

Williams, Thaddeus J. *Confronting Injustice without Compromising Truth: 12 Questions Christians Should Ask about Social Justice*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan Academic, 2020.

## INTRODUCTION

Thaddeus J. Williams teaches at Biola University for the Talbot School of Theology as an Associate Professor of Systematic Theology. In past years, Williams has also taught on various topics such as jurisprudence, worldview studies, philosophy, and ethics at Trinity Law School, Blackstone Legal Fellowship, the Federalist Society, and Saddleback College. He has written several books including *Don't Follow Your Heart: Boldly Breaking the Ten Commandments of Self-Worship* as well as *Love, Freedom, and Evil: Does Authentic Love Require Free Will?*

## SUMMARY

John M. Perkins introduces Williams' *Confronting Injustice without Compromising Truth* by presenting four components that are central to the pursuit of true, biblical justice (xv). He argues that every effort to counteract injustice must begin with God—the only One able to restore complete justice and bring genuine healing (xv). Perkins continues by advocating for the necessity of Christians to preach the Gospel and remain united in Christ as they seek to obediently “do justice” as God desires of His people (xv-xvi; Mal 6:8). Perkins concludes this Foreword by highlighting the obligation Christians have to uphold truth without bowing to feelings or opinions (xvi). Williams follows this Foreword by remarking on the importance of pursuing the kind of social justice that will appropriately respond to true injustices and oppression in a God-glorifying way (xviii-xix).

Williams begins the introduction of his book by providing an abundance of biblical references that reinforce the necessity of “truly execut[ing] justice” (Jer. 7:5), which requires responding to Scripture’s call for discernment rather than aiding any supposed social justice effort (1-4). Williams follows this discussion by presenting his readers with two definitions for social justice. Williams labels biblically faithful justice-seeking as “Social Justice A” (SJA) and unbiblical justice-seeking as “Social Justice B” (SJB) (4-5). He continues to explain that, despite the various views of and responses to social justice, very few individuals are truly pro-injustice (6). Williams argues that an individual’s worldview causes the different reactions and responses to injustices; moreover, some worldviews cause more damage than others (7). Williams emphasizes that not every so-called social justice response, attitude, or perspective truly executes justice (3, 7). He closes this introduction with several disclaimers and includes the words of Francis Schaeffer that beg readers to consider and respond to the devastating consequences of bad ideas (11-12). As he summarizes the four-part breakdown of his book, Williams invites Christians to partake in the honor of demonstrating that genuine, beautiful, and all-encompassing justice flows from faithfulness to the biblical worldview, which is founded on objective truth rather than emotions, self-absorption, or cultural trends (6-7).

Williams begins Part One of his book by stating the overarching theme of the first three chapters: misplaced worship as the fundamental issue of every injustice (13-14). In chapter 1 of his book, Williams <sup>we</sup> exposes the implications of the fallen human nature that is taught throughout Scripture and points out how well this worldview component is reflected in the real world (13-18). Furthermore, he uses the Pauline Epistles to reinforce his claim that the most accurate perception of reality is found by viewing the world through the lens of Scripture and the existence of a divine Creator (16). For example, Williams notes that disrespecting the Creator

makes the maltreatment of his creation much easier (17). Because of the sinful nature found in every human being, Williams explains that altered circumstances, resources, or responsibilities cannot completely resolve injustices nor eliminate the rotten fruit that broken people produce (17). Williams concludes his first chapter by insisting that any social justice approach that incorrectly views the Godhead will not result in true justice (19).

In chapter 2, Williams emphasizes the significance of the equal value that the Creator placed on every human being by making humans in His image; moreover, Williams explains that the Imago Dei is essential for the execution of true justice (21-22, 24). As an example, he explains that the Aztecs and Conquistadors committed such gruesome atrocities due to their lack of respect for the Creator and for the equal value He placed on every individual (22-24). Williams continues this chapter by highlighting the great danger of classifying humans according to cultural labels and ideologies, which often resulted in mass bloodshed and dehumanization throughout history (23-24). He closes this chapter with a prayer to God for Christians to have eyes that see the world as the Creator does (24-25).

In chapter 3, Williams returns to his discussion of misplaced worship and idols as the root of injustice and wrongdoing (28-35). He addresses typical idols that many humans bow to on both sides of the political spectrum such as social acceptance and the self (29-34). Williams explains that, although many of these idols often lead to dissatisfaction or hurt, humans are either motivated by worship of the Creator or that of His creation (31).

Before he begins chapter 4, Williams introduces Part Two of his book by highlighting humanity's need for community and their tendency towards tribalism, which is defined as the separation of people into categories associated with negative characteristics that hinder others' perception of them as image-bearers (39-41). He acknowledges that SJB calls upon humanity's

need to belong—a reality that Scripture reinforces (44). However, Williams pulls apart a primary element of SJB that clearly contradicts Scripture and reasons that every human being, regardless of race, can bring injustice upon another (45-48). He clarifies that Scripture does not make allowances for basing identity on race since Christ ought to be the source of an individual's new life and the antidote to his or her sin issue (50). Consequently, Williams continues to explain, self-righteousness or ugly tribalism have no place in the life of a Christian (51).

