



Sermon Notes | I Will Surely Hear Their Cry (Part I) | Exodus 22:16-23:9

'Social Justice', a predominant term these days, is being given much traction of late, and initially one might think, 'that sounds good', 'I am for that', 'that sounds like a noble endeavor'. Indeed, the term is used regularly, liberally, and frequently, and sounds good at first look. Yet, Old Testament scholar, John Godingay, is on point when he states: "The notion of 'social justice' is a hazy one. It resembles words, words whose meaning may seem self evident, in which we assume are obvious Biblical categories, when actually they are rather undefined and culturally relative. Over the years social justice has become a buzz expression."

So what does this 'buzz expression' mean? We hear the associated words with the phrase: equality, opportunity, oppression, unity, diversity, all good words, in one sense, and there is a dimension of these words that God is in, for indeed, God is a 'God of Justice'. He is proclaimed as such in the Word, from Genesis to Revelation. He is a 'God of Justice' socially, personally and otherwise. But there are some common cultural questions to consider:

Does the Bible use these words in the same way you hear them used today? Does the Bible, in theory and practice, offer us the 'Social Justice' solutions that we see today?

For example, does the Bible teach that true justice means to 'defund the police' and 'give partiality to the criminal'? Does the Bible teach that ultimate oppression is a matter of race and privilege? Does the Bible teach that we should show favour to those with more 'intersections' (an academic and philosophical term showing placement and social identities such as minority, gender, class, etcetera, indicating convergence and confluence, thus mapping one's life)? Does the Bible teach the necessity for 'apology' for the sins of our ancestors, the generations past? Does the Bible teach that we are to put extra efforts into ensuring everyone feels equal? And how are we to measure that, and where does it end? Does the Bible teach that equality is a virtue socially? Is social equality the God-end game? Let us consider this. Bring these, and any other such questions you may have, to today's Scripture, a portion of the Bible whose (uninspired) subheading reads: Laws About Social Justice. We will follow every word to where it takes us and drill in, knowing that the Scripture itself is inspired.

The Responsibility of 'Social Justice' according to the Word: Let us look at this extended passage that directly addresses 'Social Justice' (Exodus 22:16-23:9). We pray for understanding to receive the Word, and the ability to apply what we learn so that we can live out the truths.

The passage provides 'case law': actual, various, and specific cases from the time, communicating 'overarching justice'. These are tributaries flowing from the original TEN WORDS, The Ten Commandments, the foundational law principles. We will see these principles of law again today, and we will see God's character revealed and reflected in His Law. His attributes are made manifest by this Law.

So, what is important in 'Social Justice'? What are we striving for in 'Social Justice'? What matters? Something is wrong, but what is it really? That is what we are looking for now. By focusing on a few plights and branches, God will show us what we are to know.

## **I. JUSTICE FOR THE MAIDEN (vv. 16-17)**

Exodus 22:16-17:

*"If a man seduces a virgin who is not betrothed and lies with her, he shall give the bride-price for her and make her his wife. If her father utterly refuses to give her to him, he shall pay money equal to the bride price for virgins."*

This case identifies the maiden, the virgin, the young girl of marriageable age, who is ready to marry, but who is not yet placed or 'betrothed', has not yet been 'pledged' in marriage. Betrothed, is like our state of 'engagement,' but in Ancient days, it held more authority. It was a legal and binding contract, a 'firm arrangement', meaning that the couple were almost married, except for cohabitation, and to break such an agreement required formal divorce. But in this case, the 'maiden' is 'seduced' by a man, and in her state of readiness, he lies sexually with her.

By not deviating from the text, a number of observations come through:

### **1. This is not rape. This is 'seduction'.**

Seduction and rape are not the same. The passage clearly states that this is 'seduction', seduction being that the man 'strongly persuaded' the girl. The guilt is his, not hers. Rape is different. Note the difference.

Deuteronomy 22:25:

*"But if in the open country a man meets a young woman who is betrothed, and the man seizes her and lies with her, then only the man who lay with her shall die."*

Rape's penalty is death. Seduction's penalty is not death. Nevertheless, seduction is still an offence under God, a wrong in God's sight, and therefore warrants a penalty.

### **2. This seduction is a 'transgression' under God.**

Modern day justice 'blurs the lines' concerning such behaviours, but with God, 'seizing' and 'seducing' are both wrong behaviours, and God does not blur the lines. He acknowledges the difference between the two actions. He establishes His penalty in an 'eye for eye' response; the punishment will fit the crime.

