oppressors. In other words., I don't care what your ethnicity or sex is, you are an oppressor by the very fact that you believe what we believe as Christians because you have embraced a controlling set of objective truths, as we call them. In fact, they argue that the idea, for example, that there's only male and female that that was created by the oppressive class of heterosexual males to maintain control. One of the Frankfurt School philosophers, Herbert Marcuse, taught that - listen to this - the tolerance of different lifestyles in a free society is really pseudo tolerance hidden beneath the repressive superstructure of traditional norms. He said, for there to be real freedom, all traditional views of morality and all who hold them have to go.

It is this focus beyond race that explains the common use of another word you need to know that's used in CRT and that is “intersectionality.” You'll hear that word. What does it mean? Intersectionality describes those who are in multiple oppressed groups, not just racial minorities. You experience, for example, intersectionality if you are not only black but you are a woman and you are lesbian. You are now in three minority groups and all the different ways that you are oppressed intersect. That's intersectionality.

Now, how does all of this get resolved? What's the solution according to the Social Justice Movement or Critical Race Theory? Well, like classical Marxism - don't miss this - the only solution is revolution. Oppressed victims and their supporters or allies must unite to unmask oppressive power structures and redistribute power from oppressor to oppressed. How does that happen? Well, the tactics of today's

revolutionaries include public shaming, forced reeducation, threats and even the loss of employment. As one author pointed out, these tactics are not unlike those of Chairman Mao and his cultural revolution.

Now I have just flown across the top of this issue. If you want to learn more about the Critical Race Theory and its influence in the Social Justice Movement, I recommend three books to you. I'll recommend some others next week, but three books that will deal with this: Christianity and Wokeness by Owen Strachan, Fault Lines by Voddie T. Baucham Jr., and What Every Christian Needs to Know about Social Justice by Jeffrey Johnson. But I hope I've at least given you enough history for you to get my main point and that is the foundations of the Critical Race Theory that is sweeping across the American landscape like a hurricane is completely and utterly bankrupt.

So, with that background, thirdly, let's turn to the scripture and consider the spiritual foundations. What is its source. At a spiritual level, where does the Social Justice Movement, and the Critical Race Theory that serves as its philosophical foundation, where do they come from? What is the spiritual foundation on which this flawed secular theory is based? Let me start with a couple of sort of more surface observations and then, as we go, we'll get deeper into the issue.

First of all, I think one foundation of this is the residual image of God and a residual desire for justice in the human heart.

Genesis 1:27 says that, "God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him; male and female, He created them." As we learned last week as we looked at the issue of gender, part of the image of God that Adam was created with included spiritual endowments and part of the spiritual endowment he received was righteousness - rightly treating other people according to God's standard. But sadly, the image of God that included that righteousness was terribly marred because of the Fall. Still, because of the residual image of God in man – in all men - there is in many even unbelieving people, a desire for justice to be done. But here's the problem: our sense of justice has been terribly distorted by both the Fall and our own fallen hearts.

A second source of the Social Justice Movement and the Critical Race Theory, is a national sense of guilt for slavery. I think you understand that a people or a nation can be marked by certain sins. For example, if I were to take you back to the Old Testament, I could show you passages where Israel was again and again marked by the sin of idolatry. They were known for that sin. The Babylonians for their pride and self-exaltation certainly shown so clearly in the life of Nebuchadnezzar in Daniel chapter 4. You look at the Assyrians and you find that they were, as a people, as a culture, bloody, brutal, violent people. And

of course, the New Testament example is not a very flattering one. If you look at Titus 1:12, Paul says, "One of them, a prophet of their own, said, 'Cretans are always liars, evil beasts, lazy gluttons.'" And Paul says, "this testimony is true." Wow. What was he saying? He was saying that nations and peoples can be marked by certain sins. That doesn't mean everyone in that nation or people group commits those sins, but there can be a mark of sin. As a result of sins committed by many in the culture or the group, there can be, therefore, a collective sense of guilt - even among unbelievers. And believers within that nation or group find themselves acknowledging those sins in their people and asking God to be compassionate and gracious in spite of those sins. Great examples are Nehemiah 9, the prayer of Nehemiah there, as well as Daniel 9. In Nehemiah 9, Nehemiah acknowledges Israel's past sins as they reaffirm their Covenant to God. And in Daniel 9, Daniel acknowledges the sins of the previous generations, God's just punishment for those sins on those people, and the lasting consequences even up to Daniel's time. He seeks God's forgiveness - this is really important - he seeks God's forgiveness and grace for his own sins and for the sins of the people whom he currently represents as God's prophet in Daniel 9. But what you don't find in either of those passages is - not Nehemiah or Daniel - asking God to forgive personal guilt because of the sins of others.

