

# CHAPTER SEVEN

## Risk, Self-Respect, and Redemptive Struggle

*“Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, this he will also reap.”*

Gal. 6:7

MASTER PRINCIPLE #7

**The possibility of a failure is essential for human growth.**

A truly free society encourages obedience to God, is compassionate to the truly needy, and permits man to be freely blessed or penalized as a consequence of his own choices. The opposite is true for the modern liberal state:

Its economic policies enslave the needy with ineffective, addictive aid, and it shields large numbers of its citizens from the consequences of their sins with financial policies that promote rebellion against God’s laws. Committed to parentalism, the modern state promotes moral failure and penalizes virtue. These are tall charges. Are they really true?

As we touch the issues surrounding the relationship between risk, failure, and moral growth, we will be dealing with the concepts which underpin a society’s economic policies in the areas of welfare, insurance and health care policies, and criminal justice. Even after all these years it is still amazing to me how our collective spiritual values (or lack thereof) have such a direct bearing on economic policy. The study of economics is the study of how spiritual choices play themselves out in the material world. As the Almighty’s project associates, we must become experts in understanding these basic spiritual/economic relationships. Unless we do, we will be poor citizens and likewise unable to fulfill the Master’s great commission of disciplining nations with public policy that is built upon observing all that Christ commanded.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Matt. 28:18-20

## **Self-Respect Comes from God's Feedback System**

One of the crises of the modern world is the quest for “authenticity,” “meaning,” and “self-respect.” But all of these necessary and elusive traits only have ultimate meaning if they are given to us by a source greater than our own self. Indeed, honest men and women recognize, as the mountain of self-help and self-acceptance books pile up in both Christian and secular bookstores, that “me liking me” is an exercise in Zen Buddhism: “How can hand grasp hand” or self approve of self? Put another way, which “me” is qualified to authenticate “me”? And how can I accept the validity of the evidence both received and evaluated by my own self? The scripture, as always, says it best: “The heart is more deceitful than all else and is desperately sick; who can understand it?”<sup>2</sup> Amen.

The human heart is elusive, evasive, self-centered, and desperately needs an objective yardstick *outside of itself* to measure where it is. God's answer to the “yardstick” need is the reality of *cause and effect* as revealed in God's Law/Word. Do *this*, and *this* will happen. Plant corn; you'll never get spinach. Unbiblically create debt; you'll lose your freedom. Commit adultery; your self-esteem is destroyed. Jump off a high building; you'll die. Culturally fail to discipline the children; your nation's taxes required to operate your courts and the criminal justice system will skyrocket. Touch the hot stove; you'll burn your hand. Reality is our feedback system. But you can only correctly interpret reality in life the way God has instructed us, and that is through His Word. Without the Word of God as your teaching guide, interpreting reality's feedback system becomes subjective, chaotic, and unreliable and leads us into both confusion and deception.

So why would anyone want to conceal the proper evaluation of the feedback system? Because they don't want to obey the rules, or have others obey the rules. It makes their rebellion harder to hide. So how do those who oppose God's feedback system try to keep men from reading it correctly? Here are two simple techniques: (1) by rejecting and ridiculing the Word of God, and shielding the citizens

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<sup>2</sup> Jer. 17:9

of a culture from it as much as their society's constitutional law permits; and (2) by using tax dollars to "muffle" the effects of sin on the disobedient by providing them goods and services to lessen the blows of cause-and-effect. Welcome to the truly anti-Christ philosophy behind the liberal modern state. Once you see this truth, it's a mind-boggler.

### **The State Resists God's Feedback System**

If you fornicate, the state will either directly or indirectly help you kill the child through abortion, or help you raise it using other people's money. If you become addicted to anything, it will help keep you addicted, or pay for help for you, as long as it is not Christian in nature. If you steal, instead of pressing you to make biblical restitution, the state will cage you up at a cost of \$25,000 a year at the taxpayer's expense. Commit a "white-collar" crime, and the state will make your stay even nicer. The state will pay subsidies of all kinds to rich and poor alike and rig the game as best it can so that the laws of cause-and-effect are blunted, dulled, and made less obvious. If you somehow awakened to reality and repented, that would look bad for the rest of us. The price tag to all of us is higher taxes, bureaucracy, colossal injustice, and most of all, the trapping of people in their sin.

