

Child and Family Protection Association

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A Biblical Case Against Socialized Medicine

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By What Standard?

Does God ordain socialized medicine and other forms of government-controlled charity or welfare, including subsidies, services and benefits, for meeting basic personal needs?

Many people are confused about whether civil government should take that which belongs to some citizens and give it to other citizens or non-citizens in order to provide for basic personal needs. Many people believe that these personal needs, coupled with Jesus' command to be compassionate, justifies this kind of government intervention. In short, they believe that the end justifies the means.

What does God permit, or require of us, regarding receiving help or helping others with basic family and individual needs? **“Basic needs”** generally means **food, shelter, clothing, health care,** and perhaps **education.** There are, of course, other important human needs. Also, we are using the word **“charity”** to refer to any kind of **help to provide for the “basic needs” of others,** beyond one's immediate family.

In addressing this question of “helping others” (charity), some Christians hold to a variety of philosophical, religious, and political points of view. They sometimes rely on fallacies of interpretation and illogical application of Scripture. This misuse of Scripture is further complicated by emotionally-based arguments to justify civil government's involvement in meeting individual needs.

Whether we are considering education, food, housing, clothing, health care or money, the appeal is often: *“What would Jesus do to*

demonstrate love to people in need of these things?” This question does not necessarily lead us to right conclusions or right actions for several reasons:

First, we can never do all of what Jesus would do because He is God and we are not. We will never share any of the attributes of God, which are exclusively His, such as omnipotence, omniscience and omnipresence. We neither have the ability nor the responsibility to help everyone. For example, are we expected to feed five thousand people by miraculous multiplication of five loaves of bread and two fish? However, we are to become more like Christ in character qualities such as kindness, obedience, truthfulness, integrity, compassion, discernment, mercy, humility, graciousness, etc.

Second, it does not follow logically or Biblically that just because Jesus would do something, that groups and social institutions would also be required to do these very things. In God's Word it is neither explicitly stated nor implied that a civil government is required to do everything that Jesus would do or has done.

Third, this question could lead some to guess or speculate on what Jesus would do, even in cases where Scripture does not tell us what Jesus would do and where Scripture does not provide us with any specifically related commands and principles. This kind of presumptuous speculation could be very misleading.

A more profitable question to ask is *“What would Jesus have **us** do?”*

Where do we get the answer to this question? Where do we get authoritative guidance on how to do what Jesus would have us do? For the **final** source of authority we certainly do not go to our thoughts and feelings (Prov. 3:1-8); and not to our desires for ourself or others (Heb. 13:5; 1Tim. 3:3; 1Tim. 6:9-10; Ex. 20:17); and not to our culture and traditions (Col. 2:8-10; Matt. 15:3-9); and not some leader, teacher, or preacher (Jer. 5:31). God reminds us that our hearts (our thoughts and emotions) and those of the one's we listen to are always subject to deception (Jer. 17:9; John 2:24-25). **We are to rely only on God's written Word as the final arbiter of truth and authority in our life.**

We are to take our own thoughts and feelings, along with the advice of others, and subject them to the obedience of Christ (2Cor. 10:5) by testing them with the standard of God's Word (Acts 17:11, Matt. 4:4).

From God's Word, we could rightly respond to our question by answering that Jesus would have us love God with all our heart, soul, and mind and love our neighbor as our self (Matt. 22:37-40). However, God knows our being – that we require more specific revelation in order to know what *love* really is, as opposed to just an emotion or a thought. God has revealed the specifics of what love is in His Word.

The Christian understands from God's Word that God is sovereign over the Universe. He ordains both the ends and the means. From God's point of view, only His written Word prescribes the proper means that fits the end. **The end alone never justifies a means.** Another way of putting it is that God is concerned with the "Who," the "How," the "Where," and the "When" as well as the "What" of our actions.

A perceived need of someone or group does not automatically constitute a responsibility to meet that "need" on someone else's part. God has revealed to man His directions

for what He requires, prohibits, and permits in the 66 books of His Word, the Bible. **His Word addresses every individual need and all true compassion.** *"All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work."* (2Tim. 3:16-17)

Below is only an illustrative, not an exhaustive attempt to answer the question from God's point of view: "Does God ordain government-controlled or government-funded charity or welfare?"

