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"He that hath pity upon the poor lendeth unto the LORD; and that which he hath given will he pay him again" (Proverbs 19:17).

## Lending to the Lord

**Lesson Subject:** God cares for the poor through caring individuals.

**L34. Date:** July 1984. **Text:** Proverbs 14:21, 31; 17:5; 19:17; 21:13; 22:2, 9, 16, 22, 23; 28:6. **Topic:** Giving: To the poor.

There is a social application of the gospel of Jesus Christ which causes one to reach out and help the poor. It is expressed in these words: *"If a brother or sister be naked, and destitute of daily food. and one of you say unto them, Depart in peace, be ye warmed and filled; notwithstanding ye give them not those things which are needful to the body; what doeth it profit?"* (James 2:15, 16). The mercy inspired by the gospel is shown by action, not just by feelings and words.

Jesus said, *"The poor always ye have with you"* (John 12:8). The opportunity to help them is always before us.

What does a Christian do when a genuinely needy person comes for help? Send him to an agency of the government? No! Jesus said, *"Give ye them to eat"* (Mark 6:37). Christian mercy must be tangible as well as emotional: God cares for the poor and He does it through the benevolence of His people.

Jesus spoke of thirsty, naked, destitute, and imprisoned people who were ministered to by His people. He praised such benevolent concern, saying, *"Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me"* (Matthew 25:40). A deed of kindness to the needy is a deed of kindness done to the Lord himself. That is why Proverbs 19:17 reads, *"He that hath pity upon the poor lendeth unto the LORD; and that which he hath given will he pay him again. "*

## I. GIVE MERCY TO THE POOR

**A. Giving mercy to the poor will bring you happiness.** There is a natural tendency in people to despise the poor and fawn over the rich (Proverbs 14:21). Such an attitude is selfish, for one hopes to promote himself by the favor of the wealthy. How different that is from the attitude God has.

Psalm 41:1-3 reads, *"Blessed is he that considereth the poor."* Then it lists those blessings as (1) deliverance in time of trouble, (2) preservation, (3) sparing the life, (4) blessing on the earth, (5) protection from his enemies, (6) strengthening in weakness, and (7) good health. Those blessings are expanded in the list of Psalm 112. Yes, *"Light is sown for the righteous, and gladness for the upright in heart"* (Psalm 97:11).

You will find happiness as you give of your time and money to relieve the distress of people about you. You will find your own heart lightened with the inner voice of God's "Well done." Try it this week!

**B. Giving mercy to the poor will bring you honor from God.** Proverbs 14:31 reads, *"He that oppresseth the poor reproacheth his Maker: but he that honoureth him hath mercy on the poor."* Your attitude toward those in need indicates your attitude toward God. *"Life, righteousness, and honour"* are God's blessings on those who serve Him by serving needy people in His name (Proverbs 21:21). Jesus promised, *"If any man serve me, him will my Father honour"* (John 12:26).

You are serving both man and God when you help meet the needs of your fellowman. God has given His word that He will honor you for such benevolent ministry.

**C. Giving mercy to the poor will deliver you from sin.** *"Whoso mocketh the poor reproacheth his Maker"* (Proverbs 17:5). Mercy shown to the needy will deliver you from the sin of reproaching God by reproaching people made in the image of God. Such a sin deserves severe punishment. How much better it is for you to serve God by serving the needs of people in the name of God. Benevolence can be a great Christian witness!

*"Whoso hath this world's good, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him? My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue; but in deed and in truth. And hereby we know that we are of the truth, and shall assure our hearts before him"* (I John 3:17-19).

## II. GIVE MONEY TO THE POOR

**A. Gifts to the poor are gifts to God.** *"He that hath pity upon the poor lendeth unto the LORD"* (Proverbs 19:17). Benevolent gifts are not "taking money from the Lord's work"; they are the Lord's work. God has special concern for those who lack financial resources. Ancient Israel left their farms unharvested every seventh year that the poor might harvest them and have supply (Exodus 23:10, 11). The tithe of all Israel was set apart every third year to be a source from which the needs of the poor of the land could be supplied (Deuteronomy 26:12-15). You are giving to the Lord when you give to help the poor and needy.

**B. Neglect of the poor hinders your relationship with God.** *"Whoso stoppeth his ears at the cry of the poor, he also shall cry himself, but shall not be heard"* (Proverbs 21:13). Why is that true? To be unconcerned about the poor, for whom God is very concerned, is to sin. To regard iniquity in the heart closes heaven so God does not hear prayer (Psalm 66:18). We all have one heavenly Father, whether we are rich or poor. The same God has created us. To deal treacherously against another human being, or to be unconcerned about his distress, is to sin against God and His covenant (Malachi 2: 10). Look on every person as your family in view of creation, and every Christian as your family in view of redemption. Do not sin against them by refusing to help them. *"When ye sin so against the brethren, and wound their weak conscience, ye sin against Christ"* (I Corinthians 8:12).

**C. Honor of the poor is honor of God.** He has made both the rich and the poor (Proverbs 22:2). We must learn well the lesson God taught Simon Peter, *"God hath shewed me that I should not call any man common or unclean"* (Acts 10:28). No condition of finances, culture, race, or nationality makes a person unclean or second class before God. To show such partiality is to dishonor God, since all people are made in His image and likeness.

