

God and the Poor

Is God Really a Liberal?

The other day, when listening to Michael Medved,¹ a guy came on the radio and began ranting about the 300 verses² in the Bible where God condemns the rich. It was clear from listening to this guy that he had not personally done any of this research, nor did he know anything about the Bible, but that he was getting this from some website.

After a quick search on the internet, I located the following article:

<http://www.zompist.com/meetthepoor.html>

What is boxed in yellow is the unadulterated text from this webpage (although, in at least 2 cases, I change the order of some verses). After each section, I make some comments, which are not boxed in yellow.

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¹ I particularly enjoy listening to Michael Medved because he spends a significant amount of time dealing with religious topics and he favors callers who are not conservative.

² Altogether, I counted 51 passages which this person quotes (at least one of these passages was repeated) and approximately 105 verses.

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The Bible on the Poor or, Why God is a liberal

The Bible contains more than 300 verses on the poor, social justice, and God's deep concern for both. This page contains a wide sample of them, and some reflections. It's aimed at anyone who takes the Bible seriously.

As you read these passages, you will very likely feel a good deal of resistance (possibly at first manifesting itself as indifference). American churches have departed strongly from Biblical values in these areas, and even created a rationalization-- "prosperity theology"-- for rejecting them. It takes time and reflection to get past this misteaching.

But try to get past the resistance. Spiritual growth doesn't come from what goes down easily, or what we like to hear and read. It comes from what's different, and even difficult.

This page can easily be used as the basis for a Bible study. I tried writing it like one, but ultimately decided that web pages just don't work that way. It makes a smashing good one, though; if you want to try, replace the commentary with questions. The best questions to ask are those without a fixed answer (e.g. "Why does Jesus say this?" or "What did you learn from these verses?").

--M.R.

This is an approach which I always find fascinating, and so many people do it—allege or even attempt to prove that Jesus agrees with their viewpoint. Because most people who write this stuff do not realize that Jesus is God, they do not realize that they are attempting to form God in their own image.

This sounds like a person who is serious about the Bible, getting the interpretation of the Bible right, the condition of today's churches and spiritual growth. However, at his own website, there are no other "religious" papers; there are no links to "good" churches, there are no recommendations of organizations which work with the poor that we ought to give to. Apart from 2 or 3 other articles, this particular essay seems to exist in somewhat of a vacuum on this webpage.

More importantly, there is nothing at this website about Jesus. The central theme of the Bible is Jesus Christ. He creates and restores the world in Gen. 1, His death on the cross is illustrated in Gen. 3, and in nearly every chapter of the Bible, there are allusions to Jesus Christ and His Work. On this website, where this author seems to be so concerned that American churches have departed from Biblical values, there is not a word about Jesus Christ. There is one other article on religion called *Have Evangelicals sold their souls to the devil?* Although I have not yet read the article, would it be presumptuous of me to assume that he is going to trash evangelicals in that article?

So, right away, one ought to understand that the authors of this piece have no real understanding of the Bible or Jesus Christ, except to use them politically; and they have no real interest in the poor, except to use them politically. The idea that they are offering up this page to be used “as the basis for a Bible study” is quite funny to hear from people who have a webpage which is 99% secular, offering 100% secular solutions.

What is being done here is typical liberal manipulation.

Examples of Liberal and Progressive Manipulation	
The bill of goods that we are sold	What is actually the case
Abortions must be made legal because of incest and rape.	Abortions performed due to rape and incest make up somewhere between 1–3% of all abortions.
There are people who are in great pain and suffering, and there needs to be legal medical marijuana in order to give them some pain-free days.	Again, perhaps 1–3% of those who use “medical marijuana” in California actually <i>need</i> it for pain management.
Bullying is bad and mean, and we need to have a curriculum which teaches kids not to bully.	The idea is to introduce the concept of gay parents as a part of normal, mainstream society; and to introduce homosexual activity to children before they even know what sexual activity is. The actual percentage of children who are bullied for this reason is minuscule.
The government needs to help single mothers and their children.	Single motherhood has become institutionalized by government aid, which has affected Black women disproportionately. When you subsidize something (single motherhood), you get more of it.
Children are showing up to school hungry; we need to feed these children at school.	There are many areas where 50–100% of the kids are fed by the federal government. I am of the mind that, if parents do not feed their children, then they children need to be removed from their home.

Examples of Liberal and Progressive Manipulation

The bill of goods that we are sold	What is actually the case
Our criminal system is corrupt because we have a disproportionate number of Blacks incarcerated.	The problem is not skin color, the problem is single parenthood. Kids from single-parent homes are more likely to become criminals. Since we are subsidizing single motherhood, particularly in the Black community, then we are going to have more Black criminals.
Christians have strayed from the faith and need to return to having a greater concern for the poor.	The welfare state in the U.S. needs to be larger; we need to have more things defined as needs (food, shelter, healthcare, transportation); we need a socialist or communist state which provides all the basic necessities for its population, including jobs. Dependence upon God or upon family and friends needs to be shifted to the government.

Progressives are extremely guilty of this. The idea is, society is supposed to *progress*, but the end game is rarely revealed (President Obama, on only a few occasions, revealed the end game for some progressive ideals—the destruction of the coal industry, single-payer healthcare). Instead, progressives identify a problem (which may or may not be a serious problem), and the government is brought in to solve that problem, with vague goals being stated (the overarching goal de jour is *social justice*).

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Therefore, we would expect an essay all about the Bible and the poor to be dropped into the middle of a secular website where progressive ideals are a part of this person's philosophy. There is no interest here to make people better Bible students; there is no real interest in the Bible or in Jesus Christ; the authors simply want to manipulate Christians to believe as they do. My guess is, their ideas came to them via a secular route, and they stand on their own, apart from the Bible. However, such progressives want to sell us on the idea that the Bible *agrees with them*; *God agrees with them*.

This is simply a distortion of what the Bible teaches, as well as a distortion of the emphasis of Biblical theology. Men who do not believe often spend a significant amount of time trying to distort the truth of the Bible.

God's concern for the poor

In this section we are not yet concerned with what the believer should think or do for the poor, but with God's thoughts. Though we often forget poverty and oppression, it is clear from the Bible that they are always on God's mind.

Deut. 26:5-9. The Egyptians treated us harshly and afflicted us, and imposed hard labor on us. Then we cried to the LORD, the God of our fathers, and the LORD heard our voice and saw our affliction and our toil and our oppression; and the LORD brought us out of Egypt with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm and with great terror and with signs and wonders; and He has brought us to... this land flowing with milk and honey.

The exodus is all about God bringing the Jews to the promised land, which they had to take by force from the heathen who live in the land; afterwards, they worked their land and farms. Out of curiosity, does the person who wrote this support Israel's right to exist, to defend her borders, and to remove the heathen (so-called Palestinians) from the land? Since the authors are leftist, I would assume not. Most believers, recognizing that God gave this land to Israel 4000 years ago, have no problem with Jews living there or with them completely running the Palestinians out of there, if necessary for their own safety.

Luke 4:16-21. And He came to Nazareth, where He had been brought up; and as was His custom, He entered the synagogue on the Sabbath, and stood up to read... "The Spirit of the LORD is upon Me, because He appointed Me to preach the gospel to the poor. He has sent Me to proclaim release to the captives, and recovery of sight to the blind, to set free those who are downtrodden, to proclaim the favorable year of the LORD... Today this Scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing."

All that is in yellow, came directly from the website cited above. For much of this "study," you will see verses from the Bible simply thrown together, which have very little in common with one another. Here we jump from the promise of God to give the Israelites the Land of Promise to Jesus Christ identifying Himself as the Messiah, as the fulfillment of the passage in Isaiah from which He reads.

Jesus Christ proclaims the good news to the poor—is this good news that He just recently petitioned the Roman government to set up a public free food store that the poor can go to? Of course not! Is the good news that he is organizing a protest on behalf of social justice, and they are going to meet outside in the quad in 20 minutes? Absolutely not! The gospel is the good news that Jesus would die for their sins and provide them peace with God through His death.

Although the poor refers to the literal poor, more often than not; this is a condition in which we find ourselves as human beings. We are without the wherewithal to save ourselves. We do not have the resources that we could use to get to God. We are poor; we are destitute; and God uses this to illustrate our poverty before Him. *Slavery* is used much the same way in the Bible. God uses that which we know and understand in order to teach us divine truth. Throughout the gospels, Jesus taught parables. These are stories about things that we know in order to teach us spiritual truth, which these stories illustrate.

