

Thinking Biblically About Socialism (Part 2)

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[0 : 00] Turn in your Bible to Matthew chapter 25 and leave it open. We're going to come to that passage later on in the message. It's rather lengthy. We're going to look at a parable of Jesus, and it's too long to put on the screen.

So if you would, Matthew 25, and have it open there when we come to it a little bit later in the message. We're going to continue to think biblically about socialism this morning.

We're going to look and see how, as we began last week, socialism is contrary to God's design for how life is to be lived in this world and for us to take care of ourselves and our families and even people who have legitimate needs.

Christian Post columnist Julie Royce does a good job of pointing out one of the foundational flaws of socialism is that it is based completely on a materialistic view of life or worldview.

Look at this. To socialists, suffering is caused by the unequal distribution of stuff, and salvation is achieved by the redistribution of stuff. There's no acknowledgement of spiritual issues.

[1 : 08] There's just an assumption that if everyone is given equal stuff, all the problems in society will somehow dissolve. Let me just point out here. How many people who espouse any aspect of socialism ever talk about other thing than, ever talk about anything but materialistic problems?

You rarely ever hear anyone mention anything about a spiritual problem. She goes on. This worldview contradicts Christianity, which affirms the existence of both a material and non-material world and teaches that mankind's greatest problems are spiritual.

The Bible says the cause of suffering is sin. That's the bottom line, cause. And salvation is found in the cross of Christ, which liberates us from sin.

As Christians, we need to understand socialism is not just a political thing. It's not just a matter of economics. It is a moral, spiritual, and biblical issue.

And what I want us to do is continue today to look at it from a biblical perspective. Let's go ahead. I'm gonna cover some of the things we did last week quickly. I'm not gonna show all the scripture and certainly not gonna go over everything we did last week, but to make it flow, we're gonna hit some highlights.

[2 : 31] Let's begin with defining what socialism is. Socialism is any economic or political system based on government ownership and or control of important businesses, methods of production, distribution of goods, et cetera.

Socialism, when you boil it down, replaces private ownership and or control of property, production, distribution, and so forth.

It replaces it with government ownership or control of property, production, and distribution. You know, one of the goal of socialists in this country is to redistribute wealth.

And what they're gonna do, what they're talking about doing is penalizing those who have been the most successful in producing wealth for themselves and other people and more government regulations, which means government control.

These socialists are talking about rewarding those who have been the least successful in producing wealth for themselves and other people and will make these people more dependent on the government and the government's control.

[3 : 54] All of this, everything in a nutshell that socialism promotes, desires, gives government more power and control over everyone and everything.

Now, how is socialism contrary to God's design? That's the point we're looking at. It's not a political message. It's a biblical message. How is socialism contrary to God's design?

Well, as we saw last week, real quickly, God created human beings in His image and we're the only thing in creation created in the image of God. He intends for us to be stewards or managers of all that He created and owns.

We looked at that from Genesis 1, verses 26 and 28. Now, as God's stewards, God has given human beings the privilege and the responsibility of having earthly ownership of private property.

Scripture clearly and repeatedly reveals that God intends for people like you and me to own things, to have possessions, to have private property.

[5 : 10] In fact, the entire Old Testament system of giving offerings and making sacrifices is based on the fact that human beings own something and can give it.

R.C. Sproul explains it. 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.

You can't give an offering with my money. I can't give an offering with your money. If we're going to give unto God, it's got to be something that originates from us.

We are actually giving of ourselves something we have earned or acquired. It's an offering. Sometimes it's a sacrifice. The right of human ownership, continue with Sproul, the right of human ownership is something God has assigned as a part of our covenant partnership with Him in creation.

Another example from Scripture. Two of the Ten Commandments reveal that God not only approves of people's right to own property, God protects that. Look at this.

[6 : 24] The Eighth Commandment. You shall not steal. You know what that means. God forbids anyone from taking what rightfully belongs to someone else. God prevents you from taking from me what is mine.

The Tenth Commandment says, or begins, you shall not covet. Covet is an improper desire, a sinful desire, a selfish desire. So God even prevents us from having selfish desires to have what rightfully belongs to someone else.

So the Bible is clear just from these examples that socialism or any kind of economic or political system that prevents private ownership and personal control of property and possessions is unbiblical.

Since it's contrary to God's design, it is unethical. Now another reason why socialism is wrong is because it fails to follow God's design for how people acquire possessions.

Look at this. God calls human beings to take care of His creation and themselves by working. We're going to be real quick with this. We've looked at it before. Last week, before sin entered the world, God gave Adam and Eve jobs to do.

