

# Thinking Biblically About Socialism (Part 3)

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[ 0 : 0 0 ] money. You have material prosperity. Is it a blessing or is it a curse?

Well, my prayer is that we will be able to accurately answer that question on an individual level as we conclude what has turned into a mini-series on thinking biblically about socialism.

We're really going to do a sort of a transition from thinking about socialism to thinking about money, what the Bible teaches about money today. I want you, if you would, to go ahead and open your Bible to 1 Timothy chapter 6. 1 Timothy chapter 6 and just leave it open until we get there in a few more minutes. But as we go through this message, is your money, your wealth, your material possessions, your prosperity? Has it been, is it a true blessing? Or has it been, is it a curse? I want us to begin with a very quick overview of some of the things we've looked at the last two weeks. And to expedite things, when we come to the section where we've looked at a lot of different scriptures, I'm not going to show the scripture on the screen again today. I want to encourage you to look back at the last two weeks. There's notes online. Plus, if you haven't heard the messages, go back and listen to them because we've been trying to analyze why, how socialism is contrary to the way God designed life to work in this world. For us to be able to provide for ourselves and our families and even people who are in need. Let's look quickly. What is socialism?

Here's a definition. Any economic or political system based on government ownership and or control of important businesses, methods of production, distribution of goods, etc. R.C. Sproul does a good job putting this together. He says, socialism seeks as its premier goal, the equality of wealth and equality of ownership within a society. To accomplish this, government must be involved in the redistribution of wealth. Now, until recently, our nation's leaders have never considered socialism to be a desirable or workable economic system. Throughout the history of our country, we have not had reputable, trustworthy leaders who talked about the goodness, the value of socialism, politically or economically.

And there's good reason for that. Look at what Sproul says about the failure of this, these systems. Virtually every significant effort aimed at improving people's standard of living invented by socialistic or communistic theories of economics has failed miserably. In his book on ethics, Wayne Grudem has done a lot of research on communism and socialism and how they failed various countries throughout the 20th century.

[ 3 : 3 5 ] This is how he concluded his research. No matter the plan, it is not been and cannot be made to work. Now, you can verify what both Grudem and Sproul have said here by just looking at what has happened in the last 50 to 100 years around the world.

Look at the Soviet Union. Look at the Soviet Union. Look at Cuba. Look at North Korea. Look at Venezuela.

Their communistic slash socialistic systems brought misery to their people and failure to their economy.

Nothing good, nothing productive came from those systems. I think Cal Thomas provides one of the best reasons why socialism has never worked anywhere in the world at any time in history. He says, perhaps the best line I have heard on the subject is from our 30th president, Calvin Coolidge. Don't expect to build up the weak by pulling down the strong. That's exactly what socialism seeks to do. Build up the financially weak by pulling down the financially strong.

It has never been successful anywhere in the world over history. Now, there are many reasons why socialism has always failed.

[ 5 : 18 ] But one of the main reasons is because it is contrary to God's design. How he intends human beings to take care of themselves, provide for themselves, their families, and even people in need.

So let's look now, again quickly, how is socialism contrary to God's design? What we're going to look at in these next points, we've looked at several different passages of Scripture that I want you to go back and look at if you weren't here.

As God created human beings in His image to be stewards or managers of all that He created and owns, here are some of the ways God has blessed us.

God gives us the privilege and responsibility of having earthly ownership of private property. It is a part of God's design for you to work and own property.

God gives us the privilege of having earthly stuff. That's why the Eighth Commandment says, do not steal. Because what belongs to you, I'm supposed to leave alone. What belongs to me, you're supposed to leave alone.

[ 6 : 27 ] Number two, God calls us to take care of His creation and ourselves by working. Work is a creation ordinance. It's part of God's good creation before the fall.

God intends for our work to be fruitful or productive. He wants us to produce something. He wants us to create value in this world through our labor.

And then number four, God intends for us to enjoy the fruits of faithful labor as a reward. You reap what you sow. That's a principle of life. A lot of times we just talk about it in a negative way.

You reap what you sow in terms of sinful things we do. But it also applies we reap what we sow when we work productively. Now, our God-given freedom to own property, to work productively, to enjoy some of the fruits of our labor, is the foundation of the economic system called free markets or capitalism.

