

Thinking Biblically About Socialism (Part 1)

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[0 : 00] And for the past five months, you know what the number one news story has been about. Something related to the coronavirus pandemic.

But do you remember what the top of the news was, number one story was about before the virus? Broad subject, politics.

Specifically, the Democratic presidential primary. But since March, the pandemic news has overall, if you balance it out over a week, has overshadowed political news.

Before March, when there were over a dozen Democrats running for their party's nomination, all of them were either openly advocating the virtues of socialism in general, or they were promoting socialistic programs like Medicare for All.

Those liberal Democrats were so unified in promoting a socialist agenda that some conservative commentators said that this year's election is going to be a referendum on socialism.

[1 : 19] Now, in many ways, that's an accurate description of what will take place when we go to the polls on November the 3rd. As Christians, it is important for us to understand that socialism is not just a political or economic issue.

It is a political issue. It is an economic issue. But it is also an ethical and biblical issue.

Socialism is a political and economic system that is contrary to the way God designed human beings to provide for themselves, their families, and people in this country who legitimately cannot take care of themselves.

I want us to begin today to think biblically about socialism, because it's something that every Christian needs to be aware of, concerned about, and actively opposing.

Let's begin by looking at what it is. What is socialism? I want to give you a couple of definitions that are representative of what you'll find basically anywhere if you do a Google search.

[2 : 36] Various sources. Here's representative definitions. Socialism is any economic or political system based on government ownership and control of important businesses and methods of production.

Another source. Any of various economic and political theories advocating collective or governmental ownership and administration of the means of production and distribution of goods. Secondary definition. A system of society or group living in which there is no private property. A system or condition of society in which the means of production are owned and controlled by the state.

R.C. Sproul, I think, does a good job of looking at those definitions and stating it in what I think is a helpful way for us to dive into it this morning.

Sproul says, Now, liberal Democrats, led by Bernie Sanders and embraced by Joe Biden and Kamala Harris, call their version of socialism democratic socialism.

[4 : 11] Now, they don't publicly advocate government ownership replacing private ownership, the ownership of companies, businesses, industry.

Their plan is for government to so regulate private ownership to the point that the government, for all practical benefits, it does control the companies, the businesses, industry.

Democratic socialists also advocate making things like medical care and a college education free to everyone. Now, as thinking people you know, nothing in life is free.

Somebody has to pay for everything. So these democratic socialists, they plan to raise the taxes on every dime responsible working people, earn, save, and invest, so that they can make everything free for those who don't earn, save, and invest.

These democratic socialists plan to redistribute the wealth of responsible working people by giving it to irresponsible, non-working people.

[5 : 33] This is how democratic socialists define equality and fairness. Now, before anyone accuses me of preaching politics this morning, which I am not doing, let's look at how the Bible reveals that socialism is contrary to God's design.

How is socialism contrary to God's design? That's the question we're going to answer now. Let's begin by looking at the way God created human beings. God created people to be stewards or managers of everything He created.

Now, we did a study of stewardship last year in 2019, and we looked at how we are responsible to take what God entrusts to our care, everything, our time, our talents, our treasures, and responsibly manage those things.

We're called to steward, to manage everything God has created and given to us. The Bible begins by telling us that God created the world and everything in it.

And by the way, I meant to say, we looked at that a year ago, and I'm not going to go into great detail this morning. I want to just sort of hit the high spots for an example.

[6 : 54] You know, it goes without even having to put it on the screen. God created this world and everything in it. That's how the Bible begins. In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth. The fact that God created everything means that He owns everything, and this is repeated throughout both the Old and New Testaments.

Here's a good example from Psalm 24. The psalmist writes, the earth is the Lord's and everything in it. The world and all who live in it. The Apostle Paul, writing to the Corinthians, quotes the first part of that verse.

The earth is the Lord's and everything in it. God created human beings in His image, and He intends for us to be stewards or managers of all that He has created and owns.

I want you to look at two verses from Genesis 1 that points out how God created us and put things under our care. For an example, Genesis 1, 26.

Then God said, Let us make man in our image after our likeness, and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the birds of the heavens, and over the livestock, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth.

[8 : 10] Then verse 28. And God blessed them, and God said to them, Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth, and subdue it, and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the birds of the heavens, and over every living thing that moves on earth.

God created human beings, and only human beings in His image, and gave them the privilege and the responsibility. Subdue.

Get control of what I have created. It is there for you. It is there for you to manage. It is there for you to use.

It is there for you to enjoy. You've got to be responsible stewards. Don't waste it. Don't abuse it. But take care of it, and use it in a way that will bring glory to me, and joy to you.

That's what God did in creating human beings, and giving them the responsibility to take care of this world. Wayne Grudem explains what this means in terms of stewardship.