[7 : 45] Work to be done. Look at it. The general statement. And God blessed them. And God said to them, Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it and have dominion.

More specifically, in Genesis 2:15, the Lord took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and to keep it. Work did become more difficult after the fall.

That's what a lot of people have in mind, that work is something that happened after sin entered the world. Well, that's in Genesis 3. And after sin, work became more toilsome, more burdensome.

But work was originally a part of God's good creation for all human beings. The Bible is also filled with statements about the importance of working to provide for yourself and your family and not to be dependent on other people.

Look at this. I want to just look at some highlights from these verses. You should mind your own business and work with your hands so that you will not be dependent on anybody. 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.

[8 : 54] One more. For even when we were with you, we would give you this command. If anyone was not willing to work, let him not eat. Now such persons we command and encourage the Lord Jesus Christ to do their work quietly and to earn their own living.

Now we looked at that last week. If you were not here last week, I meant to have said this at the beginning. I would encourage you to go back, look online and look at this message because we covered some good things last week, important things that'll help you to understand why socialism is contrary to God's design.

If you don't have access to the internet, call the church office. We can send you a copy of it. R.C. Sproul makes an important statement that ties together what the Bible says about work and the ownership of private property.

He says, 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.

The avoidance of labor is regarded as sin. Paul commands labor as an ethical norm. Now I want you to notice the second sentence in particular. Look at it again. In both the old and new covenants, the call to labor is an emphatic one, bringing fruit as its just reward.

[10 : 10] Sproul is saying here that God intends for our work to be fruitful or to be productive. And one of the fruits of our labors is that we acquire things.

We accumulate wealth. Now, God holds us responsible to do it the right way. We'll talk more next week about the dangers of wealth.

And there are Bibles filled with statements, warnings about the dangers of acquiring wealth the wrong way and using it the wrong way. So it matters greatly to God our motivation, our actions, how we treat people as we work and accumulate wealth.

But God does intend for us to be rewarded for being productive. God intends for us to be rewarded to experience and enjoy the fruits of our labor without guilt.

So keep that in mind. We're going to come to it in more detail in a moment. God intends, the next point, God intends for the work of human beings to be productive or fruitful and rewarding.

[11 : 26] Now, I want us to think about Genesis 128. Immediately after God created Adam and Eve, He charged them with this responsibility.

Look at it. 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 the earth.

Several commentators point out how the command to subdue the earth means to make the earth productive, make this world useful for human beings.

Now, I think Wayne Grudem does the best job of explaining how this works, what this means and how it works. Look at this. He says, 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 of the entire human race with stewardship over the earth. God wanted them to create useful products from the earth for their benefit and enjoyment.

[12 : 43] At first, perhaps, simple structures in which to live and store food, later various forms of transportation such as carts and wagons, then eventually modern homes, office buildings and factories, as well as cars and airplanes, the entire range of useful products that could be made from the earth.

In this way, God gave to human beings the ability to create value in the world that did not exist before. Now, I want you to think.

In the beginning, God created everything. He created Adam and Eve and put them in the garden. And He gave them this command.

Subdue the earth. Get dominion. And what Grudem is saying is, from the beginning of creation right up till today, that's what has happened.

Human beings, by the grace and enabling wisdom and power of God, have taken the raw materials of creation and through thinking and being creative and trial and error and all these kind of things, have put things together in a way that we know them today as clothes and cars and homes and computers.

[14 : 19] This didn't just fall out of the sky one day. This is how God has worked through human beings to make life in some ways simpler, some ways more complex, but to make life easier, more enjoyable, more productive as time has gone on.

Now, you think to yourself, I wish I could go back in time. I want to ask you something. Do you really wish you could go back and live in a cabin in the woods with no running water, no heat in the winter, no cooling in the summer, no way to get around but to walk or ride a horse, an outhouse, and all those kind of things?

I'll be honest with you. I enjoyed sleeping last night and getting up this morning in an air-conditioned house. Taking a shower with hot water. I enjoyed getting in my truck and driving up here with air-conditioning on.

I'm glad I'm not running around in a loincloth, and I know you are too. This is what has happened. According to the design of God, people have used their God-given, because we're created in God's image, ability, creativity to make life advance as it has and to be where we are right now.

Grudem goes on to point out how God is the one who gave us the desire to be productive like this. Look at it. Because God gave to human beings the command to subdue the earth, it is reasonable to conclude that He also placed in our hearts a desire to fulfill that command.

[16 : 17] We should not dismiss this innate human drive for material productivity and flourishing as greedy materialism as many socialists do, or sin.