Voluntary Nature of Charity

According to Scripture, **true compassion and charity must be voluntary.** We must be free to choose to give of our resources to meet the legitimate needs of another person. **Being forced** by an individual, a group, or civil governmental authorities and law to give of our time or resources to meet someone else's want or need is a **misuse of God-given jurisdictional authority.** This misuse of authority diminishes our ability to show love. Some call this "**legalized theft**". It is contrary to God's principles of stewardship and His prescribed limited jurisdiction for civil government. Civil government is one of God's three ordained social governmental institutions (stated either as family, ecclesiastical, and civil; or as family, church, and state).

God's Word tells us, "*Let each one do just as he has purposed in his heart; not grudgingly or under compulsion; for God loves a cheerful giver.*" (2Cor. 9:7) God expects all legitimate charity to be willingly and cheerfully given by **each one**, not by civil government and certainly not under compulsion. **All** civil government help, by definition, is done **under compulsion** because it is 100% funded by the compulsory collection of money or property. It is taken by coercion, backed by the police powers of civil government.

God has ordained that our charity be voluntary in order to see if we will cheerfully obey Him by showing discerning compassion in giving. If we are forced to give, however by some human instrument or force, then there is no testing or building of our faith. *“This is pure and undefiled religion in the sight of our God and Father, to visit orphans and widows in their distress, and to keep oneself unstained by the world.”* (James 1:27)

Individual Ownership of Resources

As individuals, we are required by God to be good stewards of our resources. Being a steward requires that you have authority over your private property and finances. To have private property, individuals must receive the fruits of their labor (Prov. 27:18; 1Tim. 5:18). God actually owns everything (Psalm 24:1; Matt. 11:25; Acts 17:24-28), but grants ownership rights of property and finances to us in a stewardship relationship (Luke 16:1-10; 1Cor. 4:2).

If the government takes our money and possessions from which we would have provided and cared for ourselves and others, then it deprives us from being able to give what we should to meet legitimate needs. In this case, the government is hindering us from being God’s stewards.

Assuming there are **legitimate needs** on the part of another person, *“...we are to labor with **our own hands** at what is good, in order that we **may have something to share** with him who has need.”* (Eph. 4:28) It is individuals (not the government) who are to *“...engage in good deeds to meet pressing needs...”* (Titus 3:14)

Biblical Responsibilities of Government

Never in Scripture does God command or ordain civil government at any level to meet people’s basic individual needs. However, people who are employed by or render services for the government should receive all the benefits, which are a part of

their compensation package. For instance, the military person or fireman is not only due their wages but they also should receive other promised benefits for services rendered, in the form of retirement, health care, death benefits, etc.

Also, most employees and/or their employers (on behalf of the employee) pay directly into Workman’s Compensation or similar disability plan, and health insurance, life insurance, etc. Employees have a just claim to receive those benefits when eligible. The same can be said of paying directly into other specific programs such as Social Security and Medicare. This is expected and reasonable when the benefits paid to the employee (or their spouse and dependents upon death) are tied directly to the amount of contributions paid into the program by the employee and/or their employer. We would add though, that it would be best to promote government policies that reduce our tax burden and protect the freedom of individuals to invest in private options for the needs that the government programs are attempting to meet. There are a few other cases such as repatriation, and just compensation for property taken or damages for which the government is liable.

Civil government’s jurisdiction is primarily limited to the administration of justice and protection of innocent life, limb, and property of its citizens (Rom. 13; 1Pet. 2:13-20; etc.). This is done within our borders through law enforcement, civil defense, fire and safety protection, and the judicial/criminal justice system. We are protected from external threats by our military and other entities protecting our citizens, our homeland, and its borders. There are some other things like our system of highways and water supply that also have a direct connection with the national defense of our country and its citizens.

A clear understanding of governmental jurisdiction is the key to answering the question of what God requires of us in terms

of helping others or receiving help. (A more complete discussion of jurisdiction will have to be left to another time.)