The apostle James wrote that if you honor the rich (just because they are rich) and disparage the poor (just because they are poor), you have respect of persons. *"If ye have respect to persons, ye commit sin, and are convinced of the law as transgressors"* (James 2:9). Beware!

**D. Support of the poor brings blessings from God.** He who *"giveth of his bread to the poor"* is promised God's blessings (Proverbs 22:9). God promises, *"The liberal soul shall be made fat: and he that watereth shall be watered also himself"* (Proverbs 11:25). When you give to supply the needs of others, God commits himself to give to supply your need. That is a blessed exchange. *"To the righteous good shall be repayed"* (Proverbs 13:21).

Look over your records of financial stewardship. Are you sharing in

serving God by serving needy people in the name of God? You are giving to God when you give to the poor.

### III. GIVE JUSTICE TO THE POOR

**A. Business dealings with the poor must be just.** God threatens certain retribution to one who oppresses the poor to increase his own wealth (Proverbs 22:16). Both want and death come for such a sin (Proverbs 21:6). Some will use the poor to labor at reduced wages, or even cheat them out of their due wages. But the cry of the ill-treated will come up before God (Jeremiah 22:13; James 5:1-6). He will certainly hear them and judge for them. All business dealings with the poor must be governed by honesty.

That is not a social gospel; it is the social application of the gospel. The Bible teaches that all people are made in the image and likeness of God and are equal before God. The Christian has the mind of Christ and is to deal with people as He would deal with them. Justice in society is a good witness to the change that Jesus makes in those who trust Him.

**B. Judicial decisions must be just.** The king who judges the poor justly will find his throne is established before the Lord (Proverbs 29:14). *"To do justice and judgment is more acceptable to the LORD than sacrifice"* (Proverbs 21:3). The oppression of the poor and the perverting of justice is seen of God and will certainly receive His recompense (Ecclesiastes 5:8).

We Americans can thank God we have a system of just laws; however, we must take care that the judges give verdicts based on law, not on social preference. What we give to the poor in courts of law, we are giving to God.

**C. Social relations must be just.** It is our business to *"learn to do well; seek judgment, relieve the oppressed, judge the fatherless, plead for the widow"* (Isaiah 1:17). That means we are to see that social justice is done.

The Bible says there is *"no respect of persons with God"* (Romans 2:11). That means God does not receive or reject persons on the basis of external appearance: clothing, beauty, culture, or race. He deals equally with all. We who belong to God must do the same. *"My brethren, have not the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory, with respect of persons. . . . If ye have respect to persons, ye commit sin"* (James 2:1, 9).

### IV. GIVE HONOR TO THE POOR

One can be poor in ways other than in financial resources. Many people are poor in spirit while quite wealthy in money. Christians are to *"honour all men. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honour the king"* (I Peter 2:17). How does one give honor to his fellow human beings?

**A. You honor a person when you respect his character.** *"In whose eyes a vile person is contemned; but he honoureth them that fear the LORD"* (Psalm 15:4). Respect one for what he is, not just for what he has.

**B. You honor a person when you give him time for counsel.** People in need are all about us. Blessed is the person who is able to *"speak a word in season to him that is weary"* (Isaiah 50:4). You can encourage those who are downcast and stir them up *"unto love and to good works"* (Hebrews 10:24).

**C. You honor a person when you show love to him in his hurts.** Jesus told of the good Samaritan who went to a wounded man, bound up his wounds, and took care of him (Luke 10:30-37). He instructs us to do the same to those in need about us (Job 29:15, 16). There are people who need your ministry of love today. You can serve God by serving them in the name of God.

**D. You honor a person when you pray for him.** Every Christian needs the prayer support of other Christians. *"Strive together with me in your prayers to God for me"* (Romans 15:30). *"Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints"* (Ephesians 6:18). You can help many by prayer.

**E. You honor a person as you extend hospitality for his comfort.** That was one of the earliest and greatest Christian virtues (II John 5-8; I Timothy 6:18; Hebrews 13:16). It is a neglected grace today with the convenience of motels and restaurants; however, it is an experience which has no equal. How about inviting some of God's servants to your home for food and fellowship? Both you and they will be richer for it.

No one is sufficient in himself. We need one another. God gives to each of us that we may share what we have with others. Give with joy (II Corinthians 9:7) as unto the Lord, not to others. *"He that hath pity upon the poor lendeth unto the LORD; and that which he hath given will he pay him again"* (Proverbs 19:17).

## QUESTIONS

1. Why are some people poor and others wealthy?
2. How does Matthew 25:40 make benevolence a spiritual privilege?

3. How does James 2:15, 16 show that action is better than words?
4. How is Proverbs 19:17 a key verse for this study?
5. What blessings are given in Psalm 41:1-3 for helping the poor?
6. What does Proverbs 14:31 mean?
7. How does I John 3:17-19 show that benevolence is a Christian grace?
8. What warning is given in Proverbs 21:13?
9. How can you have a part in true Christian care for the poor? 10. How can you put this lesson into practice this week?