

Racism and the Trap of the Social Justice Movement

written by Tim Jennings, M.D. | October 2, 2019



The topic of racism has persistently percolated beneath the collective conscience of American culture, but today it seems to have boiled over again and is threatening to worsen societal divisions that will not be easily healed — especially if Christ's people on earth get caught up in the firestorm.

Of course, racism is sinful. The Bible says that we're all one human race — so to separate ourselves based on the color of skin is one of the great tragedies of a fallen world. It is just and appropriate to oppose racism and promote equality of all peoples.

But I am now concerned about a new kind of social justice being advanced today, one that utilizes the principles and methods of this world — and, further, I'm especially concerned about certain groups in the Christian church that seem to be embracing this agenda. It won't help end the scourge of racism or any other societal ill.

Every day, my heart aches over the hatred I see in the world — the violence, bigotry, racism, and sexism. I am reminded of Genesis chapter 6, which describes a society that is violent all the time. Where is the love, the grace, the kindness, and the concern for our fellow human beings? I cried out to God,

“Where is the justice?”

And I was struck with a thought:

“For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways,” declares the Lord.
“As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts” (Isaiah 55:8, 9 NIV84).

Human justice is based on imposed laws and imposed punishments, but [God’s justice](#) is based on His [design law](#) — the law upon which reality is built to operate (like the laws of health and gravity). Doctors don’t diagnose healthy people as sick and sick people as healthy — that would be unjust. Doctors don’t hold children in quarantine for the sickness of their parents — that would be unjust.

Likewise, God doesn’t hold children accountable for the sins of their parents:

The son will not share the guilt of the father, nor will the father share the guilt of the son.
The righteousness of the righteous man will be credited to him, and the wickedness of the wicked will be charged against him (Ezekiel 18:20 NIV84).

In God’s kingdom, it is about the quality of each person’s heart, mind, and character. This is what really matters: Is a person like Jesus in his or her heart — or not? The color of one’s skin is irrelevant.

Martin Luther King Jr. knew this and famously said,

I have a dream that my four little children will one day live in a nation where they will not be judged by the color of their skin, but by the content of their character.

Unfortunately, society has lost sight of this reality. Many have forgotten the wisdom that judging people by the color of their skin and not the quality of their character *is* racism.

And because people have forgotten, they have failed to realize that we can never resolve racism by enacting government policies that are based on the color of a person’s skin, and not by the quality of one’s character or abilities.

Martin Luther King Jr. also said,

Darkness cannot drive out darkness: only light can do that. Hate cannot drive out hate: only love can do that (Strength to Love, 1963)

We cannot drive out racism using policies that are themselves functionally racist.

Jesus said,

How can Satan enter into a person, and by entering, get rid of Satan? Think about it: It would be like using water to get rid of wetness (Mark 3:23 The Remedy).

How can we resolve racism by using policies that are based on the color of a person's skin or their race?

Understand this reality: Human governments can *never* resolve racism, because at its core, racism is a heart problem, not a behavior problem, and no laws imposed by governments can instill love in the heart. Yes — governments *can* and *should* remove laws that are racist (Jim Crow Laws, for instance) and ensure that the laws that are passed treat all people equally (all citizens get to vote, for instance). Such laws are just and appropriate; however, such laws do not remove racism from the hearts of people because racism is based upon fear and selfishness in the heart.

Legislation, policies, and rules that give preference — and not mere equal standing — based solely on race in an attempt to repair injustices of the past are another example of the fallacy of trying to achieve a godly goal through flawed methods (and it is godly to treat all human beings equally — to love every person as yourself; it is wrong and sinful to discriminate based on the color of a person's skin). As I have said on other topics, we can never win God's cause by using Satan's methods.

The governments of this sinful world are “beastly” in that they all operate upon human imposed law, which inflicts punishments and seeks to force compliance. God's government is the government of truth, love, freedom — design law — which is how life functions; we cannot get people to love each other by using force.

God's government wants to change hearts, remove fear, remove selfishness, and restore love for God and for all peoples into every heart. When this happens, racism evaporates!

