

Socialism and the Bible

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Introduction:

Our nation has recently passed through a contentious presidential election. It is clear that socialism is gaining popularity in America. Polls show a majority of Democratic-leaning respondents view socialism positively. Furthermore, a 2019 YouGov poll showed that 70% of millennials would vote for a socialist presidential candidate, and more than 30% think highly of communism. There is a surging view toward global and international solutions.

Therefore, it seems timely to ask ourselves:

Should we support government-provided basic income programs, universal health care, and massive government spending programs? Should we elevate social justice causes, wealth inequality and climate change concerns over the God-given rights of the individual?

Is it okay now to disavow the unalienable rights of life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness declared to have been given to all humans by their Creator and which governments are created to protect as stated in our Declaration of Independence?

Reflections on Socialism:

It has been said that Socialism's reform will solve the world's problems. There will be free housing, free education, free healthcare, free public transportation, free childcare, guaranteed jobs (if you want one), paid vacations, and free welfare for all the poor. The key word is *free*. It all sounds so wonderful. Socialism would be a perfect society. Who would not be in favor of it?

There is only one big question. Will it deliver on its promises? Historically it never has.

The promise of socialism is that no one will be left behind because the government would assure equality for all. Sadly, large numbers of people fall for the promise of equality and believe government can deliver it. The deception of socialism continues even though in every place it is found, it perpetuates poverty, restricts freedom, and brings a depressing malaise.

What is socialism? There are various definitions, but essentially it is the primacy of the state over the individual. It is when the government dominates or controls the means of production and promises to spread the wealth in what is claimed to be an impartial way. The question that is never clearly answered at the start is who decides that impartial way.

When the topic of socialism arises, one of the luminaries, Karl Marx, often takes center stage. But a new type of Marxism has developed, called Cultural Marxism. Cultural Marxism is a creeping change of the national culture through academia, entertainment, media, and even religion. Cultural Marxism has merged with the left adopting post-modernism, multiculturalism, environmentalism, racism, and identity politics, all of which are designed to engulf a society and create a new culture.

Since Marx did not believe in God, he rejected the Bible and opposed Christianity. He viewed Christianity as a source of oppression. He believed that God as presented by the Bible was an oppressor who kept people enslaved to unfair social restrictions. Therefore, he wanted people to switch their devotion from the church to dependency on the state.

The changes Marx envisioned were the removal of the closely knit family, fathers released from the responsibility of the family, oppressed mothers freed from the home to work for the state, children to be raised by government approved schools. Parents would not shape the minds of their children. The family unit was no longer to be understood as an autonomous, economic unit of society. Communal housing would replace private housing.

Quotations about Socialism

In his article in Concealing Evil, GOPUSA Commentary, 2014, Walter Williams described socialism as an evil. This evil is concealed by giving it an aura of moral legitimacy in noble-sounding socialistic expressions such as spreading the wealth, income redistribution, caring for the less fortunate, and the will of the majority.

Moreover, socialism uses evil methods. Williams continues, “[socialism] employs confiscation and intimidation, to accomplish what are often seen as noble goals—namely, helping one’s fellow man. Helping one’s fellow man in need by reaching into one’s own pockets to do so is laudable and praiseworthy. Helping one’s fellow man through coercion and reaching into another’s pockets is evil and worthy of condemnation. Tragically, most teachings, from the church on down, support government use of one person to serve the purposes of another; the advocates cringe from calling it such and prefer to call it charity or duty.”

Winston Churchill said, “Socialism is the philosophy of failure, the creed of ignorance, and the gospel of envy.” In the House of Commons on 22 October 1945, he also said, “The inherent vice of capitalism is the unequal sharing of blessings. The inherent virtue of Socialism is the equal sharing of miseries.” (<https://winstonchurchill.hilldale.edu/socialism-is-the-philosophy-of-failure-winston-churchill/>)

Margret Thatcher said, “The problem with socialism is that eventually you run out of other people’s money.” And sooner than you think.

Ronald Reagan said, “Government does not solve problems; it subsidizes them.” Continuing, “Socialism only works in two places: Heaven where they don’t need it and hell where they already have it.” He also said, “Socialists don’t subscribe to our sense of morality; they don’t believe in an afterlife; they don’t believe in a God or religion. The only morality socialism recognizes, is what will advance the cause of socialism.”

Now for a few wave top points regarding socialism.

What is Socialism?

1. It is a utopian form of state government that claims to eliminate poverty.

2. It assumes that the basic nature of people is cooperative.
3. It views an idealized equality of mankind.
4. It relies on a largely unchecked centralized state power.
5. It advocates public ownership of most property and production control.
6. It attempts social equality through wealth distribution or redistribution.
7. It focuses on the collective well-being of the community.
8. Its ideas and beliefs are regulated by government agendas.
9. It stifles and discourages initiative for problem-solving.
10. Its state intervention results in a weakened economy.
11. It ultimately removes individual freedoms.

