

Terry's 2020 Itinerary

The March/April/May itinerary is still in progress and full details will be printed in the next edition (January/February).

Responses have been received from many churches in NSW, Victoria and Tasmania.

To date Terry has speaking engagements in the following areas:

NSW: Sydney, Katoomba, Picton, Eden, Albury/Wodonga

Victoria: Numurkah, Kangaroo Flats, Melbourne.

Tasmania: Smithton, Huonville.

Prayer/Praise Points

- Praise the Lord this ministry of 'Diakrisis' has now been operating for nearly 24 years. It has reached to nearly all parts of the globe and thousands of people within Australia. The Lord has supplied us with the funds to continue each year as a faith ministry. Much literature has been distributed to individuals and churches. Our focus continues to be to *inform, teach and equip*. There have been many encouraging testimonies along the way. Praise the Lord for His ministry and truth.

- Praise the Lord for the editor being able to be released with the blessing of Hervey Bay Bible church, for itinerant ministry once again. An itinerant ministry is in the planning for March - May. Pray for the Lord's will to be done.

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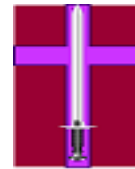
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Diakrisis (Australia)

'But strong meat belongs to them that are of full age, even those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern [diakrisis] both good and evil', (Heb.5:14)

PO Box 1499, Hervey Bay, Qld. Australia, 4655.

E-mail: taministries@bigpond.com Ph. 0411489472

Website: www.taministries.net

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TA Ministries is a non-denominational faith ministry,
teaching, informing and equipping the church.

Editor: Terry Arnold (Dr.Th; MABS; Dip.Bib.&Min.)

The editor may not necessarily agree with all the views expressed by subscribers in this newsletter.

We welcome comments or items contributed by readers. Unless otherwise requested, these may be included in following newsletters at the discretion of the editor.

Articles in this newsletter may be copied or reproduced provided it is in context and proper credit and references are given. We encourage distribution of this newsletter that others might be *taught, informed and equipped*.

This newsletter is distributed bi-monthly *free* of charge. The cost to this ministry is approximately \$20.00 per subscriber annually. Any donation to help with these expenses is received with gratitude.

Preaching Itinerary for Interstate

A preaching/teaching itinerary is being planned for the editor for NSW, Victoria and Tasmania during March-May 2020. A completed itinerary will be printed in the next January/February newsletter and finalised and updated again in the March/April edition.

If any churches or fellowships would like to join in please contact Terry on taministries@bigpond.com or phone 0411489472. A topic list is available on request.

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Editor's Comment

This editorial is an introduction to an important article later in this newsletter. The importance of that subject had been growing in my mind as I have watched churches locally and across this nation increasingly embark on one social/community project after another. So often I have asked the question of minister's fraternal and in Ecumenical community projects - what on earth has this got to do with the Gospel or 'church? Why are we doing community and social activities to help the community with no Gospel motive.

While I was attempting to put pen to paper on this subject, I came across an excellent article which addressed this issue. We have printed this article in full in this newsletter ('*Social Justice and the Gospel*', P.6). We urge readers to consider this longer article in the light of the importance of the Gospel.

Churches really do need to re-assess this question - *What is the primary mission of the church?* Most denominations and religious leaders are now increasingly concerned with social/political issues *before* the Gospel. As a pastor I often have had secular people as well as Christians ask - *'what does your church do for the community?'* When I state our first mission is to preach, teach and disseminate the Gospel and that other activities we may do are still to be Gospel based, the reactions are sometimes rather strange. Yes, we engage in outreach and other activities, but in all we attempt to glorify God by keeping His Gospel as a foundation. *The community first needs to hear about Christ's mission for sinners before any social concerns are met.*

Martyn Lloyd Jones, the great English expositor and Gospel preacher faced the same issue in Britain with the rising Ecumenical movement last century: *'The churches organise whist-drives, fetes, dramas, bazaars and things of that sort, so as to attract people. We are becoming almost as wily as the Devil himself, but we are really very bad at it. All our attempts are hopeless failures and thus the world laughs at us. Now, when the world persecutes the church, she is performing her real mission, but when the world laughs at her she has lost her soul. And today the world is laughing at the church, laughing at her attempts to be nice and to make people feel at home. My friends if you feel at home in any church without believing in Christ as your personal saviour, then that church is no church at all, but a place of entertainment or a social club. For the truth of Christianity and the preaching of the Gospel should make a church intolerable and uncomfortable to all except those who believe, and even they should go away feeling chastened and humbled'* (Biography Vol.1, P.142).

Yet the biblical church mission mentioned above has now become quite a foreign charter for many. The plethora of new church based social programmes and community projects, all perhaps worthy in and of themselves, do nothing for the souls of the lost. It may well make us popular with the masses and the social tide of the day, but social clubs can, and already do, these things *better than* any church can!

Many seek to have the church meet the felt needs of, and to serve, the

Your Comments and Questions

(Views expressed here are not necessarily those of the editor)

Terry, in your 'A Fresh Look at Revelation' Vol 4 No.11 Sept/Oct 2019, P.14 you are saying to your readers that Job 10:21-22 refers to Hades. Is this correct as the context clearly shows it to be 'the grave' (vs.19)?

(H.H. Qld)

Editor's reply:

The usual Hebrew words for Hades is 'sheol' and the grave 'qever'. 'Sheol' corresponds to 'Hades' in the NT (Ps.16:10; Hos.13:14 quoted in Acts 2:27; Acts 13:35; 1Cor.15:55). (The body enters 'qever' but it is never said to enter 'Sheol').

I do agree vs.19 is probably referring to the literal grave but I am somewhat persuaded, (even though neither 'sheol' or 'qever' are in vs.21,22), that vs.21,22 is referring to Hades, similar to many other scriptures which speak of a world of 'darkness' as Hades (Job.3:5; 28:3; 34:22; 38:17, etc).