### **3. God vindicates the maiden.**

A bride-price must be paid. (v. 16) Make it right, offender! Do the right thing! You carried out an act that by God's standard, is reserved for marriage only. You consummated the act, therefore you must pay for the wrong! It is your responsibility to pay the bride-price.

Genesis 2:24:

*"Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh."*

The process of marriage included a 'dowry' payment, which was confirmed in the marriage contract. This was not an act of property exchange. It was not paid as 'buying a person'. It served as compensation, paid to the bride's family, for the loss of the daughter's role in the home. This was a 'replenishment', by the laws of God.

Exodus 22:17:

*"If her father utterly refuses to give her to him, he shall pay money equal to the bride-price for virgins."*

But if the father does not agree, does not wish for his daughter to marry such a man who would seduce a girl, then they will not be married, but the man will still be required to pay the bride-price, for the maiden's 'marriage purity', that is, her 'readiness', her 'I am giving my body pureness to you' has now been touched, violated; it is now gone. Today we have no term for this. It is passed off. Sexuality is trampled on. But God is a God of justice. He takes sexuality seriously, even when we don't. Only marriage is the place for the sex act to happen. By His standards, a violation has absolutely occurred. God does not say, 'Hire a lawyer.' He does not say, 'Tell your story.' He does not say, 'Write a book.' This would not be true justice. By God's justice, this is not a legal situation. His justice is true and long term concern for the maiden. Her needs now are her security and her protection, more than a legal victory, and God will provide for these needs by way of the man marrying the maiden, or by the maiden returning to her father's care. God's justice is long term justice.

## **II. JUSTICE FOR THE WICKED (vv. 18-20)**

Exodus 22:18-20:

*"You shall not permit a sorceress to live. Whoever lies with an animal shall be put to death. Whoever sacrifices to any god, other than the LORD alone, shall be devoted to destruction."*

A 'sorceress', a witch, those connected with spiritual wickedness, those engaged in the power of darkness, those working and seeking out in the darkness of the 'anti God' domain. These are persons who are not to be allowed to live. These are persons seeking out matters of the 'God domain' where they have no right to be. Yes, the demonic realm is real and present, the darkness real, especially today. God's Word instructs us to beware and take heed.

Ephesians 6:10-13:

*"Finally, be strong in the LORD and in the strength of his might. Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil. For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places. Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all to stand firm."*

God is clear about His feelings concerning people 'dabbling' in it. It is not okay. While some brush it off as just a 'little thing', and others excuse themselves as having 'innocent fun', still others by stating they 'live safely under the Sovereignty of God', it is, seriously, a wrong thing to do. There is no middle ground about this. Scripture is clear that such activities are to God 'abominable practices'. These practices are from Canaan, the world, and God cannot and does not tolerate them.

Deuteronomy 18:9-14:

*"When you come into the land that the LORD your God is giving you, you shall not learn to follow the abominable practices of those nations. There shall not be found among you anyone who burns his son or his daughter as an offering, anyone who practices divination or tells fortunes or interprets omens, or a sorcerer or a charmer or a medium or a necromancer or one who inquires of the dead, for whoever does these things is an abomination to the LORD. And because of these abominations the LORD your God is driving them out before you. You shall be blameless before the LORD your God, for these nations, which you are about to dispossess, listen to fortune-tellers and to diviners. But as for you, the LORD your God has not allowed you to do this."*

Leviticus 19:26:

*"You shall not eat any flesh with the blood in it. You shall not interpret omens or tell fortunes."*

Leviticus 20:27:

*"A man or a woman who is a medium or a necromancer shall surely be put to death. They shall be stoned with stones, their blood shall be upon them."*

God is emphatic; put such persons to death.

Exodus 22:18:

*"You shall not permit a sorceress to live."*

God is clear. The God-fearer does not engage, does not dabble in such practices. Both the Old and New Testaments condemn these practices. We read, for example, of Simon the Magician who claimed to have divine powers, calling himself 'great'. Even having heard the good news of Jesus, though he was said to have believed, he is strongly rebuked by Peter, suggesting that Simon did not have 'saving faith' because his intent was still with his magic.

