

18 October 2026

“The Church & The Social Gospel: Serving The Right Message”

Introduction

*Define *Social Justice (SJ)*

- *Began mid-1800s Italy by Catholic Luigi Taparelli
- *Sought justice within social institutions
- *Today includes redistributing power & resources

*Define the *Social Gospel (SG)*

- *Began late 19th century Christianity by New York Author & Baptist Pastor Walter Rauschenbusch
- *Was response to industrialization's poverty & inequality
- *It emphasized reforming society & culture

*What mission has *the Church* been given & how does it relate to the Social Gospel & Social Justice?

*Who's job is it to address discrimination, provide family income & care for the poor and helpless?

Today, we'll see 3 keys to understanding the Social Gospel as it relates to the Church & her mission

#1 – Rules: What are Biblical Human Rights?

Does Social Justice have false premises to root out?

1. Let's separate good Biblical *discrimination* from the bad (Discriminate=to distinguish/separate)
 - a. John Stonestreet: "It's no good having the same vocab if we're using different dictionaries"
 - b. ***Race***
 - i. All are created as *one* (Acts 17:26)
 - ii. Each come to eternal life the same (Col 3:11)
 - iii. So, don't discriminate (Read Rom 2:9-11)
 - c. ***Gender***
 - i. God made male & female (Gen 1:27)
 - ii. They have equal value but different roles sometimes (Eph 5:22-33)
 - d. ***Sexual orientation***
 - i. Whether born or acquired desires, they must align w/ God's plan (Lev 18:22 & Rom 1:27)
 - ii. There is good & harmful here (Lev 18) - we must discriminate to align w/ God
 - e. ***Religion*** – There is truth & lie
 - i. ***Only*** those coming to Jesus are saved (John 14:6)

ii. *All* those coming to Jesus are saved (John 6:37, Gal 3:28)

iii. We must discriminate - matter of life/death

f. ***Financial Status***

i. From Creation to 2nd Coming there's always the rich and the poor

ii. Don't mock the poor (Prov 17:5)

iii. Don't indulge or favor the rich (Jam 2)

2. Let's separate what we *can* do about *past sins* from what we *can't* do about *past sins*

a. Personal, material sins may need restitution (Exo 22:1-6, Luk 19:8 – Zaccaeus)

b. We're never held accountable for our ancestors' sins, only our own (Eze 18)

3. Let's separate what we *can* improve about the *future* from what we *can't* improve about it

a. We're called to be good stewards of what we're personally given (Matt 25:14-30)

b. SG intends to bring heaven to earth, but the Bible says it'll get worse (II Tim 3:1-13)

i. No such thing as "Christian Nationalism" or "Kingdom Now Theology" in the Bible

4. Let's separate good Biblical *equal opportunity* from bad earthly equal opportunity
 - a. All have sinned & deserve hell (Rom 3:23)
 - b. Good & bad circumstances will happen to all people regardless (Read Matt 5:43-45)
 - c. Turn to Matt 20:1-16 – None have been robbed of good, we're given > we deserve
 - d. Jesus never intended to make everyone have *equal opportunities in employment* or use of public institutions, He intended to give *equal access to heaven* thru His death & life

#2 – Roles: Who's job is it to enable Human Rights?

Whose job is it to address *discrimination*?

1. Justice in the right role = Distributive Justice
2. Personal discrimination is handled person to person (Gal 2:11-21 – Paul handles Peter)
3. Church discrimination is handled by Church leadership (Act 6:1 – widows bias)
4. We're told to be just in civil & business life
 - a. If we receive injustice from a believer, suffer the wrong (I Cor 6:1-11)

- b. If we receive injustice from unbelievers, use the system you're within (Acts 25:11)
 - i. Paul appealed to Caesar
- c. However, there's a promise (Read Rom 12:17-19)

Whose job is it to ***earn*** the family income?

