

Independence Day 2010 – Special Message

Christianity, Economics and the Role of Government

Acts 2:42-47; 4:32-35; 5:4 and Other Scriptures

Introduction: The prevailing populist view on economics is that interventionist government control is *good* and free markets are *bad* – and...*that this is a principle taught in the Bible*. This morning we look at what the Bible actually teaches about the role of government in the economic life of a nation and what it means for us as disciples.

1. 1ST QUESTION – Does the Bible teach a form of communism or socialism? *Acts 2:42-47; 4:32-35; 5:[1-]4*

- A. First, we need to probe the precise definition and development of the doctrines of communism.
 - 1. Marx was a German economist, doing most of his work in London, supported by Engels.
 - 2. Communism is a form of utopianism, it borrows from Christianity: humans are good.
 - 3. Communism essentially says that workers will reject capitalism. Private property is bad.
 - 4. Communism did not do what Marx predicted *anywhere*; it resulted in foolishness, death.
 - 5. Today, anti-capitalism is assumed in culture: e.g. “unjust distribution of wealth.”
- B. Second, we need to probe the precise meaning of Acts 2:42-47 and Acts 4:32-35.
 - 1. A cursory reading suggests Christianity *might* teach a form of communism.
 - 2. Response 1: This was a temporary situation as suggested by latter biblical writings.
 - 3. Response 2: This sharing is done freely. There is no reference to the state.
 - 4. Response 3: Everyone maintains control over his or her private property.
- C. Third, we need to understand the biblical view of property rights. It is the *stewardship* view.
 - 1. Old Testament View: (Ps. 24:1; Ex. 20:15, 17; 22:1-15; 1 Chron. 29:15)
 - 2. New Testament View: (Acts 5:4)
 - 3. Position Stated: Humans are stewards of God’s property and accountable to him.

2. 2ND QUESTION – If not communism...what does the Bible teach about economics? *Matt. 25:14-30; (Luke 19:1-44) 1 Cor. 16:1-2*

- A. The Bible teaches a set of pre-conditions that is most favorable to free-market capitalism.
 - 1. The definition of capitalism.
 - 2. The assumptions of capitalism: free markets, secure property and motivated labor.
 - 3. The theological roots of capitalism: early medieval period.
 - 4. The sociological roots of capitalism: monasteries, Italian city-state, Prot. Reformation.
 - 5. The presumed obligation of capitalism: work in secular institutions & with the poor.
- B. The passages that model a free market approach are scattered throughout the Bible.
 - 1. Matthew 25:14-30; Luke 19:11-44 teaches the concept of unequal wealth creation.
 - 2. 1 Corinthians 16:2 teaches that different people will prosper differently.
 - 3. Proverbs 24:27 teaches that wealth is gained through hard work.
- C. The Bible teaches an important principle about how governments should interact with their economies. We need to remember the principle of human fallenness.
 - 1. Communism teaches a utopianism and positive rights.
 - 2. Christianity teaches about human sinfulness and negative rights.
 - 3. Government’s role: help free people pursue God-given potential. “Life, liberty and pursuit.”
- D. Communism and Free market capitalism flow from different worldviews: atheism vs. Christianity.

3. 3RD QUESTION – How then should we live?

- A. We should be smart as we consider public policy debates. Reject class warfare talk.
- B. We should find ways to lift the poor.
- C. We should pray about our future as a country.

Works Cited

Richards, Jay W. *Money Greed and God: Why Capitalism is the Solution and Not the Problem*. New York, NY: HarperOne, 2009.

Schweikart, Larry. *7 Events that Made America America: And Proved that the Founding Fathers were Right All Along*. New York, NY: Sentinel [The Penguin Group], 2010.

Sowell, Thomas. *Basic Economics 3rd Ed: A Common Sense Guide to the Economy*. New York, NY: Basic Books, 2007.

Stark, Rodney. *The Victory of Reason: How Christianity Led to Freedom Capitalism and Western Success*. New York, NY: Random House, 2005.