The doctrine of Hell ('Hades') was not well understood or explained in the OT (but developed in the NT). Hades was simply understood as the under 'dark' world of dead people. To add to the difficulty, Hades and the grave are used synonymously in some places (the KJV translates 'sheol' as 'grave' 31 times, 'Hell' 30 times and 'pit' 3 times). It appeared that all go to Hades (Gen. 37:35 cp. Num. 16:30) and are conscious (Ps.16:10).

For more on all this see *Diakrisis* 2016 (Sept/Oct).

Diakrisis TV

This ministry once again is reproducing short 5-10 minute **YouTube clips**. We hope that the series on the Gospel could be used to give understanding of the Gospel; and now on other subjects as they are added.

The site is '*Diakrisis TV*' or the link is:

<https://www.youtube.com/channel/Ucvub39fwrzplo8ovmr1whjw>

- Gospel series (4):**
- 1. *What is the Gospel?***
 - 2. *The Heart of the Gospel***
 - 3. *Which gospel***
 - 4. *Another Gospel***

New Topical:

**'*The Greatest Deception - True and False Believers*'
'*Total Depravity*' - *How Free is unsaved man?*'**

vigorously defended ourselves against his claim and won.

Now, we have a situation, where a Survivor, sexually abused by one of our own, is suffering a terminal illness and is in financial hardship to the point where he has to beg from strangers.

With all this in mind, I find it shameful that we have given huge amounts of money to top tier law firms to defend ourselves against a claim made by a victim who should have been shown compassion and mercy instead.

I appeal to you, and the current Executives, that even if the ACC through loopholes did not have a legal obligation to compensate Brett we definitely have a moral obligation before God and man to help him now.

I intend to take up a special offering for Brett in my church this Sunday and hope that you could encourage others to do the same.

Kind regards, Bob Cotton. Maitland Christian Church 29/09/2018”

Since writing the above quoted letter to you, public awareness of Brett Sengstock’s appalling treatment at the hands of the church has only increased. Please refer to the following links where his story is told on 60 minutes, mentioned on two occasions in Parliament by Mr David Shoebridge MLC, and also in a recent article by Joanne McCarthy in the Newcastle Herald.

<https://m.youtube.com/watch?v=4g2FgAu1NYw>

<https://youtu.be/nq4aCQDJd1U>

<https://youtu.be/5sHo9tXrBDE>

<https://www.newcastleherald.com.au/story/6436900/abuse-survivor-slams-prime-minister-over-close-ties-with-hillsong-church-leader/>

How much better it would have been if we had acted with mercy and compassion at the earliest opportunity instead of layering further abuse on an innocent and vulnerable victim. Regardless of this monumental failure I believe that it is still not too late for us to do the right thing. I would again ask that we do something collectively for Brett Sengstock and take up an offering to support this good man who has suffered more than we could possibly imagine. At the very least would you please make our fellow ministers aware of Brett’s “go fund me” page <https://www.gofundme.com/f/justiceforbrett> and through them grant our congregations the opportunity to directly provide the financial support that Brett should have already received.

As it stands, Brett’s abuse at the hands of Frank Houston cannot be compensated under the National Redress Scheme so his only hope for compensation for a life stolen is the generosity of others. Surely we can find it in our hearts to help a victim of one of our own. Let us not fail him again.

Respectfully, Bob Cotton, Pastor; Maitland Christian Church.

‘And be you kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ’s sake has forgiven you’ (Eph.4:32)

community. But again, is not seeing people saved in their *souls* more important than temporary healing and benefit for people in their *bodies* or in their *social* concerns? This world and its social concerns are *temporal* and changing constantly. The fruit of the Gospel is an unchanging truth and *eternal*.

The Ecumenical movement has raised the bar with churches concern and involvement in social activism and addressing community felt needs. In the early days of the growing ecumenical movement in England Martyn Lloyd Jones was addressing this issue at its core when he stated: ‘*The first question and the important one today is, not how we are to unite the denominations as they stand, but the old 16th century question - how is man saved? Is it through the church and its sacraments and through works alone; or is it justification by faith alone?*’ (1963 *Letters*, P.155). This is the issue with the gospel that churches need to be addressing, rather than social and community activism!

The problem is that today many church people do not know what is a true Christian and what is the true Gospel? In surveys I have found many Christians simply cannot describe the Biblical Gospel with accuracy. Many also in describing it mix it with language of social concerns. It becomes then a moral, social gospel. This subtle works gospel also changes with the whims of social thought and the fashions of this age (Rom.12:2).

I risk being accused of being unloving and lacking compassion towards the needs of the community, but what is the local church’s and the pastor’s role but to bring glory to God in worship, in teaching and equipping the sheep, and to spread the Gospel? What is the ‘great commission’ but to do these things and to go into the world and to make disciples (Matt.28:19,20)?

What did Jesus die for? Did He die for the needs and the *temporal* social concerns of the community? Or did He die for the sinful souls of men, women and children in the light of *eternity*? ‘...*While we were yet sinners, Christ died for us*’ (Rom.5:8).

Some would say we can have social issues as part of the Gospel or we can do both. But when anything is added to the Gospel does it not become ‘*another gospel*’ which is ‘*accursed*’ (Gal.1:8,9)?

Jesus himself did not preach a social gospel and allow social ventures to interfere with his mission. *He was born to die for sin*. Yes He was compassionate with the multitudes, but his *first mission* was always to do the Father’s will (Jn.5:30). In fact His *first message* was ‘*repent for the kingdom of heaven is at hand*’ (Matt.4:17). The first message of the apostles was also the same (Mk.6:12; Acts 3:19).

Is not this mandate, this mission, this ‘gospel’, really what Jesus died for - that we might believe on Him and have something that abides, even life eternal?

What are we supposed to be doing in ‘church’? How long will we follow what the world wants us to do? Why do we offer the world that which is already in the world? What is the primary mission of the church?

Surely the Gospel is the answer with its message of hope for a decaying world that is set for judgement.