In chapter 5, Williams discusses SJB's use of propaganda to further tribalism by dissecting three damaging aspects of this type of communication (54). First, Williams references several accounts of slavery to depict how propaganda tends to construct reports against certain groups of people in the worst light while simultaneously undermining that group's humanity (55-56). Second, Williams points out that propaganda often utilizes several individuals to represent an entire group of people, aiding in the establishment of generalizations as opposed <sup>to</sup> critical thinking <sup>about</sup> of specific ideologies (58-59). Last, Williams explains that scapegoating the woes of a situation on a specific group of people is another harmful aspect of propaganda (60).

In chapter 6, Williams contrasts the different perspectives, encouraged sentiments, and attitudes that are established by SJA and SJB (63-70). By referencing several historical figures and quotes, Williams exposes the impactful distinction between a life that is marked by rage and one marked by humility <sup>The</sup> as Scripture commands <sup>That</sup> (64-67). He explains that citizens of heaven are expected to bear fruit of the Spirit as they grow in relationship with God rather than letting bitterness and injustice corrupt the way they understand and respond to the world (67-68). Williams closes this chapter by contending that SJA's perspective towards life would aid society in responding to the various injustices of the present day; individuals need to carefully examine

their own lives as they seek to love and care for others rather than continuing to shift the blame of wrongdoing and prioritizing self-exaltation of their own tribe (69-70).

Williams begins Part Three of his book by acknowledging that many systems have been used as mechanisms to bring forth great evil on humanity while highlighting that the problem of evil still originates with sinful humans (75-77). He also cautions against any confusion that may arise from the various definitions of systemic injustice (77-80). In chapter 7, Williams demonstrates how SJB equates disparity with discrimination while claiming that they are a result of systemic injustice (80-81). In contrast, Williams explains that a biblical view of systemic injustice refers to any system that requires individuals to break God's moral law (79-80). He warns that Christians who go down the path of SJB may end up fighting against an unbiblical, imagined injustice while simultaneously being backed into a corner that can no longer accommodate the basic tenets of Christianity (82-88).

In chapter 8, Williams asks the reader to consider whether justice strategies are amplifying racial division rather than seeking the unification of all people groups through the Gospel (92-107). As all ideas result in consequences, he warns that bad ideas will inevitably have victims (95). He continues this chapter by restating the universal human state of brokenness that crosses all racial boundaries; moreover, Williams criticizes SJB's tendency to blame specific injustices on groups of people (101-105). He emphasizes that only Jesus can truly unite all people to Himself eternally (107).

In chapter 9, Williams emphasizes that the Gospel must remain central to every aspect of life, including the battle against injustice (110-119). He argues that reversing primary and secondary pursuits in life can lead to misery, brokenness, and confusion (111-114, 118). Furthermore, he insists that any form of justice seeking that abandons the Gospel will inevitably

abandon the necessary solution to injustice as well (113). After remarking on SJB's commitment to an absence of grace, forgiveness, and redemption in an individual's life, Williams explains that genuine social justice will flow out of an authentic transformation from the Gospel (116-118). <sup>See also Acts?</sup>

Williams summarizes this crucial point by stating that social justice is not and will never be the Gospel; moreover, he explains that authentic justice will flow out of the Gospel of Christ—the only message that can bring genuine hope, healing, and salvation for all people (119).

In his introduction to Part Four, Williams restates the danger of merely seeking to do justice rather than “truly execut[ing] justice” as Scripture commands (123-124, Jer. 7:5). <sup>Y.S.?</sup>

Williams continues this discussion by dissecting the primary components of SJB's tribal categorization system and concluding with a reminder of the Christian's obligation to carry out genuine justice—unlike the religious Pharisees of Jesus' day (124-126). In chapter 10, Williams emphasizes that a genuine pursuit of justice must involve a diligent pursuit of the truth (127- <sup>Y.S.?</sup>

130). He explains that hyper-fixating on one issue while assuming its impact on different areas may lead someone to misinterpret important realities, neglect necessary questions, and imagine injustices that do not exist while overlooking situations that should receive his attention (127- <sup>Ex. 17</sup>

132). Williams insists that individuals who adopt a Gospel-centered and biblically-faithful approach to justice will be able to provide genuine, long-lasting help just like the Good Samaritan from Luke 10 rather than the hypocritical temple workers (134-136).

Williams opens chapter 11 by emphasizing the importance and necessity of listening well as Christians, just as God does for his people (139-140). He argues that individuals should strive to find themselves on the right side of truth rather than being on good terms with societal norms <sup>a bit not</sup>

and explains that people can often be led astray by lived experiences and feelings alone (144-

145). Williams repeats his warning of the danger and devastating consequences of responding to

injustice without an accurate understanding of reality (145-148). He concludes his chapter by emphasizing the necessity of understanding the facts in order to offer authentic help, which is why the truths of Scripture must always be involved in the pursuit of justice (148).