The Bible teaches that “God's kindness leads you toward repentance” (Romans 2:4 NIV84). In God's kingdom, when we return love for wrongdoing, kindness for cruelty, forgiveness for injury, patience for impatience, the door is opened for genuine transformation and the elimination of inequality.

Jesus said,

I tell you who hear me: Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who mistreat you. If someone strikes you on one cheek, turn to him the other also. If someone takes your cloak, do not stop him from taking your tunic (Luke 6:27-29 NIV84).

Paul taught, “If your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him something to drink. In doing this, you will heap burning coals on his head” (Romans 12:20 NIV84).

God's kingdom is built on love and truth, and it seeks to heal hearts and minds from the fear and selfishness, which causes racism, to restore in us a love for all human beings. It is only by the advancement of God's methods — truth, love, and freedom — that we can win hearts!

Today's Social Justice Movement Will Not Fix Racism

The problem with today's social justice movement within the church is not its goals, but its methods.

The social justice movement seeks to replace God's principles and methods with the principles and methods of a sinful world. This is a subtle trap, one built upon human law. It attempts to impose rules and seeks to punish and force its way onto others.

However, this approach will always cause more division and more hostility. And it will never bring the unity that we find in Christ, but instead will cause even greater societal division, mistrust, and hostility — especially if the laws being imposed create race-based treatment rather than simply creating an environment of equality.

The church must be steadfast in recognizing the distinction between the state with its human imposed laws and the government of God. The secret to true unity is Jesus Christ — placing Him at the center of our lives and our value system. By beholding Him, we are changed. (This is the design law of worship — we actually change neurobiologically and characterologically to become like what we admire, esteem, worship, and spend time focusing upon.) And as we come closer to Christ, we unavoidably come closer to each other regardless of one another's skin color.

While racial equality is a godly goal, the church must resist calls to join with human governments to achieve such goals. Why? Because it is a trap; it corrupts the church to practice worldly methods *even if* its goal is a godly one. The church must live by a higher standard than human governments. This is why genuine Christians throughout history have always done what is right in the face of governmental opposition. Christians don't need governmental permission to love all people equally.

So, yes — of course! — let's move forward to eliminate racism, to have genuine equality, and to love and value all people as the children of God that they are. But let the church do so only by advancing Jesus Christ and His plan to renew the heart to love God with our entire being and every human being as ourselves.

I want to see Jesus come and the earth made new, to live in our heavenly home in which there is no sin, disease, death, and no racism — but we will not finish our work as God's agents on earth if we allow ourselves to be diverted from the mission of spreading the gospel and focus instead on working to reform human governments and enact culture change using imposed laws.

Some may be asking, "Are you saying we should ignore social injustice — that in a democratic society, we shouldn't try to have more equitable and just laws?" I am saying that we need to recognize that no matter what equitable and just laws we pass, evil and racism will not be eliminated by passing those laws; society will continue to decay. And I am also saying that the only genuine way to eliminate racism is for Christ to dwell in the hearts of people — that is the true mission of the church: to bring people to Christ for genuine renewal of heart! The further we move away from Christ and His methods, the more we embrace the corruption of the world — meaning the more laws we will seek to pass.

Law reflects but in no sense determines the moral worth of a society. The values of a reasonably just society will reflect themselves in a reasonable law. The better the society, the less law there will be. In Heaven there will be no law, and the lion will lie down with the lamb. The values of an unjust society will reflect themselves in an unjust law. The worse the society, the more laws there will be. In Hell there will be nothing but law, and due process will be meticulously observed (Prof. Grant Gilmore, Yale University, retired 1978).

If the church loses its focus and attempts to resolve the myriad of injustices in the world through legislation, it will be a sure path to ushering in Satan's kingdom.

Don't be fooled; our mission as Christians is not reforming human governments — it is advancing the kingdom of God. Jesus said, "My kingdom is not of this world" because "the kingdom of God is within you" (John 18:36; Luke 17:21).

I invite you to open your heart and invite Jesus in, asking for His kingdom of love, truth, and freedom to be established fully into your heart and mind — then go forward advancing His principles and methods — loving every person equally, shining the light of heavenly truth and love into a world filled with inequality and evil of all kinds.