The state keeps people enslaved because they have the tax resources to do so. What is worse is that the modern state adds insult to injury and does so in the name of "compassion"! This false earthly compassion is economic futility and immoral co-dependency of the worst order, followed by eternal Hell for its victims! That, friend, is some kind of "compassion." God's Word perfectly pierces the smoke-and-mirrors of the modern welfare taxation policy which does this, summing up the matter with the following truth: "The compassion of the wicked is cruel."<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Prov. 12:10

We'll talk more about the public policy implications of this later, but what does all this have to do with the nature of self-respect? A great, great deal. Self-respect is built on the fact that God and His feedback system are set up to reveal whether or not you're pleasing Him and moving in the right direction. The false protection and false compassion we are exposing here will not let the "ball of life" bounce back to you in truth. It either doesn't come back to you at all, or comes back at lying angles. That's what false compassion does: It lies, and therefore destroys any possibility of true self-respect.

Scripture says that "the fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge."<sup>4</sup> In the game of life, I recognize that both God and His universe can play rough and hard. This is the first ultimate reality I must accept and build my life around. We serve a God who doesn't rig the game and who has enough moral courage to let people go to Hell. Why? Is it because He's a mean-spirited, vindictive God as some have foolishly reasoned? No. It's because God recognizes that without the possibility of failure, success would have no meaning. Our God is very deep, to say the least.

If I can't fail, I can't truly succeed. And if I do succeed without the possibility of failure, where is my self-respect? The game was actually rigged; the yardstick of reality was in fact made of elastic compromise! The liberal denies men self-respect by demanding that the state supply a safety net under the universe's trapeze and high wire act.

### **Rewards and Penalties Teach Us Reality**

Rewards and penalties teach us God's limits and God's way. He leads us by the rod<sup>5</sup> of adversity, as sin is revealed and character forged. By the staff<sup>6</sup> of His protection and provision we stay within the pasture of obedience to His Word and guidance. The reality and risk of penalty teach us dependency and obedience to Christ and the

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<sup>4</sup> Prov. 1:7

<sup>5</sup> Psa. 23:4

<sup>6</sup> Psa. 23:4

necessity for the power of the Holy Spirit within us to enable us to obey Him. Those who shield us from failure ultimately produce our dependence upon them rather than God. That is slavery to sin and unreality. No self-respect can be found behind a false shield, and those who offer me a false shield are really acting as my enemy, all in the name of “caring.”

Even the mottos on the walls of our gyms and exercise rooms preach a truer gospel than the liberals. They say, “No pain, no gain.” And so God has made it. The possibility of failure and pain is essential for human growth. Rig the game through false compassion, and you trap your dependent victims in their sins. Welcome to an economy drowning in a sea of red ink called “false help.”

### **Exposing the Modern State As a False Parent**

*When the earth experiences Thy judgments, the inhabitants of the world learn righteousness.*

Isa. 26:9

In the name of compassion, the modern state is committed to minimizing the risks of life for all its citizens. It is at war with God's laws of sowing and reaping. It is committed to shield the disobedient from correction, and the successful from “too much success.” It also shields those who lawfully play the loopholes of the law to keep from getting caught, especially if they are a part of the power structure. It is a false parent, protecting its citizens from a “mean” God. “The state will save,” it says, “not God.” And it does so through taxation.

