

THE POOR

“For ye have the poor always with you...”

Jesus Christ



What Advantage hath the Poor?

As I turned the corner and came down the street where he was lying there wrapped in a tattered blanket on the tennis court of our community park. Who is he? He is poor. He is a homeless person. (A scene from daily life in America) This is a daily occurrence—the sight of the poor and homeless not just in America, but the entire world as well. The poor are here and according to Jesus will always be.

"For ye have the poor always with you..." (Matthew 26:11a)

Definition of poor

The Bible, both Old, and New Testaments use the word poor and its variants about 199 times. Poverty is used about 15 times. The general meaning of both words is helpless people, needy, lowest class, impoverished, one in poverty, or destitute of wealth, food, clothing, water, and shelter.

Webster's Dictionary: "lacking material possessions, or characterized by poverty, less than adequate, small in worth. Etymology: Middle English poure, from Old French povre, from Latin pauper."

What is it?

By classification, using both Biblical and secular (Webster's Dictionary) definitions, it really means simply a person, family, group, or country that happens to fall short of the needs to adequately live without difficulty in acquiring those needs. To everyone being poor is a negative thing and assumed contrary to upward movement—human instinct is repulsed by digression. We have been conditioned to progression all our lives.

Causes?

What are some of the causes of poverty? Many will say laziness, but there are other facts as well. For example, judgment of God, inadequate education, inadequate skills, the condition that one finds themselves in, the poverty of the parents, the aggression and corruption of a government, etc. When we say judgment of God, we mean that God can strip an individual or nation and cast them down for His justice against an offending party. This is mostly short-term and upon repentance and confession, God will begin to restore.

Poor of ourselves

We must look upon ourselves as poor and destitute of all things. We must understand that it is God that gives us everything for life and being. God's second statement to the man from the very beginning was as follows:

"And God said, Behold, I have given you every herb bearing seed, which [is] upon the face of all the earth, and every tree, in the which [is] the fruit of a tree yielding seed; to you it shall be for meat." (Genesis 1:29)

We came into this world with nothing and we'll leave with nothing.

"And the LORD God formed man [of] the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul." (Genesis 2:7)

"And said, Naked came I out of my mother's womb, and naked shall I return thither: the LORD gave, and the LORD hath taken away; blessed be the name of the LORD." (Job 1:21)

"As he came forth of his mother's womb, naked shall he return to go as he came, and shall take nothing of his labour, which he may carry away in his hand." (Ecclesiastes 5:15)

In order to rightly understand being poor we need to survey what God has to say on the matter. God is a God of order and unchangeableness, and what He outlines in His word should be heeded.

Both Christian and non-Christian alike need to understand that the God of the Bible cares about everyone; although not everyone will be saved. God's love is love toward the object irrespective of the worth or quality of the object even when the love is not reciprocated.

Common grace is aimed at all mankind. Common grace is unmerited favor toward men displayed in His general care for them. This is whereby God, because of His unmerited favor toward men, indiscriminately gives such things as rain, sunshine, food, drink, clothing, and shelter and so on.

Old Testament

It is God who provides

"And the LORD was with Joseph, and he was a prosperous man; and he was in the house of his master the Egyptian. And his master saw that the LORD [was] with him, and that the LORD made all that he did to prosper in his hand." (Genesis 39:2,3)

"And when ye reap the harvest of your land, thou shalt not make clean riddance of the corners of thy field when thou reapest, neither shalt thou gather any gleaning of thy harvest: thou shalt leave them unto the poor, and to the stranger: I [am] the LORD your God." (Leviticus 23:22)

"And say thou unto the people, Sanctify yourselves against to morrow, and ye shall eat flesh: for ye have wept in the ears of the LORD, saying, Who shall give us flesh to eat? for [it was] well with us in Egypt: therefore the LORD will give you flesh, and ye shall eat." (Numbers 11:18)

"If the LORD delight in us, then he will bring us into this land, and give it us; a land which floweth with milk and honey." (Numbers 14:8)

"Ye shall buy meat of them for money, that ye may eat; and ye shall also buy water of them for money, that ye may drink. For the LORD thy God hath blessed thee in all the works of thy hand: he knoweth thy walking through this great wilderness: these forty years the LORD thy God [hath been] with thee; thou hast lacked nothing." (Deuteronomy 2:6,7)

"He doth execute the judgment of the fatherless and widow, and loveth the stranger, in giving him food and raiment." (Deuteronomy 10:18)