What Does the Bible Say about Socialism?

Periodically, someone remarks that the Bible supports socialism. This is not true. There are numerous passages in Scripture that refute the socialist position. However, there are those who use certain biblical passages to support socialism. We will see that they are mistaken.

1. Genesis 2:15 – God’s requirement for work in the garden.

Labor is biblical. It is a principle that was established in the garden by the Creator. Prior to the fall, man was given work. He was “to tend [serve] and keep [guard]” the garden (Gen 2:15). After the fall, man was told that to eat, he would be required to work (Gen 3:17-19). Therefore, labor was a requirement in perfect environment prior to the fall, and after the fall it remained part of life, albeit more difficult. Socialism says not to worry, the government will take care of you. We would do well to obey the guidance found in Proverbs that uses the ant’s industriousness as an example. “Go to the ant, you sluggard! Consider her ways and be wise” (Prov 6:6).

2. Exodus 20:17 – The Mosaic Law prohibited the sinful attitude of greed and coveting.

The final mandate of the Ten Commandments addressed the attitude of greed and covetousness. Moses gives God’s list of what was strictly prohibited and concluded the proscription of coveting with the phrase, “nor anything that is your neighbor’s” (Ex 20:17; Deut 5:21). The commandment against coveting was essentially a prohibition of greed or lusting for something that belonged to someone else. In this commandment God recognized the inequality of success, possessions, or anything that was associated with another person. God was requiring individuals to be content with what they had, not dissatisfied with what they did *not* have, and not be lustful for what someone else possessed (Phil 4:11). Socialism is based on greed, the desire to have the

success, wealth, or possessions of another. In fact, socialism questions the judgment of God, who has provided the possessions of each person. “Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights” (Jas 1:17). Socialism promotes greed, envy, lust, and coveting.

3. Proverbs 31:10-31 – King Lemuel exemplifies wisdom as a virtuous wife.

In the final chapter of Proverbs, the author captures the themes of wisdom that have been taught in the book and presents them as a virtuous wife. Wisdom is represented as a woman who provides for her household, considers a field and buys it, from the profits plants a vineyard, spins clothes for her family, gives to the poor, provides clothes for herself, makes garments to sell, and has a husband and children. All of these activities of the virtuous wife are contrary to socialism. You are not to be self-reliant or God-reliant, but government-reliant. Little “g” replaces big “G.”

4. Matthew 21:33–40; 22:2–10; 25:14–19 – Jesus uses the wealthy in His parables to teach spiritual lessons.

Jesus often used parables to teach godly principles. Several of these parables used wealthy landowners or other personalities who were wealthy. In none of the parables was there criticism or judgment made toward those who owned land, prospered in business, or provided occupation for employees. In fact, often the landowner or wealthy individual represented God, who was providing employment for those needing jobs. In none of His parables do we find a hint of socialism. Rather, in the parables and throughout Scripture we find that private property ownership is encouraged.

5. Matthew 26:6-11 – Jesus taught about poverty.

Jesus told His disciples that the poor would always be with them (v. 11). Socialism desires income equality, but generally achieves poverty equality. Jesus knew there would be classes of society and while providing for the poor was important and godly, His definitive pronouncement to His disciples confirms that there will *always* be the poor. This assures us that no amount of government programs will eliminate the poor. The biblical principle is that while we hope the best for everyone, there will always be those on the lower end of society.

6. 1 Thessalonians 4:9-12 – Paul commands believers to mind their own business.

The Thessalonian believers had an excellent reputation of loving one another, but Paul desired for their love to increase. The increase of that love was to be seen in living a quiet life, to mind their own business, and to work with their hands. Paul meant for the Thessalonians to support themselves as he had done when he was with them. One of the goals of socialism is to control the lives, affairs, or business of individuals. Paul’s teaching rejects socialism’s overreach into individual’s lives, affairs, or businesses.

7. 2 Thessalonians 3:6-12 – Paul mandates, “If anyone will not work, neither shall he eat.”

Paul addresses the problem that certain members of the Thessalonian church were acting in an irresponsible way. Paul and his gospel team had demonstrated the proper conduct of Christians and he reminds the Thessalonians that they should follow, imitate, his example. Then in one of his most adamant commands, Paul demands that “if anyone did not work, neither shall he eat” (v. 10). This principle certainly would not fit a socialistic policy.

