

## Income Redistribution and Slavery

One fact that continues to astonish me is that many people today have no problem with certain forms of slavery. You would think that in 21<sup>st</sup> century people would have learned to abhor it, but that is not the case. Support for it is growing by leaps and bounds, even among people who really ought to know better.

Of course, we don't call it slavery anymore and we implement it a little differently than we did in the past. The institution itself, however, is still more or less the same: the economic output of one person is taken away from him by force and is given to someone else. People are forced to work for others and give them what they earn, whether they want to or not. Apparently what people objected to was the *word* slavery, and not the *concept*. Forcing other people to work for you against their will is widely accepted and praised.

So what is slavery? The dictionary defines it like this:

1. the state or condition of being a slave; a civil relationship whereby one person has absolute power over another and controls his life, liberty, and fortune
2. the subjection of a person to another person, esp in being forced into work

In the old days slavery was very direct: one person owned another person outright and forced the slave to work for him until he died. The slave did all the work and the owner reaped all the benefits. The slave was forced to live on whatever the owner let him have. Society eventually outlawed this arrangement, but it kept the idea of allowing one person to forcibly take what another person had produced. People are no longer allowed to own other people, but they *can* legally take away other people's income by force and keep it for themselves, without providing anything in return. The net effect is remarkably similar to slavery: one person works and someone else takes his money.

Now, it's true that it's illegal to break into people's houses and steal their things. That will land you in prison. However, you *can* use the government to take away other people's money and have it given to you, which has exactly the same effect. Today we call it the "redistribution of income." Welfare is one example, but there are many others. The money that is handed out as welfare doesn't grow on trees or fall out of the sky. Instead money is forcibly taken from one person and given to someone else – and this happens on a regular, recurring basis, as if people were slaves and had no right to keep what they had earned. When a thug forcibly takes money away from other people we put him in prison, but when the government does it on behalf of *that same thug* we somehow think it's ok. Apparently if you use the government as an intermediary it makes stealing morally acceptable.

For example, countless millions of dollars are given to farmers in the form of ethanol subsidies, even though some of these farmers are millionaires that own tens of thousands of acres. Where did that subsidy money come from? Why, it was forcibly taken from other taxpayers. Any taxpayer who refuses to give up their money to the millionaire farmer will be prosecuted and, depending on the circumstances, put in prison. In other words, money was taken from one person under threat of imprisonment and given to millionaires.

Of course, farmers are not the only offenders. There are a great many other groups of people that end up with other people's money: bankers who are bailed out by the government, artists who are given grants, students who are given free tuition, and people who are too lazy to work (to just name a few). If these people had mugged Joe Smith and stolen his wallet they would have all been arrested, but since they used the power of government to empty Joe's wallet for them it's all somehow ok. I have to ask: how can people not realize that getting a third party to take away your neighbor's property for you

*is just as immoral as stealing it yourself?* Everyone realizes that hiring a hit man to kill an enemy makes you just as much a murderer as if you had killed him personally. But somehow, when it comes to stealing, we think that using an intermediary makes it moral.

Some would say “Well, these people need the money. How could lazy slobs survive without welfare? How could students go to college? How could sick people get the care they need? The need is so great that it makes it all right. It's just social justice.” That sounds all wise and noble, but honestly, it makes no difference. Think about it: if a drug addict broke into your home, stole your TV, and told the cops “I did it because I needed the money”, his excuse isn't going to make a bit of difference. The judge doesn't care that the burglar was a student trying to pay his college tuition. It doesn't matter how great your need is: *you are not allowed to take things that belong to other people*. There is nothing “just” about it.

The Bible has something to say when it comes to this sort of situation:

**Exodus 20:15:** “Thou shalt not steal.”

This is very easy to understand: you are *not* allowed to take things that belong to other people. It doesn't matter if you're poor, or hungry, or wealthy, or want higher margins on your corn crop. It doesn't matter if your bank is failing, or you're behind on your mortgage, or you made some bad investments. You *cannot* help yourself to other people's money. Period.

Now, there is nothing wrong with *giving* money to the poor – in fact, the Bible commands it. We are to love our neighbors and do what we can to help them. However, there is a *tremendous* difference between giving money to someone *and having that person steal it from you*. The fact that the person may need the money does *not* give him the right to steal it:

**Proverbs 6:30:** “Men do not despise a thief, if he steal to satisfy his soul when he is hungry;

31 But if he be found, he shall restore sevenfold; he shall give all the substance of his house.”

In this country people accept the idea that there's nothing wrong with forcing other people to pay your bills. If a student needs money to go to college, just have the government confiscate the funds from other people. If an elderly person needs prescription drugs, just have the government loot other people's bank accounts. If a person is sick, just have the government force someone else to pay their medical expenses.

People no longer have the idea that it is the *individual's responsibility* to pay for the things that they consume. People should pay for their own college, or their own drugs, or their own medical bills. If they can't then the honest thing to do is to ask for help, *not* arrange for someone to forcibly take money from other people. That is called *stealing*.

Sadly, this concept has been entirely lost on today's society. Few people believe that a person has a right to keep the money he's earned, or that other people do *not* have a right to take it from him. People enjoy living at other people's expense, which is exactly what slavery is all about.

The redistribution of wealth in any form – be it through subsidies, or welfare, or some sort of “benefit” – is a grossly immoral act that is simply legalized theft. America has not outlawed slavery; it has simply changed it into something that is socially acceptable. However, changing the name does not change the reality. Just because you call it “social justice” instead of slavery doesn't mean you're doing something moral.

God, however, is not amused. Just because theft is legal doesn't mean God is going to give it a pass. There is a peculiar thing about welfare states: they always destroy themselves. As more and more people start believing that their neighbors should be forced to pay their bills, the pool of people who are

willing to be stolen from starts to dry up. Eventually there are more parasites than hosts and society collapses, overwhelmed by debt and unable to pay its bills. Nor can it rise again, because this sort of theft has a way of exterminating the productive members of society – and without them, all you have left are leeches that demand to be paid for doing nothing at all.