"[When] the poor and needy seek water, and [there is] none, [and] their tongue faileth for thirst, I the LORD will hear them, I the God of Israel will not forsake them." (Isaiah 41:17)

See also: Genesis 3:21; 4:25; 6:21; 26:12-14; 30:43. Exodus 3:21,22 (here God provided for His purpose to use the gold, silver, etc., for the Holy place—the tabernacle.) 11:2,3; 12:4 (here God designs a way to help the less fortunate) 12:35,36; 15:25; 16:1; 17:3; 23:11. Leviticus 5:7,11; 12:8; 25:35-43. Numbers 11:19; 20:8. Deuteronomy 11:9-15; 12:15,21; 13:12; 14:26,29 (chapter 14 God gives beasts for food) 18:8 (God took care of the priests) 29:5,6. Joshua 24:13,14. 2 Kings 8:1. Job 36:6,15,19. Psalm 10:14; 12:5; 14:6; 65:9; 68:9,10; 69:29,33; 70:5; 72:4,12,12; 78:15,16,20,24-29; 81:16; 107:9,39,41; 109:31; 132:14,15; 136:23,25; 140:12; 146:7. Proverbs 22:2; 28:19; 29:13. Ecclesiastes 5:15,19; 6:2,8. Isaiah 14:30; 55:1; 66:26. Jeremiah 2:7; 5:24; 20:13; 22:16. Zechariah 11:7,11.

It is God who blesses or not

"The LORD maketh poor, and maketh rich: he bringeth low, and lifteth up. He raiseth up the poor out of the dust, [and] lifteth up the beggar from the dung-hill, to set [them] among princes, and to make them inherit the throne of glory: for the pillars of the earth

[are] the LORD'S, and he hath set the world upon them." (1 Samuel 2:7,8)

"And said, Naked came I out of my mother's womb, and naked shall I return thither: the LORD gave, and the LORD hath taken away; blessed be the name of the LORD." (Job 1:21)

"Bow down thine ear, O LORD, hear me: for I [am] poor and needy." (Psalm 86:1)

"[When] the poor and needy seek water, and [there is] none, [and] their tongue faileth for thirst, I the LORD will hear them, I the God of Israel will not forsake them." (Isaiah 41:17)

See also: Genesis 12:1-3,16; 13:2; 24:1,35; 26:12-14; 30:27,30; 39:5; 41:52. Exodus 1:21. Deuteronomy 2:7; 6:10-12; 7:13; 12:7,15; 14:29; 15:4; 26:15; 27:3. Ruth 1:21. 1 Samuel 18:23; 25:2. 1 Kings 3:11,13; 10:23. 1 Chronicles 29:28. 2 Chronicles 1:11,12; 14:7; 17:5,11; 18:1; 20:25; 31:21. Nehemiah 1:11; 2:20. Job 1:3,10; 5:15,16,20,22; 42:12. Psalm 37:25; 102:17; 109:10,22; 112:3,9; 113:78; 118:25; 132:14,15. Proverbs 8:18; 10:22; 12:11; 30:8,9. Ecclesiastes 5:19; 6:2. Isaiah 10:30; 11:4; 14:30; 55:1; 66:2. Jeremiah 2:7; 5:24; 20:13,11; 22:16. Lamentations 3:17; 5:2-10 (because of their sin) Zechariah 2:8. Malachi 3:10.

God will use others to provide

"As the days wherein the Jews rested from their enemies, and the month which was turned unto them from sorrow to joy, and from mourning into a good day: that they should make them days of feasting and joy, and of sending portions one to another, and gifts to the poor." (Esther 9:22)

"Defend the poor and fatherless: do justice to the afflicted and needy. Deliver the poor and needy: rid [them] out of the hand of the wicked." (Psalm 82:3,4)

"[Is it] not to deal thy bread to the hungry, and that thou bring the poor that are cast out to thy house? when thou seest the naked, that thou cover him; and that thou hide not thyself from thine own flesh?" (Isaiah 58:7)

See also: Genesis 23:6; 31:16; 33:11. Exodus 3:21,22; 11:2,3; 22:24
9God's people are to lend to God's people without interest) Leviticus 25:35-43. Deuteronomy 24:19,20,21; 26:12. Joshua 22:7,8. 2 Kings 4:2. 1 Chronicles 16:3. 2 Chronicles 11:23. Esther 9:22; 10:3. Job 20:10; 29:12,16; 30:25; 31:16-19. Psalm 41:1-3; 112:3,9. Proverbs 19:17; 28:27; 29:14; 31:9. Jeremiah 39:10; 40:6,7,9; 52:15,16.