Terry Arnold

How The World Sees Pentecostalism



Editor:

This below is taken from *The Signal* secular journalists Stephen Stockwell and Ruby Jones and printed in the ABC news under ‘*How Hillsong and other Pentecostal megachurches are redefining religion in Australia*’.

Note how secular authorities view Pentecostalism.

‘Lighting and music draw thousands of people for a Hillsong service. It is Sunday morning at Hillsong’s megachurch in the Sydney suburb of Alexandria, and Pastor Natalie Pingel pauses mid-sermon to conduct an impromptu Dwayne ‘The Rock’ Johnson look-a-like contest.

...She [Pastor Natalie Pingel] selects a group of buff parishioners and members of the band to line up on stage. Each takes turns flashing the crowd the actor’s signature raised eyebrow, to approval and gushing laughter. Pastor Pingel then leads the congregation in prayer, the band plays anthemic rock music and the big screens either side of the stage light up with suggestions for what people can pray for. The suggestions include financial stability, luck with job applications and visa approvals. Pentecostalism is not just about rock music and laughs, it also promises the Holy Spirit can help you in this life, in practical ways, not just in the afterlife. This ‘prosperity doctrine’ is key to how Pentecostal Christianity is attracting new demographics of worshippers, particularly migrants and young people.

How popular is Pentecostal Christianity?... ‘Australia’s largest churches in every capital city and in the regions are all Pentecostal churches,’ Andrew Singleton, an associate professor of sociology and social research at Deakin University, said. ‘Starting with Hillsong in Sydney and churches in Melbourne and Adelaide like Planet Shakers, Riverside Church, Paradise Church are all Pentecostal. More people are attending Pentecostal churches than any other Christian denomination, they put bums on seats.’

... ‘If I’m a 22-year-old and I’m religious, do I look at the local Catholic church?’ Associate Professor Singleton said. ‘I see a bunch of old ladies. Do I look at that or do I look at the Pentecostal church down the road where I see hundreds of people my own age, dressed like me? It’s a no-brainer’.

Michael, a 25-year-old parishioner at Hillsong’s Sunday service, agreed. ‘Right now everyone is very into experience and Pentecostalism was birthed out of experience of the Holy Spirit,’ he said. ‘It’s exciting, it’s riveting, there’s a little bit more life and energy in it,’ his friend Maddy added.

How did it become popular in Australia? Pentecostalism grew from small churches like the Azusa Street Revival in Los Angeles in the early 1900’s....The breakthrough came when Pentecostals began borrowing from a group called the Jesus People in the 1960s, taking on an informal style and using music to evangelise....Professor Singleton said... ‘literally anyone who could get some musicians together and some dynamic preaching, set up in a school hall, and

Your Comments and Questions

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Terry, This is a letter I have written to again bring attention to the dire needs of one of the victims of Frank Houston [the founder of the Christian Life centres in Australia and father of Hillsong’s pastor Brian Houston]

Open letter to the Members of the National Executive of the Australian Christian Churches.

Dear Sirs, I am writing to you again, as I did just over 12 months ago to appeal to you to assist Mr Brett Sengstock, a survivor of childhood sex abuse by clergy and, as you well know, a victim of our Frank Houston (dec).

I am assured by the NSW State Secretary that you did receive my original email of 29 September 2018 and further, it has been forwarded to you again through him recently yet I still have had no reply so I feel writing an open letter is now not only appropriate but also my only hope of bringing proper attention to this matter that you appear to have chosen to ignore. It read as follows:

‘Hi [name withheld by editor] I wish to bring a serious matter to your attention and would be grateful if you would forward this to [name withheld by editor] and the National Executive.

Brett Sengstock was a child victim of Frank Houston’s sex crimes. He was identified at the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sex Abuse, Case Study 18 by the pseudonym “AHA”.

It has come to my attention that Brett is suffering Stage Four Lymphoma and, as an invalid pensioner, is struggling financially because of the additional strain on his limited finances caused by his ongoing medical expenses. In short, he is dying and is broke.

A friend of Brett’s has started a ‘go fund me’ page in an attempt to ease his financial burden at this time. Please refer to the following link: <https://www.gofundme.com/f/justiceforbrett>

I am hoping that we, as a Christian Movement, may be able to help Brett financially.

At the Royal Commission there was never any question raised about Frank Houston’s guilt in regard to the sex crimes committed against Brett when he was a little boy in Coogee. From the evidence tendered, everyone now knows that Frank Houston was a serial paedophile with multiple victims in New Zealand as well as Australia and the crimes committed against Brett were both serious and numerous. The impact on Brett’s life from this abuse has been devastating and ongoing.

Despite the Executive of the time knowing all these facts, they chose to conceal Frank Houston’s crimes from the Police and the Movement. In doing so they effectively took away any hope Brett would ever have of obtaining justice.

I am aware that in recent times Brett sought compensation from the Australian Christian Churches for the crimes he suffered at the hands of one of our most highly respected pastors. I understand that we, as a movement

Your Comments and Questions

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The Editor - a 'Son of Belial'?

Hello Terry, at the outset I really do thank you for your perseverance and expense in sending me your 'Diakrisis' magazine over the years. I understand completely how your ministry touches many people and how they are looking for a man of substance and principle that will stand for the truth. The concern I have is that we, you and I, do not serve and worship the same God. One of us is a son of Belial. The definition? 'Certain men, the children of Belial, are gone out from among you, and have withdrawn the inhabitants of their city, saying, Let us go and serve other gods, which you have not known' (Deut.13:13)...Sincerely,

(Name withheld at editor's discretion)

[After repeated requests the writer refused to show the editor any reason for this charge of 'son of belial'].