8. Ephesians 4:25–28 – Paul admonishes the believer to perform honest work.

Paul commands that the believer who had previously routinely stolen to steal no longer. Rather “he must labor [toil], working with his hands what is good.” The sense of “what is good” is better understood as “doing honest work with his own hands” (ESV). Instead of stealing, a Christian should work with his own hands so that he can share with those in need. This is a call for the individual believer to be generous, to have a complete change of attitude. It is not for the government to seize his production and then dole it out to whomever they merit is in need.

The following passages are mistakenly viewed as support for socialism.

9. Matthew 25:31–46 – Jesus teaches the conduct of the Gentile believer during the Tribulation.

Socialists would say that this passage supports socialism by giving support to the oppressed. However, this is not the intent of Jesus’ teaching. Jesus returns at the end of the Tribulation to rescue the believing Jews and to defeat their enemies. Matthew 25:31 describes an event at the time of the Lord’s 2nd Coming (Rev 19:11). The conduct described in vv. 35-36, are believing Gentiles’ treatment of believing Jews during the Tribulation. The Church has been raptured and is not mentioned nor present in any way in Matthew 24-25. Only *believing* Gentiles will help the Jews. All unbelieving Gentiles will serve the antichrist. Treatment of the believing Jews is the sign of the division of believer and unbeliever Gentile, not the basis for eternal life. Jesus’ teaching is not guidance for the Church Age believer, but for Gentile believers in the Tribulation. Yes, Church Age believers should be sympathetic and treat compassionately the Jews and anyone in need, but this is an individual decision, not a governmental directive. In fact, the antichrist’s governmental directive during the Tribulation is to kill Jews. *This passage is not teaching socialism.*

10. Acts 4:32–35 – What was the financial policy of the early church in Jerusalem?

Socialists say that the financial policy of the early church in Jerusalem was socialism. Luke writes, “Neither did anyone say that any of the things he possessed was his own, but they had all things in common” (4:32). This was not governmental confiscation and redistribution, but a voluntary act by the believers in which they could participate or not. At that time, there were many believers congregating in Jerusalem expecting Jesus to return any day, and there was a need to graciously provide support to them. The church was not practicing socialism, but gracious, generosity to those waiting for the Lord’s return.

11. Acts 5:1–9 – The case of Ananias and Sapphira.

Socialism does not recognize the right of private property ownership. When Ananias and Sapphira brought money from the sale of their property to Peter, they lied about retaining *part* of

the proceeds of the sale and were immediately struck dead. Peter is careful to make it clear why they died. Ananias and Sapphira did not die because they did not give *all* the proceeds of the sale of property to the apostles; they died because they lied about retaining *part* of the proceeds of the sale. Peter recognized the right of private property ownership and clarified that the land and the money received for the land was theirs to give or keep, all or part (Acts 5:4). *Deception* was their only sin. *This event does not indicate socialism.*

12. 1 Samuel 30:23–25 – David establishes a wise leadership policy for his military force.

Socialists say that David's policy of giving the spoils of his military operation to all his men, even those who did not participate in the fight, reflect the tenets of socialism. Is that true? The entire troop of David had traveled 80 miles from Aphek to Ziklag, only to set off immediately in pursuit of the Amalekites. David's decision to divide the excess spoil evenly among all the men, both those who pursued the Amalekites and those who guarded the supplies, is not a form of socialism, but wise leadership policy. In fact, Scripture says that *all* the spoil belonged to David (v. 20). When David became king of the nation and fought many campaigns, we are told he continued the policy of dividing the spoil within the military force. However, David did not make it a policy, nor did any other ruler of Israel, to take from one person to give to someone else. Unless you are Jezebel.

13. Genesis 41:53–57; 47:5–6, 13–26 – Joseph's economic policy during the famine in Egypt.

Socialist say that Joseph's economic policy reflects the ideals of socialism. There is much that could be said about Joseph's policies, but the overarching principle is that God was guiding the events in Egypt over 400 years to bring about a situation that He had promised to Abraham many years prior (Gen 15:13). The conditions in Egypt after Pharaoh's dream and his decision to place Joseph in control of the economy were extraordinary. The seven years of plenty were so blessed by God that the agricultural production was beyond all Egyptian storage capability. Joseph built grain bins, silos, and storehouses to store the excess grain (Gen 41:34). Every year for 7 years, Joseph gathered 20 percent of the production into the cities, which was a reserve not touched until needed during the 7 years of famine. So much food was gathered that it was immeasurable (41:49). When the famine years arrived, Joseph was prepared to feed the populous of Egypt and many other nations also. The people came to Joseph and he sold food to anyone who approached him. God used the famine to bring Israel, Jacob, and his family to Egypt. The money collected for the food was placed in the Pharaoh's treasury. As the famine continued, Joseph traded food for all the livestock, the land, and then moved the people off the land and into cities. The people purchased or bartered for food until they exhausted their means to do so. At that point Joseph supplied food without charge. When the famine ended, Joseph gave the Egyptians seed to plant in the land (Gen 47:23). They would keep 80 percent of the profits for themselves and give 20 percent to Pharaoh. The system that Joseph created was a feudal-type arrangement where the lord and serf support each other. This was not an example of biblical socialism; it was God creating conditions in a pagan country to fulfill His plan for Israel. Israel moved to Goshen, prospered, multiplied, and in time became slaves to Pharaoh. They awaited God's deliverance by His servant Moses.