[9 : 17] Look at this. The Hebrew word translated as subdue, means to make the earth useful for human beings' benefit and enjoyment. God was entrusting Adam and Eve, and by implication, the entire human race, with stewardship over the earth.

This world that God's put us in, He has given us the authority, the responsibility, and the privilege to use it wisely, to benefit from it.

I want you to think. From the very beginning, human beings have been given a God-given privilege and responsibility that no other creature was ever given.

We have the privilege of using God's creation for our benefit, for our good, for our enjoyment.

Think about that. God created us and said we can enjoy what He's given us. But there's also responsibility. We've got to manage His creation wisely, not abuse it, not do anything to destroy it.

[10 : 42] Be wise. Take care of it as you enjoy it. Now, when you look at the big picture of creation, the Bible is clear that God owns everything and we're stewards or managers of His creation.

But when you look at what the Bible specifically says, what it teaches about how we are to live in this world, the Bible clearly shows that we are owners of stuff.

We are private property owners. us, you and me, as people. God gave human beings the privilege and responsibility of having earthly ownership of private property.

And this is the clear testimony of Scripture. For example, the very first act of worship that you find in the Bible is in Genesis chapter 4.

The giving of offerings to God by Adam and Eve's sons, Abel and Cain, they gave what we would call a first fruit offering from what they owned.

[11 : 53] Look at it. Now, Abel was a keeper of sheep and Cain, a worker of the ground. Abel was a shepherd. He was a, you know, in today's term, he was a cattle farmer.

Cain was a farmer who planted crops. Well, in the course of time, Cain brought to the Lord an offering of the fruit of the ground.

And Abel also brought of the firstborn of his livestock. Cain took the land that was his, planted crops, and at harvest time presented an offering to the Lord from his crop that he owned.

Abel brought the firstborn of his flock that he owned, presented it to the Lord as an offering, as a sacrifice.

R.C. Sproul explains how this demonstrates the existence of human ownership of private property shortly after creation. Look at it. Notice that their offering is validated and that it belongs to the one who offered it.

[13 : 09] The offertory system of the Old Testament makes no sense when divorced from the system of private property. One of the basic stipulations of making an offering is that you present something which belongs to you.

The right of human ownership is something God has assigned as part of our covenant partnership with him in creation. Many of you are familiar with the Old Testament sacrificial system.

You're familiar with the giving of tithes and offerings. The people of Israel were required to take something that they owned, something that they produced, and give it to the Lord.

They gave of their income, their resources, what we call financial resources, as a tithe to the Lord.

This is debatable what I'm going to say.

You may condemn me for this and I may have been wrong. I never gave my boys an offering to give at church because they can't give my money as their offering.

[14 : 22] Now I know the theory, give them money and let them give it, teach them to give. I like the idea of making them earn money or take their money and they give it as an offering to the Lord.

That's what the whole sacrificial system is about. If you have given or give online or in person of your tithes and offerings, you're giving something that you earned, that you have, that's yours as an offering to the Lord.

You can't give unto God if there's no such thing as private property. Private ownership is the point. The next major passage of Scripture that reveals God's approval of the ownership of private property comes from the Ten Commandments.

The Eighth Commandment says, you shall not steal. You know what it means to steal? To take something that rightfully belongs to another person. The Tenth Commandment begins, you shall not covet.

To covet means that you have an improper desire to have what rightfully belongs to someone else. God gave these two of the Ten Commandments.

[15 : 37] Do not steal and do not covet because people have a right to own possessions and have a law prevent other people from taking them away from them.

People have a right to own possessions and have those rights protected by law. Now the New Testament repeats both of these commandments.

Paul on more than one occasion will write and talk about do not steal. In fact, he says to the thief do not steal but work, make a living so you can have something to give of your own.

Do not covet, we are told repeatedly in some of Paul's letters. The right of private ownership of property and possessions is a God-given right that is found throughout the Bible.

It begins at creation nearly. Genesis 4 is found throughout the Old Testament. It's found throughout the New Testament. Therefore, any economic system like socialism or communism that prohibits private ownership or private control of property and possessions is unethical.

[16 : 57] It's unbiblical. It's contrary to God's design of how life is supposed to work. Therefore, we in this country, as Christians, this is a message especially for Christians, we need to get involved in the democratic process of our country.

We need to exert influence. We need to talk to people about why socialism and those who will advocate advanced socialism are wrong and should not be voted into office.

We need to do whatever we can to oppose any politician, political party, or government action that would take away or regulate away our God-given right to enjoy the private ownership of property and possessions.

Now, let's look at one more foundational matter that reveals how socialism is contrary to God's design. God calls human beings to take care of His creation and themselves by working, by their labor.