It can be distorted by selfishness and sin, and we know that it is. But the drive to create, produce, and enjoy useful products ultimately comes from a morally good, God-given instinct that He placed within the human race before there was any sin in the world when He commanded Adam and Eve to fill the earth, subdue it, and have dominion over all of it.

Socialists like to condemn prosperity and the accumulation of wealth by saying it just comes from greed or an abuse of power and privilege or a lack of concern for anyone but yourself, especially the poor in society.

Well, that is true about some people who are prosperous and wealthy, but I want you to know this too. That's true about poor people. Poor people can be just as greedy as rich people.

Poor people can just be all about themselves and care nothing about anyone just as much as a wealthy person. And a poor person can take what little power or privilege they have and abuse other people or ignore other people with it.

[17 : 53] The truth is, the fact is, many people have become prosperous, have accumulated wealth by working hard, being productive, and wisely managing their money.

And I want you to think, isn't that what you have done to this point or tried to do? It's what I try to do. Isn't that what you want to do right now to provide for yourself and your family?

to work, to be productive, to wisely manage what you have, to let it accumulate, and then to enjoy it the right way, God's way?

that's what we're talking about this morning. And when we do enjoy, well, we should be able to enjoy the fruit of our labor without guilt, and we should be able to enjoy it without the fear of anyone, including the government, taking it away from us and redistributing it to people who may not care anything in the world about being productive or wisely managing what they have.

Look at the next point. God wants us to enjoy the rewards of faithful labor, and I want to show you how that is seen in two parables that Jesus told God rewards stewardship.

[19 : 28] The first one is what we're going to read from Matthew 25. Matthew 25, beginning in verse 14. The parable of the talents. Now, talent was a huge sum of money, a monetary unit worth about 20 years' wages for a laborer.

You'll see in the footnote of the ESV translation. Here's the story Jesus told. For it will be like a man going on a journey who called his servants and entrusted to them his property.

To one he gave five talents, to another two, to another one, to each according to his ability. Now notice that. In the original distribution by the master who represents God, he doesn't give the same to each person.

He gives one five, one two, and one one, each according to his ability. Then he went away. He who had received the five talents went at once and traded with them, and he made five talents more.

So also, he who had the two talents made two talents more. But he who had received the one talent went and dug into the ground and hid his master's money. Now after a long time, the master of those servants came and settled accounts with them.

[20 : 41] And he who had received the five talents came forward, bringing five talents more, saying, Master, you delivered to me five talents here. I have made five talents more. His master said to him, Well done, good and faithful servant.

You've been faithful over a little. I will set you over much. Enter into the joy of your master. And he also, who had the two talents, came forward, saying, Master, you delivered to me two talents here.

I have made two talents more. His master said to him, the very same thing that he said to the guy with five. He said, I lost my place.

His master said to him, Well done, good and faithful servant. You have been faithful over a little. I will set you over much. Enter into the joy of your master. Now, he also, who had received the one talent, came forward, saying, Master, I knew you to be a hard man, reaping where you did not sow and gathering where you scattered no seed.

So I was afraid. And I went and hid your talent in the ground. Here, you have what is yours. But his master answered him, You wicked and slothful servant. You knew that I reap where I have not sown and gathered where I have scattered no seed.

[21 : 59] Then you ought to have invested my money with the bankers. And at my coming, I should have received what was mine with interest. So take the talent from him and give it to the one who has the ten talents.

For to everyone who has, more will be given. And he will have an abundance. But from the one who has not, even what he has will be taken away. And cast the worthless servant into the outer darkness.

In that place, there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. Now I want you to note, the three servants received three different amounts of talent.

Five, two, and one. Two servants were commended for being productive even though one was twice as productive as the other.

They did not start out financially equally and they did not end up being equally, being financially equal. The one who had more at the beginning had even more at the end.

[23 : 07] More than the other guy. But they were both rewarded for their faithfulness, their productivity. The unfaithful servant was condemned for his laziness laziness and failure to be productive.

No wealth was redistributed. In fact, what he had was taken from him because he was irresponsible. Jesus told a similar parable in Luke chapter 19, the parable of the minas.

A mina was about three months wages for a laborer. What I want us to do is look at Matthew 25, this parable of Talos. In light of R.C. Sproul's definition of socialism from last week.

Look at it. Sproul said, socialism seeks as its premier goal the equality of wealth and equality of ownership within a society. To accomplish this, the government must be involved in the redistribution of wealth.

That parable that Jesus told teaches the very opposite of what socialism seeks. There was no intent in Jesus' story to bring about equality of wealth or ownership.

[24 : 24] There was no intent to redistribute wealth. Jesus, in fact, commends those who are productive with what they have, even though their production is not the same.