Only a true ideologue could take a passage like the one above, intentionally leave out portions of the verse, and then present it thematically as if it is all about the poor.

In the synagogues, various people would stand up and read from portions of the Bible (in that time, this would have been the Old Testament). Jesus stands up, and reads a passage from Isaiah, and stops right in the middle of that passage (there is a reason for that), and all the eyes of the synagogue are on Him. Some looked at Him because he stopped in the middle of a passage. Some looked at Him because they recognized truth spoken by God. And then, after a dramatic pause, Jesus tells them, **“Today, this Scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing.”** This is one of the most dramatic passages in all the Bible. Jesus has just told these people in the synagogue that He is the Messiah!

Here is the unedited passage (Luke 4:16–21): **And He came to Nazareth, where He had been brought up. And, as His custom was, He went in to the synagogue on the Sabbath day and stood up to read. And the book of the prophet Isaiah was handed to Him. And unrolling the book, He found the place where it was written, “The Spirit of the Lord is on Me; because of this He has anointed Me to proclaim the Gospel to the poor. He has sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to proclaim deliverance to the captives, and new sight to the blind, to set at liberty those having been crushed, to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord.” And rolling up the book, returning it to the attendant, He sat down. **And the eyes of all in the synagogue were fastened on Him.** Then He began to say to them, “Today this Scripture is fulfilled in your hearing.”** All of Israel knew Who the Messiah was; they understood the Old Testament to varying degrees, but they all understood that God would send them a Savior. Jesus Christ stood up before these people, read the passage from Isaiah about the Messiah, stopped in the middle of the passage (the rest of the passage deals with the 2nd advent of Jesus Christ), and He sat down. Everyone in the synagogue was looking at Him. Then He told them, “Today, this Scripture is fulfilled in your hearing.” In other words, this is the Messiah, Who moments ago, stood in front of them and read from the Holy Scriptures about Himself! **When the fullness of the time came, God sent forth His Son, coming into being out of a woman, having come under Law, that He might redeem those under Law** (Gal. 4:4–5a).

Psalm 140:12. **I know that the LORD will maintain the cause of the afflicted, and justice for the poor.**

Isaiah 25:4. **For You have been a defense for the helpless, a defense for the needy in his distress.**

Psalm 10:14. The unfortunate commits himself to You; You have been the helper of the orphan... O LORD, You have heard the desire of the humble; You will strengthen their heart, You will incline Your ear to vindicate the orphan and the oppressed.

God is concerned with fairness and justice for the poor. However, just be leftist groups use the term *social justice*, that is not the sort of justice which is taught in the Bible. God's concern for the poor is His concern for all mankind; however, as stated earlier, the poor better represent man before God. They do not have the ability to reach Him, as is true of all mankind.

Isaiah 41:17. The afflicted and needy are seeking water, but there is none, and their tongue is parched with thirst. I, the LORD, will answer them Myself, as the God of Israel I will not forsake them.

This chapter is all about the enemies of Jehovah Elohim, and for them to come before Him. Much of the language in this chapter is not literal, but representative or similar to those found in the parables of Jesus. Behold! I have made you a new sharp threshing instrument, a master of teeth; you shall thresh mountains and beat them small, and shall make hills like the chaff (Isa. 41:15). God was not speaking of literally turning people into threshing machines or that they would harvest mountains or anything of the sort. The verse in question reads: The afflicted and needy are seeking water, but there is none, and their tongue is parched with thirst. I, the LORD, will answer them Myself, as the God of Israel I will not forsake them. (Isa. 41:17). The afflicted and needy are those who are searching for God and for the truth of His Word. What is promised to these is God taking them into the Millennium: I will open rivers in bare places, and fountains in the midst of valleys; I will make the desert for a pool of water, and the dry land springs of water. I will plant cedar in the wilderness, acacia, and myrtle, and the oil tree; I will set fir, pine and boxwood together in the desert; so that they may see, and know, and set up, and understand together, that the hand of Jehovah has done this; and the Holy One of Israel has created it." (Isa. 41:18–20). There is nothing in the context of this verse which deals with "serving the poor."

Luke 6:20-21. Blessed are you who are poor, for yours in the kingdom of God. Blessed are you who hunger now, for you shall be satisfied. Blessed are you who weep now, for you shall laugh.

There is no promise here to the poor that Jesus is bringing to them a great welfare state. For the poor and destitute (which encompasses all unbelievers), Jesus offers them the kingdom of God; all they have to do is to believe in Him (John 3:16, 18, 36). If Jesus was some great social reformer, then any honest revolutionary must admit that He did a lousy job, as He changed absolutely nothing politically in that time period. Rome did not become a better place because Jesus was some sort of political activist. Furthermore, none of his disciples who carried on His message changed the world politically. They did not organize marches for social justice or demand that the government spend more money on the poor, or that the government tax the rich more. So, by the standards of the authors who wrote this paper, Jesus and His followers failed miserably, if they are to be measured by the

authors' standards. In fact, they did absolutely nothing for the poor, insofar as is recorded in Scripture—at least, nothing similar to what the authors would like to see done.

Why don't the authors find other social reformers in history and use them, rather than take from the Bible? If Jesus and the disciples did nothing for the poor, then why hold them out as great examples? Why use their words? The answer is simple. The intent of these authors is to distort the words of the Bible and manipulate Christians of today to pursue political social justice (and they have been very successful in this endeavor; hundreds, if not thousands of churches, over the past 40 years, have been turned from teaching the Bible³ to teaching political social justice).

James 2:5. Did not God choose the poor of this world to be rich in faith and heirs of the kingdom which He promised to those who love Him?

Any person can believe in Jesus Christ. However, those who are destitute often are more likely to turn to Him. Those who are rich often spend so much time involved with their riches that they do not consider their own spiritual needs. If we were to logically follow out the meaning that the writer hopes us to take from this verse, then we would want to increase the number of poor people on this earth, so that more people would be rich in faith.

Commentary: I think it's fair to say that American attitudes toward the poor-- and perhaps not just in America-- are mostly disdain and fear. They're dangerous and different. Sometimes there's a suspicion that their condition is their own fault, that they're simply lazy or inferior. Other Americans are more kind-hearted, but prefer not to look at the poor too closely; it's depressing, and they're surely not fun people to be with.

These attitudes are a world away from God's attitudes, as described in these verses. Neediness arouses compassion in God-- and action.

We may think: "Of course God loves the poor; he loves everybody." But it's not so simple as that; God's character is presented as a model for our own. If God values the poor, we have to think about what that means for us.

God is certainly concerned about the poor. There is no doubt about that. However, let's understand that the bulk of the Old Testament is about the nation Israel, which is the nation through which God worked. God set out specifics for how the nation Israel ought to be run, which clearly included fair treatment for the poor, the widow and the helpless. This fair treatment was extended toward slaves and toward foreigners living in Israel.

The person who put this together did not bother to include the verses which tell what God actually told Israel to do, with respect to the poor.

³ To be accurate, many of the churches which have gone in for Liberation Theology, never taught sound Bible doctrine, and this is why it is so easy to nudge them toward Liberation Theology.

The purpose of liberals is to either establish a welfare state where a list of “needs” are defined (housing, education, food, healthcare) and then provided for by taxpayers who work; or to simply establish a socialist or communist state. That is the end game, none of which is found in the Bible. Jesus did not command His disciples to go out into the world and to demonstrate in order to make the governments better. Paul, in his many epistles, did not encourage his readers to become politically active. In the very country which persecuted Paul, Paul clearly called for believers to obey the authorities over them (Rom. 13:1–7).

We know that such propagandists are not trying to establish a government similar to that defined by God in the Old Testament, because everything else found in the Old Testament about Israel as a nation is ignored. They are simply looking to sell the welfare state, socialism and/or communism, and they will do that using any means possible. They use the Bible to capture the minds of the unlearned. They use a few verses in order to bring those who believe in the Bible over to their side.

What we do not find as a companion piece on this website dealing with the sexual immorality described in the Old Testament, and how God handled it. These same people do not quote all of the verses on sexual immorality and what the Bible says about it, and then proclaim, *notice that our attitudes about sexual immorality are a world away from God's attitudes, as described in these verses. Sin arouses judgment from God-- and action!* Of course not. They take out of the Bible what they can use to manipulate believers. The rest is unimportant to those in the social justice movement.