Now, that word capitalism to a lot of liberals, socialistic thinking people is a four-letter word. It's an awful concept.

[ 7 : 47 ] Socialists consider capitalism or the free market economy to be a greedy, materialistic system that allows some people to become wealthy at the expense of the majority of people remaining poor.

That's not true. That is not true historically. It's not true in terms of how it works. Now, certainly there are people, there are capitalists.

Maybe some of us in this room at times, we're greedy and we're materialistic. It's true that some capitalists take advantage of the system and take advantage of people.

But as a system, it is not designed to just reward a few people at the expense of most people. There's nothing about a free market system that prevents anyone from acquiring wealth if they'll participate and go about it the right way.

For an example, I'm just going to use a farmer as an example. As you think about it, think of any other business owner that comes to mind. A farmer who owns land, plants a large crop of corn, and sells it for a considerable profit does not force anyone to suffer for his profit.

[ 9 : 24 ] The truth is just the opposite. Many people will benefit from the successful farmer, builder, any kind of business person.

Think about how. This farmer will employ other people to help him plant, take care of, and harvest his crop. This farmer will buy seed, fertilizer, and farm machinery from other business owners.

And every one of those businesses that has the seed, the fertilizer, and the machinery, they employ people. The farmer will produce food for many, many people who do not have the ability to grow the corn for themselves.

If the farmer is a faithful Christian, he'll give a tithe of his income to his church, and if his church is faithful, they'll be about fulfilling the great commission that our Lord has given us, making disciples, teaching the word of God, having a positive impact in the community through their godly character and influence.

That's what Jesus called being salt and light. Also, if this faithful farmer, or if this farmer is a faithful Christian, he'll be helping other people that God brings into his life that he knows and sees their need and has the means to help.

[ 10 : 47 ] R.C. Sproul does a great job of pointing out the advantages of a free market economy, even if a wealthy person is an unbeliever and greedy and materialistic.

It's a long, somewhat long quote. I'm not going to put it on the screen. I want you to listen to this. Sproul says, in a free market, even if a man is a crass materialist, avidly pursuing riches out of greed, even his greed can work for the general welfare.

How? Listen to what Sproul says. Suppose a man makes a billion dollars. What can he do with it? Well, he can't eat a billion dollars worth of food.

He may hoard his money by putting it in the bank. Well, that just makes society have a stronger bank to assist other businesses and individuals.

A stronger bank helps you have the loan to buy or build a house for an example. Sproul says, he can waste his money on self-gratifying extravagances.

[ 12 : 02 ] He can buy 10 Rolls Royces, three Learjets, and have five plush condominiums in Florida. Who benefits? The automobile industry, the Learjet people, and the condominium builders.

It takes people to build Rolls Royces, Learjets, and condominiums. By his lavish lifestyle, purchasing things he does not need, being a materialist, he's contributing to the economy by buying that stuff.

People work and build those things. Sproul says, the worst thing that can happen to a man's money is to be taxed heavily by the government. Why?

Governments are not producers. They produce no value. I want you to think. The farmer, he takes the land, the seed, the fertilizer, his machinery, he produces value in that corn crop.

If you build something, you take those raw materials, you build a house or whatever. We've got a lot of teachers in our church.

[ 13 : 20 ] You are investing your time, talents, and efforts in students. You are helping them learn to read, to write, to think, to do math, to become productive members of society.

You are adding value to the lives of those students every day as a teacher. Look around this room. every person here, no matter what your work was or is right now, unless you work for the government, you provide value.

You provide something of value through your efforts. Sproul says, to be sure, government redistributes money, but a terrible waste of administrative overhead.

Government-controlled economics, like socialism and communism, are notoriously less efficient in raising national standards of living than is the free market of voluntary exchange of goods and services.

there is no example of socialism or communism raising the standards of living for the people under those systems.

[ 14 : 45 ] Sproul concludes, Christians must work for a free market regulated by just laws. In our last two studies, the last two weeks, and to this point today, I have done my best, I have tried to make it clear that socialism is not just another political or economic system that's being talked about, promoted, proposed today by some politicians.