A lot of people don't think of work as a God-given blessing, but that's how God originally intended that work be seen and done.

[18 : 24] Work is found in the Bible before sin took place, before sin entered the world, God gave Adam and Eve work to do. Look at that verse 28 that we looked at a while ago.

And God blessed them and God said to them, be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it. Have dominion. It takes effort.

It takes work to do that. If you have any doubts, Genesis 2, the Lord took the man and put him in the garden of Eden 2, work it and keep it.

From the very beginning, God created that first couple with responsibility, with labor, with work to do to take care of the creation.

The idea of work being tall, having briars and thistles and so forth, that comes from Genesis 3. Genesis 3 describes the result of the fall.

[19 : 31] When sin entered the world, it made work a chore. It made it much more difficult. But work has always existed for men and women to do.

It was a part of God's original good creation. salvation. Now, the Bible is filled with statements about the importance of people, all people, but especially Christians, working and taking care of yourself and your family and not looking outside of yourself except to God for what it takes to make a living. Let me give you some examples. Paul wrote this to the Thessalonian Christians. He says, you should mind your own business and work with your hands just as we told you so that your daily life may win the respect of outsiders and so that you will not be dependent on anybody.

It's important to have a good reputation in the community to be someone who works and takes care of what you have, takes care of your family, takes care of yourself instead of being dependent on someone else.

It is important that we as Christians look to God for the ability to provide for ourselves so that no one else will have the burden, individual, the community, the government, of taking care of us.

[21 : 08] Another example, in 1 Timothy, Paul writes, but if anyone does not provide for his relatives and especially for members of his household, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever.

Here's what Paul is saying to Christians. Let me qualify this first. If a person is unable to work because of health issues, emotional issues, there's a lot of different reasons why a person is unable to work.

And the Bible, we're going to look at this next week. The Bible charges us as Christians with a responsibility to take care of those who through no fault of their own cannot take care of themselves.

If a person, anyone here, anyone in your family, who is truly disabled, unable to provide for themselves and their families, that is not a reason for shame.

And Paul is not trying to shame anyone like this. But if a person is able, but just not willing, and look at this verse, and does not provide for his relatives and especially for members of his household, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever.

[22 : 42] It is contrary to the Christian way of life to be lazy and refuse to work and provide for yourself and your family.

Let me put it even more bluntly. It is a sorry human being who refuses to take the responsibility to work and provide for himself and his family and expect someone else to take care of him.

It is a sorry human being, according to the Apostle Paul. Such a person has denied the faith. He's worse than an unbeliever. He's destroyed his Christian testimony and witness.

That's what Paul is talking about here. And this is not the final word. One more. He wrote another letter to the Thessalonians. First letter didn't get the job done with some of these who were unwilling to work.

For even when we were with you, we would give you this command. If anyone is not willing to work, let him not eat. Now these liberal democratic socialists, they don't agree with Paul.

[23 : 56] They want you to take your money that you work for and give it to those who won't work so that they will not have to do without. That's not what Paul says.

That's not biblical teaching. Again, we'll look next week. If people are unable, through no fault of their own, to provide for themselves, they should not go hungry.

We have a responsibility as Christians to help such people. But here, if anyone's not willing to work, let him not eat. For we hear that some among you walk in idleness, not busy at work, but busy bodies.

Now such persons we command and encourage in the Lord Jesus Christ to do their work quietly and to earn their own living. It is vitally important that we as Christians understand we have a God-given responsibility to be productive in this world, in our economy, to work, to make money, to save, to invest, so that we'll be able to take care of ourselves and our family.

And it's important to say and point out today, take care of ourselves when we're no longer able to work in our old age. We need to have savings and investments for that purpose.

[25 : 20] Do not expect the government to take care of you for the rest of your life. R.C. Spurl makes an important statement that ties together with what the Bible says about work and the ownership of private property.

Look at this. The sanctity of labor is the ground basis for private property. In both the Old and New Covenants, the call to labor is an emphatic one bringing fruit as its just reward.

We're supposed to reap the benefits of our labor. We're supposed to be able to work and enjoy the fruit of our labor because it's ours. There's a place to give, but there's a place to enjoy because it's yours, because you worked.

That's God's economy. Spurl goes on. The avoidance of labor is regarded as sin. Paul commands labor as the ethical norm.

God's plan from the beginning was for people to work and provide for themselves and their families and not be dependent on other people or society or the government to meet your needs.

[26 : 41] Now, there's a word of caution and order here, I hope that it's not necessary, but I want to throw it out just in case. We must never think of ourselves as being independent from God.

I want you to look at what is written in Deuteronomy chapter 8 about what we're talking about. But remember the Lord your God, for it is He who gives you the ability to produce wealth.