Acts 8:9-24:

*"But there was a man named Simon who had previously practiced magic in the city and amazed the people of Samaria, saying that he himself was somebody great. They all paid attention to him, from the least to the greatest, saying, 'This man is the power of God that is called Great. And they paid attention to him because for a long time he had amazed them with his magic. But when they believed Philip as he preached good news about the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women. Even Simon himself believed, and after being baptized he continued with Philip. And seeing signs and great miracles performed, he was amazed. Now when the apostles at Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the word of God, they sent to them Peter and John, who came down and prayed for them that they might receive the Holy Spirit, for he had not yet fallen on any of them, but they had only been baptized in the name of the LORD Jesus. Then they laid their hands on them and they received the Holy Spirit. Now when Simon saw that the Spirit was given through the laying on of the apostles hands, he offered them money, saying, 'Give me this power also, so that anyone on whom I lay my hands may receive the Holy Spirit.' But Peter said to him, 'May your silver perish with you, because you thought you could obtain the gift of God with money. You have neither part nor lot in this matter, for your heart is not right before God. Repent, therefore, of this wickedness of yours, and pray to the Lord that, if possible the intent of your heart may be forgiven you. For I see that you are in the gall of bitterness and in the bond of iniquity.' And Simon answered, 'Pray for me to the Lord, that nothing of what you have said may come upon me'."*

And we note yet another magician, Bar-Jesus, a false prophet, who opposed the missionaries. The Apostle Paul characterizes him as a 'son of the devil', thus suggesting that his magical powers were demonic. His magic was not an innocent matter.

Act 13:9-10:

*"But Saul, who was also called Paul, filled with the Holy Spirit, looked intently at him and said, 'You son of the devil, you enemy of all righteousness, full of all deceit and villainy, will you not stop making crooked the straight paths of the LORD.'"*

God is clear. These are not innocent dabblings. They are 'darkness' in the fullest sense, demonic, and wicked. Tarot cards, horoscopes, crystal balls, fortune tellers, Ouija Boards, seeking the future outside of God's Word, rabbit's foot and trolls; it is all very wrong, and against the will of God for us. The 'God-fearer' does not cling to 'charms', lucky or otherwise. Even superstitious clothing, the tie that brings luck, the special socks, all such things are to be avoided. It is most serious. It is wrong. There is no middle ground, Church.

It is either right or wrong, of God, or not of God. Why? Because it is wicked and ungodly, an 'abomination' to the LORD.

ONLY GOD! There is to be nothing else. We need nothing else. We have Christ. He is our fullness. We are blessed in Him. He never leaves us. And we need no charms in our lives.

Joshua 1:5,7:

*"Just as I was with Moses, so I will be with you. I will not leave you or forsake you ... Only be strong and very courageous, being careful to do according to all the law that Moses my servant*

*commanded you. Do not turn from it to the right hand or to the left, that you may have good success wherever you go."*

Hebrews 13:5:

*"...I will never leave you nor forsake you."*

Ephesians 1:3:

*"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places."*

We have every spiritual blessing. What else do we need? What are we then seeking? Dabbling in the demonic is wrong then, wrong because of the Word of God, and wrong because of the Son of God.

Scripture's stance: The dark dabbler deserves death! "You shall not permit a sorceress to live" (Exodus 22:18).

Exodus 22:19:

*"Whoever lies with an animal shall be put to death."*

This is yet another serious warning. No lying with animals! This is, again, evil. While other groups, example, the Hittites, allowed such behaviour, God is clear, NO 'bestiality'. The people were to avoid all pagan ways, and were to live lives set apart from pagan practices, instead, focusing on the ways and principles of 'holiness'. This is relevant, since 'bestiality' is still practised today. The book of Leviticus, chapters 18 and 20, goes into significant detail concerning a variety of 'Unlawful Sexual Relations', clearly stating that such unlawful behaviours shall have consequences. In the case of 'bestiality', it warrants death.

Leviticus 18:23:

*"And you shall not lie with any animal and so make yourself unclean with it, neither shall any woman give herself to an animal to lie with it: it is perversion."*

Leviticus 20:15-16:

*"If a man lies with an animal, he shall surely be put to death, and you shall kill the animal. If a woman approaches any animal and lies with it, you shall kill the woman and the animal; they shall surely be put to death; their blood is upon them."*

Further, 'bestiality' is also listed as a 'curse', a practise of the nations from days of old, but it is not for the 'child of God'.

Deuteronomy 27:21:

*"Cursed be anyone who lies with any kind of animal. And all the people shall say, 'Amen'."*

The Doctrine of Man's Depravity:

Doctrine is so important, and proves so helpful. Things people are capable of, outside of God, 'know no bounds'. The Law helps us to know these things. There is lots of evil, but not a bit of good.

