

Kingdom Come Series ©

A Biblical Perspective on Poverty: Pointing Us to Our Responsibility to Love Part 2 of a series on poverty 2009 Glenn Strauss

I. Review Gods perspective on poverty

- God is the owner, the operator, and the sustainer of it all
- He has, by His authority, allowed open opposition to His ways.
- Poverty is a consequence of the moral depravity that results from this open opposition.
- Even though mankind bears full responsibility for causing the problem of poverty, God has perfectly incorporated it into His plan.
- Because of His heart for the poor, God has chosen to use them in His plan to expand the glory of His kingdom.
- This is great news because it means we get to see the expansion of His glory in our work with the poor and we get to know the Lord through them.
- We must remember that compassion is not enough to sustain us in this work.
- Compassion must be combined with a passion for things of this world to reflect the glory of God because ultimately we must align ourselves with God's own concern for His own glory.
- By aligning ourselves with God's purposes, we begin to depend on God for transformation of lives rather than our own efforts or money.

II. So what does God expect us do for the poor if we cannot solve the problem?

A. We do not have the option of no response

Matt 25:41-42

⁴¹Then he will say to those on his left hand, "Depart from me, you cursed, into everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels: ⁴²for I was hungry and you gave me no food; I was thirsty and you gave me no drink.

Ezekial 16:49

⁴⁹Look, this was the sin of ...Sodom: she... had pride, fullness of food, and abundance of idleness; and did not strengthen the hand of the poor and needy.

B. Our response to the poor

1. Taking advantage of the poor for our own benefit either for ego or for profit is evil

Proverbs 17:5

⁵He who mocks the poor reproaches His maker.

Proverbs 22:22-23

22 Do not exploit the poor because they are poor and do not crush the needy in court 23 for the Lord will take up their case and will plunder those who plunder them.

2. We must learn to share our time and resources with godly compassion

-compassion must be combined with a passion for God's glory.

Deuteronomy 15:7-8

7 If there is a poor man among your brothers in any of the towns of the land that the Lord your God is giving you, do not be hardhearted or tightfisted toward your poor brother. 8 Rather be openhanded and freely lend him whatever he needs

Luke 14:12-14

12When you give a dinner, do not ask your friends, your relatives, nor rich neighbors lest they also invite you back and you be repaid. 13But when you give a feast, invite the poor, the maimed, the lame, the blind. 14And you will be blessed because they cannot repay you. For you shall be repaid at the resurrection of the just.

Matthew 25:37-40

37 Then the righteous will answer Him saying, "Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you a drink? 38 And when did we see You a stranger and invite you in, or naked and clothe You? 39 And when did we see you sick or in prison and come to You? 40 And the King will answer and say to them, "Truly I say to you, to the extent that you did it to one of these brothers of mine, even the least of them, you did it to Me."

James 1:27

27 Religion that God our Father accepts as pure and faultless is this: to look after orphans and widows in their distress and to keep oneself from being polluted by the world.

I Timothy 5:3

3 Honor widows who are widows indeed

Romans 12:13

13 Share with God's people who are in need. Practice hospitality

3. We must intervene (take action) on behalf of the poor

Psalms 82:3-4

3 Defend the cause of the weak and fatherless; maintain the rights of the poor and oppressed 4 Rescue the weak and needy; deliver them from the hand of the wicked.

Hebrews 13:3

3 Remember those in prison as if you were their fellow prisoners, and those who are mistreated as if you yourselves were suffering.

Proverbs 29:7

7 The righteous care about justice for the poor, but the wicked have no such concern..

Luke 10:25-37- the story of the good Samaritan

1. We must beware of the line between Christian humanism and the Christian mission. Christian humanism reduces Jesus to some kind of product that will better the conditions of the poor.

Christian mission is to bring the passion for the glory of God to bear on the poverty of man.

4. The goal for us all is contentment not wealth

Philippians 4:11-13

I have learned to be content whatever the circumstances. ¹² I know what it is to be in need, and I know what it is to have plenty. I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want. ¹³ I can do everything through him who gives me strength.