- 1. Adam & Eve were graced with abilities and resources & then told to have dominion and work for it (Merit-based system) (Gen 3:17b-19)
- 2. General practice is that if you don't work, you don't eat (II Thes 3:10-12)
- 3. To refuse this principle is evil (I Tim 5:8)

Whose job is it to ***help the poor***/widow/orphan/immigrant?

- 1. National policy of gleaning involves ***both*** the giver and the worker/receiver (Lev 19:9-10)
- 2. It's only in the overwhelming times that others jump in to assist (Gal 6:1-6)
- 3. Widows are cared for in layers (personal responsibility is key here – lowest level possible)
 - a. Cared for by themselves if under 60

- b. Cared for by extended family
 - c. Cared for by Church only if other two criteria are met (I Tim 5:3-16)
- 4. We're to be generous, but generosity should never be compulsory (Luk 14:13, I John 3:17)
- 5. There's ***no*** mandatory church-wide welfare program required by the Bible
 - a. We care for others individually & cheerfully
- 6. There's ***no*** Biblical expectation that the State will provide for the poor
 - a. If they provide benefits, use them, praise God

#3 – Realms: What's the Church's Mission?

How is the Church instructed to give materially?

- 1. Give in burdensome 1-time situations (Gal 6:2)
- 2. Do good to all, especially to church (Gal 6:10)
- 3. We continuously give for religious services rendered by ministers & missionaries (I Cor 9)
- 4. We give amongst Christians (Phil 4:15)

5. There are no examples of *continuously* giving to unbelievers
 - a. Examples of 1-time giving to non-believers are connected to giving the Gospel
6. We care for those that can't (widows, orphans)
 - a. But even here w/ widows, if they have family, it's not the church's job

How did Jesus & others handle physical needs versus spiritual needs?

1. Jesus did physical helps as a support to the primary mission of spiritual help
 - a. Paralyzed Man – sins are forgiven, but so they may know, get up & walk (Mar 2:1-12)
 - b. Even when the Gospel wasn't given after a physical help, He wanted to give it (10 lepers)
2. Jesus saw no end to the physical need
 - a. Pool of Bethesda – Healed only one man
3. Apostles primarily gave (help, healing, money) to the Church (sometimes to unbelievers)

- a. This material help always called people to spiritual belief (Acts 3:1-10, 14:8-18)

What's the Church explicitly given as our mission?

1. The Church's core mission is to make disciples
 - a. "Go" & "Make" (Read Matt 28:19-20)
 - b. Evangelize and then train them
2. We're to be witnesses for Jesus (Acts 1:8)
3. How are we told to stick to the core mission?
 - a. Read Acts 2:42, 47b – As we do our part, God will do His part
 - b. Read II Cor 5:18-20 – We're ambassadors for Christ performing the ministry of reconciliation
4. Physically helping others was apart of regular Christian life but it wasn't the mission
 - a. Gal 6:10 – Do good to all, especially church
 - b. Jesus commissioned us to love one another
 - i. This will naturally involve material help
 - ii. But the mission is new birth in Jesus and becoming more like Him

Conclusion

Keys to knowing the Social Gospel & its relationship to the Biblical Gospel... (End with bag w/ holes)

1. **Know the Rules: Biblical human rights aren't identical to the Social Gospel's human rights**
 - a. There are times we need to discriminate
 - b. We view the past & future very differently
2. **Know the Roles: We must assign responsibilities to the right parties**
 - a. Unbiblical discrimination must be handled within the institution in which it occurs
 - b. A family's financial condition is on them
 - c. The poor are to be helped at the lowest level possible and only by the willing
3. **Know the Realms: The Church isn't given the mission of solving the world's fiscal problems**
 - a. Will give willingly & mostly to believers
 - b. We give material help to give spiritual help
 - c. Mission is offering eternal life thru Jesus

*Bob Hoekstra – someone told him, “You’re so heavenly minded, you’re no earthly good” He responded that “you can only be earthly good to the extent that you are heavenly minded”