The sin of greed to be rich

"Because he hath oppressed [and] hath forsaken the poor; [because] he hath violently taken away an house which he builded not" (Job 20:19)

"A little that a righteous man hath [is] better than the riches of many wicked." (Psalm 37:16)

"Behold, these [are] the ungodly, who prosper in the world; they increase [in] riches." (Psalm 73:12)

"He that trusteth in his riches shall fall: but the righteous shall flourish as a branch." (Proverbs 11:28)

"Labour not to be rich: cease from thine own wisdom. Wilt thou set thine eyes upon that which is not? for [riches] certainly make themselves wings; they fly away as an eagle toward heaven." (Proverbs 23:4,5)

See also: Genesis 34:23. Ruth 3:10. 1 Samuel 25:10,11. 2 Samuel 12:1,3,4. Job 24:4,7-10,14; 27:19-22; 34:28. Psalm 49:6,7,10; 109:16. Proverbs 1:32; 10:15;11:4,26; 13:7,11,23; 14:20,31; 15:27; 18:11; 19:4; 21:17,26; 22:1,7,16,22; 27:24; 28:6,8,11,20,22. Ecclesiastes 4:8; 5:10,11,14. Isaiah 53:9. Jeremiah 5:27. Ezekiel 16:49; 18:12; 22:29; 26:12; 27:12,18,27,33; 28:4,5. Amos 2:6,7; 3:9; 4:1; 5:11,12; 6:4-8; 8:4,6. Habakkuk 3:14.

Inherited wealth

With inherited wealth, as Christians, we must remember to give to the poor and not be greedy. We need to remember that God gave it to us and not abuse it, but use it for His glory and kingdom.

"A good [man] leaveth an inheritance to his children's children: and the wealth of the sinner [is] laid up for the just." (Proverbs 13:22)

"House and riches [are] the inheritance of fathers: and a prudent wife [is] from the LORD." (Proverbs 19:14)

See also: Genesis 33:6. Deuteronomy 18:8 (God took care of the priests) Joshua 14:1,2. Psalm 49:16.

Being poor because of an oppressive government

"Therefore they did set over them taskmasters to afflict them with their burdens. And they built for Pharaoh treasure cities, Pithom and Raamses." (Exodus 1:11)

See also: Nehemiah 5:1-5. Job 24:4,7,8-10,14. Psalm 10:2,8,9,10; 37:14. Proverbs 14:31; 22:7. Ecclesiastes 5:8. Isaiah 10:1,2. Daniel 4:27. Amos 5:11,12.

We are not to despise or mistreat the poor

"If there be among you a poor man of one of thy brethren within any of thy gates in thy land which the LORD thy God giveth thee, thou shalt not harden thine heart, nor shut thine hand from thy poor brother: But thou shalt open thine hand wide unto him, and shalt surely lend him sufficient for his need, [in that] which he wanteth." (Deuteronomy 15:7,8)

"The wicked in [his] pride doth persecute the poor: let them be taken in the devices that they have imagined." (Psalm 10:2)

See also: Exodus 23:3. Deuteronomy 24:12-15. Psalm 10:8-10; 14:6; 37:14. Proverbs 14:31; 17:15; 28:3; 31:9,20. Ecclesiastes 5:8; 9:15,16. Isaiah 1:17; 3:14,15; 32:7. Ezekiel 16:49. Daniel 4:27. Zechariah 7:10; 11:5.

We are not to pervert the cause of the poor

"Thou shalt not wrest the judgment of thy poor in his cause." (Exodus 23:6)

See also: Leviticus 19:15. Deuteronomy 1:17. Psalm 14:6.

Offerings to God from poor and rich are to be considered equal

"The rich shall not give more, and the poor shall not give less than half a shekel, when [they] give an offering unto the LORD, to make an atonement for your souls." (Exodus 30:15)

See also: Leviticus 5:11; 12:8; 27:8.

We are to help the poor in their poverty

"And if a sojourner or stranger wax rich by thee, and thy brother [that dwelleth] by him wax poor, and sell himself unto the stranger [or] sojourner by thee, or to the stock of the stranger's family" (Leviticus 25:47)

"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)

See also: Job 31:16-19. Proverbs 6:30; 14:21; 21:13; 22:9; 28:27; 29:7,14; 31:20. Ezekiel 18:7,16,17.