While it is beyond the scope of an introductory book on biblical economics to discuss the “state as savior,” I must make one specific application here. As immoral as abortion is, it will not be the ultimate justification for God's judgment against the modern state. This is also true of legalized pornography, unbiblical discrimination, exploitation, and the long litany of our current social ills. God will ultimately judge us economically for *keeping the people from turning to God and using tax money to do it*. This is an *eternal injustice* towards mankind, and an act of self-exalting opposition to God by the state. Economic judgment is inevitable, and its root goes deeper than our absurd and immoral

monetary and fiscal policies. It is because our economic policy opposes the very *salvation* of God Himself. The modern state has become a false and treacherous economic shield against God's cause-and-effect correction devices. False love leads to death and to hell.

### **If You Really Love Me, Let Me Struggle**

If you really love me, you won't get in the way of my struggles with self, sin, growth, and God. Remember, life was tough even for Jesus: "Although He was a Son, He learned obedience from the things which He suffered."<sup>7</sup> Let me give two illustrations that serve our point.

The first is a strong illustration from nature and tells of a little boy who sees a moth fighting its way out of its cocoon. Stopping to help it, out of compassion, he pulls out his trusty pocketknife and carefully slits open the cocoon. The moth comes out, but it dies. Why? There is something the little boy doesn't know: The moth gains the strength necessary to survive as it resists the constrictiveness of the cocoon in its battle to get out. Cut the cocoon, and it dies. How many dead and crippled human beings are on the bloodstained hands of a civil government who cut those people's cocoons and contributed to the destruction of their souls?

The second illustration asks you to make a choice based on the same principle. Suppose our nation is at war, and you get drafted. We're an "emancipated" nation, ladies, so you also get to go to the front and fight next to the men. You're off to boot camp to get combat ready. But this is a modern army of choice: You can go to Drill Sergeant Jones (who has a reputation for being a tough, cruel disciplinarian and makes boot camp a living hell), or you can go to Drill Sergeant Smith (who is a genuinely concerned, compassionate, and sensitive trainer). Which drill sergeant do you choose?

I know which one I want: Drill Sergeant Jones. Give me a mean, dirty, tough instructor whom I may curse in boot camp, but bless on the battlefield because he trained me to stay alive! The kinder, gentler

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<sup>7</sup> Heb. 5:8

Mr. Smith is no friend of mine even though I may like him as a person far better. Sergeant Jones obviously knows the real issue: Like him or hate him, he couldn't give a rip. His job is to keep you alive. Ultimately, that's real love. That's why God plays "hard ball," and His laws are sometimes tough. Those laws are designed to keep us from eternal death.

As an employer or a civil leader, you must understand that sparing people the consequences of disobedience destroys them, because failure and God's chastisement teach people the fear of the Lord. If you shield people from consequences, you are shielding them from the fear of the Lord, and you're destroying their possibility for true, earned self-respect. That respect comes from doing it right, asking no favors, and cutting yourself no slack.

Our generation grew up under parents who were instructed in secular child rearing, not by the Bible. "Don't you dare spank little Johnny!" they told us. "The Bible is an archaic book. You've got to be a child abuser if you bruise poor little Johnny's ego or bottom. If you do that, he'll grow up to be a social cripple!" A generation that went through the Great Depression and vowed never to let their children go hungry bought that nonsense. The result? The next generation seldom learned responsibility because it seldom faced consequences.

Everybody looked at the young people of the sixties and asked, "How could this be?" They should have asked, "How could this not be?" The sixties generation wasn't taught about the cost of sin. Now we are paying the bill.

Godly relationships, not civil government, should sustain us when we have needs; primarily, that means the family and not some kind of "mother state."

The state as an indulgent, sheltering mother is destroying the family. Who stepped in to shield a man and woman from dealing properly with sin and its consequences in marriage? It was the state who said, "You don't need to work it out in covenant. Get a divorce. And if you get into financial trouble, we'll cushion you. You won't go hungry. You won't go without a roof. We're the ultimate safety net."

When the state says, "We will support you, whatever happens," it destroys the family and turns people into slaves.

