

Biblical Basics about Wealth

Written by Calvin Fox

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1. God owns everything, including the earth and all natural resources. He is the ultimate property owner. All wealth comes from God. All of it. This truth is absolutely fundamental to the Biblical concept of Wealth

1 Chron. 29:1 David blessed the Lord in the presence of all the assembly, ... 'Blessed are you, O Lord, the God of our ancestor Israel, for ever and ever. 11 Yours, O Lord, are the greatness, the power, the glory, the victory, and the majesty; for all that is in the heavens and on the earth is yours; yours is the kingdom, O Lord, and you are exalted as head above all. 12 Riches and honor come from you, and you rule over all. In your hand are power and might; and it is in your hand to make great and to give strength to all. 14 ... For all things come from you, and of your own have we given you. 16 O Lord our God, all this abundance that we have ... comes from your hand and is all your own.

2. God created Human Beings to enjoy His creation. It is good. They are to be caretakers of His property, developing all its resources and the wealth derived from them. As Stewards, human beings will be held accountable for how well they do this.

3. There are God-given conditions and responsibilities attached to all Wealth. It is to be developed and used according to His Law. The Model for all of this is Israel. **Deut 28:1-20**

Blessings for Obedience

28 If you will only obey the Lord your God, by diligently observing all his commandments that I am commanding you today, the Lord your God will set you high above all the nations of the earth; 2 all these blessings shall come upon you and overtake you, if you obey the Lord your God:

3 Blessed shall you be in the city, and blessed shall you be in the field.

4 Blessed shall be the fruit of your womb, the fruit of your ground, and the fruit of your livestock, both the increase of your cattle and the issue of your flock.

5 Blessed shall be your basket and your kneading-bowl.

6 Blessed shall you be when you come in, and blessed shall you be when you go out.

7 The Lord will cause your enemies who rise against you to be defeated before you; they shall come out against you one way, and flee before you seven ways. 8 The Lord will command the blessing upon you in your barns, and in all that you undertake; he will bless you in the land that the Lord your God is giving you. 9 The Lord will establish you as his holy people, as he has sworn to you, if you keep the commandments of the Lord your God and walk in his ways. 10 All the peoples of the earth shall see that you are called by the name of the Lord, and they shall be afraid of you. 11 The Lord will make you abound in prosperity, in the fruit of your womb, in the fruit of your livestock, and in the fruit of your ground in the land that the Lord swore to your ancestors to give you. 12 The Lord will open for you his rich storehouse, the heavens, to give the rain of your land in its season and to bless all your undertakings. You will lend to many nations, but you will not borrow. 13 The Lord will make you the head, and not the tail; you shall be only at the top, and not at the bottom—if you obey the commandments of the Lord your God, which I am commanding you today, by diligently observing them, 14 and if you do not turn aside

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from any of the words that I am commanding you today, either to the right or to the left, following other gods to serve them.

Warnings against Disobedience

15 But if you will not obey the Lord your God by diligently observing all his commandments and decrees, which I am commanding you today, then all these curses shall come upon you and overtake you:

16 Cursed shall you be in the city, and cursed shall you be in the field.

17 Cursed shall be your basket and your kneading-bowl.

18 Cursed shall be the fruit of your womb, the fruit of your ground, the increase of your cattle, and the issue of your flock.

19 Cursed shall you be when you come in, and cursed shall you be when you go out.

20 The Lord will send upon you disaster, panic, and frustration in everything you attempt to do, until you are destroyed and perish quickly, on account of the evil of your deeds, because you have forsaken me.

These blessings and warnings apply to any Nation, people or persons. Even though most people today no longer live on the land or practice subsistence farming, everyone everywhere depends on the land and its resources to survive. and is still accountable to be its steward.

Basic Principles of Stewardship

1. All Natural Resources and all wealth derived from them are meant to be developed. To neglect or waste any of them is evil. (This involves far more, and is often other than, environmentalism and “going green”.)

2. Natural Resources and Wealth derived from them exist for the benefit of all people around the globe, not for only a select few or minority. They are to be shared by all. Monopolies and Hoarding are evil. Selfishness and greed are evil. Oppression of any people by denying them their right to share is evil

The challenge is to implement these ideals. We need to go to the Book. The Bible explains the mechanism for developing and sharing wealth. Biblical Law makes many provisions for how this can happen. To begin with, private (but not absolute) ownership of property (including intellectual and social capital) and wealth is fundamental. Second, all people have the right and responsibility to be engaged in the production and distribution of goods and services. Third, surplus and scarcity of goods and services are to be expected with the growth of population and production. This will lead to exchange and trade, governed by supply and demand. Biblically informed Christians will support the ideal of free-market Capitalism. Last, there shall be continual, intentional, organized efforts to insure that no one is left out of this process, especially victims of disaster, violence or tragedy.

Economic activity is essentially people exchanging goods and services for other goods and

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services. (Money is one means of such exchange.) Capitalism requires people to have the freedom to make such exchanges as they will, freedom to make economic choices without coercion. People must be allowed to make up their own minds as to what they want and what they will pay or do for it. It is a voluntary and peaceful choice.

Capitalism is criticized for being unchristian, especially fostering greed. In truth, Capitalism fosters the human right to be free, free to make choices, to hold property and to make exchanges of goods and services as one wants. And far from greed, free markets must put others first. To be successful, businesses must ever seek to meet the needs of people. If they do not serve people successfully, over time they will fail as businesses. All of this, of course, assumes that producers and consumers are all protected from fraud, deception and theft. That oversight is the government's responsibility.

When people criticize Capitalism they are really attacking interventionism. That is when there is government intervention in the market, when decisions are made by elite planners and bureaucrats rather than producers and consumers. Socialism is opposed in principle to the free market and seeks to replace its freedom of choices with some form of centralized control. That control sets prices and production levels. Socialism exercises government control to determine outcomes to achieve goals desired by the experts and planners. If Capitalism means freedom, Socialism means coercion. Socialism is supposed to reflect Christian values and be truly humane, yet it is the system that denies people basic economic freedoms. It is Socialism, not Capitalism that creates the conditions that make monopolies possible and the concentration of wealth and power in the hands of the few.

The Founding Fathers and our Constitution recognized the realities of sin and the weakness of human nature. That is why it established limited Federal Government with a system of checks and balances. Capitalism and constitutional Federalism go hand in hand. Human beings need both political and economic freedom.

In brief, these are Biblical Basics about Wealth and how it is to be created and used as God planned.