



# The Weightier Matters of the Law

Justice: God's Concern, Our Obligation

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- Biblical Justice—a larger umbrella
  - Three prominent elements
    - Impartial treatment
    - Special concern for the needy and powerless
    - Use of generosity and influence to help the needy and powerless
      - Criminal/punitive justice
      - “Social” justice
        - A historical movement (ca. 1865-1920)
        - A contemporary catch-all
- What should be an uncontroversial conclusion: **Out of Christ-like love of neighbor, Christians should have an active concern for the needy and powerless and should oppose oppression and injustice of every kind.**



# What's the Hang-Up?

- ▶ The “Slippery Slope” into Theological Liberalism | The Theology Behind the Social Gospel
  - ▶ Theology of Kingdom and its Implications
  - ▶ Theology of “the Problem”
    - ▶ Systems vs. Sin
  - ▶ Theology of Renewal/Regeneration
    - ▶ Societal vs. Personal



# Telltale Statements | A Sampling

- Social Gospel: “To help the poor and oppressed is to advance the Kingdom of God.”
- Biblical Gospel: “To help the poor and oppressed out of Christ-like love is our obligation as we call people to enter the Kingdom of God through repentance and belief.”
  
- Social Gospel: “Out of Christ-like love, the church should be about eliminating inequalities in society.”
- Biblical Gospel: “Out of Christ-like love, the church should stand against oppression and injustice—however they are manifested—so that people are treated equally as image-bearers of God.
  - Not all *inequalities* are the result of *iniquity*

# Telltale Statements | A Sampling

- Social Gospel: “The primary mission of the church is to show the love of Christ to the world by serving those in need and defending the marginalized.”
- Biblical Gospel: “The primary mission of the church to make disciples while the primary *ethic* of the church-on-mission is Christ-like love of neighbor and opposition to injustice wherever it is found.”
  
- Social Gospel: “The fundamental problem with society is unjust institutions and oppressive systems.”
- Biblical Gospel: “The fundamental problem with society is human sinfulness and rejection of Christ’s lordship which manifests itself in every human-populated institution and system in a variety of ways.”



## Bottom Line...

- ▶ With a properly positioned concrete wall—an accurate understanding of the Gospel and the mission of the church—no one should be worried about sliding down a slippery slope.
  - ▶ What people should be worried about is neglecting clear biblical mandates in the name of theological risk-aversion.

# Challenges and Application

- Where might I need to repent of ignoring the needy and powerless?
  - Fear of man
  - Minimization
  - Lack of Compassion
- How can I use my influence to advocate for mercy and justice?
  - Home? Work? Church? Community?
- Are there certain forms of injustice that I am particularly drawn toward fighting?
  - Different burdens, different gifts
    - The danger of omni-activism
- The importance of a clear conscience (Acts. 24:16)
- Gospel-driven love, not guilt-driven activism