The condition of prospering is in obedience and faithfulness to God

"For when I shall have brought them into the land which I swear unto their fathers, that floweth with milk and honey; and they shall have eaten and filled

themselves, and waxen fat; then will they turn unto other gods, and serve them, and provoke me, and break my covenant." (Deuteronomy 31:20)

"The meek also shall increase [their] joy in the LORD, and the poor among men shall rejoice in the Holy One of Israel." (Isaiah 29:19)

See also: Leviticus 14:9. Deuteronomy 6:10,12; 7:13 (v13 is an outcome in obedience and faithfulness to God in v12) 10:12,15,16; 29:9; 31:20 (we are not to abuse God's blessings by turning away from Him). Joshua 1:8; 5:6; 24:14. 2 Chronicles 14:7. Psalm 128:1,2. Proverbs 14:31; 22:4. Isaiah 26:6.

There is inherited poverty

"And he said unto him, Oh my Lord, wherewith shall I save Israel? behold, my family [is] poor in Manasseh, and I [am] the least in my father's house." (Judges 6:15)

See also: Proverbs 13:7, 31:7.

There will always be poor

"And the LORD sent Nathan unto David. And he came unto him, and said unto him, There were two men in one city; the one rich, and the other poor." (2 Samuel 12:1)

See also: 2 Kings 24:14 (God allowed the poor not to be uprooted but be left and cared for by the oppressor nation) 25:12. Job 34:19,28. Psalm 19:1,4,7,22.

The rich

"Riches profit not in the day of wrath: but righteousness delivereth from death." (Proverbs 11:4)

"Labour not to be rich: cease from thine own wisdom. Wilt thou set thine eyes upon that which is not? for [riches] certainly make themselves wings;

they fly away as an eagle toward heaven." (Proverbs 23:4,5)

"That lie upon beds of ivory, and stretch themselves upon their couches, and eat the lambs out of the flock, and the calves out of the midst of the stall; That chant to the sound of the viol, [and] invent to themselves instruments of musick, like David; That drink wine in bowls, and anoint themselves with the chief ointments: but they are not grieved for the affliction of Joseph. Therefore now shall they go captive with the first that go captive, and the banquet of them that stretched themselves shall be removed. The Lord GOD hath sworn by himself, saith the LORD the God of hosts, I abhor the excellency of Jacob, and hate his palaces: therefore will I deliver up the city with all that is therein." (Amos 6:4-8)

See also: Job 15:21,29. Psalm 73:12. Proverbs 13:8,11; 14:20,31; 18:11,23; 19:4; 22:6,22; 27:21; 28:6,8,11. Ecclesiastes 2:7-11; 4:8,13; 5:10,11,14. Isaiah 53:9. Jeremiah 5:27. Ezekiel 16:49; 26:12; 27:12,18,27,33; 28:4,5. Daniel 2:6,7; 3:9; 4:1. Amos 6:4-8 (the judgment of God on the rich) 8:4,6. Zephaniah 1:18.

The slothful and lazy

"[Yet] a little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to sleep: So shall thy poverty come as one that travelleth, and thy want as an armed man."
(Proverbs 6:10,11)

See also: Proverbs 10:4; 11:24; 13:18; 19:24; 20:13; 21:25; 24:30-34; 26:13-15.

In looking at the Old Testament we discovered several things in regards to the poor. One, it is God who provides and blesses. Two, it is a sin to desire to be rich and greedy. Three, there is inherited wealth and inherited poverty. Four, we are not to oppress or mistreat the poor. Five, we are to help the poor. Six, there will always be poor. Seven, the rich and those that desire to be rich are viewed

as negative in the Old Testament. Eight, one can be poor because of laziness.

The New Testament

The poor in spirit

"Blessed [are] the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." (Matthew 5:3)

See also: Matthew 11:5 (the gospels are full of Jesus mostly ministering to the poor). Mark 12:42-44. Luke 4:18; 6:20,21; 7:22; 16:9,11,20; 18:4; 21:1-4. 1 Corinthians 12:26. Revelation 2:9.

God provides for us

"Then the disciples, every man according to his ability, determined to send relief unto the brethren which dwelt in Judaea." (Acts 11:29)

"Giving thanks always for all things unto God and the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ." (Ephesians 5:20)

"But my God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus." (Philippians 4:19)

"[Let your] conversation [be] without covetousness; [and be] content with such things as ye have: for he hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee." (Hebrews 13:5)

See also: Matthew 6:25-34; 7:11. Luke 3:11. Romans 12:13. 2 Corinthians 9:6,8,10,11. Philippians 4:6. James 4:13-16. 3 John 1:2,6,7. Revelation 7:16; 12:6,14.

