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THE BEREANS

ACTS 17:11

Mark 7:15
Lesson #27
Socialism
02/07/2021

Four concerns I have for the way many Evangelical Christians relate to American political culture.

1. We are too often guided by *fear, shame, and bitterness.*
2. We place too much faith in worldly *power and politics.*
3. We fail to see the implications of *the separation of church and state.*

1

How should Christians process their "rendering to (American) Caesar" with respect to:

- Socialism
- Abortion
- Social Justice




2

Some feel that these issues are simply a matter of following the Bible.

Ecclesiastes 10:2
"A wise man's heart directs him toward the right, but the foolish man's heart directs him toward the left."

But following the Bible can be reduced to following Jesus in context.



Are we following the Word and Way of the Cross or of our culture?

3

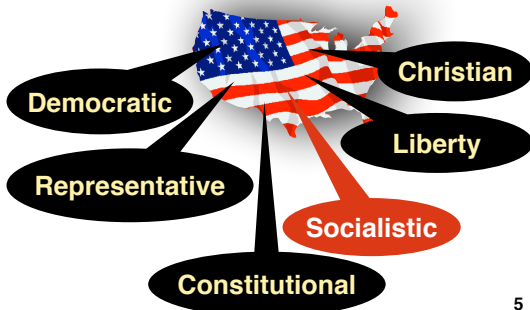
Some common impressions of "socialism"

- Wherever socialism has been tried **it has failed.**
- Socialism is incompatible and toxic to the **culture and constitution** of America.
- Socialism is among the greatest **threats** to American freedom and prosperity.
- The **democratic party** is heavily committed to displacing capitalism with socialism.



4

The Founders of the American system drew upon many ideals.



5

Socialistic elements and liberty complement each other.

"We the people of the United States, in order to form **a more perfect union, establish justice, insure domestic tranquility, provide for the common defense, promote the general welfare, and secure the blessings of liberty** to ourselves and our posterity, do ordain and establish this Constitution for the United States of America." (U.S. Constitution)

6

Tension is built into our system of Government.



We see community as a bigger calling than just defeating our political rivals.

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Both sides share common challenges:

- Preoccupation with the temporal / material. "It's all about this life and now."
- Being convinced that the solutions are political. "It's all about social systems."
- Associating their politics with their theology. "God is on our side."
- More committed to being "understood by" rather than "understanding" each other. "We don't need or care to hear about your ideas."
- Questioning the motives of those on the other side. "We are the only ones addressing the real issues with the right motives."
- Failing to appreciate their need for each other. "We are better off without you."



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Socialism ? Marxism. (communism) **SOCIALISM**

A political system that controls economic output and distribution throughout the population.

(Marxist communism, North Korea)

(complementary) **socialism**

A cooperative management of certain resources to meet common needs.

(Refining capitalism, America)

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Socialism

(cooperative management of resources to meet common needs)

Voluntary
Early ch.

Legislated

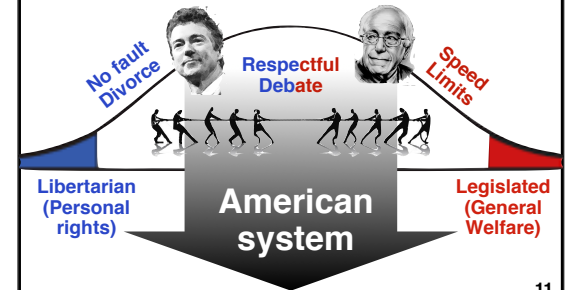
Complementing
Freedom

Communism
Locked down
N.Korea

America

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Cooperative control is very American.
Tension is built into the system.



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Examples of socialistic principles in American capitalism

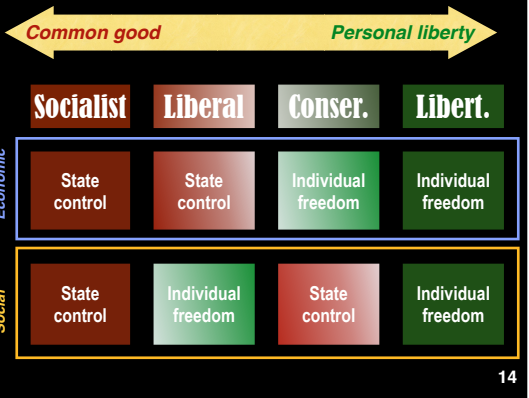
- **Insurance** - where the costs and benefits are shared by a large pool of participants.
- **Regulations of commerce** - where those in power are not allowed to exploit those without it.
- **Public service** - Postal service, Education, Law enforcement, Standard measures & procedures, National Parks, etc.
- **Community covenants** - where rules are made to protect and promote the general well-being of a neighborhood.

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Some of the many cooperative taxpayer funded programs in America.