Romans 5:6, 8, 12-14, 18-19:

*"For while we were still weak, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly."*

*"...but God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners Christ died for us."*

*"Therefore, just as sin came into the world through one man, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men because all sinned --- For sin indeed was in the world before the law was given, but sin is not counted where there is no law. Yet death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over those whose sinning was not like the transgression of Adam to Moses, even over those whose sinning was not like the transgression of Adam, who was a type of the one who was to come."*

*"Therefore, as one trespass led to condemnation for all men, so one act of righteousness leads to justification and life for all men. For as by the one man's act of righteousness leads to justification and life for all men. For as by the one man's disobedience the many were made sinners, so by the one man's obedience the many will be made righteous."*

Romans 7:4-6, 12-13:

*"Likewise, my brothers, you also have died to the law through the body of Christ, so that you may belong to another, to him who has been raised from the dead, in order that we may bear fruit for God. For while we were living in the flesh, our sinful passions aroused by the law, were at work in our members to bear fruit for death. But now we're released from the law, having died to that which held us captive, so that we serve in the new way of the Spirit and not in the old way of the written code."*

*"So then, brothers, we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh. For if you live according to the flesh you will die, but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live."*

We are seeing a trio of wickedness being addressed here. The third layer of wickedness comes by sacrificing to any other God but Yahweh. Such behaviour is worthy of destruction.

Exodus 22:20:

*"Whoever sacrifices to any god, other than the LORD alone, shall be devoted to destruction."*

This is an extension of the 2nd Commandment:

Exodus 20:4:

*"You shall not make for yourself a carved image, or any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth."*

No likeness is to be worshipped: No idol worship. No false gods. ONLY YAHWEH, the ONE TRUE GOD! To do so, is wicked, and a very severe matter. The 'justice' for such 'wickedness' is 'destruction', not just being put to death, but being destroyed.

### **III. JUSTICE FOR THE DISADVANTAGED (vv. 21-24)**

Exodus 22:21-24:

*"You shall not wrong a sojourner or oppress him, for you were sojourners in the land of Egypt. You shall not mistreat any widow or fatherless child. If you do mistreat them, and they cry out to me, I will surely hear their cry, and my wrath will burn, and I will kill you with the sword, and your wives shall become widows and your children fatherless."*

Here we are considering three 'groups', similar, in that they are 'less advantaged', compared to the social norm. Whatever else may be going on, these groups are disadvantaged: the sojourner, who lives in the land, but is not a native; the widow, who no longer has the provision and protection of her husband; and the orphan, who no longer has the protection of the parents.

Social Justice has much to say about the disadvantaged, but the 'groups' 'Social Justice' is concerned with, are not the same 'groups' as those in the Bible. The Bible clearly casts light on the 'clearly disadvantaged' — those so evidently so. We do not need training to establish and understand these 'groups'. These are God's people, but people who are self-evidently 'disadvantaged'. Thus, God has something to say about these 'groups'.

He reminds the Hebrews, natives to Israel and God's holy purposes, yet who were once themselves 'sojourners', once themselves had had their own plight while living in the foreign Egypt, were oppressed foreigners, slaves in a land not their own. It was not a 'just' experience, and they had cried out to the LORD because of the 'injustice' of the experience. God had heard those cries of injustice. He freed them. Why? He delivered them because what they were enduring was 'unjust', and God is a God of justice. The God of justice made wrong right, in His time.

Exodus 2:22-25:

*"During those many days the king of Egypt died and the people of Israel groaned because of their slavery, and cried out for help. Their cry for rescue from slavery came up to God. And God heard their groaning, and God remembered his covenant with Abraham, with Isaac, and with Jacob. God saw the people of Israel — and God knew."*

Exodus 22:21a:

*"You shall not wrong a sojourner or oppress him..."*

This is of importance. God repeats His law concerning the 'sojourner', reminding His people of their 'unjust' experience, and states positively that they are to love the 'sojourner', love 'him' like self, protect him, never mistreating him, ever mindful of what it was like to be a 'sojourner'.



Exodus 23:9:

*"You shall not oppress a sojourner. You know the heart of a sojourner, for you were sojourners in the land of Egypt."*

Deuteronomy 10:19:

*"Love the sojourner, therefore, for you were sojourners in the land of Egypt."*

Leviticus 19:33-34:

*"When a stranger sojourns with you in your land, you shall not do him wrong. You shall treat the stranger who sojourns with you as the native among you, and you shall love him as yourself, for you were strangers in the land of Egypt: I am the LORD your God."*

Note the character of God. God is very much in this. He is defining the Law. He is underpinning the Law. The whole scaffolding of the Law shows His character. God calls for justice: true justice, true rights. A 'wrong' is clearly stated. A clear and obvious 'wrong' is pointed out. This is 'true justice'. This is 'Biblical justice'. To mistreat a foreigner is wrong. It is sin. The 'sojourner' is to be treated like themselves; they were to be treated as though 'natives' in the law. They were to copy the character of God.