What is the cause of homelessness? It's the destruction of the family. What will solve homelessness? It won't be building shelters for the homeless; that will only expand the problem. Instead, we should give the homeless a one-way ticket to their nearest kin. Believe it or not, I really mean that. Send the homeless home if they have one. Give them a one-way ticket and a letter saying, "It is our joy to help reunite you with your nearest living kin. You will not get another of these tickets. Neither will you get any more welfare." Add a letter to their kin saying, "Your sister is on the way to your house. You're a family. Make it work. Signed, The State." This may sound "tough" and void of compassion, but think about the long run alternative consequences. Don't make the homeless more dependent on government handouts. Show real compassion, the kind that cares more about their growth in character and their eternal destiny than their immediate convenience.

### **What's True Love: Truth or Lies?**

Some people will object. "You don't understand. I don't like my mother. I don't like my father. I don't like my brothers, my sisters, my relatives. And they don't like me!"

The proper response? "Why should everyone else pay for your family's hassles? The government shouldn't reach into everyone's wallet to pay the price for your bickering with your sister. Go home! By God's grace, work it out. And if you won't, don't foist your problems off on somebody else."

Our economic policy has to have a slogan beneath it: "Go home." Go home for care, for housing, for wealth creation. Go home to lay up treasure for your children. Don't go to the state. Go home!

And by the way, this isn't coming from a heartless Christian fascist. In our own city, our church leader's group has helped to house, feed,

and clothe most of our city's homeless all winter for the last several years, without a pile of the federal or state government's help, I might add. But we know that we're only a stopgap measure, and we do encourage them to either go home or become responsible enough to create their own home.

Of course, the modern state doesn't want to hear this kind of truth. After all, it has its science, technology, the media, and its monetary and fiscal policy to help it continue to play the false, shielding parent to its citizens. And it has the printing presses to run out more money and the ability to create new money in the banking systems' balance sheets. The state can circumvent the consequences of inferior work, government waste, a lack of planning, and resource confiscation through unbiblical taxation. It seems "responsible" to minimize life's risks. So what? Here's what.

Today we are rapidly approaching the time when God will say, "Okay, I gave you acid indigestion, but you didn't respond. So go ahead and print your money. I will take My hands off, and your indigestion will become a cancerous stomach that will certainly immobilize you."

One of the most terrifying passages in all of God's Word is, "Ephraim is joined to idols; let him alone."<sup>8</sup> As long as God deals with you, you have hope. When He stops, you are in trouble. If you continue to rebel, God says, "All right, I will take My hands off of you and let your disobedience bring forth its own judgment."

That's what has happened to the United States. Instead of looking at the causes of our troubles, we have succumbed to the idolatrous notion that civil government can create money (which it mistakes for real riches and even for wealth) out of nothing, and that we can use this created money to buy our way out of the consequences of sin. God says, "All right, you think you can print enough money to escape judgment? Let's see how fast your presses can run. They can't outrun My judgment..."

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<sup>8</sup>Hosea 4:17

## **Recognizing Eight Cocoon-Cutting Economic Policies Destroying Our Nation**

Do you enjoy sending more than forty-five percent of everything you earn, in the form of direct and indirect taxes, to the government to continue this cruel joke? Let's listen carefully to this "jokester's" reasoning so we can vote him out of office when we hear him speaking these lies:

1. "Authority must be increasingly centralized in the state. After all, no one has the resources to solve problems like the state."
2. "Case law and bureaucratic law must gently replace constitutional law if the people who really need help and protection are to get it. The original founders of the Constitution lived in an agrarian-based culture and foresaw few of the pluralistic, urban-based problems of a democracy today. Their wisdom is dated and outmoded."
3. "In order to provide a just and compassionate safety net, taxes must be raised to provide adequate services. Those who have prospered by greed, social status, and sheer luck should obviously share their wealth with victims of life's accidents and society's prejudices."
4. "Private property is a far lesser right than compassion. Cough more of it up."
5. "Your children belong to the state in terms of their educational needs. Parents are usually well-meaning but incompetent, and their personal prejudices and preferences may prove harmful to the children in terms of preparing them to live in peace with all people, values, and life-styles in the context of modern democracy."
6. "Production and trade must be carefully regulated by the state. If we do not protect our jobs and citizens in the economics of the global market, who will?"