Editor's reply:

This is not the language of, nor is it a description to be used for, a professing christian. Here is my reply:

The God I have is the one who created the heavens and the earth, who sent His Son to die for sin. That person, the Lord Jesus Christ, propitiated God the Father for my sin with a perfect finished sacrifice, enabling me to be forgiven of my trespasses. In dying on the cross he offered his life for mine as a substitute to satisfy God's wrath upon me a wretched sinner. When I was first born again and saved by Grace alone through faith, not of works, I knew very little in those days about doctrine except that I was a sinner and needed a Saviour as my substitute. As a redeemed person His blood has set me free. I acknowledged Jesus as Saviour and Lord, and still do. The righteousness I look to is in the Lord, alien to me but credited to my account so that a terrible penalty can be paid...I praise Him daily for this changing of my heart and the regeneration (once born again). I have served him imperfectly, the same God now for more than 30 years...When he saved me I became a *son of the most high*...Is this the profession of a 'son of Belial'?

'Let your speech be always with grace, seasoned with salt, that you may know how you ought to answer every man' (Col.4:6)

'...out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks' (Matt.12:34; Lk.6:45).

away they go'. Associate Professor Singleton said the Pentecostal's exceptional ability to gather donations allowed them to expand.

The evolution of the church over recent decades meant it has undergone a rebirth of sorts. A lot of the baby boomers who founded it have moved on, left church, because it's high energy, it's hard to stay committed to that practice,' Associated Professor Singleton said.

What is the difference between Pentecostals and other Christians? One of the most recognisable aspects of a Pentecostal church is the singing and music and Hillsong has made music central to its model. 'They really used music as their engine, they wrote their own music and it's now famous worldwide,' Professor Singleton said. While the music and singing is front and centre, some worshippers also speak in tongues, an incomprehensible language. They also practice something called 'slain in the spirit', where worshippers fall to the ground in a state of religious fervour...Do not expect to see those elements on your first trip to one of these churches though. 'The version of Pentecostalism that reigns supreme in Australia now is a very soft kind of version compared to earlier iterations where it was much more religiously edgy'. He said the more 'gonzo' spiritual experiences are becoming less important today. Instead, modern Pentecostalism focuses on teaching God will help you be successful. This is what has been dubbed the 'prosperity doctrine'. 'God doesn't necessarily want you to be richer but God wants you to be successful and a manifestation of that might be getting your finances in order,' he said...Will Pentecostalism become more influential?... 'I personally think that we've probably plateaued in terms of the influence of Pentecostalism...The tide of secularism is strong and powerful. All the research shows teenagers falling away from organised religion one generation after the next and Pentecostalism has kind of bucked that trend but how long can you resist, I don't think forever'.

Editor's Comments:

Note how the secular journalists accurately describe what is modern Pentecostalism with its 'rock music', 'big screens', 'bands', 'stage lights', 'laughs' 'finances', 'prosperity doctrine' and various methods to 'put bums on seats'. And it is true that 'music is their engine' and if that was taken away there would be an exodus of 'bums on seats'.

It is also true that there is a huge fall away rate in these churches. Many simply leave it all together and 'move on' as stated.

Another remarkable truth in this article is that today there is less of the 'gonzo' (crazy) manifestations as well as unknown 'tongues' and 'slaying in the spirit'. The emphasis now is on prosperity, healing and temporal concerns because that plays into peoples felt needs.

The 'tide of secularism' mentioned here is as stated 'strong and powerful' and that trend is held back somewhat by this new Pentecostalism with its entertainment and market driven approach. But the fruit is in the huge fall away and turn over rates and the younger audiences. The world's observers see all this, yet many Christians are duped into the false gospels therein.

Social Justice and the Gospel

R. Todd Stanton

I want to discuss a trend within evangelicalism – something of a worldwide trend within evangelicalism [loosely defined]. It has been around for a while but of late has picked up quite a bit of traction and speed and thus, something we need to pause and evaluate biblically. I am talking about the need to do ‘social justice’ in our churches. That is fast becoming an assumption today. We are told that churches *must* do ‘social justice’ as part of their ministry and their mission.

I am questioning that assumption. I am questioning the assumption that the church’s mission is to do ‘social justice’. That’s what I want us to discuss. Now, some of you may have not a clue what I mean by ‘social justice,’ so perhaps by way of introduction a nice window into the whole subject is to replay a couple of conversations: one that I had some time back and another a pastor friend of mine also had.

A few years ago, we had a visitor at SJPBC, she actually came a couple times and each time she pressed me each Sunday with a particular question. The conversation went something like this: Visitor: ‘*What does SJPBC do for the community?*’ Me: [knowing what she was getting at]...*for the community: we evangelize; we preach Christ to the community* (I told her). Visitor: *No, no* (she replied) *what kind of things do you do for the community? How are you helping the poor? feeding the hungry? stopping domestic abuse? ending abortion? Etc. In other words, what are you guys doing about ‘social justice’?*

Believe it or not, nowadays, that’s what people are looking for when they decide upon joining a church? Does your church do ‘social justice’? Continuing with my introduction, let me tell you of another story; this one comes from a pastor friend of mine. He wrote it like this: *When the morning worship service ended last Sunday, a woman whom I had never met before made a beeline for me...She said she was a guest from out of town, and wanted to help me understand the ‘social justice’ issue. ‘Despite what you think,’ she said, ‘social justice is a gospel issue.’ ‘Injustice is everywhere in the world. I am fighting it full time. Right now I have several lawsuits pending against injustice in the health-care industry. Don’t tell me that’s not gospel work. You’re not being a faithful witness unless you’re fighting for social justice. It’s built right into the gospel message: ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’*

I tried to sound as agreeable as possible under the circumstances: ‘That’s surely one of the most important tenets of God’s moral law, and it does distil the idea of human justice into a single commandment,’ I said. ‘But be careful how you state it. That’s not the gospel. That’s the Second Great Commandment.’ ‘Oh, right,’ she said. ‘I meant to say the gospel is ‘You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, and mind.’ ‘Well, that’s the First Great Commandment,’ I said. ‘That’s still law, not gospel.’ ‘What do you mean?’ she said. ‘I can show you those verses in the Bible.’ ‘Yes, ma’am, I know,’ I said. ‘It’s Matthew 22:37-40. But that’s a summary of the law. It’s not the gospel.’ ‘But it’s

Continued next page >

mission of the Church. Please don’t confuse the two. After all, arguably, sharing the gospel with an unbeliever is the ultimate ‘doing good,’ and *that is* the mission of the church!