Biblical Charity

For citizens to look to civil government for charity is idolatrous since God desires that He alone be in the role of provider. Consequently, our needs should be met exclusively by the means He has ordained. However, people often wrongfully think that civil government is to help everyone so that all their “basic needs” are met. People believe that they have a right to all these things. However as we have stated, the Biblical view of jurisdictional responsibility limits civil government to being a restraint to evil-doers. Therefore, the primary purpose of civil government is to offer a just protection for its citizens so that they might live a quiet and peaceable life and have an opportunity to pursue meeting their needs and wants (and those of others) without interference. (Rom. 3; 1Peter 2; 1Tim 2:2; etc.)

Civil governments are not commanded, are not able, and should not be expected to fulfill the command – *“You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind... You shall love your neighbor as yourself.”* (Matt. 22:36-39) It is persons and families who have neighbors. Your closest neighbors are those in your own immediate family.

The teachings of Scripture related to charity, such as those of Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount, are all directed to individuals and families or in some cases the church (Acts 4:32-36; 2Cor. 8:1-15). The first line of help is the God-ordained family.

“But if anyone does not provide for his own, and especially for those of his household, he has denied the faith, and is worse than an unbeliever.” (1Tim. 5:8)

Regarding taking care of His earthly mother after He died on the cross, did Jesus

choose to (or command others to) petition the government to develop a program to take care of her? No. What did He do? Jesus had John take care of His mother as an “adopted member” of John’s family.

“Then He [Jesus speaking from the cross] said to the disciple, ‘Behold, your mother!’ [speaking of Jesus’s mother – Mary] And from that hour the disciple took her into his own household.” (John 19:27)

To emphasize this command, God repeated this specific application of honoring father and mother in the New Testament: *“Honor widows who are widows indeed; but if any widow has children or grandchildren, let them practice piety in regard to their own family, and to make some return to their parents; for this is acceptable in the sight of God.”* (1Tim. 5:3-4) Jesus also talks about this again as recorded in Matthew 15:3-9.

When there is a legitimate Biblically-based need for help and it is beyond what the family can provide, then we as Christians may consider helping, either as individuals or as a church, when it is within our means based on the priorities set by God. *“...[W]hile we have opportunity, let us do good to all men, and especially to those who are of the household of faith.”* (Gal. 6:10)

As God brings the needs of those who are within the scope of our responsibility to our attention, we are to help them expeditiously rather than setting up a government bureaucracy to do it. *“If a brother or sister is without clothing and in need of daily food, and one of you says to them, ‘Go in peace, be warmed and be filled,’ and yet you do not give them what is necessary for their body, what use is that?”* (James 2:15-16)

Limits On Charity

There are circumstances when some personal needs are to go unmet by others. God’s Word puts restrictions and priorities on who is to receive our help such as

“...[I]f anyone will not work, neither let him eat. Now such persons we command and exhort in the Lord Jesus Christ to work in quiet fashion and eat their own bread.” (2Thess. 3:10b-12)

While the primary point of the parable of the prodigal son is not about meeting personal needs, it is interesting to note what Jesus chose to include in his parable. Jesus specifically described the deprivation, which the son was experiencing as a motivating factor for the son to **repent and return** to the father (Luke 15:14-18; see also Prov. 16:26). In the parable, even though the prodigal was eventually reconciled to his Father, the son was allowed to reap for a season what he sowed. This principle of sowing and reaping is repeated elsewhere in God’s Word (e.g. Gal. 6:7-9).

There is a time to allow some people to reap the temporal consequences of the choices they have made. Some people call this tough love. While there are some Biblically-consistent exceptions, rescuing people prematurely from the fruit of their own behavior is generally detrimental to the maturity process. While we do not rely upon the secular world for our views, it is noteworthy that even in the secular world, the problem of interfering with sowing and reaping has been recognized as a problem by some and labeled with terms like “co-dependency” and “enabling”.

Once the government takes our money ostensibly to help others, then we are no longer able to exercise personal discernment as a good steward concerning who are most deserving and needful of our help. We cannot give what is no longer ours.

Meeting Personal Needs

The Biblically prescribed normative means for meeting basic family and personal needs are from: (1) our own labor, (2) investments from our own property and labor, (3) family inheritance, and (4) voluntary help

(charity) from immediate family, extended family, church, neighbor, and others. Our labor is clearly God’s primary means of provision (Prov. 13:11). Labor is not limited only to work done for compensation but any work that contributes to meeting your own needs or that of others. A full-time wife and mother at home, for example, is certainly engaged in all kinds of labors. Her children should also increasingly be involved in labor, commensurate with their ability.