Back to the poor and what programs God actually instituted for the poor. Farmers were told to leave portions of their field unharvested; like the corners of a field. Then the poor could come in and harvest. So, you will note, the poor actually had to work in order to eat. A portion of the Book of Ruth tells about Ruth doing this, as a poor woman from Moab. There was no sitting at home waiting for a welfare check to come in. If you wanted to eat, you go out and worked for it. That meant that these same poor had to make provisions for the rest of the year. They had to deal with storage and preservation of food, which is more work. Even in the New Testament, working in order to eat is clearly taught: **If anyone does not desire to work, neither let him eat** (1Thess. 3:10b).

After quoting a few verses, then the author writes: *I think it's fair to say that American attitudes toward the poor-- and perhaps not just in America-- are mostly disdain and fear. They're dangerous and different. Sometimes there's a suspicion that their condition is their own fault, that they're simply lazy or inferior. Other Americans are more kind-hearted, but prefer not to look at the poor too closely; it's depressing, and they're surely not fun people to be with.* Have you ever read such silly drivel in all of your life? Some people are poor certainly because of not valuing hard work. Some have faced difficulties. But to say that many Americans look at the poor as *dangerous and different*, and not fun to be with, it is hard for me to even comment on, the accusations are so ridiculous.

God's commands concerning the poor

This section collects some specific commands from Old and New Testaments on serving the poor.

Deut. 15:7. If there is a poor man among you, one of your brothers, in any of the towns of the land which the LORD your God is giving you, you shall not harden your heart, nor close your hand to your poor brother; but you shall freely open your hand to him, and generously lend him sufficient for his need in whatever he lacks.

Christians believe in helping the poor. If you look at the soup kitchens and missions which have been founded, most of them have been established by believers in Jesus Christ. Many churches have founded such organizations or support such organizations.

Deut. 26:12. When you have finished paying the complete tithe of your increase in the third year, the year of tithing, then you shall give it to the Levite, to the stranger, to the orphan and the widow, that they may eat in your towns, and be satisfied.

3 things ought to be noted here: the amount which is collected, how often it is collected, and who it is collected for. This is the closest thing that we have to institutionalized welfare in the Bible. 10% was collected every 3rd year, so that is 3 $\frac{1}{3}$ % per year. This would be given to, *the orphan and the widow*, who represent the poor and the helpless. However, this is also collected for foreigners who are apparently having trouble in the land of Israel. Finally, do not overlook the first-named recipient on this list: the Levite. This is the spiritual class of the Israelites. These men have been set apart by God to serve Israel's spiritual needs. So, a portion of this 3 $\frac{1}{3}$ % per year is given to pastors and teachers of the Word of God. So, let me ask, do you think the authors of this piece believe that the government ought to be partially supporting our churches? After all, if they believe in some form of institutionalized welfare, as we find here; then they must believe that a portion of this ought to go toward our churches. So, if the writers of this piece want to tax me 3 $\frac{1}{3}$ % per year and give a third of that to the churches, a third of that to the indigent foreigners and a third of that to the widows and orphans, I am fine with that. By the way, note that this is for *widows*, not for *single mothers*. The latter has children and no husband by choice.

Lev. 19:19ff. Now when you reap the harvest of your land, you shall not reap to the very corners of your field, neither shall you gather the gleanings of your harvest. Nor shall you glean your vineyard, nor shall you gather the fallen fruit of your vineyard; you shall leave them for the needy and for the stranger. I am the LORD your God.

This is a commandment given to the farmers of Israel, which was much of Israel. They were to leave small portions of their fields unharvested so that the poor could come and work that portion of the field for themselves. Note that there is work involved. These farmers were not told to harvest this food and then set up a free fruit stand for the poor; the poor had to go into the field and work, as we see in the book of Ruth.

Prov. 31:8ff. [Commandment to kings.] Open your mouth for the dumb, for the rights of all the unfortunate. Open your mouth, judge righteously, and defend the rights of the afflicted and needy.

Jer. 22:3. Do justice and righteousness, and deliver the one who has been robbed from the power of his oppressor. Also do not mistreat or do violence to the stranger, the orphan, or the widow; and do not shed innocent blood in this place.

In that day, kings (and sometimes their sons) functioned as judges, and the writer of this passage is telling the king to *justly judge the poor and the needy* (which is a precise translation of this portion of v. 8). I am certain that every person reading this believes that the courts, ideally speaking, ought to treat everyone equally by the law. A rich influential person should be given no more justice in the courts than a person who is indigent (or vice versa—we ought not to think that a poor person deserves a judgment of money simply because they are poor and their opponents are rich).

Isa. 58:6ff. Is this not the fast which I choose, to loosen the bonds of wickedness, to undo the bands of the yoke, and to let the oppressed go free, and break every yoke? Is it not to divide your bread with the hungry, and bring the homeless poor into the house; when you see the naked, to cover him, and not to hide yourself from your own flesh?

I suspect that someone else gathered these verses, and the writers here offered their own comments. In any case, the gist of this chapter was phony religious worship, when there should have been acts of righteousness, which included sharing with those who had not. There is no institutionalized socialism here; it is simply personal acts of kindness toward those who are in need.

Luke 12:33. "Sell your possessions and give to charity; make yourselves purses which do not wear out, an unfailing treasure in heaven, where no thief comes near, nor moth destroys."

Mt. 5:42. "Give to him who asks of you, and do not turn away from him who wants to borrow from you."

In both of these passages, the context is, Jesus is speaking to His disciples, and they would be sent out as His ambassadors, and these were the things they were to do in order to prepare. Missionaries do much the same thing when they go out. This was not a general command for all believers. The authors who collected these verses did not sell all that they owned to give to the poor. According to the website where this paper is posted, one of the authors have a marvelous vacation in Brazil.

Luke 3:11. And [John the Baptist] would answer and say to them, "Let the man with two tunics share with him who has none, and let him who has food do likewise."

If you read the entire passage, John the Baptizer is telling those in the crowd to be honest and just and charitable in their lives. Again, you cannot read this, and then suddenly make a leap to the idea that the government now owns everything and ought to distribute property as it sees fit.

Commentary: The message here is really very simple: help the needy. It's not hard to understand; it's just hard to do.

And the message is continuous. It's in the Torah; it's in the Prophets and Psalms; it's in the Gospels; it's in the Epistles. How many churches emphasize serving the poor as much as the Bible itself does? Would the world look the way it does if all believers followed these commands?

Another thing to note about these verses is the lack of caveats-- the lack of excuses. None of them add "...once a year" or "...when you feel you can" or "...if they're moral" or "...unless they're black" or "...if they speak English". We have plenty of reasons (I'm sure you can think of a dozen) why we can't go out and feed the hungry, why we have to turn away the needy borrower-- and God help us, how many of us have sold so much as a lawnmower in order to have money to give away? But all those reasons belong to our sinful human nature, not to God. God just wants those needy people helped.

If you wanted to be a Biblical one-issue voter, you'd do well to make that one issue serving the poor.

First off, there is no verse in this list which speaks of *servicing the poor*, as if this is some exalted class of people that we need to do some sort of obeisance to. Secondly, the last thing we ought to do as voters is to help form a permanent class of dependent poor (which the government of the United States has done). Over and over again, the Bible speaks of *the orphan and the widow*; and provision needs to be made for these. This is not the same thing as providing free school lunches (and other meals) for 10–100% of the school children in any given city.

Secondly, this author seems to be accusing Christians of being stingy with their charity if people are Black or immoral or if they do not speak English. This is obviously an ideologue who has never helped out in a soup kitchen or at a mission. My recommendation is for this person, because he has so much concern for the poor, involve himself with some of the church-supported outreaches in his own community, so that he can see with his own eyes that people are not turned away because they are immoral, Black or speak with an accent. Such accusations are incredibly foolish, self-righteous and self-serving.

Blessings on those who serve the poor

Serving poor may be The Right Thing To Do; but the Bible also associates it with material and spiritual reward. Here we'll look at the benefits promised to those who serve the poor; in the next section we'll examine the consequences of not doing so.

Prov. 22:9 He who is generous will be blessed, for he gives some of his food to the poor.