God goes further yet in His statement of establishing justice. He establishes principle. Don't mistreat the 'sojourner', but don't get carried away either. Do not treat them unfairly, but neither shall you be 'partial' to them. Do not take it to the extreme, in either direction.

Exodus 23:3:

*"... nor shall you be partial to a poor man in his lawsuit."*

Leaders today make declarations. Half of my team will be 'minority gender', for example. On the surface, it sounds righteous. It sounds good. It is trendy. It fits with the call for 'social justice' and modern trends, but in fact, it is a perversion of 'true justice'. 'True justice' says that the candidates being appointed must be 'qualified'. Who can do the job best? These are the persons who should be appointed. These are the people who are 'justified' to take on the roles. God's justice 'rights the wrong', and certainly does not create a different wrong. Therefore, make the right choice. Make sure that 'the wrong' does not happen again. Israel was wronged. Therefore, Israel must not do this wrong to others.

God goes on to speak for the 'widow' and 'orphan'.

Exodus 22:22:

*"You shall not mistreat any widow or fatherless child."*

God cares for these widows and orphans who lose their care. He will hear their cries for justice, and will bring justice to them.

Exodus 22:23:

*"If you do mistreat them, and they cry out to me, I will surely bear their cry."*

How concerned is God about this matter? God's wrath will burn. Such wrong treatment will bring death. This denouncement of 'wrong treatment', this 'mistreatment' of the 'sojourner', the 'widow' and 'orphan', is spoken to more than once in Scripture. He curses those who 'mistreat' these three 'groups'. He promises vindication. And he calls the guilty to repent of their wickedness. Cease to do evil!

Deuteronomy 27:19:

*"Cursed be anyone who perverts the justice due to the sojourner, the fatherless, and the widow. And all the people shall say Amen. "*

Again these 'disadvantaged' are included among those God will not forsake the justice of, from the wicked.

Psalm 94:6, 23:

*"They kill the widow and the sojourner, and murder the fatherless."*

*"He will bring back on them their iniquity and wipe them out for their wickedness, the LORD our God will wipe them out."*

Isaiah 1:16:

*"Wash yourselves; make yourselves clean; remove the evil of your deeds from before my eyes; cease to do evil."*

Seek justice. Learn to do good. Woe to those who oppress.

Isaiah 10:1-2:

*"Woe to those who decree iniquitous decrees, and the writers who keep writing oppression, to turn aside the needy from justice and to rob the poor of my people of their right, that widows may be their spoil, and that they may make the fatherless their prey,"*

James 1:27:

*"Religion that is pure and undefiled before God the Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their affliction, and to keep oneself unstained from the world."*

This is the cry of the Triune God, Old Testament and New. The rules go on. They do not change. God has not changed. And God has not changed the way to live.

Exodus 22:22:

*"You shall not mistreat any widow or fatherless child."*

Does God care about the disadvantaged? Does He want justice for the disadvantaged? Does He see their plight? YES! And God moves and meets in ways that execute, ways that 'social justice' of our times, can't meet.

Horizontal 'social justice' is incapable of meeting the vertical 'true justice', its laws and sense of righteousness. 'Social justice' has lots of words, lots of bells and whistles, but it misses the God of Justice. It has its own standards, but it misses Yahweh's standards. Apart from God's code of righteousness, there is no true justice. 'Social Justice' misses the mark, and executes justice in wrong places, for wrong means, and comes nowhere near God's standards. And it misses the Gospel entirely. The Gospel is better than gender, ethnicity, neighbourhood or class. Only the Gospel guarantees the righting of the 'sojourner', 'widow', and 'orphan'.

Galatians 3:28:

*"There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is no male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus."*

The Gospel is the love of God poured out on the 'disadvantaged' and on those who are not suffering injustice, for all of us are 'disadvantaged' in the sight of God. We cannot bring anything to God's plan of salvation. There is nothing that we can do to assist the problem. We are all helpless in our sin. We must all be 'thankful' to Christ, for only in 'Christ Alone' can 'true justice' be made; True Justice and Mercy, in HIM. It is not our righteousness, for we have none.