Socialism is an immoral unethical, unbiblical system that helps no one and hurts many.

Therefore, Sproul is right. Christians must work for a free market regulated by just laws. that is the way God intended life to work in this world with people working, producing, and enjoying the fruits of their labor justly according to the other things that the Bible teaches about ethical conduct and the way we treat people and do business.

Now, we cannot be faithful to Scripture and stop here just thinking about what we've looked at so far about money and material possessions.

The Bible is real clear. It is clear that money and material prosperity can be a blessing, a reward for faithful work and faithful production.

[ 16 : 47 ] But here's where we've got to be real honest and spend some time. The Bible's main emphasis concerning money and material prosperity is to warn us, God's people, of its dangers.

Money and material prosperity are powerful sources of temptation to sin against God and other people. So let's look now at one more question today.

How can money and material prosperity be temptations to sin? Now look at 1 Timothy chapter 6. Let's begin in verse 6. But godliness with contentment is great gain.

For we brought nothing into the world and we cannot take anything out of the world. But if we have food and clothing with these we will be content. But those who desire to be rich fall into temptation, into a snare, into many senseless and harmful desires that plunge people into ruin and destruction.

For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evils. It is through this craving that some have wandered away from the faith and pierced themselves with many pangs, many griefs, many miseries.

[ 18 : 07 ] Here's what I want us to look at now. Wealth can become an obsession. It does become an obsession for some people.

Some people can become so obsessed with getting more that they never reach a point where they have enough. Paul stresses the importance of two character qualities that we need to develop and demonstrate that will help us avoid becoming obsessed with money or material possessions.

It's in verse 6. He says, but godliness with contentment is great gain. Two character qualities that will help us guard against becoming obsessed with wealth, godliness, and contentment.

In his book, The Practice of Godliness, Jerry Bridges describes godliness like this, devotion to God which results in a life that is pleasing to him. A godly person is devoted to God in the sense that they have a true desire, heartfelt desire to know God, to love him, to enjoy a real relationship with him, to serve him, and to please him.

That kind of devotion will cause us more than anything to want to know and do God's will. to want to live our lives in a way that's going to bring a smile to his face.

[ 19 : 46 ] God will truly be first in our lives, not money and not stuff. Now the next one is very important as well. Paul says that godliness will need a great gain when it is accompanied by contentment.

Chuck Swindoll describes contentment as an attitude of satisfaction and peace within regardless of circumstances. Paul described his contentment in the book of Philippians chapter 4.

He'd learned to be content when he had plenty. He'd learned to be content when he had not enough. When he was in want and when he was having plenty, he was content with the circumstances which he found himself.

Now, contentment doesn't mean that we blindly accept whatever is going on in our lives or in the lives of people around us if there's something we can do to change it, to make it better.

Being content never means that you don't make changes. You just sort of go with the flow. Here in verse 6, Paul is talking specifically about being content not to be rich.

[ 21 : 01 ] being content to the point that you don't pursue wealth as your ultimate goal in life. Now, one reason why we need to focus more on being godly with contentment instead of pursuing wealth is because wealth is not going to last.

You know that. Wealth is not eternal and Paul basically says in verse 7, you can't take it with you. Look at him. For we brought nothing into the world and we cannot take anything out of the world.

Here's a sobering thought, maybe depressing thought. Has it ever crossed your mind that the day you die, everything you own, your money, your land, your possessions will no longer be yours?

The day you die and because of the probate and all the kind of stuff I know that happens after death but sometime after you die, somebody else is going to take possession of your money, your possessions, your land.

And you know, we think about some things like that. One of my hobbies is making my yard look good. I love green, neat grass.

[ 22 : 35 ] Somebody may get my house and let it grow up and that breaks my heart right now to think about all that work going down the drain. Not really. I won't care after I'm dead.

But just think, all the things that we concern ourselves with about, I'm talking about being obsessed, just consumed with money and making more, with our stuff acquiring more.

Today's going to come when it's all going to be gone. Isn't it really foolish for us to be obsessed with the things of this world?

It's important that we care. It's important that we care and work and be productive and enjoy the fruits of our labor. It's like we've been talking about. That matters to God.