Sadly, one unintended consequence of this movement is that it has produced what I call ‘The Accidental Pharisee’. It has created a mandate that is just not there in Scripture. As one writer put it: ‘To insist that social justice activism is an essential tenet of gospel truth is a form of theological legalism not fundamentally different from the teaching of those in the early church who insisted circumcision was a gospel issue’. To put it another way, the social justice movement is in violation of 1 Corinthians 4:6. They have gone ‘beyond what is written’. **THUS, IT IS A FORM OF ‘THEOLOGICAL LEGALISM’. To say, ‘if you don’t do social justice, you are not a Christian’ is legalism. Tim Keller goes as far as to say that, ‘if you are not just, you have not truly been justified by faith...the real proof that you are a Christian is to work against injustice, to share food, clothing, and home with the hungry and homeless.’ That is going beyond what is written!**

In the end, we who do understand the gospel need to be reminded of the priority of the gospel. Let me close with the reminder of 1 Corinthians 15:1-4: ‘*Now I make known to you, brethren, the Gospel which I preached to you, which also you received, in which also you stand, by which also you are saved, if you hold fast the word which I preached to you, unless you believed in vain. For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received, that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and that He was buried, and that He was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures*’. This is a great verse to examine what we are doing in our churches. Measure this text to the mission of our churches. Make sure we are keeping the main thing as the main thing. Please notice, the Apostle Paul puts the gospel as ‘*first importance*’.

That’s our point. The social justice movement not only redefines the Gospel but ultimately it will remove the gospel as the central mission of the church.

Giving the last word to Martyn Lloyd-Jones, he says: ‘There is a real danger of forgetting the gospel itself because you are so interested in the political and social and cultural implications of the gospel...I am not saying that you should not be concerned about the social political implications of the gospel, that you should not be interested in art and life in this world while we are here, but with a world such as this today...why do we not think more of what is before us, the glory that awaits us? This ‘blessed hope’...Take an interest in cultural things if you like, but be careful that you do not mix it with your presentation of the gospel...Do not put the wrong things in the centre. There is only one thing that is in the centre: ‘Jesus Christ, and Him crucified’...and all that means and involves. God’s purpose in this world - and the church’s only legitimate commission - is the proclamation of the message of sin and salvation to individuals, whom God sovereignly redeems and calls out of the world’.

(Todd Stanton is the pastor of St John’s Park Baptist Church, Sydney, and the editor of *Evangelical Action*)

4. The Social Justice Advocates do not (fully) Understand the Gospel

This is really at the heart of the issue. After all, if you get the mission of the church wrong, then inevitably, you will get the Gospel wrong. You read these guys, these so called gurus, and every time they discuss the “Gospel” they describe it in terms of ‘human flourishing’ or *shalom*.

In fact, it’s always interesting to me to hear someone explain to me the gospel as the ‘good news’ by the way they first describe the bad news. If you were to ask these guys, what are we saved from, you might hear that we are saved from white privilege; or saved from racial injustices; or saved from poverty; or saved from political oppression.

TIM KELLER SAYS, ‘THE PRIMARY PURPOSE OF SALVATION IS CULTURAL RENEWAL, TO MAKE THE WORLD A BETTER PLACE’. That’s the message from the ‘social justice’ movement. There is little, if any, discussion of: man’s sinful condition; God’s holy wrath; the need of forgiveness; the need of a Saviour. To be clear, I am not saying that some of these guys don’t present the gospel this way, *but the major problem is that when social activism is included in the gospel, history has shown that the gospel becomes blurry - blurry to the point of outright absent.* If you don’t believe me, read the history of the social gospel of the 19th century, when liberalism came into the church and poisoned her wells with its denial of inspiration and inerrancy. What you ended up with was a Bible with no authority and no Gospel. What was left was just ethics, morality - a social gospel at best!

Concluding Thoughts

So, this is a gospel issue. We must get what we are saved from absolutely right; even what we are saved to. Again, let’s be clear that there is room for legitimate, non-dominating mercy efforts in Christian missions. However, what we are seeing today is a focus on social action that, at best, is disproportional to the New Testament’s emphasis, and at times is something worse. D.A. Carson put it this way: *‘I fear that the cross, without ever being disowned, is constantly in danger of being dismissed from the central place it must enjoy.* He then adds, *the gospel is the good news of what God has done, not a description of what [Christians] ought to do in consequence. One cannot too forcefully insist on the distinction between the gospel and its entailments’.* In other words, to represent the gospel of Jesus Christ as being about the general betterment of unbelieving society is to misrepresent the Gospel.

Someone, of course, immediately throws up Galatians 6:10: *‘So then, while we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, and especially to those who are of the household of the faith’.* ‘See, we are supposed to do good to all people,’ they say. Yes, we are; absolutely we are to do good to all people, we - individually. Yet let’s not forget, however, that our priority is with the people of God. Don’t forget the *‘especially to those who are of the household of the faith’* part. We are to do good to them first. **Nevertheless, the point here is that ‘doing good’ (if ‘doing good’ means social justice) is not the gospel, nor is it the mission of the church primarily.** Yes, it can be the mission of the Christian but it is not the

in the Bible,’ she repeated. ‘So it’s a gospel issue.’ I tried to explain: ‘Gospel and law aren’t the same thing. The law is a prelude to the gospel, not really part of the gospel. The law tells us what God requires of us. But then it condemns us, because it requires perfect obedience and curses anyone who doesn’t obey its every jot and tittle. But none of us obeys so thoroughly. And ‘whoever keeps the whole law and yet stumbles at just one point is guilty of breaking all of it.’ That’s James 2:10. Jesus said in Matthew 5:48 that the standard the law sets for us is God’s own absolute perfection. We can’t live up to that. The law therefore brings wrath (Romans 4:15), not salvation. The law can only condemn us, because we are guilty. All of us. ‘Furthermore, suffering oppression doesn’t absolve anyone of wrongdoing. And being privileged doesn’t make a person any more sinful. We all deserve the wages of sin: death. That’s what the law says. Once we understand that, the last thing we need is more law. What we need is salvation from the penalty and power of the law. That’s where the gospel comes in. ‘The gospel is the good news about Christ’s death, burial, and resurrection. Its themes are atonement for sin, forgiveness, reconciliation, and the justification of sinners. It’s the answer to the dilemma of the law.’

