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THE BEREANS

ACTS 17:11

Bereans “received the word with great eagerness, examining the Scriptures daily, to see whether these things were so.”

1

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THE BEREANS

ACTS 17:11

Galatians 5:13-15
Lesson #20
Abused Freedom
10/12/2025

2

Hard Questions

How is one's Christian faith to be reflected in political matters?



Recognize and Resist the dark side of freedom.

Be “salt and light” as alien ambassadors of God's Kingdom in this world.

3

Satan's “game plan”

2 Corinthians 2:11
“... in order that no advantage be taken of us by Satan; for **we are not ignorant of his schemes.**”



2 Corinthians 4:4
“...the **god of this world has blinded the minds** of the unbelieving, **that they might not see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ**, who is the image of God.”

2 Corinthians 12:7
“there was given me a thorn in the flesh, a messenger of Satan **to buffet me— to keep me from exalting myself!**”

Luke 22:31
“Satan has demanded permission to **sift you like wheat;**”

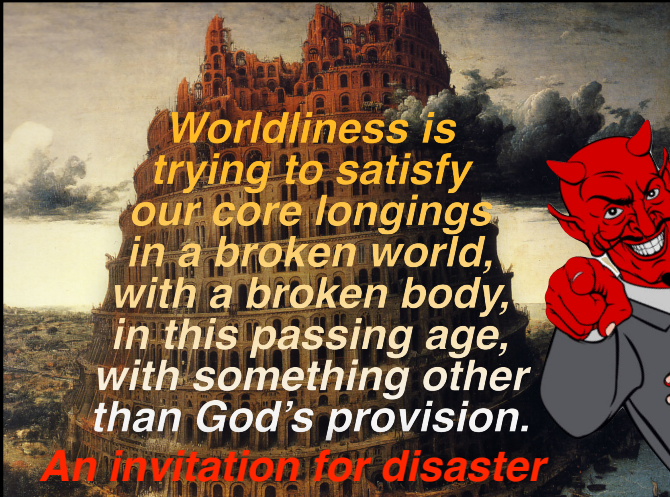
4

Satan does not want to take away our faith, hope, and love.
He just wants to control the
subject & object of our faith, hope & love.



Christians should model Virtue and Vigilance

5

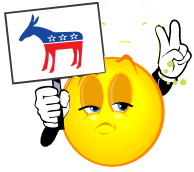


Worldliness is trying to satisfy our core longings in a broken world, with a broken body, in this passing age, with something other than God's provision.

An invitation for disaster

6

The religious left is tempted to:



- Give the state a Messianic role in the life of people. **"The state functions as savior."**
- Define the human dilemma in material terms. **"Save bodies not souls."**
- Promote community apart from the Spirit of Christ. **"Ethics is an economic & individual rights issue."**
- See the poor as (primarily) victims of the greedy rich and a capitalistic system that takes unfair advantage of them. **"The poor need a hand and a handout."**
- Look down their nose at the political right. **"Conservatives are selfish, materialistic, intolerant, autocratic, and evil."**

7

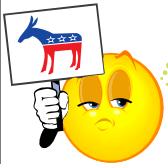
The religious right is tempted to:



- Make uncritical nationalism a sacred calling. **"Our country is always right."**
- Define God's blessing in terms of the American dream. **Kingdom values get confused with personal material blessing.**
- Confront select personal moral sins only. **"God will bless us if we repent of abortion, immorality, & socialism."**
- See the poor as (primarily) lazy and irresponsible who could change their state if they would only work harder, and smarter. **"The poor only need opportunity."**
- Demonize the left. **"Political liberals are always naive and usually (always) power hungry, wrong, and probably not serious Christians."**

8

Both sides share some things in common:



- They are preoccupied with the temporal / material. **"It's all about this life and now."**
- They are convinced that the solutions are political. **"It's all about social systems."**
- They associate their politics with their theology. **"God is on our side."**
- They are more committed to being "understood" rather than "trying to understand" each other. **"We don't need or care to hear about your ideas."**
- They demonize the other side. **"We are the only ones addressing the real issues with the right motives, and realistic solutions."**

9



Matthew 4

"² And after He had fasted forty days and forty nights, He then became hungry. ³ And **the tempter came and said to Him . . .**"

At the heart of worldliness is not only a displaced faith, hope, and love but also a (worldly) wisdom that makes perfect sense of this displacement, as with Eve in the Garden of Eden.

