

Test the Spirits – 1 John 4:1-6
Part 2: Excursus on Socialism (from 2 Corinthians 9:6-12)

THE CHEERFUL GIVER & THE GENEROUS GOD: ONE BIBLICAL ARGUMENT AGAINST SOCIALISM

1. The historical context/setting which Paul addressed in 2 Corinthians.

- Christians in Jerusalem were experiencing a difficult situation.
- A collection of money was received from extremely poor Xns in Macedonia who gave abundantly. 8:1-5
- In chapter 9, Paul specifically addresses God's perspective on the principle of giving.

2. The spiritual principle of sowing and reaping. v.6

3. The attitude and freedom of the giver. v.7

- Each one must give as he has decided in his heart. (individual choice)
- Not reluctantly (internal constraint) or under compulsion (external control).
- God loves a cheerful giver. Ref. Deuteronomy 15:1-11; Rom 12:8

→ Not a forced giver. Not a reluctant giver. Give with freedom and with joy.

4. The provision of God. v.8-10

- God will provide the spiritual resources you need to have this attitude in giving. v.8
- God will provide for the poor. v.9
- God will provide for your spiritual growth and benefit through this attitude of giving. v.10

5. Thanksgiving to God. v.11-12

- You will be enriched (by God) to be generous (to others) and will produce thanksgiving to God. v.11
- This attitude in giving both supplies for the needs of others and gives glory and gratitude to God. v.12

→ The economic system of socialism removes both the cheerful giver and the generous God from the picture.

WHAT IS SOCIALISM?

1. Socialism is an economic system—a way of exchanging goods and services.

- Socialism attempts to deal with the realities of inequalities. (E.g., Bob has 5 sheep—but Sam only has 1.)
- Socialism uses force (coercion) to redistribute wealth. (Take 2 sheep from Bob and give them to Sam.)
- Socialism relies on some sort of centralized control by a smaller group of people.
- This smaller group of people makes decisions based upon what they deem fair or best for everyone else.

2. Some practical problems with socialism.

- Who makes the decisions? (Who is this smaller group of people?) How do they decide what is fair or right?
- Who carries out these decisions? Under socialism it is the government.
- What if someone doesn't want to give up what they own? (This is where force, coercion enters.)
- How do they deal with changing resources, production, scarcity, etc.

3. A free-market system (capitalism) is based upon the freedom of exchange.

- Free-market systems deal with the realities of inequalities by giving people the freedom to make choices.
- Free-market systems leave the responsibility to acquire and redistribute wealth with individuals.
- Free-market systems put the responsibility for production on the consumer (What do I want?) and the producer (What is worth my time and resources to produce?).

-Dr. Ronald Nash's summary of differences: "One dominant feature of capitalism is economic freedom, the right of people to exchange things voluntarily, free from force, fraud, and theft.... Socialism, on the other hand, seeks to replace the freedom of the market with a group of central planners who exercise control over essential market functions. There are degrees of socialism as there are degrees of capitalism in the real world. But basic to any form of socialism is distrust of or contempt for the market process and the desire to replace the freedom of the market with some form of centralized control."¹

¹ Ronald H. Nash, *Poverty and Wealth: Why Socialism Doesn't Work*, (Richardson, TX: Probe Books, 1986), p. 63.

SOCIALISM IS UNBIBLICAL. I.e., Contrary to Scripture

1. Socialism breaks the 8th Commandment: You shall not steal. Exodus 20:15

- It involves taking the possessions of one person and giving them to another. John Witherspoon quotation

2. Socialism works against the biblical ethic of the free and cheerful giver. (2 Cor. 9:7).

- What about the early church? Acts 2:44-45: "And all who believed were together and had all things in common. And they were selling their possessions and belongings and distributing to proceeds to all, as any had need."
- Answer: The early church practiced the principle from 2 Cor. 9:7: they gave freely and joyfully—they were not forced or coerced.

3. Socialism trains people to be dependent upon the government to meet their needs—rather than God.

4. Socialism removes God from the picture.

- Socialistic and Communist governments are always built upon atheism.
- Trusting in the State/Government is an essential element of Socialism.

"It is undoubtedly matter of experience that great poverty makes many take unjust and unwarrantable methods of procuring relief. Not only so, but they seem often disposed to justify and defend them, as if they had a title to rectify the mistakes of Providence, in the distribution of worldly possessions. This...receives great encouragement from some who seem to have imbibed a general false principle, and act upon it, both in their own conduct, and in their judgement of others. In...dividing disputed property, when one party is, or is supposed to be rich, and in easy circumstances, and the other poor, and in a mean condition, they think that instead of acting according to strict justice, the advantage should always be made to fall to the poorer side. This conduct is considered by some, not only as lawful, but as laudable. It is however a false principle, and is condemned in Scripture, which says, "Neither shalt thou countenance a poor man in his cause" [Exodus 23:3].... This...must involve numbers unawares in the guilt of stealing; for when they have once laid down this rule, that the poor have some claim upon the rich, they are ready to apply it to their own case, and extend it very far. But in all matters of property, or right and wrong, whether a person is rich or poor, ought to be utterly out of the question; the only thing to be considered is, what is just and lawful. The rich are indeed, in point of conscience, bound to assist the poor; but this must be their own act; no person can take the smallest part of their property without their consent, but he is guilty of an act of injustice, and violation of the law of God. No person has a right to make them generous and charitable against their wills, or to exercise their own generosity and charity at their expense. This must be left to the Supreme Judge at the last day, who will say to them, "I was a stranger and ye took me not in, naked and ye clothed me not, sick and in prison and ye visited me not" (Matt. 25:35, 36)." ²

Special Announcements:

The annual **March for Life in Washington, DC** is planned for **January 29, 2021**. Hundreds of thousands gather to make a public, prayerful, and peaceful witness against legalized abortion. Pastor Ken & family plan to attend again this year. Please join us! Now is the time to start planning.

Congratulations to Bob & Peg Stevens who celebrate their 63rd wedding anniversary on Tuesday, September 1st!

² John Witherspoon, *The Works of the Rev. John Witherspoon*, (Harrisonburg, VA: Sprinkle Publications, 2003), vol. 3, p.212.