She interrupted at that point. ‘But you can’t preach forgiveness to people who treat other people unjustly,’ she said. ‘That would just compound the injustice.’ ‘Scripture says the opposite,’ I told her. ‘Christ died for the ungodly. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins. Christ, who never committed a single act of injustice, gave his life as a ransom for other people’s sin - the just for the unjust. He paid sin’s price and thus satisfied both the wrath and the justice of God on behalf of sinners, so God can be just and still justify sinners who turn to Christ in faith. ‘That’s the gospel. And God’s Word emphatically condemns anyone who proclaims the law instead of the gospel, or mingles the law with the gospel. ‘Yes, the law condemns oppression, and it puts evildoers under a curse. But it cannot change hearts, and therefore it can neither free oppressed people from the bondage of their own sin nor transform their oppressors into good Samaritans.’ She cut me short again. ‘You can say that all you want, but I’m telling you that if you’re not fighting against injustice, you’re not doing gospel work,’ she repeated. ‘Trust me; I know. I deal with corporate injustice all the time. I’ve even got these lawsuits pending...’

...And we were right back where we started.

Both of those conversations, as I said, highlight an assumption today and that is that churches *must* be involved in ‘social justice’. We *must* be involved in things like:

- ‘Prosecuting men who batter, exploit, and rob poor women’
- ‘Putting pressure on local police departments until they respond to calls and crimes as quickly in the poor part of town as the prosperous part’
- ‘Form an organization that both prosecutes and seeks against loan companies that prey on the poor and the elderly...’
- ‘Meet the needs of the handicapped, the elderly, or the hungry in our neighborhoods’
- ‘Provide temporary shelters for the homeless’

Continued next page >

- ‘Create food and clothing services for those in need’
- ‘Arrange health clinics’
- ‘Organize foster care of children’
- ‘Help educate...train people for jobs’
- ‘Give financial counseling’

All of that is considered ‘doing social justice’ - plus a host of other things. They are all with the goal of ‘fixing the injustices of the world’. (By the way, all those above were quotes out of a book by a prominent evangelical leader just a few years ago. I will name him a bit later).

SO MY QUESTION IS THIS - AND WE NEED TO BE CLEAR ON THIS - ARE THOSE THINGS ABOVE, ARE THEY PART OF THE MISSION OF THE CHURCH? After all, no one will quibble or argue that those things should not be done. Yes, injustices *should* be corrected; people should be aided, helped and protected. In fact, in a real sense, Christians should lead the way in showing kindness and compassion to his fellow man. We, above all people, know that men are made in the image of God and thus we treat him or her as such.

The question, though is not on a personal basis - arguably, individual Christians should be the proverbial ‘Good Samaritan’ to the helpless they run into. No, we are talking about the church. Is social justice part of the goal and mission of the church? To put it another way, should the church be busy engaging in social relief? **Well apparently, John Stott thinks so (if we want to trace the sources of the current trend).** In 1974, at the First International Congress on World Evangelization called by evangelist Billy Graham held in Lausanne, Switzerland, Stott articulated a change from his earlier thinking, which reflected that of most evangelicals of the time, of understanding the Great Commission primarily as being ‘a preaching, converting and teaching mission’. He said this: *‘Today, however, I would express myself differently. It is not just that the commission includes the duty to teach converts everything Jesus had previously commanded (Matt.28:20), and that social responsibility is among the things which Jesus commanded. I now see more clearly that not only the consequences of the commission but the actual commission itself must be understood to include social as well as evangelistic responsibility, unless we are to be guilty of distorting the words of Jesus’.*

That created the seed of social justice as part of the gospel within evangelicalism. Fast forward to 2011 and we have Rick Warren’s PEACE Plan. According to the website, vision of the peace plan is to mobilize Christians worldwide to address five giant problems of spiritual emptiness, self-serving leadership, poverty, disease and illiteracy. The church responds to these global giants by five expressions with the acronym PEACE: Promote reconciliation, Equip servant leaders, Assist the poor, Care for the sick and Educate the next generation. Interestingly, when the program was first introduced the P stood for Planting Churches but the emphasis shifted to Promote reconciliation.

The shift in emphasis reflected the effort to broaden involvement to more churches and religious groups worldwide as well as public and private sector

was clearly to the *spiritually* poor, captive, blind, and oppressed!

SIMPLY PUT, THE SOCIAL JUSTICE GURUS DO NOT UNDERSTAND THE MISSION OF JESUS!

3. The Social Justice Advocates do not understand the Sufficiency and Authority of Scriptures

As one writer puts it: *‘Social justice has a really bad starting point. Rather than beginning in the Word and seeking biblical justice - social justice by its very definition begins in the social environment and imports ideas from sociology, politics, and a wide array of disciplines into the Scriptures. This is why you hear gifted theologians talking about justice through the lens of intersectionality and systemic racism as opposed to the gospel’.*

In other words, the social justice movement is just the latest movement added to the plague of pragmatism in the church. Pragmatism, remember, is the idea that if it works, it must be right. It is the belief that ‘people are coming into your church, thus whatever you are doing must be right, it must be okay. Look at the results, obviously, God is blessing. So, exactly what are you doing?’