Now, how does this factor into our own situation? Our culture has been forced to acknowledge the reality of our nation's sin and the lasting effect of that sin and that awareness creates guilt that people seek to alleviate. I'm convinced that the wholesale cultural acceptance of the Critical Race Theory stems, in part, from this national sense of guilt.

There's a third spiritual source of this - and now we get more to the heart of the issue - it is a sinful distortion of Biblical Justice.

You see, the Critical Race Theory holds a distorted view of justice. In Biblical justice, guilt is individual. In the Critical Race Theory, it's corporate. In Biblical justice, you are guilty because of personal sin. In CRT, you are guilty because of the sins that your ancestors or your ethnic group commit. Is that what scripture teaches? The answer is: absolutely not. Let me show you what scripture teaches.

First of all, scripture teaches that we are not personally guilty because we belong to a culture where certain sins predominate.

Turn to Genesis 18. You remember the context here. God has determined to destroy the cities of the plain, the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah, because of their homosexuality that permeated the culture. Their aggressive homosexuality - demonstrated even in the story that you're familiar with- and in

response to that, Abraham begins a discussion with God. He's concerned about Lot, his relative, and his family. And so, look at Genesis 18:22, "Then the men turned away from there and went towards Sodom" - the angels - "while Abraham was still standing before Yahweh." So, Abraham is having this discussion with God.

Abraham came near and said, "Will You indeed sweep away the righteous with the wicked? Suppose there are fifty righteous within the city. Will you indeed sweep it away and not spare the place for the sake of the fifty righteous who are in it?"

And then he makes this observation about the character of God in verse 25.

"For far be it from You to do such a thing, to slay the righteous with the wicked, so that the righteous and the wicked."

This is the key

"are treated alike. Far be it from You! Shall not the Judge of all the earth deal justly?"

Or, literally, "do justice." Verse 26, here's the Lord's response.

So, the Lord said, "if I find in Sodom fifty righteous within the city, then I will spare the whole place on their account."

In other words, God agrees with Abraham's description of His character. And, of course, Abraham continues to bargain and sort of bet that there are some righteous there. Go down to verse 32

Then Abraham said, "oh may the Lord not be angry, and I shall speak only this once. Suppose ten are found there?"

Now at this point, Abraham's betting on Lot and his family plus maybe just a couple people he influenced. Of course, it was the wrong bet, but this is what he's betting on and God says,

"I will not destroy it on a count of ten."

Now what's going on here? This text is making it very clear that God does not assign guilt to those who live in a culture who do not actively participate in the sins of those around them, even if those sins are completely pervasive. You could even say, in Sodom, systemic. They permeated the entire culture and, again, read the context and that becomes very clear. And yet, God acknowledged that there could be

righteous people in that culture who, in fact, were not responsible and could not be tainted with the sins of the culture.

A second point scripture teaches in this light is: we are not personally guilty because our ancestors sinned.

Turn to Ezekiel 18. In Ezekiel 18, God teaches us that we are not personally responsible for the sins of the generations before us, even the immediately preceding generation. Look at Ezekiel 18. This passage is one of the key passages in the Old Testament. It lays down a basic foundational principle of God's justice. Verse 1,

Then the word of the LORD came to me saying, “what do you mean by using this proverb concerning the land of Israel, saying, ‘the fathers eat the sour grapes, but the children's teeth are set on edge?’”

In other words, they were saying, “look, God is punishing us not for our sin and complicity, but for the sin of others, for the sin of our ancestors.” Verse 3,

“As I live,” declares the Lord God, “you are surely not going to use this proverb in Israel anymore.”

And here's the point God wants to make. Verse 4,

“Behold, all souls are Mine; the soul of the father as well as the soul of the son is Mine. The soul who sins will die.”

God lays down a basic principle of His Justice which is: it is individual - individual justification, individual condemnation.