Then in 1 Corinthians, Paul says, what do you have that you do not receive? If then you received it, why do you boast as if you did not receive it? There's no place for any of us in this room to be prideful.

If you have thought to yourself, I have worked hard, I've been wise in what I made, I've saved, invested well, and you want to pass yourself on the back, don't do that.

There are people who work harder than you, but they haven't done as well as you have. For whatever reason, God blessed you more than some people who have greater ability than you.

[28 : 00] Just think about it. Look around this room. We're all very different. We look different. We have different levels of intelligence, different abilities, different skills.

It's not a matter of who's the smartest, the best looking, the hardest working person always comes out on top. It doesn't work that way. So whatever it is that we have, don't pass yourself on the back. Thank God that he gave you the wisdom, the skill, the motivation. You followed through. You used your intellect.

You used your skills. You acted on that motivation. Thank the Lord. You were responsible. But don't be prideful. Don't brag on yourself.

Whatever we have, God gave it to us. And if you've prospered, just thank him. Let it be a reason to praise him for his blessings.

[29 : 12] But socialism, it is contrary to God's plan. Socialism teaches people the opposite of what we looked at this morning. Socialism teaches people that you don't have to work.

You don't have to support yourself and your family. Socialism says you can be dependent on other people. Socialism says look to the government.

Work for a government check is what socialism says. Socialism says it's the government's responsibility to take care of everyone.

Even if they can work. But just choose not to. Socialism also robs working people of the fruit of their labor.

The right to own property. The right to have things. The right to save and have money. The right to enjoy what we earn.

[30 : 23] Next week we're going to look at some of the things the Bible says about the dangers of wealth. You can't cover everything in one message. But I want to make sure everybody understands. While the Bible in no way condemns wealth.

The Bible in no way teaches us to feel guilty if you have worked and saved and invested well and you have nice things.

That is not wrong. It's not sinful. But the Bible has much to say that wealth can become our God. We can real easily become greedy, covetous people. The Bible has much to say about wealth ruining people.

Destroying Christians' homes. Destroying our witness. And we're also going to look at next week about what the Bible says about our responsibility to help those who truly cannot work through no fault of their own.

[31 : 30] But today we need to understand socialism is not a political or economic system that will help our country solve any problems.

Socialism is an unbiblical and unethical political and economic system that is a real threat to our country's survival in the future.

In time, socialism will destroy our country's economy just like it did Venezuela in more recent times. It will destroy our country's economy and our ability to provide for ourselves and our families as God intends and as we historically have been able to do in this country.

We need to pray much. We need to vote. We need to do whatever we can to oppose radical democratic socialism that is the focus of today's extremely liberal democratic party.

That's not being politically taken one side. That is being that is just a statement of fact. It is the reality that anyone can see just by reading what the democratic party advocates today.

[33 : 01] What leading democrats are saying today. But I want us to end on this thought. John Frame, respected theologian. He talks about some of the things we're talking about today.

He talks about some of the same things R.C. Sproul and Wayne Grudem does, agrees with them. But as he comes to the end, some of his discussions about economic issues and the dangers of socialism, he does a good job of helping us always stay focused on the right thing, the most important thing.

Look at this. But what the Bible will teach us above all is this. We should not put our trust in government, private industry, or economic theory, whether capitalistic or socialistic.

We should not be looking to government to make us wealthy or to deal with the sins that have led our nation to this point in history. Now, as never before, we should trust only in the name of the Lord our God, the name of Jesus Christ.

Government can never be our God. But our ability to work and save and have, we must never worship that as well.

[34 : 25] We exist in this world as Christians to glorify God in everything that we do. We exist as Christians to know and do His will.

And as the economy is important, it is a spiritual matter. Systems like socialism, capitalism, they're important matters.

Take this message to heart. Act on it. Influence others. But when all is said and done, God is sovereign over every nation.

The most socialistic, communistic, as well as capitalistic nation. And we need to be known more for our love for Him, our commitment to all of His word, than anything else.

So as we go today, now as never before, trust only in the name of the Lord our God, the name of Jesus Christ, our Savior and our Lord.

[35 : 31] Let's pray together. Father, help us to see now how we should respond, how we should be salt and light, as Jesus called us to be in this world, concerning the election, the economy, socialism, and these matters.

But Lord, as we do this, help us to do it in a way that you are honored, that we demonstrate Christlike character.

That if people oppose us, they oppose us because of the truth of your word that we proclaim. God, Lord, we're not going to be in this world, not because of our hard-heartedness and bitter words and just plain lack of love and concern for others.

Lord, make it clear what you want us to dwell on right now, how you want us to respond, and leave here being influential Christians.

about these important matters. Let's just, in an attitude of prayer, listen to the Lord and respond to Him. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.