Well over the last few years, we have seen pragmatism take many different forms. **THERE IS THE PSYCHOLOGY MOVEMENT; THE CHARISMATIC MOVEMENT; THE SEEKER-FRIENDLY MOVEMENT; THE EMERGENT MOVEMENT; AND NOW, THE SOCIAL JUSTICE MOVEMENT.**

What do all these movements have in common? They are substituting the sufficiency and the authority of God’s wisdom for man’s wisdom. After all, think about it, why would a Christian depart from the sufficiency of Scriptures? What normally drives one away from the God-ordained means of Sola Scriptura in the power of the Holy Spirit? Three words: unbelief, fear of man, and pride.

John MacArthur wrote recently on this saying: ‘Evangelicals of our generation seem pathologically addicted to the sin of desiring the praise of man. Every deviation from sound gospel doctrine has been driven and advanced by evangelicals seeking acceptance in the broader culture. Whatever attracts the world must be the right doctrine or strategy. Even with social justice...it reflects a fear of being thought unsophisticated or out of step with contemporary ‘wisdom’. ‘Social Justice’ entails political ideas that are deemed sophisticated – namely identity politics, critical race theory, the redistribution of wealth, and other radical or social policies. Those ideas were first popularized and propagated in the secular academy, where they are now regarded as received wisdom and have become a dominating part of popular culture. Evangelicals who are chasing the culture are latecomers to the party of those who advocate ‘social justice’. And I am convinced the dominant motives are pragmatic’.

I believe he is right. The social justice movement is pragmatic, looking for acceptance in the culture. At the foundation of it though is a subtle denial of the sufficiency and authority of the Bible!

even John the Baptist).

Neither did Jesus instruct or train His disciples to do so. **That doesn't mean that it's intrinsically wrong for Christians to be involved in such work.** But it certainly makes suspect the argument that, based on Jesus' example, the church should make social action central to her mission.

Personal expressions of mercy and church-organized social action programs are not the same thing: Jesus exemplified one, not the other. In fact, the purpose statements of Jesus' earthly ministry always focused on proclamation and on His substitutionary death for sinners: 'Let us go somewhere else to the towns nearby, so that I may preach there also; for that is what I came for' (Mark 1:38). 'For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many' (Mark 10:45). 'I must preach the kingdom of God to the other cities also, for I was sent for this purpose' (Luke 4:43).

But what about Jesus' miracles, they say? Jesus' miracles of healing and of feeding the multitudes were genuine acts of compassion, revealing His power over sickness, nature, and even death. In short, they were a sneak preview of the power Jesus will exercise when He comes in the *fullness of His kingdom*. In other words, Jesus' miracles were a preview of those *'powers of the age to come'*.

Thus, we need to ask: is it our job or Jesus' job to do 'social justice'? By the way, it's no surprise that many of these **'social justice' gurus are postmillennial in their theology - as if it is the church's job to 'redeem and reclaim the society/culture'**. In a real sense, you get eschatology right, you get social justice right; you get the mission of the church right.

But back to Jesus, let me say this, in light of Jesus' compassion, I do believe that it is perfectly appropriate for medical doctors to make mission trips to Africa or for churches to send hurricane relief to Haiti. Those are good things and have a legitimate and valuable place in the body of Christ.

It is interesting though that Jesus' miracles were never held up as motivation for the early church to focus on social action - as if the church were to continue Jesus' program of miraculous social relief by non-miraculous means. In fact, Jesus repeatedly said that the purpose of His miracles was something else: to declare that He was the unique God-sent Messiah. 'The works which the Father has given Me to accomplish - the very works that I do - testify about Me, that the Father has sent Me' (John 5:36).

One of their proof texts, in the hope of proving that Jesus' mission was equally proclamation *and* social action, social justice gurus draw attention to Luke 4:18-19 *'The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me, Because He anointed Me to preach the gospel to the poor. He has sent Me to proclaim release to the captives, And recovery of sight to the blind, To set free those who are oppressed, To proclaim the favourable year of the Lord'*. In this passage, Jesus reads Isaiah 61:1-2 and announces to the people of Nazareth that His mission was to the poor, the captives, the blind, and the oppressed. **Yet, what social justice advocates fail to give due weight to is the fact that the Isaiah passage focuses on preaching and proclaiming (mentioned three times), and that the preaching to be done**

organizations. Warren's peace plan broadens the mission of the church with a global social agenda. It also promotes an ecumenical, interfaith, governmental, and business partnership in the fulfillment of the mission.

Perhaps the biggest evangelical guru behind the 'social justice' movement is Tim Keller who is a high-profile Presbyterian pastor in New York City (and co-founder of the Gospel Coalition). On his church's website, they have a statement - known as *The Missional Manifesto* - where their goal as a church, seeks to renew the city: socially, spiritually, and culturally. That missional duality is expressed this way: *'We believe the mission and responsibility of the church includes BOTH the proclamation of the Gospel AND its demonstration...The church must constantly evangelize, respond lovingly to human needs, as well as seek the welfare of the city'*.

Keller has also written a book that fleshes this out titled *Generous Justice: How God's Grace Makes Us Just*. In it, he teaches that the church has a two-fold mission in this world: to preach the Gospel and to do justice. In it, he makes some bold assertions such as: *'the primary purpose of salvation is cultural renewal, and to make the world a better place'*.

I have to say, much of this kind of 'missional' language 'reclaiming culture, renewing culture' sounds a lot like the Emergent Church people a number of years ago. **One of them, Mike Frost from Morling College, basically says this same thing. In a blog post just a few weeks ago, he said this: *Rather than seeing evangelism and social justice as competing interests, I'd like us to recover the biblical idea that word and deed are interdependent activities of the church. Instead of evangelism and justice being seen as opposing each other on a see-saw, think of them as two interlocking cogs. As you crank one cog, it sets the other one turning as well. In fact, I'd go so far as to say if you're committed to evangelism but never find yourself drawn to alleviate suffering or remove social or political impediments to allow true access and equality for all, you're probably doing evangelism wrong. The only people who say justice diverts you from evangelism are those for whom the gospel is (a) reductionist (information about how to go to heaven when you die); (b) individualistic (inviting Jesus into your heart); (c) punitive (guilt alleviation and hell avoidance); and (d) anthropocentric (focused on personal sin more than on the character of the Triune God). However, if you believe, as Tim Keller says, 'the gospel is the good news that God himself has come to rescue and renew all of creation through the work of Jesus Christ on our behalf,' then your gospel is expansive, communal, telic, and God-centered. It propels you into the world to demonstrate God's justice, not just preach about it'*.**

By the way, it's interesting that many campus ministries at universities today (i.e., Campus Crusade and Inter-Varsity) have recently shifted their 'ministry philosophy' to keep and attract young people to their groups. Now 'we are about social justice' they say. 'We exist to make the world a better place.'