There will always be poor

"For ye have the poor always with you; but me ye have not always." (Matthew 26:11)

See also: Mark 14:7. Luke 14:13; 16:19,20. John 12:8. Acts 3:2,3,6. 1 Corinthians 13:3. Galatians 2:10.

Riches

"No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon." (Matthew 6:24)

"For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?" (Matthew 16:26)

"So likewise, whosoever he be of you that forsaketh not all that he hath, he cannot be my disciple." (Luke 14:33)

"But they that will be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and [into] many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition. For the love of money is the root of all evil: which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows." (1 Timothy 6:9,10)

"Whose adorning let it not be that outward [adorn-
ing] of plaiting the hair, and of wearing of gold, or of putting on of apparel." (1 Peter 3:3)

See also: Matthew 6:19,20,21; 19:21,22,23. Mark 8:36,37; 10:21,22-25. Luke 1:53; 6:24; 7:25; 9:25; 12:13-31; 15:13-15 (here he inherits, spends it, becomes poor, and finds work) 16:1,9,13,19,21; 18:22,23-25; 19:2,12-23 (has to do with faithfulness with money, and also the gospel) 20:47; 21:1. John 12:6. Acts 5:1-4; 19:24,25 (wealth from idols) 20:23. 1 Corinthians 4:8. 1 Timothy 3:3,8; 6:17,18. Titus 1:7,11. Hebrews 11:25,26. James 1:10,11; 2:1-9; 4:3-16; 5:1-5. Revelation 3:17,18; 6:15; 13:16,17; 18:3,9-17.

Other people can provide and so can we

"And fear came upon every soul: and many wonders and signs were done by the apostles. And all that believed were together, and had all things common; And sold their possessions and goods, and parted

them to all [men], as every man had need. And they, continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart." (Acts 2:43-46)

"And the multitude of them that believed were of one heart and of one soul: neither said any [of them] that ought of the things which he possessed was his own; but they had all things common...Neither was there any among them that lacked: for as many as were possessors of lands or houses sold them, and brought the prices of the things that were sold, And laid [them] down at the apostles' feet: and distribution was made unto every man according as he had need. And Joses, who by the apostles was surnamed Barnabas, (which is, being interpreted, The son of consolation,) a Levite, [and] of the country of Cyprus, Having land, sold [it], and brought the money, and laid [it] at the apostles' feet." (Acts 4:32,35-37)

"Then the disciples, every man according to his ability, determined to send relief unto the brethren which dwelt in Judaea." (Acts 11:29)

"For it hath pleased them of Macedonia and Achaia to make a certain contribution for the poor saints which are at Jerusalem. It hath pleased them verily; and their debtors they are. For if the Gentiles have been made partakers of their spiritual things, their duty is also to minister unto them in carnal things." (Romans 15:26,27)

See also: Matthew 27:7,57. Mark 14:5. Luke 14:13,21; 19:18. John 12:5; 13:29. Acts 6:1; 10:2,4,31; 20:35. Romans 12:13,20; 15:1. 1 Corinthians 9:11; 16:1. 2 Corinthians 8:4,14,15 9:6. Galatians 6:10. Philippians 4:17,18. 2 Thessalonians 1:3. 1 Timothy 5:8. James 1:27; 2:15,16.

The poor can give

"And there came a certain poor widow, and she threw in two mites, which make a farthing. And he called [unto him] his disciples, and saith unto them, Verily I say unto you, That this poor widow hath cast more in, than all they which have cast into the treasury: For all [they] did cast in of their abundance; but she of her want did cast in all that she had, [even] all her living." (Mark 12:42-44)

"And he looked up, and saw the rich men casting their gifts into the treasury. And he saw also a certain poor widow casting in thither two mites. And he said, Of a truth I say unto you, that this poor widow hath cast in more than they all: For all these have of their abundance cast in unto the offerings of God: but she of her penury hath cast in all the living that she had." (Luke 21:1-4)

"Render therefore to all their dues: tribute to whom tribute [is due]; custom to whom custom; fear to whom fear; honour to whom honour. Owe no man any thing, but to love one another: for he that loveth another hath fulfilled the law. For this, Thou shalt not commit adultery, Thou shalt not kill, Thou shalt not steal, Thou shalt not bear false witness, Thou shalt not covet; and if [there be] any other commandment, it is briefly comprehended in this saying, namely, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself." (Romans 13:7,8,9)