Now, He goes on beginning in verse 5 to talk about a number of different scenarios. What about when there's a righteous father who has a wicked son? Or, what if there's a wicked father who has a righteous son? Or, what if there's a wicked father who has a wicked son? Or a righteous father who has a righteous son? He deals with all of those scenarios, and, in the end, this is His conclusion. Go down to verse 19. “Yet, you say, ‘why should the son not bear the punishment for the father's iniquity?’” And God says this, “when the son has practiced justice and righteousness and observed all My statutes, and done them, he shall surely live.” I'm not going to punish him for his father's sin. Verse 20, “the person who sins will die. The son will not bear the punishment for the father's iniquity. Nor will the father, bear

the punishment for the son's iniquity. The righteousness of the righteous will be upon himself, and the wickedness of the wicked will be upon himself."

Now listen carefully, although we bear the continuing, natural consequences of the sins of those who lived before us - and we do in our country - we do not bear any personal, guilt for their sins. That is a basic principle of God's justice.

Number three: we will be judged solely by God's standard of justice.

Turn to Romans 2. Beginning in verse 1, Paul begins to argue the principles of God's justice because the Jews had misunderstood. The heart of it comes in verse 6. Look at this statement in verse 6. "God will render to each person according to his deeds." Paul says this is what God's coming judgment will be like. God's judgment is certain. Notice, "God will render." God's judgment is individual. "God will render to each person." Folks, the final judgment will not be a national judgment. You will not stand at the judgment with your ethnic group. You will stand before God individually. I will stand before God individually and give an account. God's judgment is universal. Verse 6 says, "God will render to each person." That is, to every person without exception. And then the main point he gets in the rest of verse 6 is that God's judgment is evidential. It's based on the evidence. Notice, "God will render to each person according to" – or, in keeping with – "his deeds" – or his works. God's verdict will be a perfect reflection of the collective evidence of our lives, our thoughts, our motives, our words, our actions.

What I want you to understand is: the idea of collective guilt based on the sins of the people around me, the group I belong to, or the sins of those who lived before me is a violation of the basic standards of God's justice.

A fourth spiritual foundation of the Social Justice Movement - and here we really get to its heart - is: a theological rejection of radical human depravity.

The Social Justice Movement and the accompanying philosophy of Critical Race Theory are built on a rejection of theism. They're atheistic. They are built on a rejection of scripture because the only real sin in CRT is oppression, and the only ones who can commit it are those in the majority. What you need to understand is this is, in fact, a cover-up of the real human problem. Let me explain to you the real human problem that lies behind racism.

First of all, the real location of racism is not in society or a political or economic system, but it is in every fallen human heart. Turn to Mark 7. Where this sin is present where it is obviously, it is something that

comes from the individual heart. Mark 7. You remember the context. In verses 14 and 15, Jesus says, "nothing outside the man can defile a man if it goes into him; but the things which proceed out of the man." There had been a discussion about washing your hands and the kinds of foods you eat, and Jesus makes all foods clean here. And it's further punctuated in Acts 10 - the vision that Peter has there. But He gets to the point. You know, his disciples, verse 17, they leave the crowd. The disciples were like, "what did that mean?" And Jesus says to them, verse 20,

That which comes out of the person, that is what defiles the man. For from within, out of the hearts of men, proceed the evil thoughts, acts of sexual immorality, thefts, murders, acts of adultery, deeds of greed, wickedness, deceit, indecent behavior, envy, slander, pride, and foolishness. All these evil things proceeds from within and defile the person.

The real problem in our culture is individual and personal. It is in the fallen human heart.

Secondly, I would say this: the real cause of racism is radical human depravity. This is what it traces back to - radical human depravity.

Turn to Romans 3. In Romans 3:9, Paul makes the indictment of the presence of radical human depravity and then, beginning in verse 10 and running through verse 18, he presents the Biblical evidence for that depravity. He begins in verse 10 with a summary. Notice what he says there, "as it is written, 'there is none righteous, not even one.'" And then he follows with a string of Old Testament, references that illustrate the depth and scope of human depravity. Notice what he says here. Verse 11, we have darkened minds, "no one understands." He goes on, in verse 11, to say we have enslaved wills. "No one seeks God." Verse 12, we have rebellious lifestyles. "All have turned aside." By the way, it's not like you accidentally wandered off the path. The Greek verb there is the idea of you've got tired of walking on the path of what God required and you've gone somewhere else intentionally - rebellious lifestyles. Verse 12 goes on to say: sinful behavior. "There is none who does good, not even one." And then he gets more specific in verses 13 and 14. He talks about the toxic speech that characterizes humanity. Notice how he describes it. "Their throat is an open grave." The kind of talk that comes out of people's mouths is like the rottenness in a tomb. "With their tongues they keep on deceiving." People are liars and when they speak, they intentionally seek to harm others. "The poison of asps is under their lips; their mouth is full of cursing." They curse other people who are different than they are. And when they've been wronged - either they've actually been wronged, or they have a perception of wrong - they

