

GRACE GAZETTE

Volume IV

Issue 17

Published occasionally for Zion's mourners

Wherefore lift up the hands which hang down, and the feeble knees; And make straight paths for your feet, lest that which is lame be turned out of the way; but let it rather be healed.

Hebrews 12:12-13

THE POOR

For ye have the poor with you always, and whensoever ye will ye may do them good: but me ye have not always. Mark 14:7

Since I grew up during the sixties, I well remember the early days of the ill fated "war on poverty" that was begun during the LBJ years. Of course this foray into "battle" was actually begun by FDR who promised wealth to all Americans nearly thirty years before. This was one war which was destined to end in defeat even before it was conceived. If the politicians, bureaucrats, and would be do-gooders of that day (or this one for that matter) had simply understood the plain words of our LORD JESUS; perhaps they would have directed their efforts and the vast amounts of cash that have since been wasted in this "war" to some more worthwhile endeavor. I once heard a man say that, "being broke is a temporary situation but being poor is a state of mind." Now there is a lot of truth in his statement even though he was only referring to poverty of a monetary kind.

The word poor appears in the New Testament thirty five times. Sometimes it is referring to those who have a lack of money but it is always referring to those who are destitute. Strong's Greek Dictionary defines poor as "destitute of wealth, influence, position, honour". Such are all of those who are considered poor in the scripture.

Now the natural man considers such a state to be undesirable but the LORD JESUS said "*Blessed (i.e.; happy) are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.*" (Matt 5:3) In another place, HE said "*The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor.*" (Luke 4:18) So the poor are those to whom HE was sent. This was a startling revelation to the religious world into which HE came. The Pharisees then, (as do their step children in the present day) think that money, power, earthly happiness, and influence are all a part of the Kingdom of GOD. One of the most pervasive and common messages heard in the religious world today is that of the promises of the tangible benefits of this world to those who are the followers of CHRIST, usually based upon their ability to perform good deeds or exercise "faith" in some greater or less proportion.

Poverty is a blessing when a man is made aware of it and can recognize that he alone is the cause of his own poverty. There are many who are in reality "poor" (since all men are so by nature, see Rom.3:23) but who think themselves to be rich. Such is a great deception. Those who drink false doctrine as water and slake their thirst at wells which send forth a corrupted stream feel themselves to be doing fine because the preachers of such doctrine usually encourage that idea. These drinkers are usually very satisfied with their "religious life" and find great fulfillment in attending unto its exercises and seeing its results. They are those who have a name to live but are dead. (see Rev.3:16,17) Then there are those who know themselves to be poor but think that someone else is the cause of it. They do not own their destitution and they feel that they are owed something. They make excuses for their sin and some even blame GOD for it, or attribute it to some schizophrenic side of them over which they have no control.

One of the greatest blessings that GOD can bestow upon a man is to give him a true understanding of exactly how, poor, destitute, and beggarly he is before the throne of GOD. Some seem to think this is but a temporary state for a true believer. I've heard some speak of "second blessings", "praying through", "getting the victory", etc. as if they had moved on beyond this state. However, it appears to me that the more a man learns of the glory and holiness of CHRIST JESUS, the more acquainted with his own poverty he becomes. Instead of growing richer in his mind, he grows poorer. Instead of reaching plateaus of blessing, he finds himself more vile as the LORD pours out HIS blessing upon him. Isaiah was a man lifted up to behold the very throne of heaven, yet he was overwhelmed with his baseness when he saw the LORD. (see Isa.6:1-6) So was Daniel during his vision and John on the isle of Patmos. (see Dan.10:1-9; Rev.1:12-17) The closer one is to the throne of GOD the more unrighteous he knows himself to be. He can find no place for boasting or glorying in anything but the cross of JESUS CHRIST because he is convinced of his utter destitution apart from that which is laid to HIS account by another. He cannot find anything in himself of value except that which is bestowed upon him. For him, the motions and emotions of religion and the exhortations to duty give him no consolation but only serve to remind him of how desperately he needs the advocacy of a SAVIOR. This is the very purpose that the LORD is accomplishing in HIS true sons. Paul described it like this "*I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ's sake: for when I am weak, then am I strong.*" (2 Cor 12:10) When a man is convinced that he has strength of his own, he is not only deceived but at his very weakest. The LORD ordains poverty in the earth in order that:

The blessings of HIS abundance can be appreciated. Wealth cannot be valued fully by those who have always possessed it. But when a man knows how to be abased then that man can also be grateful for and value the abundant blessings of the LORD.

The difference between the Kingdom of GOD and the natural realm can be contrasted. The gospel is for the poor. Religion is for the strong. The gospel is for those who have nothing in their hand to bring unto the LORD. Religion is for those who feel themselves able to seek and serve GOD. The gospel is for those who find themselves destitute and unable to even seek the things of GOD. Religion is for those who value their own ability to love and serve GOD according to their own desire and will.

HE may have glory in the redemption of a people without worth. We who were worthy of destruction have been chosen to become the sons of GOD that the glory of HIS redeeming work might be magnified. "*The LORD did not set his love upon you, nor choose you, because ye were more in number than any people; for ye were the fewest of all people.*" (Deut 7:7)

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