Military defense, Highways / roads, Public libraries, **Police**, **Fire dept.**, **Postal service**, Student grants, Bridges, Garbage collection, Public landfills, **War**, Farm subsidies, **CIA**, **FBI**, Congressional health care, Vaccine (Polio, Bird flu, Swine flu,), **EPA**, **Social security**, Museums, **Public education**, Prison system, Business subsidies, VA health care, **National parks / beaches**, Elected gov. officials, Food stamps, Sewer systems, **Medicare**, Court system, G.I. bill, Hoover dam, State / city zoos, **IRS**, Free lunch programs, Pentagon, **Medicaid**, FDA, Unemployment insurance, **Public transportation**, PBS, **CDC**, Welfare, FEMA, Public defenders, S-CHIP, Amtrak, NPR, Dept. of Homeland Security, OSHA, USDA, Secret Service, Justice dept., **National Weather Service**, etc.

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“Under capitalism,
man exploits man.
Under communism,
it’s just the opposite.”



John Kenneth Galbraith

Romans 3:23
“for all have sinned
and fall short of the
glory of God.”

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Common myths:

- ✓ Capitalism is built on a commitment to self interest that is always toxic to the general welfare - especially the poor and weak. (Only when and if it is driven by selfish people and without reasonable government controls).
- ✓ Capitalistic systems ALWAYS work better than socialistic systems (except where socialistic systems are successful - Singapore, Scandinavia, Canada, Germany, Modern China?, etc).
- ✓ You should not MIX socialistic and capitalistic elements. (Almost all nations, like the USA, and China are a mixture of both for good reasons).

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American capitalism’s challenge to the Christian:

- ✓ **Community** - How do we build and maintain a large tranquil community that is diverse?
- ✓ **Exploitation** - How do we keep the rich and powerful from manipulating the system?
- ✓ **Economic justice** - How do we maintain a sense of just distribution of the benefits of a free enterprise community?
- ✓ **Values** - How do we promote the higher values of the Christian faith when the system is driven by self serving (greed), competition, materialism, and individualism?
- ✓ **Anxiety, stress, & depression** - epidemic.

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Without a Biblical ethical spirit:

Capitalism becomes the exploitation of the poor & weak by the rich & powerful.

Democracy becomes a marginalization of the minority by the majority and an endless litigation of rights.

Pluralism dignifies every kind of divergence as an individual right.

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Christian capitalism

Competition that is fair

It is motivated by the pursuit of efficiency, and effectiveness as stewards more than personal comfort and power as consumers.

Cooperation that is proactive

It is sensitive to the well-being of the community as well as the family and the individual.

Compassion that is sacrificial

It is free to be generous and sensitive in addressing the true needs of others, especially those without power or dignity.

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America's Original Sin

Not Slavery, or materialism, But **INDEPENDANCE**



ME
over WE and THEE

21



Freedom abused invites freedom withdrawn.

Romans 6:5

"Shall we sin because we are not under law but under grace? May it never be!"



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Socialism restricts personal liberties when they are abused or inefficient.

- ✓ **Free expression** - Americans can 1) voice their true beliefs and feelings and 2) curse both government and God.
- ✓ **Free enterprise** - Americans can 1) create / produce and 2) manipulate / oppress.
- ✓ **Personal autonomy** - Americans are 1) free from enslavement to man or government and 2) from God.
- ✓ **Competition** - Americans are 1) able to rise to the limits of their ability and 2) have contempt for those who are not as competitive.

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Christian socialism

Restrain the heartless

It protects the disadvantaged and unfortunate from the abuse of the selfish, and insensitive.

Refines productivity

It enables the whole to be greater than the sum of the parts in many key areas.

Renew community

It nurtures social justice, team spirit, and corporate identity.

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"The poor have sometimes objected to being governed badly; the rich have always objected to being governed at all."



G.K. Chesterton

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*Why Christians should be concerned
about communistic socialism.*

- ✓ It can **discourage** initiative & bureaucratic efficiency.
- ✓ It can **minimize** individual worth and significance.
- ✓ It can be **inefficient** in creating, maintaining, or ending.
- ✓ It too often rewards and promotes the **inept & foolish**.

*Why Christians are drawn to
complementary socialism.*

- ✓ It **rewards noble things** - community, cooperation, social tolerance and respect.
- ✓ It **is sensitive to the marginalized** - poor, powerless, inept, victimized, etc.
- ✓ It **is just** - distributing material wealth more equitably than other systems.
- ✓ It **is efficient** - in coordinating resources & needs.

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Competition
without cooperation,
and compassion,
in community
is crippling
to a country.

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The objective of this lesson

- Political systems make a difference but are not the main issue in Kingdom Ethics.
- In culture wars be careful that you do not die on the wrong hills (for the wrong issues).
- The USA has wisely combined capitalist and socialist principles in its commitment to liberty and justice for all.
- **The Word and Way of the Cross lead to holy Alien Peacemakers.**

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