What About The Israelites?

Before we leave this topic, let us look at one proof-text argument given by some proponents for government being involved in meeting basic family/individual needs. The claim is made that since the Israelites received help from Egypt as they left for the Promise Land via the wilderness then it is permissible for anyone to receive help from government for family and personal needs. Let’s look carefully at the scriptural account in Ex. 12:35-36 (also see Ex. 3:21-22): *“Now the sons of Israel had done according to the word of Moses, for they had requested from the Egyptians articles of silver and articles of gold, and clothing; and the Lord had given the people favor in the sight of the Egyptians, so that they let them have their request. Thus they plundered the Egyptians.”*

There are at least three key observations concerning this passage: (1) The help was not from the civil government of Egypt but **from the families and individuals of Egypt**; (2) The items were given **voluntarily** by the Egyptians, not from any form of coercion (taxation, etc.) from the Egyptian government; and (3) the giving came as a direct result of the grace of God working so that the **Israelites found favor** in the hearts of the Egyptian citizens. On the other hand, the Egyptian government had offered certain government benefits in exchange for the Israelites’ continuing servitude – all of which Moses turned down flatly without compromise.

Legalized Theft

If you noticed that a family in your neighborhood was lacking a basic necessity that was beyond your ability to provide, would you forcibly take from another family (or families) in your neighborhood to meet that family's need? Is it right to steal from one person (or group of persons) in order to meet a basic need of another individual (or group of individuals)?

You cannot give that which is not yours. You are not to receive that which has not been given freely by the owner. To do either is to disobey God.

God forbids stealing in the Eighth Commandment (Ex. 20:15). He does not allow stealing even for meeting basic needs. *“Men do not despise a thief if he steals to satisfy himself when he is hungry; but **when he is found, he must repay sevenfold; he must give all the substance of his house.**”* (Prov. 6:30-31). While men understand why the thief stole (to meet a basic need), the thief is still punished for his crime. He must still make restitution. The fact that his motivation was understandable did not make his action right or permissible.

Is it right to support or vote for legislation that would **legalize theft** to meet people's needs? Is it right to violate a commandment of God in order to achieve a worthy end? If it is wrong for an individual to take something by force from one and give it to another, then why is it OK for everyone through his or her government to do the same thing? God did ordain the authority for civil government to use coercive taxation, but **only to fund its God-ordained limited jurisdictional responsibility**. Again, God ordains both the means and the ends.

Where is our country headed? Where will all of this lead? The sad logical outworking of

this interventionist statist view of government-controlled and funded charity will eventually be a civil government in which **all property** is either: (1) owned and controlled by the state or (2) privately owned but controlled by the state. The first is technically called *economic socialism*. The second is *economic fascism*. Either way, *“... the compassion of the wicked is cruel.”* (Prov. 12:10b)

A Challenge From God

Abraham (Abram) is an outstanding example of being able to just say NO – rejecting government assistance outside of its God-ordained boundaries because of his commitment to having God alone receive all the glory as provider: *“And the king of Sodom said to Abram, ‘Give the people to me and take the goods for yourself.’ And Abram said to the king of Sodom, ‘I have sworn to the Lord God Most High possessor of heaven and earth, that I will not take a thread or a sandal thong or anything that is yours, lest you should say, ‘I have made Abram rich.’”* (Gen. 14:21-23)

Abraham did what was right. He acted consistently with God's Word:

*“When you sit down to dine **with a ruler**, consider carefully what is before you; and **put a knife to your throat**, if you are a man of great appetite. **Do not desire his delicacies** for it is deceptive food. Do not weary yourself to gain wealth, cease from your consideration of it.”* (Prov. 23:1-4)

“Let your character be free from the love of money, being content with what you have; for He Himself has said, ‘I will never desert you, nor will I ever forsake you’.” (Heb. 13:5)

“For the eyes of the Lord move to and fro throughout the earth that He may strongly support those whose heart is completely His.” (2Chron. 16:9)