10

Satan doesn't mind people using the Bible and quoting it authoritatively so long as they ignore its **CONTEXT and the **WAY OF THE CROSS** in applying it.**



Christians are to be **AMBASSADORS of the Gospel in this world, and also, **ALIENS** to this world's displaced application of the Gospel.**

11

LIBERTY is America's strength

John 8:36

"If therefore the Son shall make you free, you shall be **free indeed.**"

Pledge of Allegiance

"Liberty and justice for all."

2 Corinthians 3:17

"Now the Lord is the Spirit; and where the Spirit of the Lord is, **there is liberty.**"

Preamble to the Constitution

"secure the blessings of **liberty** for ourselves and our posterity."

It is the heart of the gospel.



It can be Satan's tool.

12

Freedom comes with risks of abuse.

Galatians 5

"13 For you were called to freedom, brethren; only **do not turn your freedom into an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another.** 14 For the whole Law is fulfilled in one word, in the statement, 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' 15 But if you bite and devour one another, take care lest you be consumed by one another."

The founding fathers of the American political experiment put in checks and balances to guard against abuse of freedom.

13

The abuse of freedom and power



Matthew 4

God's power is misdirected

"3 **Command** that these stones become bread."

God's protection is misused

6 **He will command His angels concerning you** so that you will not strike your foot against a stone."

God's plan is misunderstood

9 All these things I will give you, **if you (prostrate yourself before) me.**"

14



Too many, love Jesus, primarily as a **means** to the "good life", not as the **model** of that life.

Jesus is NOT

"Chaplain of the American Dream"

15

America's government drew wisdom from history.

Classical Representative Government



"There never was a democracy yet that did not commit suicide." John Adams

Republic strong Senate

Empire weak Senate

Glory

Roman government

Failure

The framers of our Constitution looked to ancient Rome's Republic for civil government's structure and to Biblical values for virtue in avoiding abuse.

They sought to learn from history the importance of checks and balances in political power and separation of church and state.

16

Checks and balances to avoid abuse of power



JUDICIAL
interprets the Law



CONGRESS
makes the Law



EXECUTIVE
enforces the Law

CHURCH
values & virtue



Christians should show others how to manage both human dignity & depravity in community.

17

Virtue begins with the community of faith, but should not end there.

Galatians 6

"9 And let us not lose heart in **doing good**, for in due time we shall reap if we do not grow weary. 10 So then, while we have opportunity, **let us do good to all men, and especially to those who are of the household of the faith.**"

Christian community should be "salt & light" **to the broader culture.**

"Doing good" modeling values, character, and responses to life, **is a visual aid to the Gospel.**

18

Mark 10

"35 And James and John, the two sons of Zebedee, *came up to Him, saying to Him, "Teacher, we want You to do for us whatever we ask of You." 36 And He said to them, "What do you want Me to do for you?" 37 And they said to Him, "**Grant that we may sit in Your glory**, one on Your right, and one on Your left."

42 And calling them to Himself, Jesus said to them, "You know that those who are recognized as **rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them; and their great men exercise authority over them.** 43 But it is not so among you, but whoever wishes to become great among you shall be your servant; 44 and whoever wishes to be first among you shall be slave of all. 45 **For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many.**"

19

1 Corinthians 4 (Corinth)

"8 You are already filled, **you have already become rich, you have become kings** ... 10 We are fools for Christ's sake, but you are prudent in Christ; we are weak, but you are strong; **you are distinguished, but we are without honor.**"

Revelation 4:17 (Laodicea)