Jesus had very little while here on earth

"And Jesus said unto him, Foxes have holes, and birds of the air [have] nests; but the Son of man hath not where to lay [his] head." (Luke 9:58)

"For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though he was rich, yet for your sakes he be-

came poor, that ye through his poverty might be rich." (2 Corinthians 8:9)

Giving up all for Christ

"Esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt: for he had respect unto the recompence of the reward...They were stoned, they were sawn asunder, were tempted, were slain with the sword: they wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins; being destitute, afflicted, tormented." (Hebrews 11:26,37)

See also: Luke 18:28-30 (self inflicted poverty) Acts 14:22. 1 Corinthians 4:11; 7:30. 2 Corinthians 6:10; 8:2; 11:27. 1 Timothy 6:11. Revelation 2:9.

God does not respect either the rich or poor and we shouldn't either

"My brethren, have not the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ, [the Lord] of glory, with respect of persons. For if there come unto your assembly a man with a gold ring, in goodly apparel, and there come in also a poor man in vile raiment; And ye have respect to him that weareth the gay clothing, and say unto him, Sit thou here in a good place; and say to the poor, Stand thou there, or sit here under my footstool: Are ye not then partial in yourselves, and are become judges of evil thoughts? Hearken, my beloved brethren, Hath not God chosen the poor of this world rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom which he hath promised to them that love him? But ye have despised the poor. Do not rich men oppress you, and draw you before the judgment seats? Do not they blaspheme that worthy name by the which ye are called? If ye fulfil the royal law according to the scripture, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself, ye do well: But if ye have respect to persons, ye commit sin, and are convinced of the law as transgressors." (James 2:1-9)

See also: Romans 2:11; 10:12. 1 Peter 1:17,18.

Nothing can separate us from Christ; not even poverty

"Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? [shall] tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?" (Romans 8:35)

"And whether one member suffer, all the members suffer with it; or one member be honoured, all the members rejoice with it." (1 Corinthians 12:26)

God is described as being rich in His graciousness to us

"Or despisest thou the riches of his goodness and forbearance and longsuffering; not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance?" (Romans 2:4)

"The eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that ye may know what is the hope of his calling, and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints." (Ephesians 1:18)

See also: Romans 11:33. Ephesians 3:16. Colossians 1:27.

We are to work

"But if any provide not for his own, and specially for those of his own house, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel." (1 Timothy 5:8)

See also: Romans 12:11; 13:13. Ephesians 6:5-9. Colossians 3:22; 4:1. 1 Thessalonians 4:11,12. 2 Thessalonians 3:8,10,11,12. 1 Timothy 5:8. Titus 2:9. 1 Peter 2:18.

We have nothing in this world

"For we brought nothing into [this] world, [and it is] certain we can carry nothing out. And having food and raiment let us be therewith content." (1 Timothy 6:7,8)

As believers, we will be rewarded by God

"And hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father; to him [be] glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen." (Revelation 1:6)

"And hast made us unto our God kings and priests: and we shall reign on the earth." (Revelation 5:10)

In looking at the New Testament we discovered several things in regards to the poor. One, we're blessed if poor in spirit. Two, God provides. Three, there will always be poor folks. Four, riches and wealth are frowned upon in the New Testament. Five, Jesus had very little while here on earth. Six, we must give all for Christ. Seven, God does not respect rich or poor. Eight, we really have nothing in this world.

What the early Church believed about the poor

"My child, do not be a money-lover, nor vainglorious. For out of these, thefts are born." (The Didache, A.D. 80)

"That many of us are called poor, this is not our disgrace, but our glory." (Mark Minucius Felix, A.D. 200)

"Those whom you consider rich add forests to forests. They exclude the poor from their neighborhoods and stretch out their fields far and wide." Cyprian, A.D. 250)

"Whom He has made rich, none will make him poor. For, in fact, there can be no poverty to him whose breast has once been supplied with heavenly food." (Cyprian, A.D. 250)

"To seek riches is not a virtue." (Lactantius, A.D. 304)

"Do not let it trouble your understanding, that we see the unrighteous having riches and the servants of God in need." (Second Clement, A.D. 150)

"So also those who are rich in this world cannot be useful to the Lord unless their riches are cut down." (Hermas, A.D. 150)