are filled with bitterness and that bitterness just spews out in toxic speech. And notice, this toxic speech spills over, in verses 15 and 17, to destructive relationships. You see, the sin in our hearts leaks out and it infects and destroys all human relationships because, notice verse 15, "their feet are swift to shed blood." Man has a predisposition to violent anger. Verse 16, "destruction and misery are in their paths." Man has a pattern of destroying relationships. If you follow in the path of a fallen human being apart from God's redeeming grace, you will find in their wake everywhere you look the debris of broken, devastated relationships. Verse 17, "and the path of peace they have not known. Not only does man fail to walk on the path that is characterized by peace, he doesn't even know where to find it. He doesn't know it. He doesn't recognize it. Why? Verse 18, "there is no fear of God before their eyes." There's the root cause, the basic reason, the primary source behind all of the sins in this passage. Now folks, what I want you to see is that the diagnosis of the Social Justice Movement and the Critical Race Theory is so incredibly shallow, because the real cause of racism is the radical depravity that characterizes every unredeemed, fallen human heart and still resides to some extent in the heart of the redeemed because we still have our flesh.

Thirdly, the primary sin behind racism is hatred which is endemic to the fallen human heart.

Look at Titus 3. Verse 3, Paul says, we also - all of us who are believers – "once were foolish ourselves," like unbelievers are now. So, he's saying we used to be this. all unbelievers still are. We also once were, "foolish ourselves, disobedient, deceived, enslaved to various lusts and pleasures." Now watch this, "spending our life in malice" - that's with a vicious disposition toward others - "and envy" - wanting what others have – "hateful" - that means we were hated by others and "hating one another." So, we were not only hated by others, we hated them. This is what the fallen human heart looks like. It is characterized by a vicious disposition that envies and hates. And it doesn't matter, you know, what your socio-economic situation, what your ethnicity, what your circumstance is, what nation you live in. It doesn't matter. If you're not in Christ, then this is a description of you today and it's a description of what we used to be and, by God's grace, are gradually unbecoming as we become more like Jesus Christ.

Number four: the only permanent solution to racism is individual conversion.

Now, don't misunderstand me, I'm not suggesting that we shouldn't desire and pursue the decreasing practice of racism in our culture. Of course, we should - just as we should with every other sin. But what I am saying is this – and, by the way, I'll talk a little more about that next week - but real, permanent

change is only possible through the gospel of Jesus Christ. Look at Titus 3:4. Verse 3 is what we used to be. Verse 4,

but when the kindness of God our Savior and His love for mankind appeared, He saved us, not on the basis of the deeds we have done in righteousness but according to His mercy which He poured out on us richly through Jesus Christ Our Savior, so that we've now been justified

Declared right with God

by His grace

And now, what's possible? Verse 8,

Those who have believed in God

Those who have been saved. Those who have been changed can now

Engage in good deeds.

Now, we can not be hating toward others, but loving towards them. Now, we can not have a vicious disposition toward others, but we can be kind and gracious like God is. This is the only thing that produces real, permanent change.

Now, Lord willing, next week we'll consider some cultural expressions of this issue and will spend a good bit of our time on the Biblical correction. How are we to think? What is the truth about this from scripture? Let's pray together.

Father, thank You for our study together today. I pray that You would help us to understand our times and, Lord, help us to think, above all, Biblically. Help us to think like Christ thinks about the issues in our world as we have, in His word, His very mind. Lord, I pray that you would protect us from imbibing a Godless, atheistic theory that is sweeping across our country. Help us instead to look at the problems that permeate our culture through the lens of Scripture. Help us to diagnose them correctly. And Father, help us to see Your prescription, Your solution and to embrace it. Father, I pray that you would work in our hearts through your truth and, Lord, I pray for those who may be here today, who are still living in Titus 3:3, who are still enslaved to various lusts and pleasures, who still are hateful and hating one another. Lord, I pray that you would help them to see the salvation that's offered in Jesus Christ – not by deeds that they do but, rather, through the grace that's offered in Jesus Christ and His life, death, and

resurrection. Lord, may they believe in Him today and find that forgiveness, find that lasting change of heart that only You can produce. We pray in Jesus name. Amen.