Jer. 22:16 "Did not your father eat and drink, and do justice and righteousness? Then it was well with him. He pled the cause of the afflicted and needy; then it was well. Is that not what it means to know Me?" declares the LORD.

Deut. 15:10. You shall give generously to [your poor brother], and your heart shall not be grieved when you give to him, because for this thing the LORD your God will bless you in all your work and in all your undertakings.

Prov. 19:17. He who is gracious to a poor man lends to the LORD, and He will repay him for his good deed.

Jer. 7:5-7. "For, if you truly amend your ways and your deeds, if you truly practice justice between a man and his neighbor, if you do not oppress the alien, the orphan, and the widow, and do not shed innocent blood in this place, nor walk after other gods to your own ruin, then I will let you dwell in this place, in the land that I gave to your fathers forever and ever."

Isaiah 58:10. "And if you give yourself to the hungry, and satisfy the desire of the afflicted, then your light will rise in darkness, and your gloom will become like midday. And the LORD will continually guide you, and satisfy your desire in scorched places, and give strength to your bones; and you will be like a watered garden, and like a spring of water whose waters do not fail."

Luke 14:12-14. "When you give a luncheon or a dinner, do not invite your friends or your brothers or your relatives or rich neighbors, lest they also invite you in return, and repayment come to you. But when you give a reception, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, the blind, and you will be blessed, since they do not have the means to repay you; for you will be repaid at the resurrection of the righteous."

There are certainly blessings for those who perform acts of divine good, which can include *personal giving* to those in need. One of the advantages of individuals and churches here is, people do not tend to permanently collect a check, as does institutionalize welfare. This might help a family get through a difficult month or even a difficult year; but churches and individuals do not tend to take on the responsibility of supporting those who simply choose not to work, as our government does.

If we were to look through the groups of poor, those who are actually unable to provide for themselves; those who have absolutely no family, we are probably looking at maybe 1% of those who receive welfare. I am personally in a unique position where I work with people who are on disability social security, or who receive help from the government through section 8 housing or food stamps, and I have not yet come across a single person who is truly unable to work or to provide for himself (or herself). Over the past 30 years,

I have encountered 2 people who are so crazy and out of control, that both should have been institutionalized (and one of them was *not* on welfare). However, for the rest of them, welfare was a nice perk; it meant that they did not have to work quite as hard to get what they wanted.

Please don't misunderstand me at this point. This is the world in which we live. Most of these people were brought up to believe that government needed to help them out. Our government has gone along with this notion. I have come across very few people, in my life, who would starve in the streets if they did not receive welfare. And I have known hundreds of people whose lives are partially subsidized by government.

This is why private assistance is far better than an institutionalized government assistance. The former tends to be temporary and to help a person or family to get a leg up; the latter tends to make huge numbers of people dependent upon a government check for the bulk of their lives. And these people who depend upon government assistance when they don't need to—and these are not terrible people (although some most certainly are)—they are simply a part of this society which teaches certain groups of people that government is the answer for all of their needs.

Luke 12:44. "Sell your possessions and give alms; make yourselves purses which do not wear out, an unfailing treasure in heaven, where no thief comes near, nor moth destroys. For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also."

Mt. 19:20ff. The young man said to Him, "All these commands I have kept; what am I still lacking?" Jesus said to him, "If you wish to be complete, go and sell your possessions and give to the poor, and you shall have treasure in heaven; and come, follow Me."

We already covered the first verse above, but the second verse is from a very fascinating passage. Jesus was speaking to a man who desired to be saved by keeping the Law (no man can be saved by keeping the Law—Gal. 2:16); so Jesus is simply pointing out where this man failed at keeping the Law of Moses. The key to this passage is not the specific shortcomings of this rich young ruler, but that we all have shortcomings; we have all sinned and we all fall short of the glory of God (Rom. 3:23). If you are a liberal, and you are reading this, and you have not believed in Jesus Christ, then you are trying to stand on your own works before God. You are just like this rich young ruler. All of those who stand upon their own works will be cast into the Lake of Fire (John 3:18 Rev. 20:11–15). Jesus' message to you is the same as His message to the rich young ruler—your own personal righteousness is not enough; you must stand by faith on the finished work of Jesus Christ. [God our Savior] saved us, not because of works done by us in righteousness, but according to His Own mercy, by the washing of regeneration [= the cleansing of the new birth] and renewal of the Holy Spirit, whom He poured out on us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior, so that being justified by His grace we might become heirs according to the confidence of eternal life (Titus 3:5–7).

This particular passage, where Jesus tells this man to sell all of his possessions, give them to the poor, and follow Jesus, will be discussed in full later on. However, let me make this

one observation: I can guarantee you that these 3 individuals who wrote this essay, have not sold all of their worldly possessions, given this to the poor and then have gone on to follow Jesus. They will accuse Christians in this piece of all kinds of evil (not having any compassion for the poor; particularly the immoral, Black and foreign poor); and they will demand that Christians ought to give until it hurts; but they do not follow this advice themselves.

Commentary: Americans like money; the American dream is about being rich. No wonder we're susceptible to religious quacks who promise riches to those who believe in God.

The United States is filled with religious quacks; and the *prosperity gospel* has been with us for a long time. Now, God does promise us blessings in this life, which, for some, includes riches. Just as these verses about the poor are in the Bible, so are there verses about blessings which we receive from God (Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and Joseph were not paupers by any means; nor was Solomon or David). However, it ought to be made clear that, just as God does not promise every believer that He will make them rich; God does not promise unbelievers that He will bless them for giving to the poor. Nor does God promise anyone great blessings because they help to bring socialism into a country's government (ask those who live in North Korea about their lives, as compared to their counterparts in South Korea—oh, sorry, you cannot easily ask a person in North Korea anything).

Speaking of North and South Korea; the former is founded on communist principles (which the writers of this essay believe, at least, to some degree) and South Korea is founded upon freedom and free enterprise. If I wanted to begin corresponding with a person in South Korea, I could do that easily. If I wanted to do the same with a person in North Korea, it would be nearly impossible (and it might endanger their lives). If I wanted to fly to South Korea, it would be the easiest thing in the world (apart from the cost, of course). However, if I wanted to go to North Korea, it would not be easy, and I might be captured there and used as a human bargaining chip.

If you ever wonder, would we be better off under a socialist government or under a capitalist government, see Paul Noll's excellent site where he compares the 2 Korea's: <http://www.paulnoll.com/Korea/History/index.html>

We do find promises of reward in the Bible-- to those who serve the poor. God's making a very simple proposal here: "You help the poor, and I'll repay it."

God does expect us to share our wealth, to some extent; but this is not the central message of the Bible. The Bible also speaks of sexual immorality and defines the boundaries of a sexual relationship. The writers of this essay will never gather up all of these verses and call for Americans to become more moral. Sexual morality, like helping the poor, is not the central message of Scripture. Jesus Christ is the central theme of the Bible, and His efficacious death on our behalf. We find this in Gen. 3 22 Psalm 22 Isa. 53, passages which are written hundreds and thousands of years before our Lord walked this earth as Jesus.

The people who have spent time going to the Bible and gathering together verses like this have no intention of turning unbelievers toward Jesus Christ, nor are they interested in guiding believers to be more charitable in their lives. They are looking to turn the government into a welfare state government; or to turn us toward socialism and/or communism. This has occurred numerous times in both South America and Latin America, where Liberation Theology crept into the Catholic church, and where these verses are presented as the central Biblical theme. See Liberation Theology ([HTML](#)) ([PDF](#)).

People who tout this theology have little or no interest in the Bible, except to turn believers away from a legitimate establishment government toward a far left oppressive government. In Red China, communists got the support of Christian missionaries by showing that they too were against immoral behavior. Once their communists objectives were achieved, missionary activity was persecuted next.

Thomas Sowell is one of the greatest writers of our day, who clearly presents reasonable arguments which favor capitalism and freedom (which go together).

Thomas Sowell on “Useful Idiots”

The term "useful idiots" has been attributed to Lenin, as a description of those mindless people in the Western democracies who would always find ways to excuse whatever the Soviet Union did. Columnist Mona Charen's new book [Useful Idiots](#) shows that such people are still with us.

Long after the Soviet Union's horrors had become too widely known around the world for their sympathizers in the West to be able to get away with whitewashing the USSR, new Communist dictatorships arose to become the new objects of the affections of the Western intelligentsia and of like-minded people in the media and in politics.