"Give heed, therefore, you who glory in your wealth, lest those who are needy should groan." (Hermas, A.D. 150)

"Delicacies spent on pleasures become a dangerous shipwreck to men." (Clement of Alexandria, A.D. 195)

"For example, it is a sin to live luxuriously and licentiously." (Clement of Alexandria, A.D. 195)

"Rich men—attached to their means—have been accustomed to gaze more upon their gold than on heaven." Mark Minucius Felix, A.D. 200)

"Luxury does not entertain the fear of God." (Novatian, A.D. 235)

How can they follow Christ that are held back by the chain of their wealth?" (Cyprian, A.D. 250)

What others say

"Programs using the guidelines (or percentage multiples of the guidelines — for instance, 125 percent or 185 percent of the guidelines) in determining eligibility include Head Start, the Food Stamp Program, the National School Lunch Program, the Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program, and the Children's Health Insurance Program. Note that in general, cash public assistance programs (Aid to Families with Dependent Children and its block grant successor Temporary Assistance for Needy Families, and Supplemental Security Income) do NOT use the poverty guidelines in determining eligibility. The Earned Income Tax Credit program also does NOT use the poverty guidelines to determine eligibility." (US DHHS, 2000 Poverty Guidelines)

" If you are a person who always gets defensive when hearing the truth about believer's spurning wealth and living simple, relatively poor lives, then money remains an idol in your life. If you are quick to defend yourself by saying, "oh, but Christians are not to be poor, and I can have substantial wealth and still be a Christian", then you are deceiving yourself. You are playing into the hands of Satan, and missing the incredible

blessing that comes from being free from covetousness and thereby truly being Jesus' disciple." (www.john14-6.org)

" Half the world -- nearly three billion people -- live on less than two dollars a day. The GDP (Gross Domestic Product) of the poorest 48 nations (i.e. a quarter of the world's countries) is less than the wealth of the world's three richest people combined. Nearly a billion people entered the 21st century unable to read a book or sign their names. Less than one percent of what the world spent every year on weapons was needed to put every child into school by the year 2000 and yet it didn't happen." (www.globalissues.org)

"What can one person do about hunger? Plenty. You can sponsor a needy child, give a financial donation, and serve through our unique Hunger Corps and Short-term Teams programs. You can involve your church. Most importantly, you can pray." (www.fh.org)

"Guatemala crisis - More than 60,000 children are currently suffering from severe malnutrition. More than 6,000 could starve." (www.foodforthepeople.org)

"There were 31.1 million poor people in the United States in the year 2000." (US Census web site)

"A federal judge Tuesday took the unusual step of blocking the sale of four Sacramento County apartment complexes until the owner complies with state law designed to guarantee low-income housing. The rare ruling is a crucial victory for at least 351 poor families, some with members who are disabled. They share a fear of winding up homeless without their rental assistance." (www.sacbee.com)

"For the year 2000, we served 32,525 meals through our dining facility. In our transient shelter, we provided 5,672 bed nights, a 10.85% increase over 1999; while the temporary shelter (rehab) housed 2,152 nights, an increase of 54.93% over 1999. Through the family, a shelter was housed 771 children, 14.22% over 1999; and, 1,238 women, a 5.42% decrease over the same period of 1999." (www.davidsplace.com)

"Christmas came early this week for 232 poor Sacramento County families who learned that, instead of rent hikes with the potential to put them on the streets, they will have subsidies allowing them to keep their homes. After eight months in federal court, their attorneys reached a settlement with the new owner of four county apartment complexes that ensures at least 232 of the 351 units will remain affordable to low-income tenants for the next 30 years." (www.sacbee.com)

" San Francisco -- A decade ago, San Francisco voters outlawed aggressive panhandling in the city. A couple years later, they went after soliciting money near ATMs. Now, there's a plan at City Hall to broaden the ban -- targeting begging everywhere from movie lines to parking lots. Supervisor Gavin Newsom outlined this week his proposed legislation that would prohibit panhandling along median strips and freeway ramps, around parking meters, in front of banks and check-cashing businesses, in parking lots, around transit stations and places where people are lined up to go into a building. Violating the ban would be a misdemeanor that could carry a \$500 fine and six-month jail term." (www.sfgate.com)