But we cannot be obsessed with working and producing and having more and more fruit from our labor. Our real obsession should be with developing the godliness and contentment that Paul describes at the first of this section that we've looked at.

[ 23 : 53 ] Our real obsession should be not only that we develop godliness and contentment but teach those we have influence over to be godly and content.

You know, on the day of judgment and throughout eternity, that will be all we care about. Now, I'll never think about zoysia grass in my yard from the day of judgment on.

But I will be totally consumed with my relationship with God, being with him, pleasing him on that day and for all eternity.

If that's what we all will wind up doing, if we're going to be obsessed with anything, shouldn't our obsession be with knowing and loving and drawing closer to and pleasing God now?

You know, pursuing wealth for the sake of becoming rich is the first step of a downward spiral to ruin. I want you to look at it in verse 9.

[ 25 : 08 ] But those who desire to be rich fall into temptation. I want you to say, that is clear, that is just what it says. If God blesses your work and productivity to the point that you become wealthy, even a billionaire, thank him, be wise in how you manage it and enjoy it.

but it is sinfully wrong to truly just desire, be obsessed with becoming wealthy.

And it'll lead to your downfall, mine too. But those who desire to be rich, he writes, fall into temptation, into a snare, into many senseless and harmful desires that plunge people into ruin and destruction.

Paul is warning us of the sinful and dangerous desire to be rich for the sake of living a selfish, materialistic life of wealth and privilege.

marriage. There is no, there is nothing commendable about desires to become a billionaire or even a millionaire for the sake of just having it and not having to work, just being a bum.

[ 26 : 46 ] Paul is condemning by warning the person who is determined to get rich at any cost. That's what we're talking about.

Such a person makes obtaining wealth their ultimate priority and goal in life. Again, don't feel guilty if you are rich or become rich by working and being productive, doing something useful with your life that God's called you to do.

Just thank him for it. But guard against the temptation to just want more and more just for the sake of your own selfish desires.

Let's look at how Paul describes this downward spiral to ruin that desiring to be rich will cause. Number one, pursuing wealth will expose us to greater temptation.

That's what we looked at. But those who desire to be rich fall into temptation. People who make wealth their goal are tempted to make all kinds of unhealthy risks.

[ 27 : 55 ] They'll risk their health. They'll risk their marriage. They'll risk their relationship with their children. They'll risk the money that they do have.

What I'm talking about, a person who is obsessed with just, I'm going to be rich. They're going to do whatever it takes to be that. They're going to ignore their relationship with God. They're going to ignore their spouse, their children.

They're going to be less than wise in using their money. They'll be too risky. It gets worse. Many people get so focused on making money that they give in to the temptations to compromise their integrity, their honesty, their truthfulness.

They'll lie for a dollar. They'll deceive to make money. They'll be less than Christ-like in the way they treat people and do business with people so they can come out on top in their financial transactions.

If you'll lie to make money, you'll lie about anything. If you're dishonest when it comes to your finances, you're dishonest about anything because it's a matter of the heart.

[ 29 : 19 ] It's a matter of our character. It means money is our God. We've sold out. Many people end up only concerned about their wealth and they have no real interest in anyone or anything including a relationship with God.

that's outside of that pursuit of wealth. So let's just pause here and ask ourselves a question. What are you most concerned about right now?

What most occupies your thinking when you're riding down the road? When you're outside just cutting grass, just sort of letting your mind wonder. what most occupies your mind?

Your wealth? Growing it? Keeping it? Or your relationship with God?

Growing in your relationship with Him? Enjoying a relationship with Him? number two, pursuing wealth changes our desires, but those who desire to be rich fall into temptation, into a snare, into many senseless and harmful desires that plunge people into ruin and destruction.

[ 30 : 40 ] If we become obsessed with wealth, if we just pursue wealth for its sake, here's what will change. We'll put more value on things than people.

We don't want to mention that, we don't want to admit that, but our actions will show it. We're more concerned about things than we are about people.

We'll put more emphasis on the things of this world and little to no emphasis on the eternal things of God. You can tell where your emphasis is right now by just looking at what do you do with your time, your talents, how do you spend your treasures?