As Mona Charen's book [read book review](#) makes painfully clear, this usually happened in a pattern that was repeated again and again, with the same useful idiots saying the same kinds of things again and again. She spells this out and names names, quoting Peter Jennings, Jesse Jackson, Anthony Lewis, Ted Kennedy, Ted Turner and a long list of others.

The founding of the Castro dictatorship in Cuba set the pattern that was followed later in Nicaragua, El Salvador, and Grenada. By initially concealing the fact that he was a Communist, and having some non-Communists around him as window dressing, Fidel Castro was able to play the role of a popular liberator, out to end oppression, hold free elections, and do all sorts of good things for "the people."

The useful idiots in the United States and other Western democracies ate it up. Many still do, to this very moment.

Once in power, Castro tolerated no opposition, held no free elections, and established a police state that made the previous dictators look like amateurs. Those who spoke out

Thomas Sowell on “Useful Idiots”

against what was happening were jailed or executed. So were those who tried to flee the country.

Now that the mask of liberator was no longer necessary, Castro revealed that he was -- and always had been -- a Communist, despite useful idiots who claimed that it was American hostility which drove him into the arms of the Soviet Union.

Not only was Castro part of the Soviet bloc from day one, he made Cuba the first Soviet military base in the Western Hemisphere and supplied Cuban troops to go help other Communists to gain and hold power in Africa.

Taken from: http://townhall.com/columnists/ThomasSowell/2003/05/20/useful_idiots accessed December 4, 2010.

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Those who wrote this original article on the poor are not interested in you personally; they are not interested that you know Who Jesus Christ is; they probably do not know themselves Who He is. They are interested in establishing a political system, and if this involves running circles around those who are believers but do not know the Bible, that is fine with them. But never expect such writers to clearly present their end game; do not expect them to clearly lay out exactly what they want our society to be. Their idea is to move us, bit by bit, little by little, toward socialism (which is why they call themselves progressives); and if they must use the Bible in order to do this, then that is fine with them. They know the Bible is important and influential, and that is why communist governments often outlaw the Bible once they are established.

Full disclosure: there's a little bait-and-switch going on. Jesus promises treasure in heaven. In the sociology of religion game, we call this spiritualization. In plain English, it means that Jesus is asking us to go way past our comfort level in giving things away. And in not getting them back.

As we find throughout, this discussion or commentary bears little resemblance to the verses quoted. The only passage which appears to require all of us to give stuff away “way past our comfort level” is that of the rich young ruler. It is a passage like this which requires

a good pastor-teacher to explain exactly what Jesus is saying. The entire passage reads: And behold, a man came up to him, saying, "Teacher, what good deed must I do to have eternal life?" And he said to him, "Why do you ask Me about what is good? There is only One Who is good. If you would enter life, keep the commandments." He said to Him, "Which ones?" And Jesus said, "You shall not murder, You shall not commit adultery, You shall not steal, You shall not bear false witness, Honor your father and mother, and, You shall love your neighbor as yourself." The young man said to him, "All these I have kept. What do I still lack?" Jesus said to him, "If you would be perfect, go, sell what you possess and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow Me." When the young man heard this he went away sorrowful, for he had great possessions. And Jesus said to his disciples, "Truly, I say to you, only with difficulty will a rich person enter the kingdom of heaven. Again I tell you, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich person to enter the kingdom of God." When the disciples heard this, they were greatly astonished, saying, "Who then can be saved?" But Jesus looked at them and said, "With man this is impossible, but with God all things are possible." (Matt. 18:16–26).

This man has come up to Jesus and he asks Him, "What good thing must I do to have eternal life?" Jesus knows the hearts of men (Matt. 9:4 Luke 9:47 Acts 1:24), so, for instance, when He is asked, "What must we do in order to be doing the works of God?" Jesus determined that he could give them the straight-out definitive answer, which was: "This is the work of God, that you believe in Him Whom He has sent."

On the other hand, with this rich young ruler, Jesus approached eternal life from a different point of view. This man was ready to hear that he did not keep the Law (as he thought he did), but he was not quite ready to hear the gospel (**Believe in Jesus Christ and you will be saved**). So, you will note that Jesus Christ begins ticking off the Ten Commandments, beginning with commandment #6 then 7 then 8 then 9 and then....Jesus goes back to commandment #5, **Honor your mother and father**. So why is this? Why did Jesus begin the quote the commandments in order? This man, in his own mind, had kept commandments #6–10. When Jesus began with "You will not murder" the rich young man began to bob his head up and down, indicating, "Yeah, I keep that commandment." Then the man thinks that Jesus is about to say the tenth commandment, which is "You will not covet..." and this rich young man can afford to buy whatever he wants, so he has no need to covet what someone else has. So he is ready to say, "Yes, sir, I am keeping all of these commandments." But Jesus, instead, doubles back, and says, "Honor your mother and father." Now why does Jesus do that? In that time period, a man could declare his wealth *korban*, which, in effect, meant that it was dedicated to God; and therefore, he could not be compelled by social pressure to, for instance, take care of his own parents. Then Jesus tells him to love his neighbor as himself. Again, under the *korban* gimmick, this man had his wealth dedicated to God, so he did not have to give any of his wealth to the poor (under the Law, there was a tax for the Levites, the alien and the widows and orphans of 10% every 3 years). If his money was already dedicated to the Lord, then he could avoid this obligation. So, in these final 2 items, he is no longer bobbing his head up and down enthusiastically, but, he is thinking that he has still fulfilled the letter of the Law. So then Jesus tells him how he can be perfect: "If you would be perfect, go, sell what you possess

and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow Me." Jesus had hit upon that which the rich young man would not do—he would not part with his money. The point of this story is **not** that, you have to keep all of the commandments and give away all of your money, and then you are considered perfect by God. **Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us, through the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit** (Titus 3:5). In case you doubt this, *Salvation* ([HTML](#)) ([PDF](#)) is an 11 page document listing hundreds of verses about salvation, and how we are saved by faith alone in Christ alone and not by any works which we have done. This is the basis for the entire Christian life (something completely ignored by these socialist propagandists who wrote this essay on the poor).

What Jesus did with this rich young ruler was to point out where he did not obey the spirit of the Law. Ideally speaking, the rich young ruler was to ruminate on this, and, hopefully, be ready to hear the gospel on a later date. Some people believe in Jesus Christ the first time they hear about Who He is; and others require more time and preparation; particularly those who are self righteous.

None of the rest of the verses quoted suggest that we need to give and give way past our comfort level (something which the authors of this essay have not done).

Who are the poor, by the way? Among our rationalizations is the feeling that the actual poor aren't people we really have to pay attention to. They may be of different races, or not speak our language, or aren't moral enough for us; they may be illegal immigrants. (Imagine that, a class of human beings that are illegal. Imagine explaining that to God.)

Again, this author makes all kinds of accusations of the reader, that we do not give to the poor if they are immoral, Black or speak another language. The people in the United States are the most generous people in the world. We give as individuals more money to more disasters than does any other nation in this world. Few if any look at disasters in Haiti or Sri Lanka or Thailand, and say, "Well, hell, we want to give, but they aren't Americans and most of them don't speak English. And, besides, their skin is a funny color." This sort of accusation is absurd, and yet the authors of this essay make it two times.

We get a brief peak into the psyche of authors of this piece. "Can you imagine classifying one group of human beings as illegal?" There are people who believe that there ought to be no borders (at least, in the case of the United States; I have heard these same types of liberals justify North Korea taking prisoners of those who wander into their territory). They do not believe that the United States ought to be able to define and enforce its own borders. The Bible clearly teaches nationalism. See the Laws of Divine Establishment ([HTML](#)) ([PDF](#)); particularly examine the section on [nationalism](#).

Does this mean that we ought to treat illegal aliens viciously? Of course not! There are very few people who believe in the sovereignty of the United States who want to see illegal aliens harmed in any way. What we want to see is, all illegal alien criminals dealt with severely; the borders closed, and then we are willing to talk about the illegals who are already living here.

God doesn't want to hear these excuses; he specifically commands us to help the stranger, the alien, the sojourner. Jesus' command on dinner parties couldn't be clearer: the people you need to help are not the people like you, the people you like, the people who can repay you. As for racial prejudice, note that the first person in the gospel of John to whom Jesus clearly confesses to being the Messiah is a Samaritan; Samaritans were despised by the orthodox Jews of the time. (And for that matter, she was a woman, and an adulterer.)