What do we say to all that? Is he right? Does the church have a two-fold mission or a one-fold mission? Are evangelism *and* social justice the interlocking 'cogs' of the church's mandate?

Well, I am going to argue that it has a one, single mission. In fact, more than a mission - a mandate - from Christ Himself and that is to proclaim the gospel! That's what we singularly do: 'we preach Christ and Him crucified' Or, as Jesus said Himself: *'Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age'*.

To me, that sounds like the church is about one thing and one thing only: the conversion of souls and making disciples. Does that mean there is no room for 'social justice'? Well, that is *the* question we need to talk about. Fundamentally we need to discuss this and get it right because, as I see it, this "social justice" add-on to the church's mission is an ecclesiological issue - it is a movement to redefine the church. **Secondly, it is a soteriological issue - it is a movement to redefine the gospel. That's how serious this is. As John MacArthur recently put it: 'Evangelicalism's newfound obsession with the notion of 'social justice' is a significant shift - and I am convinced it's a shift that is moving many people (including some key evangelical leaders) off message, and onto a trajectory that many other movements and denominations have taken before, always with spiritually disastrous results. Over the years, I have fought a number of polemical battles against ideas that threaten the gospel. This recent (and surprisingly sudden) detour in quest of social justice is, I believe, the most subtle and dangerous threat so far'**.

So, with that let me just outline for you a number of errors that I see in the 'social justice' movement within evangelicalism. Frankly, there is way too much for me to say to do this justice (no pun intended) but I think I can give enough for you to get an idea of the seriousness and the errors of what is going on today. Here are four errors with the social justice movement.

1. They don't understand true justice.

In other words, they don't understand the difference between social justice and biblical justice. If you trace the root of 'social justice' it actually comes out of the leftist, liberal secular postmodern ideologies brewed in the academy. It comes out of the wacky (Godless!) philosophies like intersectionality, critical race theory, etc. **In fact, making sure we are all clear, let's use the following definition for 'social justice': 'Social justice is a philosophical and political concept holding that, because all people in this world should have equal access to wealth, health, opportunity and well-being, all people of this world are thus obliged to make it so'**.

Now, you may ask, what's wrong with that? Aren't we all for one and one for all in striving for equality? **That certainly sounds all right? The question, though, is this: is it biblical?** Biblically, though, justice in the Bible doesn't have a modifier. Nowhere in the Bible, do we read 'social justice'. Some, of course, like to put it in there but it is not there. Surprisingly, **Dr. Keller accentuates this reality when he rewrites Psalm 33:5 in *Generous Justice*. The text reads; 'The Lord loves righteousness and justice; the earth is full of his**

unfailing love.' Dr. Keller's version reads; *'The Lord loves social justice; the earth is full of his unfailing love.'* He takes a perfectly understandable sentence and renders it senseless.

Make no mistake, every time 'justice' is used in the Bible, it is referred to as 'God's justice'! As I said, it doesn't need the modifier. I mean, let's not complicate this: what is justice? **Justice is when words and actions are done according to God's law!** Right? In reality, it is *'God's justice'* is what counts in the end. Where is the concern for that?

In fact, when you understand biblical justice - again God's justice, I guarantee you that nobody will be interested in that. Nobody will want that! Think about it, do unbelievers really want justice? Do unbelievers want God's justice? I don't think so! And yet, the social justice movement flips all of that on its head. You see, the assumption behind social justice is that everyone is a victim. There is the premise of the so-called victim-mentality. That then encourages an entitlement mentality: 'I deserve this,' 'I am owed that'. If you think about it, at the root of 'social justice' is laziness, covetousness, and a revenge mentality - none of which is biblical!

In fact, let's be clear, the Bible does not portray men as victims. The Bible portrays men as being born dead in sin and evil from the womb whose hearts are deceitfully wicked and who love darkness while hating the light. The Bible says that men knowingly suppress the truth in unrighteousness and are not only not seeking God but indeed are His active enemies.

Thus, contrary to all of that, as I said, the social justice movement engenders in people an entitlement mentality. People believe that they are owed some form of restitution or preferential treatment because of some injustice, real or perceived, that has been done to them. But this is a profound misunderstanding of both the nature of man and of God. Listen carefully, yes, we are indeed owed justice, but we don't want the justice we are owed. That's because the justice that we are owed is eternal punishment for our sin. Each of us deserves to spend all of eternity in Hell. Each of us deserves to 'drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is mixed in full strength in the cup of His anger' and 'be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels and in the presence of the Lamb' (Revelation 14:10). That is true justice.

2. The Social Justice Advocates do not Understand the Mission of Jesus

Those who hope to make social action and gospel proclamation two wings of the same bird claim that they are imitating the earthly ministry of Jesus. Jesus, they contend, not only preached repentance, He also focused on relieving the physical needs and the oppression of the economically downtrodden in Palestine. He healed their sicknesses, filled their stomachs, and dropped a coin in the outstretched hands of the poor.

While the Scriptures imply that Jesus did express mercy to the poor on a personal level (Matt 26:9; John 13:29), **it is clear from the Gospels that Jesus started no orphanages, established no poverty relief funds, no low-cost housing schemes, no well-digging programs, and set no prisoners free (not**