The Dangers of Socialism

Let's look at some of the dangers of socialism.

The following points are adapted from TFP Student Action
<https://tfpstudentaction.org/blog/10-reasons-to-reject-socialism>

1. Socialism, Marxism, Communism are all based on the same ideology.

Marxism and Communism are but an extreme form of socialism.

2. Socialism violates personal freedom.

Socialism seeks to eliminate injustice by transferring rights and responsibilities from individuals and families to the State. In the process, socialism actually creates injustice. It destroys true liberty: the freedom to decide all matters that lie within our own competence and to follow the course shown by our reason. True freedom comes from our relationship with God (Jn 8:31-32).

3. Socialism violates human nature.

Socialism opposes the natural desire of human nature. It destroys personal initiative – a fruit of our intellect and free will – and replaces it with state control. It tends to totalitarianism, with its government and police repression, wherever it is implemented. Totalitarianism is founded and retained by force. Socialism is based on an arrogant viewpoint: We know what's best for you.

4. Socialism violates private property.

Socialism calls for redistributing the wealth by taking from the rich to give to the poor. It imposes taxes that punish those who have maximized their productive talents, capacity to work, or thrift. It uses taxation to promote economic and social egalitarianism, a goal that will be fully achieved, according to The Communist Manifesto, with the abolition of private property.

5. Socialism opposes traditional marriage.

By opposing religious faith, socialism also opposes biblical morality. Therefore, socialism sees no moral reason for people to restrict sex to marriage, that is, to an indissoluble union between a man and a woman. Furthermore, socialism undermines private property, which Engels believed to be the foundation of traditional marriage.

6. Socialism opposes parental rights in education.

Socialism has the State, and not parents, control the education of children. Almost from birth, children are to be handed over to public institutions where they will be taught what the state wants, regardless of parental views. Evolution must be taught. School prayer must be forbidden.

7. Socialism promotes radical equality.

A supposed absolute equality among men is the fundamental assumption of socialism. Therefore, it sees any inequality as unjust in itself. Private employers (capitalists) are quickly portrayed as ‘exploiters’ whose profits really belong to their employees (workers). Socialism eliminates any system of employee advancement and compensatory reward. Therefore, socialism does not recognize the application of individual God given gifts, skills, and pursuits that ensure inequality.

8. Socialism promotes atheism.

Socialism is based on the philosophy that only matter exists. Therefore, it rejects the spiritual realm—God, the soul, and eternal life. However, when God is removed from life’s equation, then basic human rights no longer come from God, but from the state. The state makes decisions regarding human rights. Furthermore, if the state is the entity giving the rights, then the state cannot be criticized.

9. Socialism promotes relativism.

In socialism there are no absolute truths or revealed morals that establish standards of conduct that apply to everyone, everywhere, and always. Everything evolves, including right and wrong, good and evil. There is no place for biblical standards, neither in the private mind nor in the public square.

10. Socialism mocks/opposes religion.

Karl Marx said that religion is “the opium of the people.” Lenin, founder of the Soviet Union, agreed: “Religion is opium for the people. Religion is a sort of spiritual booze in which the slaves of capital drown their human image, their demand for a life more or less worthy of man.”

Conclusion

Socialism opposes the principles that the Bible teaches. To achieve its goals, socialism seeks to remove biblical norms and standards from our lives. Therefore, as Christians we must honor God by rejecting socialism and the philosophies it spawns. We must never allow false doctrine to confuse the truth that Scripture teaches.

The Bible has much to say about God’s design for mankind, about proper relationships between people, about proper social behavior, about good government, about nationalism, capitalism, governance, and the proper function of ruling authority. None of these designs function effectively without acknowledging God’s authority in our lives and institutions.

Paul tells us in 1 Corinthians 1:18, “For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God.” The arrogance of socialism is man thinking he can solve the world’s problems without God. When the cross is held in contempt, you have lost the power of God.

The issue of man’s condition is not a need for *reformation*—it’s about a need for *regeneration*.