Where is the focus? Where is the emphasis? That tells you a lot about where your desires are. The end result of this downward spiral is this, pursuing wealth causes ruin and destruction.

One more time, verse 9, but those who desire to be rich fall into temptation, into a snare, into many senseless and harmful desires that plunge people into ruin and destruction.

[ 31 : 58 ] Money is like a drug, and to blindly seek it is an addiction. Like all addictions, the more you have, the more you want.

You never get enough. You know, it may be that Paul uses these two terms to point to the ruin of our lives here on earth and the destruction of our lives in hell.

Let's not kid ourselves by thinking that we can pursue both God and money. It's an impossibility because Jesus said it was. Look at this.

No one can serve two masters. For either he'll hate the one and love the other, or he'll be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and money. Paul reinforces this warning about the danger of money by referring to what was probably a well-known proverb in his day.

Verse 10, look at this. For the love of money is the root of all kinds of evils. It is through this craving that some have wandered away from the faith and pierced themselves with many pains.

[ 33 : 10 ] Now note what this verse does not say. This may be, this is one of the most misquoted verses in the Bible. It does not say money is the root of all evil. Money is not the root of all evil.

In fact, money is not the problem here. It's the love of money. That is sinful. The love of money is not the root of all evil.

It's just one of them. It is a root of all kinds of evil. Again, I want to make it clear. Money can be a blessing from God. Money is not evil.

It is just a medium of exchange. Everybody has to have it. It is a good. It is worthwhile. It is a blessing from God a lot of times.

And we can use our money in a lot of different ways that will please God. We can serve Him. We can serve Him with it. The problem comes when we think too highly of money and allow it to control us instead of us controlling it.

[ 34 : 22 ] Now I want you to note, Paul says that this had happened in the church at Ephesus. That's where Timothy is. This is Paul's letter to Timothy.

He is serving the church, leading the church at Ephesus. And Paul says there are some there who had wandered away from the faith. There are Christians, or professing Christians anyway, church members, who had forsaken their relationship with God and their commitment to the truth of God's Word.

And by doing so, they'd hurt themselves more than anyone else. Look at it. And pierced themselves with many pains or many griefs. Let me ask you one more time.

Money and material prosperity. It can be a blessing or it can be a curse. What is it for you?

You know, if our focus, if our real obsession, our true heartfelt desire is to know, love, serve, and please God, and be a faithful steward of all that He entrusts to our care, money-wise, prosperity-wise, the money and material prosperity is a blessing.

[ 35 : 45 ] Don't feel guilty. If God has blessed you tremendously, don't feel guilty. If you've had the right motives, you've gone about it the right way in acquiring what you have, enjoy it.

Realize you're a steward of God. God holds you responsible. Be wise with it. Please Him. Honor Him with it. But don't feel guilty. It can be a blessing.

But if our real focus, heartfelt desire is on the money and the material prosperity, and pursuing it is the goal and joy of our lives, the money and prosperity is a curse.

It very well may lead to your ruin in some way in this life.

But most assuredly, it'll lead to your destruction of the day of judgment unless you repent. So, what is the nature right now of your money and your material prosperity?

[ 37 : 08 ] Is it a blessing or is it a curse? Let's pray together. Father, show us the truth.

show us the real answer to that question. And Father, help us to be honest.

Help us to admit if we are obsessed with money and material possessions and acquiring more. And if it is, help us, dear God, to see that it's wrong, it's sinful.

It does not please you and ultimately it'll ruin us. So, help us to repent of it and seek your forgiveness. Help us to rearrange our priorities.

Help us to make you the object of our strongest heartfelt desire. But Father, where it is a blessing, help that person to just say thank you to you.

[ 38 : 17 ] And seek to be faithful to use it as you direct without guilt. Father, if there are people in this room who do not know you because they do not have a relationship with Jesus, help them to understand that regardless of their attitude toward money, they are separated from you by their sin, their selfishness, their self-centeredness.

Help them, dear God, to truly turn from that, repent of that. And to put their faith in Jesus as their Savior and Lord.

Help them, dear God, to make a total commitment of themselves to you right now to live in life your way.

Lord, show us what we need to do. And now it's just an attitude of prayer. Listen to the Lord and respond to him as he speaks to us. you you you you you