7. “The state will guarantee the ultimate litmus test of a society’s true freedom: consenting adult sexual freedom. If the state stays out of your bedroom, even if it’s in your board room, you are truly free.”
8. “What is good for this generation should be the best test of policy and lifestyle decision making. Each generation must be free to choose how it would live, unencumbered by the prejudices of the past and the pressures of attempting to define and resolve the elusive challenges of future generations’ problems.”

Behind each of these cocoon-cutting statements lurks a mountain of our current economic-death policies and unreality, but I spare you.

### **Jesus Takes Poverty Out of People, Not People Out of Poverty**

While chapter eight will focus more precisely on the relationship between poverty and sin, we must mention this relationship in the context of “risk” and its relationship to poverty. Minimizing people’s risk, or attempting to do so, frequently leads them into irresponsibility which ultimately leads to poverty. God’s answer to poverty is responsibility for choices, actions, and consequences. To limit any of these three leads to a loss of freedom, and a loss of freedom automatically leads to poverty, since poverty is perhaps best defined as having fewer and fewer productive choices.

Poverty is a *spiritual disease* more than an economic condition. Put more precisely, it is an inner disease of soul and spirit that manifests itself in the natural outer world by a scarcity of resources. Poverty is a set of choices which become a lifestyle. Its spiritual causes are clearly identified throughout the book of Proverbs. They include several things: laziness, fear, get-rich-quick schemes, disobedience, anger, dishonesty, bribery, idolatry, adultery, and theft. To become free of external scarcity, I must first remove it internally from myself. Both poverty and prosperity begin on the inside of us.

The state cannot cure a spiritual disease with money. That is another cocoon-cutting tactic. While compassion is essential, and supplying the opportunity to glean for oneself is an attribute of a free society,<sup>9</sup> unearned money is not the answer. It is a pocketknife in another form, designed to cut a cocoon. Unless the money is issued in the form of a repayable, non-interest bearing loan,<sup>10</sup> it is principally unjust to both the self-respect of the recipient and the freedom of the taxpayer from whom the revenue was secured. If that sounds tough, don't blame me. Blame our "mean" God. After all, what does the One who hung on the Cross know about real compassion? My sarcasm has a point: Truth is ultimate compassion.

### **Poverty Is about Skills, Not Money**

Charles Murray's book, *Losing Ground*,<sup>11</sup> an economic study of the so-called "War on Poverty" Programs, is familiar to most serious students of state planned cocoon-cutting in the United States. The study demonstrated (and to my knowledge remains unrefuted) the total futility of giving direct financial aid to the poor without stipulations for repayment. In the end, the recipients of these substantial amounts of dollars in the slum-laden Chicago neighborhoods came out poorer, not richer. No internal wealth was created in the people who received the money; what else could we expect but more external poverty?

God delivers us from poverty in Christ. His Word promised those who obeyed the laws of His redeemed community, "but you shall remember the Lord your God, for it is He who is giving you power to make wealth, that He may confirm His Covenant which He swore to your fathers, as it is this day."<sup>12</sup>

But how can I experience the way to that promise if you don't let me live out the consequences of my failures? Failures instruct me *on* the way and *in* the way. Without the possibility of living in my failures, I'll never grow up. ALMIGHTY & SONS is built on risk

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<sup>9</sup> Lev. 19:9-10

<sup>10</sup> Ex. 22:25; Deut. 23:19-20; Neh. 5:11-13

<sup>11</sup> *Losing Ground: American Social Policy in the 1950-80's*, New York, Basic Books 1984

<sup>12</sup> Deut. 8:18

taking. That is what makes Heaven incredibly meaningful. We really could have gone the other way: The game isn't rigged. Because it isn't rigged, I rejoice in God's saving mercy to me, and I can hold my head up because once I caught the ball, I ran with it. That is far better than "self-esteem." That is called "self-respect."