I Timothy 6:6-10

⁶ But godliness with contentment is great gain. ⁷ For we brought nothing into the world, and we can take nothing out of it. ⁸ But if we have food and clothing, we will be content with that. ⁹ People who want to get rich fall into temptation and a trap and into many foolish and harmful desires that plunge men into ruin and destruction. ¹⁰ For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil. Some people, eager for money, have wandered from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs.

5. A specific biblical challenge to those with plenty

I Timothy 6:17-18

¹⁷ Command those who are rich in this present world not to be arrogant nor to put their hope in wealth, which is so uncertain, but to put their hope in God, who richly provides us with everything for our enjoyment. ¹⁸ Command them to do good, to be rich in good deeds, and to be generous and willing to share.

III. Guiding principles for biblical response to poverty

A. Our first priority is to respond in faith according to God's purposes for all people rich or poor

Isaiah 42:6-7

⁶ I am the Lord, I have called you in righteousness, I will also hold you by the hand and watch over you, and I will appoint you as a covenant to the people and as a light to the nations, ⁷ to open the eyes of the blind, to bring out prisoners from the dungeon and to those who dwell in darkness.

II Corinthians 5:18-20

¹⁸ Now all things are of God, who has reconciled us to himself through Jesus Christ and has given us the ministry of reconciliation ¹⁹ that is that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not imputing their trespasses to them, and has committed to us the word of reconciliation. ²⁰ Therefore we are ambassadors for Christ as though God were pleading through us.

Matthew 28:18-20

¹⁸ And Jesus came and spoke to them, saying, "All authority has been given to me in heaven and on earth. ¹⁹ Go therefore, and make disciples of

all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, *20* teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo I am with you always, even to the end of the age.

B. We must respond in love

I John 3:16-18

*16*We know love by this, that He laid down His life for us; and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren. *17* But whoever has the world's goods, and beholds his brother in need and closes his heart against him, how does the love of God abide in him? *18* Little children, let us not love with word or with tongue but in deed and in truth.

Philippians 2:1-4

1 If you have any encouragement from being united with Christ, if any comfort from his love, if any fellowship with the Spirit, if any tenderness and compassion, *2* then make my joy complete by being like-minded, having the same love, being one in spirit and purpose. *3* Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves. *4* Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others.

B. We must respond in hope- looking forward to God's story being completed

II Peter 3:13

¹³Nevertheless, we according to His promise, look for new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells.

Revelation 5:9

9 And they sang a new song saying, "Worthy art Thou to take the book, and to break its seals; for Thou wast slain and didst purchase for God with Thy blood men from every tribe and tongue and people and nation.

Philippians 2:9-11

9 Therefore God also highly exalted Him and bestowed on Him the name which is above every name *10* that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those who are in heaven and on earth and under the earth, *11* and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father.

IV. Concluding remarks

A. We must be careful not to glorify poverty and the poor. There is no "noble savage"

Leviticus 19:15

*15*You shall not be partial to the poor nor honor the person of the mighty. In righteousness you shall judge your neighbor.

-we must be careful that we do not let compassion blind us to sin.

B. The power of poverty is in the fear it produces.

-It is God's love that casts out this fear in us and in others.

I John 4:18

There is no fear in love; but perfect love casts out fear because fear involves torment. But he who fears has not been made perfect in love.

-God's love is captured in the good news of the gospel: we are here because we serve a loving God. He has shown us Himself in the person of Jesus who has completed all the work necessary for us to have a relationship with God eternally. We can have this simply by trusting that Jesus makes this all possible. We should trust our lives to no one and nothing else.

-A passionate response in word and deed communicates this love

C. We must thank God that the poor will always be among us

-They show us the way to humility in our own relationship with God.

-They remind us of God's glory.

-They challenge us to passionately pursue God's purposes for His glory.

-They are God's vessels of mercy with which He builds His kingdom.

And we are able to be a part of this plan!

-Micah 6:8

8 He has showed you, O man, what is good.

And what does the Lord require of you but to act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God.

Matthew 6:9-10

Our Father in heaven, may your name be made holy. May your kingdom come. May your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.

This must be our prayer as we work among the poor.

This is the missionary prayer for God's glory to expand on the earth in this present evil age.

This is an unfinished story that, when completed, finds God's creation restored to its fullness for all those who have put their trust in Him, rich and poor alike.