

What the Bible Actually Says About Socialism vs. Capitalism

Mikhail Gorbachev said that “Jesus was the first socialist.” I wonder if Stalin murdering as many as 20 million people was on Gorbachev’s “WWJD” list.

And in 2016, Vladimir Putin said in a speech in Stavropol, Russia, “the Moral Code of the Builder of Communism resembles the Bible a lot.” Hmm. Maybe Psalm 14:1 (if you exclude the first part about a fool): “There is no God.”

However, even some evangelical Christians try to “milk” socialism out of the Bible. Like in Acts 4:32-35: “All the believers were united in heart and mind. And they felt that what they owned was not their own, so they shared everything they had ... There were no needy people among them, because those who owned land or houses would sell them and bring the money to the apostles to give to those in need.” In the very next chapter (Acts 5:1-9), there’s even an account of Ananias and Sapphira falling dead because they held back some of the money from the sale of their land. Maybe this is another verse Putin was referencing; it’s probably on his refrigerator.

I’ll admit, at first glance, it does look like a fair argument for socialism, but let’s take a closer look. First of all, there’s a huge distinction in that these believers in Jerusalem were doing this of their own free will. The government was not forcing them to do it. It says they brought the money to the apostles, not to the government (verse 4:35). One might also reconcile the believers’ actions by the fact that there was a great famine in Jerusalem and all of Judea at the time, as prophesied by Agabus in Antioch (Acts 11:27-29). Because of this famine, many Gentile believers throughout the

Roman Empire were sending money to the believers in Jerusalem (Rom. 15:26, 1 Cor. 16:1-3, 2 Cor. 9:1).

But the key is found in verse 5:4. Peter told Ananias, "The property was yours to sell or not sell, as you wished. and after selling it, the money was also yours to give away." Clearly, the offerings of the church in Jerusalem were free-will offerings and not as the result of a mandate. They fell dead for lying about it to the Holy Spirit (verse 3).

Another verse socialists like to use is Luke 3:11. While preaching by the Jordan River, John the Baptist said, "If you have two shirts, give one to the poor. If you have food, share it with those who are hungry." Again, John was compelling those who had plenty to help people in need out of the goodness of their hearts, not as a requirement from the government.

And finally, socialists also like to pull that "compassion card" with 1 John 3:17. This verse asks, "If someone has enough money to live well and sees a brother or sister in need but shows no compassion—how can God's love be in that person?" But a socialist government is not compassionate; it not only limits the amount its citizens can make, but also robs them of their God-given ability to be innovative. On June 19, 2018, the United States Patent Office issued its ten millionth patent. What's the latest innovative gadget in your household that came from Cuba or Venezuela?

In the parable of the talents (Matthew 25:14-29 and Luke 19:12-28), the business owner is clearly a representation of God Himself, so this is a pretty good picture of how God's economy works. Notice in verse 15 that the man gave three different amounts to three different servants, "to each according to his own ability." This is the very antithesis of socialism. Evidently, the business owner's perception of their abilities was pretty accurate, because the two who were given the most (five and two talents respectively) doubled their

investments. By the way, this kind of profit would likely create a fourth and a fifth employee and generate greater pay for all.

What if the owner had taken those same eight talents and divided them up equally (or talents each)? And what if he told them they would be trusted with the same amount next time... and the next... and the next, regardless of their performance? I guarantee you the productivity of even the two good employees would wane over time. Whereas the owner received fifteen talents back from his original eight-talent investment under the capitalism model, he would probably get little more than his original eight talents back under the socialist model. Why should the two productive employees outperform the unproductive employees with no incentive? With capitalism, everyone races toward the top; but with socialism, everyone races toward the bottom.

In the parable of the ten virgins who were waiting for the bridegroom (Matt. 25:1-9), we see a similar underlying theme that's incongruent with socialism. Notice that five were wise, and five were foolish, not lucky and unlucky. And if you continue reading, verses 10-11 reveal that the five wise virgins were rewarded (they got into the wedding feast), and the five foolish virgins were not rewarded (they were locked outside). Socialists would cry, "Not fair!"

In John 12, we read the story of Mary anointing Jesus' feet with very expensive perfume. In verse 5, Judas said, "That perfume was worth a year's wages. It should have been sold and the money given to the poor." Fair point, even if it did come from Judas. Jesus said (verse 7), "Leave her alone. She did this in preparation for my burial. You will always have the poor among you, but you will not always have me." Wow! I'm sure if Jesus made such a statement today, the Democratic Socialists of America would certainly deny Him a membership card.

In summary, it's clear in the Scriptures that God never condoned a socialist-type system. It has been contrived by well-intentioned but unrealistic people in the best cases, and by evil, power-hungry fascists in the worst cases. God "wired" us to function best in a merit-based system. "He who tends the fig tree will eat its fruit" (Prov. 27:18). And that gives us incentives to cultivate the gifts God has placed inside of each of us. Moreover, when we cultivate and develop our gifts, they benefit the rest of society.

The Biden Administration is racing us toward Socialism: Paying people not to work, pushing for nationalized elections, nationalized health mandates, free college, and free everything else. My brothers and sisters, we must pray like our country depends on it ... because it does. {eo}

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