In chapter 12, Williams disapproves of SJB's tendency to validate an idea based on the speaker's race as well as the way SJB makes itself immune to cross-examination or questions (151-156). Williams argues that Christians should assess ideologies based on their faithfulness (or lack thereof) to Scripture instead (158). Otherwise, Williams explains, justice endeavors based on human morals, prejudices, and expectations will quickly lead to more injustice (158). ✓ will!

Williams ties his book together in an Epilogue by listing twelve ways that SJA and SJB contradict each other; moreover, he shares several crucial disclaimers that Christians should consider after reading his book (162-166). He concludes this Epilogue by quoting twelve Bible passages that serve as a final demonstration against the unbiblical foundations of SJB (164-166). Williams follows the Epilogue with several appendices that address numerous points of disagreement between SJA and SJB (169-218). In Appendix A, Williams discusses the topic of abortion and addresses six common arguments that are often used to promote abortion (169-177). In Appendix B, he highlights the importance of clear definitions and addresses the recent alteration of for the definition of racism (178-185). In Appendix C, Williams analyzes socialism and explains why it does not align with the truths of Scripture (186-194). In Appendix D, he approaches human sexuality from a biblical worldview and offers ✓ advice on how to lovingly serve the broken world that is in desperate need of the truth (195-205). In Williams' final appendix, he reiterates the necessity of the Gospel in any social justice pursuit in order to "truly execute justice" (213-218; Jer. 7:5).

**CRITICAL ANALYSIS**

Throughout each section, Williams provides a well-founded argument that remains faithful to the primary message of this book, which is aptly summarized in the striking title of his literary work: *Confronting Injustice without Compromising Truth*. From the very beginning, Williams clearly states the importance of loyalty to the truth and quickly identifies God's revelation to mankind as the ultimate source of truth (xv-xvi, 2-4). This perspective of Scripture is seen throughout the rest of his book as he frequently and appropriately utilizes Bible passages to establish his points (219-250). Furthermore, Williams' entire approach to enacting genuine social justice flows from his view of the Gospel as being of "utmost importance" (110-113, 1 Cor. 13:3-4). As he seeks to pursue justice and uphold the truth, Williams responsibly includes a well-rounded collection of references, studies, and quotations from various sources that his readers can easily access (219-250). Williams beautifully communicates this extremely relevant topic to the general public in an organized, rational, and well-supported manner.

By exposing his readers to several devastating realities of injustice within the world as well as the Creator's unparalleled devotion to justice, Williams powerfully grabs the attention of his readers and demonstrates the necessity of including the truths of Scripture in every social justice approach (1-4, 14, 19-20). By using Scripture, Williams reminds his readers that Christians are commanded to seek justice, removing any room for doubt in regard to this mandate for God's people. Furthermore, Williams does not simply include a Bible reference within parentheses from time to time, but he masterfully weaves sections of Scripture passages into the content of almost every chapter (219-250). His use of Scripture displays that this unwillingness to compromise the truth begins with God's revelatory message to mankind.

Williams' aim to expose the differences between social justice pursuits that are scripturally-faithful and those that are not is a very helpful topic of discussion for today's present age. Throughout his book, Williams identifies various social justice efforts that result in more brokenness, oppression, and injustice due to a flawed perception of the world (55-60, 127-136, 139-148). For Christians who are founding themselves on the truths of Scripture and are seeking to walk in obedience to God's command of doing justice, the brokenness of humanity and the desperate need for a savior are unavoidable realities. Williams does a remarkable job of repeatedly highlighting the significance and necessity of the Gospel in every single social justice pursuit (15-27, 110-119, 128-136). And although a commitment to justice is required of every Christian, Williams clarifies that true social justice will flow from the Gospel; social justice itself is not the Gospel (117-119).

Although Williams discloses his bias, he supports his arguments with an abundance of evidence such as statistics, quotes, and reputable sources (219-250). His arguments also appear very well-reasoned due to his use of references from various points on the political spectrum (101). For example, Williams quotes Mary Calderone, former president of Planned Parenthood, in his discussion of abortion to help expose the intentional misinformation that was spread about "back-alley abortion" fatalities (170). Williams also does not hesitate to include current statistics that reflect current realities and demonstrate his commitment to the truth (80, 85, 94, 96-98).

## CONCLUSION

As this section has stated, Williams masterfully communicates what is required in order to faithfully execute justice without compromising the truth (162-166). Each chapter of his book reflects how Williams prioritizes the authority and truths of Scripture in every response to social

injustice (1-18). He also repeats the crucial role of the Gospel in every social justice endeavor. And as Williams seeks to protect the truth from compromise, he supports his arguments with many quotations, statistics, and references that are easily accessible and encourage further study (205, 219-250). From the beginning of his book to the end of it, Williams clearly communicates how Christians ought to approach social justice in a manner that is well-organized, attention-grabbing, and thought-provoking.