Can you give too much? We believe in moderation in all things. Unfortunately, we get this idea from the Greeks, not the Bible. Jesus asks for immoderate giving.

Jesus does not ask for immoderate giving; we have a choice—we can be absolutely perfect in order for God to like us (which is an impossibility) or we can place our faith in Him. As you will notice with any liberal who *uses* the Bible, they will never, at any point, suggest that it is important that you believe in Jesus Christ. They are not concerned with what the Bible is all about; they are concerned with Christians buying into their interpretation of the Bible, and to be consequently swayed politically by this.

Consequences of not serving the poor

As there are blessings for those who serve the poor, there are consequences for those who oppress them... or who simply ignore them.

Ezek. 16:49ff. "Behold, this was the guilt of your sister Sodom: she and her daughters had arrogance, abundant food, and careless ease, but she did not help the poor and needy. Thus they were haughty and committed abominations before Me. Therefore I removed them when I saw it."

Isaiah 10:1-3. "Woe to those who enact evil statutes, and to those who continually record unjust decisions, so as to deprive the needy of justice, and rob the poor of My people of their rights... Now what will you do in the day of punishment, and in the devastation which will come from afar?"

Luke 1:52ff. [Mary's Magnificat.] "He has brought down rulers from their thrones, and has exalted those who were hungry. He has filled the hungry with good things; and sent away the rich empty-handed."

Ezek. 22:29,31. "The people of the land have practiced oppression and committed robbery, and they have wronged the poor and needy and have oppressed the sojourner without justice... Thus I have poured out My indignation on them; I have consumed them with the fire of My wrath; their way I have brought upon their heads," declares the Lord GOD.

Jer. 5:28f. "[The wicked] do not plead the cause, the cause of the orphan, that they may prosper; and they do not defend the rights of the poor. Shall I not punish these people?" declares the LORD. "On such a nation as this, shall I not avenge myself?"

James 5:1-6. Come now, you rich, weep and howl for your miseries which are coming upon you. Your riches have rotted and your garments have become moth-eaten. ...Behold, the pay of the laborers who mowed your fields, and with you have withheld, cries out against you; and the outcry of the harvesters has reached the ears of the Lord of Sabaoth. You have lived luxuriously on the earth and led a life of wanton pleasure; you have fattened your hearts in a day of slaughter.

Luke 6:24. "But woe to you who are rich, for you are receiving your comfort in full."

Luke 16:19-25. "Now there was a certain rich man, and he habitually dressed in purple and fine linen, gaily living in splendor every day. And a certain poor man named Lazarus was laid at his gate, covered with sores, and longing to be fed with the crumbs which fell from the rich man's table; besides, even the dogs would come and lick his sores.

Now it came about that the poor man died and he was carried away by the angels to Abraham's bosom; and the rich man also died and was buried. And in Hades, being in torment, he lifted up his eyes, and saw Abraham far away, and Lazarus in his bosom.

And he cried out and said, 'Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus, that he may dip the tip of his finger in water and cool off my tongue; for I am in agony in this flame.'

But Abraham said, 'Child, remember that during your life you received your good things, and likewise Lazarus bad things; but now he is being comforted here, and you are in agony...'"

Nations have a corporate identify, and how a society treats its poor and helpless is something which is important to God. Those who are spiritually mature are often called to organize missions, soup kitchens and the like. Such people dedicate their entire lives, in many cases, to teaching the gospel of Jesus Christ by helping the helpless. Many other people give to these causes. Many churches support these efforts.

As has been shown statistically again and again, conservatives tend to give much more than their liberal counterparts; and they are more likely to give of their time and resources to non-Christian causes. Not only have studies been done, but John Stossel illustrated this once by putting a salvation army booth in SF and in some small, but religious Midwestern town, where the income per capita was much lower. Who gave the most? Of course, those in the community of the small Midwestern town.

In looking over the webpage of this author, there was something that was very conspicuous in its absence: links to soup kitchens, missions, or places where we could give to serve the poor. There were many links to various [comics](#), to a trip to [Brazil](#) (with pictures!), science fiction and gaming (see their [main page](#)). So, I am reading through this paper they did, taking verses from the Bible about how we ought to give until it hurts; and meanwhile, they are spending money on comics, on games, on trips to Brazil; and I see no evidence whatsoever of them spending money on the poor. Where is their mission? Where is the soup kitchen that they organized? Of course, there are no links to anything about the gospel of Jesus Christ. It is all, "This is all the stuff I am into; yay me!" And that is fine by

me; it is his webpage and he can put on it whatever pleases him. I don't expect him to take his time and give it to the poor. I am simply offended by his self righteous attitude, which is clearly expressed in this particular paper; and yet, it is quite clear by his actions, that he does not buy into any of this.

Commentary: Many Evangelicals worry what might happen to our country if sexual immorality flourishes. Now, the sexual morality the Bible tells us to be worried about is our own, but that's another discussion. A more serious worry is what will happen to us, our churches, our nation, if we don't serve the poor.

Obviously, adding to the misery of the poor is bad-- exploiting workers, oppressing immigrants, robbing the needy. But it doesn't stop there. Merely ignoring the poor is a crime. Sodom wasn't destroyed because of sexual immorality; it was destroyed because it "had arrogance, abundant food, and careless ease"-- and isn't that a pretty good description of America?-- and it "did not help the poor and needy".

We are allowed another view into the writer's brain. *Sexual immorality* is not so bad; not *servicing the poor*, now that is bad. As discussed previously, there is a lot about sexual immorality in the Bible; there is a lot about what we ought to do and what we ought not to do. The Bible devotes about a half-dozen chapters to the consequences of David's sin, which included adultery with Bathsheba. So, sexual immorality is an important topic in the Bible; and these people did not seem to write a companion piece about it. I won't hold my breath waiting for it.

And note his words about what is happening in the USA: *exploiting workers, oppressing immigrants, robbing the needy*. Now, why exactly does most of the world want to come to the United States? Why do people risk life and limb and spend every available dollar that they have in order to sneak into the United States? *Exploiting workers, oppressing immigrants, robbing the needy* describes perfectly what occurs in all communist and socialist countries. If I was dirt poor, do you know where I would want to live? In the good old USA. The so-called poor in America live much better than do average people anywhere else. The last thing that I want to do is to fundamentally change the structure of the United States, which is the city of hope on a high hill.

There isn't the least suggestion that the rich man being punished in hell was responsible for Lazarus's condition... except in the most general sense: he was responsible as a fellow human being, as a man who was aware of the one suffering at his door and did nothing to help.

"Pleading the cause" of the poor, being their advocate and defender, is simply something a righteous person does. Are you someone who, when others are silent, advocates for the poor in your company, your church, your nation, your political party?

Again, after looking at this person's website and the trivial matters that he concerns himself with, the dripping self righteousness of this essay is absolutely offensive.

Biblical attitudes for believers toward the poor

So far we've examined only the surface God's commands concerning the poor, what happens if we obey or if we don't. Here we consider the spirit in which we respond. Without some of these correctives, we might make many mistakes serving the poor.

Prov. 29:7. **The righteous is concerned for the rights of the poor; the wicked does not understand such concern.**

1John 3:17. **But whoever has the world's goods, and beholds his brother in need and closes his heart against him, how does the love of God abide in him?**

Luke 6:33ff. **"And if you do good to those who do good to you, what credit is that to you? For even sinners love those who love them. And if you lend to those from whom you expect to receive, what credit is that to you? Even sinners lend to sinners, in order to receive back the same."**

2Cor 9:7. **Let each one do just as he has purposed in his heart; not grudgingly or under compulsion; for God loves a cheerful giver.**

Mt. 6:2-4. **"When therefore you give alms, do not sound a trumpet before you, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may be honored by men. Truly I say to you, they have their reward in full. But when you give alms, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, that your alms may be in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will repay you."**

Mt. 6:24. **"No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will hold to one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and Money."**

1Tim. 6:10. **For the love of money is a root of all sorts of evil, and some by longing for it have wandered away from the faith, and pierced themselves with many a pang.**

Gal. 2:9ff. **Recognizing the grace that had been given to me, James and Cephas and John... gave to me and Barnabas the right hand of fellowship, that we might go to the Gentiles, and they to the circumcised. They only asked us to remember the poor-- the very thing I also was eager to do.**

Lev. 19:15. **"You shall do no injustice in judgment; you shall not be partial to the poor nor defer to the great, but you are to judge your neighbor fairly."**

Eph. 4:28. **Let him who steals steal no longer; but rather let him labor, performing with his own hands what is good, in order that he may have something to share with him who has need.**

In this set of verses, it appears as if the authors just threw together some miscellaneous verses, some which have to do with the attitude of the giver, and other verses which should have been offered up earlier.

