

“Through the Bible in a Year with Pastor Don and the FBC Family”

December 14, 2016

Jeremiah 27:1–28:17. Darwinian capitalism vs. ordo-capitalism.

Romans 5:1–21. Grace, suffering, and growth.

Proverbs 20:1–12. Government as God’s servant.

COMMENTS.

Jeremiah 27:1–28:17. Chapter 27 contains several proverbs about love. It notes that sometimes true love may be hidden in a rebuke just as hatred may be hidden in a kiss (27:5–6). Moreover, there is no love where there is no fidelity to one’s wife and friends (27:8, 10–11). True loving friends can improve each other’s character, but nagging only irritates the relationship (27:15–17). **Chapter 28** covers exploitation of the poor by the powerful and wealthy. These oppressors govern without benefiting the governed (28:3), know nothing of justice (28:5), amass fortunes by exorbitant interest (28:8), and ignore the needs of the poor (28:27). Lawlessness brings down societies and families (28:4, 7, 24), and people groan under oppressive rule (28:12).

Governments should establish justice for all equally, for the rich and poor.

Life in God by second person proper knowledge and proper love. This section includes God’s viewpoint on the rich, poor, and even government. Although there are countless hybrid forms of government (there are few economic systems are pure free enterprise or pure socialism), one can loosely and broadly speak of four main categories as they relate to social and monetary policy: (1) communism, (2) socialism, (3) ordo-capitalism, and (4) Darwinian capitalism. Communism and socialism are evil. They are unbiblical because they stifle man’s freedom, his natural right to own property, and his right to engage in free enterprise. There is no biblical basis for government redistribution of wealth for the purpose of making people more equal! This leaves us with two types of capitalism. What I call Darwinian capitalism is the capitalism of Darwinian Herbert Spencer that became all the rage during the industrial revolution. Herbert Spencer opposed all government aid to the poor. He believed that society advances where its fittest members are allowed to assert their fitness with the least hindrance, and that the unfit should not be prevented from dying out. He advocated a laissez-faire system that tolerated no government regulation of private enterprise. It was Spencer who coined the term “survival of the fittest,” and his system was widely accepted as the model for the relationship between government, the poor, and business. However, this is capitalism without a moral foundation. It gives way to unbridled self-lust and unprincipled, cutthroat competition—it is capitalism at its worst—and such capitalists frequently lay the groundwork for their own destruction by exploitation which fans the fire of revolt against the system. It is also unbiblical. The system that is closest to what we find in the Bible is ordo-capitalism (known as ordo liberalism because liberalism used to be the name for liberal/conservative principles), an ordered capitalism. Government sets the rules of the game and provides oversight and even interferes as needed as an umpire to make sure everyone is playing by the rules. Also in ordo-capitalism, the government does have a role in helping the helpless poor, a principle found in the Word of God. There is a biblical basis for government helping the most vulnerable and intruding in the market place from

time to time. However, this intrusion should never be to redistribute wealth to make everyone equal. For example, while poor Ruth was permitted to glean the field of wealthy Boaz, there is never a hint that she deserves to have as much as Boaz. In closing, neither capitalism nor government's proper and limited role in helping the poor be thrown out because of abuses. It is the abuses that need to be dealt with not the principles. There needs to be accountability and recognition of God's fundamental principles regarding what God expects of any and all government—freedom and compassion, both of which demand people of integrity. The believer who walks with God *by knowledge and by love* is not drawn to the extremes of Spencerian capitalism or liberation theology. Because they value God's truth over all things, they understand both the valid and invalid principles of both flawed systems and strike a balance of wisdom somewhere in the realm of ordo-capitalism because they see that system as most compatible with the wishes of God for the government as outlined throughout the Word of God. Moreover, such a believer will be able to rise above the CNN and Fox News fray and maintain a biblical attitude rather than be drawn into the extremes found on both sides, and run the risk of hating something that God actually loves and promotes: free enterprise and government provision for the most vulnerable. Moreover, he will be able to avoid being a hypocrite who condemns evil activity in an opponent, yet looks the other way and makes excuses when that vice is found in his own candidate.

Romans 5:1–21. Paul argued that by the impact of this righteous gift believers are given salvation from the wrath of God (5:9). God has reconciled godless and unrighteous enemies to Himself (5:10–11). Thus they “*have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ*” (5:1). Paul, by way of a typology, demonstrated that sin and death came to men and women through Adam; righteousness and life, through Jesus Christ (5:11–21). Sin had been intensified by the transgression of the law. Thus, greater grace was needed. But where sin abounded, grace abounded all the more (5:20).

Life in God by second person proper knowledge and proper love. Justification is no escape from the trials and difficulties of life. Christ was upfront, “In this world, you shall have tribulation” (John 16:33). However, for those who walk with God *by proper knowledge and proper love*, trials work for him and not against him. He knows that no amount of suffering can separate him from the Lord (Rom. 8:35–39); instead, trials bring him closer to the Lord and make him more like the Lord. Suffering builds Christian character for those who cling to the Lord for His own sake—love for God for its own sake. Tribulations, however, in and of themselves, do not have any redeeming value without a close relationship with God. Countless individuals only become more calloused and get angrier and more frustrated at God and life as such. However, if we make God, not our comfort, our greatest good, the trials *always* purify us and help us get rid of the chaff that stifles our life with God and testimony to others.

Proverbs 20:1–12. The proverbs of this section, for the most part, focus on the theme of discriminating between people of good character and people of evil character. Some proverbs speak of the elusiveness of virtue (20:6, 9, 15), others describe how the king must sort out the good from the bad (20:8, 26, 28), while others speak of God as the ultimate judge of character (20:10, 12, 23–24, 27; 21:2–3).

Life in God by second person proper knowledge and proper love. Verse 8 calls attention to the importance of moral insight in government. It depicts an idealized vision of royal authority in integrity; it literally says “*a king sits on a throne of justice.*” It represents the standard to which a king should aspire, and the perception ordinary people should have of the throne as the seat of justice. Should a king fail to maintain justice, his people will lose respect for the crown’s moral authority, and the government will collapse. We should do all that we can to hold government accountable to basic moral standards. However, according to the Bible, government as such is a good thing and as such should not be viewed as a great evil. God even called the government of Nero His servant/ δῆκονός (Rom 13:4). Throughout the Bible, we see a great respect for government, even pagan governments, on the part of great believers (Joseph for Egypt, Daniel and his friends for Babylon, and the Apostle Paul for Rome). As a matter of fact, the book of Romans is a call to live out the divine righteousness which has been granted to believers. And one of the ways that righteousness was to be lived out was with respect for and obedience to government (Romans 13). Recall that it was revolution against government that gave the world some of its most horrendous dictators. While we are to respect government, we are never to place it above God. As we walk with God *by proper knowledge and proper love* we quite naturally echo the words of Peter and all the other apostles in saying that “We ought to obey God rather than men” (Acts 5:29). God and His standards always take precedence over government, which is but His servant for all the citizenry equally.

Life in God by second person proper knowledge and by proper love.

Pastor Don