"You say, "I am rich, and have become wealthy, and have need of nothing," and **you do not know that you are wretched and miserable and poor and blind and naked.**"

Matthew 4 (Jesus)

"8 Again, the devil took Him to a very high mountain, and showed Him all the kingdoms of the world, and their glory; 9 and he said to Him, "**All these things will I give You, if You fall down and worship me.**"

20



Tiberius (AD 14-37) Caligula (AD 37-41) Nero (AD 54-68) Domitian (AD 81-96) Caracalla (AD 211-217) Diocletian (AD 284-305)

These emperors all shared a **Like Jesus we should similar "strongman" profile. not lord it over others.**



21

Signs of a "strongman" - Autocratic, Dictator

- ✓ **"fear mongering"** - the sky is falling.
- ✓ **"faultless arrogance"** - messianic complex.
- ✓ **"fracture institutions"** - divide and disarm.
- ✓ **"fabricated facts"** - the truth is relative.
- ✓ **"false hopes"** - only I can save you.
- ✓ **"fake news"** - only I have the truth.
- ✓ **"forced compliance"** - follow me or I will destroy you.



Christians should recognize & resist the "strongman" spirit before it takes control as it often has in history.

22

Christians on the extremes of both political sides share more in common than they realize.

- **They see American politics as key.**
- **They put their hope in this life.**
- **They seek worldly power.**



They both neglect the Way of the Cross.

23

Declaration of Independence

"We hold these truths to be self-evident, that **all men are created equal**, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain **unalienable Rights**..."

All men are created equal in value to their Creator, but not in life's circumstances.

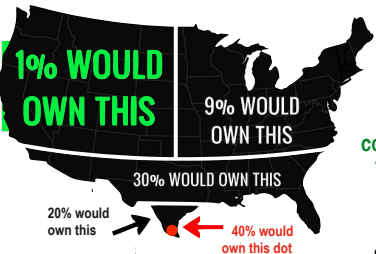
1 Corinthians 4:7

"For who regards you as superior? And what do you have that you did not receive? But if you did receive it, why do you boast as if you had not received it?"

The "have lots" promote the general welfare, by caring for the "have nots".

24

If U.S. land were divided like U.S. wealth



1% WOULD OWN THIS

9% WOULD OWN THIS

30% WOULD OWN THIS

20% would own this

40% would own this dot

The problem with the 40% in the red dot is that their lack of wealth is too often linked to a lack of dignity, access to goods / services, influence, and opportunity.

The biggest worry with concentration of wealth is that the 1% will buy themselves favors from government.

The challenge for a "free society" is to produce a just distribution of goods and services along with freedom and productivity.

The "have lots" and "have nots" are family

Christians should recognize & resist a "survival of the fittest" economic spirit that invites stress & autocracy.

25

Christian capitalists

Competition that is fair

It is motivated by the pursuit of efficiency, and effectiveness as stewards more than personal comfort and power as consumers.

Cooperation that is proactive

It is sensitive to the well-being of the community as well as the family and the individual.

Compassion that is sacrificial

It is free to be generous and sensitive in addressing the true needs of others, especially those without power or opportunity.

26

Civil Christian citizens

- Major on majors & minor on minors.
- Build bridges not bunkers.
- Grow antenna not horns.
- Be a peacemaker not a warmonger.
- Follow principles & context not rules & proof texts.
- Avoid religiosity, churchianity, and bibliolatry.
- "Sovereign grace" is not one word but two.
- Know yourself, accept yourself, get over yourself, and then give yourself.
- Promote: truth, transparency, trust, trustworthiness, thankfulness, tolerance, toughness, & tenderness.

27

Happiness Index.



November 2017

FACTORS

- Health care access
- Education quality
- Social support (family, church, etc.)
- Environmental sensitivity
- Peace emphasis
- Trustworthy leadership

Christians should lead the way by sensitizing Americans to a better "general welfare".

USA #108 of 140 vs COSTA RICA #1 of 140

28

Hard Questions



Next week
1 Pet.3:15-16

How should we defend the Christian faith?

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