No Christian would argue that giving ought to be voluntary and with the correct mental attitude. From what I have read of the author's blog, he appears to want much higher taxes, particularly upon the rich. Taxes are not giving. Paying one's taxes is not voluntary nor does it engender a good mental attitude. Many of us, when we work hours to earn our keep, and then have to give large chunks of it to the government, which seems to piss it away and then some—that does not make me feel cheerful. From what I can see, they are using my money, most of the time, simply to buy votes in order to stay in office longer. And our politicians do not live like paupers (nor do the leaders of communist and socialist countries). Many of our leaders act like they are in some higher class, and they spend our hard-earned money like it was nothing.

Acts 2:44. All those who had believed were together, and had all things in common; and they began to sell their property and possessions, and share them with all, as anyone might have need.

Acts 4:32-35. And the congregation of those who believed were of one heart and soul; and not one of them claimed that anything belonging to him was his own, but all things were common property to them. And with great power the apostles were giving witness to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and abundant grace was upon them all. For there was not a needy person among them, for all who were owners of land or houses would sell them and bring the proceeds of the sales and lay them at the apostles' feet; and they would be distributed to each, as any had need.

Acts 4 is a mini-description of the proverbial Christian Nation. There was not a needy person among them. Why isn't that said about us? We have a lot more resources than a mob of mostly poor first-century Palestinians.

Another excuse sometimes used to ignore passages like this is Dispensationalism—roughly, the idea that since we have Scripture, we can ignore large parts of Scripture. It doesn't make much sense when you state it in plain English, does it? There are some good reasons that we need not follow the Jewish Law; but the obligation to help the needy has not been repealed. It's found throughout the New Testament, with a good deal more emphasis than many subjects that Christians prefer to focus on.

[I have rearranged some of the verses and their commentary to deal with this topic specifically]

Those who are trying to sell communism and socialism through using the Bible often quote these verses. This establishes, insofar as we know, the first socialistic commune. This was a very unusual time in history. The recently established Christian church was getting it

from both sides. Judaism attacked them for their Christian beliefs, and sometimes cut these people off financially; and the Roman government attacked them, and tried to dissuade, through force, people from practicing their Christian faith. The book of Acts records what was done in those days. Just as we are not supposed to follow Judas act of hanging himself, we are not to do everything that we find in the book of Acts. Now, if Paul or Peter later exhorts us, to gather into a Christian commune, that would be different. If Paul, on Mars Hill, gave the sermon on how to properly organize Christian socialism on earth, then we would need to pay attention. However, that is not what happened here. The early Christians in Jerusalem were having a very difficult time of it, and one approach that they tried was a communal approach. We find out later, in the gospels, that this never worked. Rather than the combining of their wealth providing them with great prosperity, this approach guaranteed that they would fall deeper into poverty, as testified to by 1Cor. 16:1–3, and other passages which refer to the continual financial support needed for the believers in Jerusalem. In other words, they tried the socialistic commune approach and it did not work out.

Do you know one of the great things about America? If you really believe in this or that form of government (this or that level of socialism), you can save up enough money in America within a year, for most people, and move to whatever country in the world you want to. We, as Americans, can choose the country with the most perfect amount of socialism and government control and move to that country. If you move there and renounce your citizenship here, most of these leftist countries (including Europe) will welcome you with open arms. If you are an African-American and you think the USA has given you a raw deal, save your money and move to any nation in Africa. If you are a Hispanic living in America and you think that you are treated poorly, then save your money and move to whatever Latin-dominated country you want to move to. If you are a Muslim and you think that Muslims are treated poorly here in the United States, then you can move to a myriad of Muslim countries. And, if you are a socialist or an out-and-out communist, then save your money, and move to Russia, Cuba, Red China, North Korea or to whatever paradise on earth that you want to go. In America, we have the freedom to do this. This author had enough money to fly to Brazil and back; and, if it is a better country, then move there. More power to you! That is the greatness of freedom that we enjoy here in this country.

Commentary: Some unimpressive ways to give:

- * With a big frown on your face
- * Back to those who've given you things
- * Showing others that you're giving

What I would love to see is a detailing of the money which these authors take in through their various income sources, along with a list of the poor that they have given to. I am hoping to be inspired by their great example of their generous giving. I want to be moved by their generosity. And, if they believe that the government ought to do this, then I want to be inspired by the additional amounts of money that they send in for their taxes. I so want to titillated by their choice to see that government is taking, say, 80% of their income,

because that strikes me as sacrificial giving; that strikes me as them leading the way by example. You know what would be cool? A video of the authors showing their tax returns, the amount that they have to send Uncle Sam, and then a check that they will write for twice that amount, because the government is good with our money! And move in for a close up of the big smile on their faces as they write this check.

How do you tell if you're worshipping Money? Well, how do you tell if you're worshipping anyone? What do you spend your time on; what do you worry and talk about the most; what do you make sacrifices for? I often wonder how people can read these verses on Sunday, and on Tuesday go vote for the Money Party. James and Peter and John don't exhort Paul to remember the tax cuts.

How often do you go to church yourselves? What do you spend your time on? Going to Brazil, comics, games, politics, literature? That is fine, as long as you do not look down your self righteous nose at me.

With the prohibition on stealing, we may feel that we're on more familiar ground. But note the actual advice; it's not "Build so many jails that you rival the worst dictatorships for the percentage of your population in prison." Simply let the thieves stop stealing and do honest work.

Do you notice with this comment that the writer is no longer quoting Bible verses? Does the Bible anywhere exhort government to provide more jobs in order to reduce crime? The Bible does have verses telling us what governments ought to do about thievery, but these writers decided not to include those verses.

What has happened to us during our recession here in the United States (I write this in 2010)? Has crime gone up or down?

There have been a lot of studies on criminal behavior, and criminals tend to be criminals because that is the way they think, not because they are looking to steal a loaf of bread in order to feed their family. Selling drugs, for instance, requires a lot of work and a lot of precautions. Do you think that a person who sells drugs might be able to find another line of work? Work which does not involve the chemical murder of thousand sands of people in order for him to get by from week to week.

When you think "thieves", by the way, do you picture a poor person? The Bible doesn't assume that the poor are especially prone to sin; on the contrary. Rich thieves as well should put aside their thievery: accountants swindling stockholders, corporations cheating taxpayers, CEOs making millions while their companies fail, presidents spending money they don't have to benefit their wealthiest contributors.

There are all kinds of crimes. White collar crime is just as evil as street crime. Few Christians would disagree with this.

God's identification with the poor

Like a good king, the Lord is concerned with his poor subjects. In the passages below, we see that His heart goes deeper still: he identifies with the poor; he puts himself in their place.

2Cor. 8:9. For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though He was rich, yet for your sake He became poor, that you through His poverty might become rich.

This verse deals with God becoming a man in order to save us. It has nothing to do with Jesus having a successful business and then selling it and giving His money away so that he could be poor. As God, Jesus is rich; however, He took upon Himself the form of a man, and the degradation of the cross, so that He could bear our sins.

Paul tells us to have the following mental attitude in ourselves: Have this mindset among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, Who, though He was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but made Himself nothing, taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. And being found in human form, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. Therefore God has highly exalted Him and bestowed on Him the name that is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father (Philip. 2:5–11). The vow of poverty that Jesus took was to become man.

Prov. 19:17. He who is gracious to a poor man lends to the LORD, and He will repay him for his good deed.

Prov. 14:31. He who oppresses the poor reproaches his Maker, but he who is gracious to the needy honors Him.

True, true; no Christian would argue with any of these verses.

Mt. 25:31-46. "When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with Him, then He will sit on His glorious throne. And all the nations will be gathered before Him, and He will separate them from one another, as the shepherd separates the sheep from the goats; He will put the sheep on His right, and the goats on His left.