And Jesus rewards each who are productive because of their faithfulness.

Not because of their equality, but because of their faithfulness. Now, we're going to come back next week and look at some of the many warnings found throughout the Bible about the dangers of money and prosperity.

We've got to do that. We cannot ignore the fact that money and prosperity has ruined many people. Many Christians have pursued wealth and as a result moved away from their commitment to the Lord.

So, while the Bible talks about it is right and good, proper, according to God's design, to work, to accumulate things, accumulate wealth, wisely manage it.

[25 : 34] But at the same time, there are warning after warning. It can be dangerous. Money can be dangerous. And wealth in and of itself is not something, it's not a worthy pursuit for God's people.

But socialists are wrong to blanketly condemn private ownership, individual productivity, and the accumulation of wealth. That's the point this morning.

Wayne Grudem rightfully describes the value of work, productivity, and the enjoyment of the fruit of our labor. One of these final points, look with me. He says, the system of personal ownership of property that is affirmed throughout Scripture is essential for human flourishing.

Because without the ability to own and enjoy something of the fruit of his labor, a person will have little motivation to create and produce. You think about it.

If you work and you're productive and you are rewarded justly, rightly, you accumulate wealth, but then the government starts intervening and taxes everything you make, prevents you from accumulating wealth, are you going to continue to work like you have?

[26 : 57] Are you going to continue to work to give it all away so it can be redistributed to people who don't work? No. You wouldn't. It would not be wise to do that.

Look at what he says at the end. We glorify God by understanding and ruling over the creation, then by producing more and more wonderful goods from it for our enjoyment with thanksgiving to the God who richly provides us with everything to enjoy.

Let's close it out like this. Are you seeking to glorify God by your productive work? Or, are you seeking to glorify yourself with your hard, productive work?

Are you enjoying the fruits of your labor and acknowledging it as one of God's good gifts? Or, are you enjoying the fruit of your labor with no thought that it's a gift from God?

Are you giving thanks to God as the source of everything that you have? Or, are you patting yourself on the back because of what you have earned, achieved, been able to do?

[28 : 21] I want us to close with an important word about wealth in 1 Timothy 6. Paul writes, as for the rich in this present age, charge them not to be haughty nor to set their hopes on the uncertainty of riches, but on God who richly provides us with everything to enjoy.

You see the balance of Paul's statement? As for the rich of this present age, charge them not to be haughty because it's easy to become prideful if you become wealthy.

Nor to set their hopes on the uncertainty of riches. We forget about the uncertainty of riches. But set our hopes on God and think about this, who richly provides us with everything to enjoy.

They are to do so to be rich in good works, to be generous and ready to share, thus storing up treasure for themselves as a good foundation for the future so that they might take hold of that which is truly life.

It is good for us to work and save and have something for the future, for the rainy day, for retirement. But it's even more important that we be storing up treasures in heaven through our faithfulness to God with what He has given us in every way, time, talents and treasures.

[29 : 55] And you know there's going to come a day for most of us if we live long enough we're going to want to lay hold of that which we have saved, invested. We're going to lay hold of retirement funds hopefully.

A retirement life maybe. But what's most important is that we be prepared to take hold of that which is truly life, eternal life.

And that only comes through a right relationship with Jesus Christ. It's vitally important in this day and time living in this country that we understand that socialism is contrary to the teaching of the Bible.

It's unethical. It's immoral. But at the same time we must not make the focus of our life acquiring, possessing, owning anything.

The goal of our life is to glorify God, to serve His purpose, enjoy His blessings, thanks. But to walk with Him, to walk with Christ, as Mainline was singing, step by step through faith with Jesus, through this world, that's the only way we'll be ready to enter the next world, as Paul says, which is truly life.

[31 : 21] Let's pray together. Father, show us now how we need to respond to You in light of what You said to us. Father, help us to understand that working, being responsible, being productive is the way You created us to be.

Help us to see that being rewarded for faithfulness is also a part of Your design, and we shouldn't feel guilty. We shouldn't be made to feel guilty.

Lord, help us to make sure that our work, our accumulating, our wealth has taken place for the right reason and in the right way.

If it hasn't, help us to confess that as the sin that it is and turn from it. Help us to make sure, dear God, that Jesus is the Lord of our life, not money or not things.

And Father, if there's anyone in this room who does not know Christ as their Lord and Savior, call them now to turn from their sin to trust Jesus as absolute Lord, boss, owner of their life.

[32 : 49] that's just in an attitude of prayer to listen to the Lord and respond to him personally. Just make this a time of commitment, recommitment, whatever it is you need right now. Thank you.