

## Intro:

In the first unit of the Worldview study of Government, we said the following:

- Government is God's idea
- Therefore, government is good
- Government's fundamental purpose is to administer justice
- Justice is founded on the concept of the image of God in man

I also said that government would have been necessary, even in an unfallen world. This is an idea that got much questioning and I am afraid distracted us from my main points. If you disagree with that point, that is fine, I think we can make the four points above without agreeing on this one.

Today we are going to move to the second unit, which will describe political ideologies in a fallen world. The title of the unit is:

### *Government: Idolatrous Ideologies*

Why do people say “don't talk about religion and politics”?

Because “conversations ... tend to either go nowhere or get heated quickly. Or both.” [Ward 252]

- You need the omniscience of God to come to perfect conclusions in both realms.
- Views in both realms are dependent on worldviews that affect our thinking and values, and worldviews are dependent on presuppositions held by faith.

“**On the religious side.** People simply can't know by themselves why we are all here, what has gone wrong with our world, and how to fix it. That's why they look to their worldview, which is based ultimately on faith.

“**On the political side.** The world is too complex for any human (given all our limitations) to perfectly predict which political policies will be successful. That's why people look to their political ideology, which is also ultimately based on faith.” [Ward, 252]

- Political ideologies are based on an underlying concept of human nature.
- This makes political ideologies theological, or religious — “because concepts of human nature are theological.” [Ward, 252]

Secular political ideologies tend to be false in two ways:

- They almost never view evil in the world as sin
- They almost always see salvation from “the evil” as something other than God

“Even though political ideologies all have problems, Christians shouldn’t expect any ideology to be wrong on every point. All the prevalent political ideologies have correctly grasped one or more creational norms. In addition, the good things in creation that these ideologies look to for salvation from the problems of life really exist—they’re just insufficient to save.” [Ward, 252-253]

This unit will discuss these ideologies: liberalism, democracy, socialism, conservatism. Today we will discuss liberalism.

## I. Liberalism Defined

Note: in this section, we will define some terms. There won’t be much Bible until we get to Liberalism Evaluated, which is our next point.

### A. Not simply party politics

1. In our country, we have a Liberal Party and a Conservative Party (and others)
2. While the Liberal Party tends to be more liberal in its ideology, it is not simply a matter of party labels that makes for liberalism

### B. Liberalism historically

1. Liberalism describes an ideology that makes liberty its fundamental political value
2. Actually, most of the political parties in our country are liberals in this sense
  - a. They all agree that liberty is a good thing
  - b. They disagree on what liberty is and how liberty should be expressed
  - c. There are two major forms of liberalism: classical liberalism and progressive liberalism

### C. Classical liberals

1. Believe that people have natural rights to life, liberty, and property

2. Believe that the state [the government] is the greatest threat to liberty, so value limited government
3. Believe that all men are created equal as persons, but all men do not experience equal outcomes for various reasons

#### D. Progressive liberals

1. The industrial revolution produced great inequalities between men
2. Some came to believe the wealthy were the greatest threat to liberty, so a new form of liberalism developed
3. Progressives thought limitation of the wealthy (and their businesses) would provide the greatest liberty for the common man
  - a. Labour regulations
  - b. Welfare state, etc.
4. Progressive thought continued to develop the idea of liberty so that it insisted the individual has the right to define his own freedom
  - a. To say there is one “common good” for all violates individual freedom
  - b. So progressives supported sexual revolution and freedom of choice for abortion, etc.
5. However, God has a way of turning men’s rebellion against him: Rm 1.24, he gives people over to the sins they desire
  - a. Freedoms go against God’s norms, so freedoms become slaveries
  - b. Sexual freedom leads to family breakdown, disease, poverty
  - c. Drugs, alcohol lead to addiction, crime, accidental deaths
6. Progressive answer: expand government to protect against consequences of individual freedoms

## II. Liberalism Evaluated

When you evaluate a political ideology, you must remember that it is “informed by an underlying concept of human nature.” At the heart of each form of liberalism is an emphasis on liberty as the great good which must be defended. For liberalism this liberty, or self-rule, is often overemphasized and out of balance with other norms that God built into the created order. [Ward,

255 – quote fr. Nancy Love, *Dogmas and Dreams*, 7.]

## A. Classic Liberalism

1. Place a high value on the free market which allows
  - a. Individuals and businesses the freedom to excel
  - b. Produces competition which promotes innovation
  - c. Motivates people to strive to better themselves and the world around them
  - d. Has been the greatest force to reduce poverty
2. “But everything is fallen, including the market” [Ward, 255]
  - a. Nineteenth century liberals objected to safety regulations and child labour laws
  - b. Tend to deny that people can be paid unfair wages in a free market
  - c. The Bible frequently commands the wealthy not to oppress the poor (Deut. 24:14; Prov. 3:27; 29:7; Jer. 22:13–17; Mal. 3:5)
  - d. Government has a mandate from God to ensure justice, even in a free market
  - e. Also, in a free market system, everything tends to be reduced to markets, denying morals and morality
    - 1) Instead of teaching morals, “incentivizing” good behaviour becomes the strategy
    - 2) Parents provide financial incentives for children getting good grades
    - 3) Churches organized to market religion to their communities

“When everything is seen as a market, moral considerations get sidelined.” [Ward, 255]

## B. Progressive Liberalism

1. Strong biblical criticism for working to free from creational norms, especially in area of sexuality

2. Man made in the image of God given command to be fruitful and multiply (Gen 1.28)
  - a. Yet progressives want freedom from gender roles
  - b. And from sexual morality
  - c. And to be able to choose one's own gender
3. Creation mandate implies that work is good
  - a. Progressive poverty programs reward people for not working
  - b. The Bible says if a man will not work, he shall not eat (2 Thess 3.10)
4. Progressives turn to government to protect and promote the freedoms they value
  - a. Government's primary purpose is to ensure justice
  - b. When government helps men be free from creational norms, government perpetuates injustice
  - c. Some functions of the progressive state belong to other institutions created by God: If the state
    - 1) Attempts to run a business
    - 2) Manages how families raise their children
    - 3) Oversees worship in churches...the state will fail in fulfilling these functions
5. Progressives are not wrong about everything
  - a. The Bible calls for safe working conditions (Ex 21.29)
  - b. The Bible advocates a basic safety net for the poor (Lev 19.9-10; Dt 14.28-29, 24.21)

## Conclusion:

"Look at the places in the world where people are free to do what is right in their own eyes without government intrusion, such as Somalia. People there are not truly free. They're caught among the gears of a country grinding to a halt. ... Government is not a necessary evil; it is a God-established (though fallen) good. ... Liberalism overemphasizes liberty. It looks to freedom as a

savior from many problems. But liberals easily get carried away with cries for liberty while not stopping to ask themselves, 'Liberty to do what?' Liberty, like justice, must be based on moral judgments. Will those moral judgments be shaped by individual desires or by Scripture?" [Ward, 256-257]