Then the King will say to those on His right, 'Come, you who are blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. For I was hungry, and you gave Me something to eat; I was thirsty, and you gave Me drink; I was a stranger, and you invited Me in; naked, and you clothed Me; I was sick, and you visited Me; I was in prison, and you came to Me.'

Then the righteous will answer Him, saying, 'Lord, when did we see You hungry, and feed You, or thirsty, and give You drink? And when did we see You a stranger, and invite you

in, or naked, and clothe You? And when did we see You sick, or in prison, and come to You?'

And the King will answer and say to them, 'Truly I say to you, to the extent that you did it to one of these brothers of Mine, even the least of them, you did it to Me.'

Then He will also say to those on His left, 'Depart from Me, accursed ones, into the eternal fire which has been prepared for the devil and his angels; for I was hungry, and you gave Me nothing to eat; I was thirsty, and you gave Me nothing to drink; I was a stranger, and you did not invite Me in; naked, and you did not clothe Me; sick, and in prison, and you did not visit Me.'

Then they themselves will also answer, saying, 'Lord, when did we see You hungry, or thirsty, or naked, or sick, or in prison, and did not take care of You?'

Then He will answer them, saying, 'Truly I say to you, to the extent that you did not do it to one of the least of these, you did not do it to Me.' And these will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life."

Again, salvation is not through works, but through faith in Christ. Separating sheep from goats is separating believers from unbelievers. Believers who are mature reveal this in their works, which does include—particularly in desperate times (the context of this verse)—giving to those who are in need.

Again, there is no government involved here. Jesus is not saying, "Make sure your government taxes you until it hurts, because that is how you will get into heaven." We are to obey governments and we are to pay whatever taxes we owe (Rom. 13:1–7); however, there is no command in the Bible about being communist revolutionaries, nor does the Bible call for government control of everything.

Commentary: God isn't a conservative; he's a revolutionary.

Jesus is a revolutionary, only in this way—He tells us that salvation come through faith in Him. The woman said to Him, "I know that Messiah is coming (He who is called Christ). When He comes, He will tell us all things." Jesus said to her, "I who speak to you am He." (John 4:25–26). "I am the Way, and the Truth, and the Life. No one comes to the Father except through Me." (John 14:6b). Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life; whoever does not obey the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God remains on him (John 3:36). And Abraham had believed the LORD, and He counted it to him as righteousness (Gen. 15:6).

Commentary [continued]: He not only takes the side of the poor; he puts himself in their place. In the very alarming parable of the sheep and the goats he speaks of salvation as depending on how we treat the poorest and the most afflicted.

According to prosperity theology (and according to the best Pharisaical opinion) Jesus should have come as a lord, a tycoon, a cult leader. Some of his followers today act as, presumably, they felt Jesus should have acted, building multi-million-dollar cathedrals. But Jesus came as a poor man.

There's all sorts of meaning in that, but at the very least we can say that Jesus takes the issue of poverty personally. A church or a nation that ignores its poor or places stumbling blocks in their way, whose supreme good is Money, is very far from the spirit of God.

Based on a 1989 compilation by myself, Andrés Tapia, and Arnie Fishman.

Almost no one in the Christian community thinks that Jesus should have come as a tycoon or a cult leader. The writer apparently is not all that alarmed over the parable of the sheep and the goats, as there is nothing on his webpage about serving the poor (what organizations he has personally set up).

It is another straw-man argument to say that believers today think that Jesus should be building multi-million-dollar cathedrals. Can you find a single notable Christian who has ever made such a statement, ever?

Again, no one argues that our lives ought to revolve around money; but it is money in the hands of private citizens which goes to feed the poor without causing them to become a permanent underclass that is always dependent upon the government.

What we have found is, that if man is given the maximum amount of freedom, as we have here in the United States, this raises the status of everywhere. There really is trickle down prosperity. We had a very liberal president in President Carter, who gave us an economy so terrible, that a misery index was established in order to describe it. However, when President Reagan came into office and began to reduce the tax burden (on rich and poor) and began to encourage Americans to depend upon their freedom rather than upon the government, we had a prosperity wave which continued for decades. Bill Clinton along with a Republican Congress, continued in this same vein, balancing the federal budget and instituting welfare reform. President Bush continued in this same vein, reducing taxes once again (but not, unfortunately, subjecting himself to greater fiscal discipline; and not regulating FNMA and FHLMC, which entities sent our country into a financial tailspin). In any case, for the better part of nearly 30 years, America enjoyed great prosperity, and the lot of the poor improved tremendously over this period of time as well. All of this goes back to what President Ronald Reagan did and taught.

There are many passages about the poor in the Bible. However, liberals and progressives will never cite this passage.

The passage about the poor that progressives will not cite

John 12:3–8: Then Mary took a pound of ointment of pure spikenard, very costly, and anointed the feet of Jesus, and wiped His feet with her hair. And the house was filled with the odor of the ointment. Then said one of His disciples (Judas Iscariot, Simon's son, who was to betray Him) "Why was this ointment not sold for three hundred denarii and given to the poor?" He said this, not that he cared for the poor, but because he was a thief and held the moneybag and carried the things put in. Then Jesus said, "Let her alone. She has kept this for the day of My burial. **For you have the poor with you always; but you do not always have Me.**"

Jesus Christ, the God-man, was being honored by Mary. She understood Who He was. She understood that He is God and that He ought to be so honored. One of the disciples—Judas, the one who would betray Jesus—then began to take up the cause of the poor. Now, he really did not care all the much about the poor, but this would have put more money under his control, as he carried the moneybag.

Now, despite Judas' motivation, Jesus could have easily said, "You know what, Judas has a point. There are all of those poor out there, and we need to get out there and take care of them." But Jesus does not say that. Jesus says, "**The poor you will have with you always.**" Here is God, in the flesh, telling His disciples, and telling us, that we will always have the poor. It does not matter how much we escalate the war on poverty, **the poor we will have with us always.** I suspect, because Jesus is God, that this is true. I also suspect that history will bear this out. In which societies have the poor been eliminated? None of them. In the United States, the poor probably have a better standard of living than anywhere else in the world; and yet, the people who write these essays make it sound as if Christians have completely lost their way, and do nothing for the poor. What complete and utter balderdash!

Let me add one more thing to the historicity of the poor always being with us: what is common to all communist takeovers? Mass starvation. This is a part of every communist revolution in history. Communism takes over a country, and, at various points in their history, people starve.

If the people who wrote this self righteous essay had any self-knowledge, one of the essays they would post would be, "The Evils of the Practice of Communism." Communism hurts the poor more than it hurts anyone else, because they starve and die under communism. However, they use the poor as pawns, just as they attempt to manipulate Christians by using the Bible. They have no real interest in the Bible or in what the Bible has to say; and they have no real interest in the poor, which is obvious by the websites where we find this essay posted. They have a progressive ideology, and they will use anything—lies, half-truths or even the truth when it suits them—to advance this ideology. That is what this is really all about. Do they care about the poor? There is nothing at the 2 websites where I found this essay which indicates that they do.

Deut. 15:11a [The poor shall never cease out of the land.](#)

Matt. 26:11 [Jesus is speaking]: [“For you have the poor with you always, but you do not always have Me.”](#)

Mark 14:7 [Jesus is speaking]: [“For you have the poor with you always, and whenever you desire you may do them good. But you do not have Me always.”](#)

The fact that the poor will always be is not an excuse to ignore them; however, any effort to eliminate the poor will not work.

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Addendum:

There are websites which publish these verses about the poor, do not try to give them a socialist or communist leaning (they do not call God a revolutionary). And, they provide many links to missions and other places where believers can give of their time and money.

<http://home.snu.edu/~hculbert/poor.htm>

Here is another with a similar approach:

<http://www.christiananswers.net/q-eden/edn-poverty.html>

In case you want to discuss this, there is a liberal Christian who posts her liberal leanings here, and a discussion follows:

<http://rachelheldevans.com/article-1212898761>

Another article about Jesus and the rich young ruler:

<http://www.rbc.org/questionsDetail.aspx?id=45872>

The article which I have commented upon is also posted here:

<http://the-bohemian-register.blogspot.com/2010/12/wealthy-tea-party-rejects-jesus-and.html>

However, the blogger saw no reason to credit authorship of this article (it appears to be the blogger's—Jonathan Presco's—work). What a surprise; along with this work is no listing of places or causes to which we can give our time and money.

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