"So right on cue, the U.S. Conference of Mayors released the results of a survey last month reporting rising hunger and homelessness on the streets of America's biggest cities. The Associated Press and several major metropolitan newspapers reported it — one piece of the traditional holiday pie of stories on the less prosperous in the richest nation in the world. But some say with a Republican in the White House, homelessness is in vogue again after more than a decade when AIDS was the cause du jour. So has it become cool to care about the downtrodden? Have the homeless, once again, become hip? By all accounts, homelessness has risen steadily. The Department of Housing and Urban Development says 25 percent more people are on the streets in 2002 than in 1991. The National Coalition for the Homeless puts that number at closer to 50 percent." (www.foxnews.com)

"Does God like you better broke, or might God really want you to be a success? If you really think God might punish you for seeking a better life on earth, then this audio program is not for you! Learn why thousands say this audio program rolled away from their path the number one obstacle to their success! They report now, after years of wheel-spinning, they finally found - in this program - a simple key that opened the future to their highest hopes. The author calls it "Permission" for Success...do you have it? In Pray and Be Rich, Dr. Briley tells how to apply purposeful faith and "seven spiritual secrets of success" (hidden in plain view in the Bible) to reach life-enhancing goals. Thousands say this audiobook put them on their path to success. Dr. Briley says, "My major life purpose is to help people solidify vague dreams into measured, reachable goals." (Richard Gaylord Briley, Pray and be Rich)

"Cal Expo is willing to grant a three-month reprieve to homeless families with nowhere to sleep when Sacramento County's winter shelter closes next month, welfare officials said. Dorms with beds for 76 women and children would be allowed to stay open until July 21, said Cheryl Davis, chief of the county Department of Human Assistance. The cost is \$415,908. "That date is when Cal Expo needs that space to get ready for the State Fair," Davis said. Cal Expo also is considering letting the county provide a year-round shelter for women and children, according to a report to the Board of Supervisors. Cal Expo officials could not be reached for comment." (www.sacbee.com)

"MONTEREY, Mexico March 23 — After decades of cutbacks in aid to the developing world, rich nations have agreed to pump billions of dollars into poor countries in exchange for their efforts to stabilize their governments and economies. More than 50 heads of state wrapped up a weeklong U.N. International Conference on Financing for Development on Friday, agreeing to do more for the half of the world's population that ekes by on less than \$2 a day." (www.abcnews.com)

"This week we had a visitor whose first comment when he walked into our flat was, "My, you have a very nice flat here!"

For anyone else, this may have been taken as a compliment. However, Cherry and I have come to recognize the real implication that comes from many people when they say that. He had just come from spending some time with Paul, who is presently living in a little tent hidden in a national park south of Sydney. Paul has, for several weeks, been living on the streets in Sydney. He has been able to get free meals, free laundry, a free haircut, and even free train travel (by finding unexpired excursion tickets lying around railway stations). This guy was impressed with Paul's humility, and he was actually having a shot at us because Cherry and I live in such luxury by comparison to the hardships that Paul has been enduring." (http://cust.idl.net.au/fold/teach/money_greed/Liberated_poverty.html)

"President Bush's call for the U.S. to spend an additional \$5 billion on foreign aid over the next three budget years, described by the White House as "the largest three-year increase in history," was labeled a "modest first step" by U.S.-based NGOs at the forum. Flanked by a banner proclaiming "For the Fair Distribution of Wealth," organizers announced that the NGO "Declaration of Monterrey" also demanded the cancellation of all Third World debt, a universal minimum wage, and "progressive taxation systems" within countries. The document is designed to influence the thinking of world leaders and future U.N. conferences." (www.newsmax.com)

"Not far from where participants in Gov. Gray Davis' Summit on Homelessness searched for practical solutions Monday, proceedings at Sacramento's Cesar Chavez Plaza were decidedly less formal. Under the shade trees, half a dozen men and women sprawled out for mid-afternoon naps. Some slept in the comfort of sleeping bags beside plastic bags filled with their belongings. Across the street, David asked passers-by for change. The system that lawmakers, state officials, and advocates were discussing nearby works for him -- sort of. "There is nothing like having your own place," said David, who declined to give his last name. After 10 years of "traveling," he has finally stabilized and has a place to live, thanks to an

assisted-living program. He said he is being treated for paranoid schizophrenia." (www.sacbee.com)

What now?

We must realize there will always be poor in this world. We know it's true and Jesus said so. We know we need to help them first with the gospel—for what good is it to feed them if they go to hell—then feed them with the staples of life? No one wants to be poor. And it is hard for those with much to truly consider the less fortunate. As Christians what are we to be doing? And how do we live?

Read and heed

"For ye have the poor always with you..." (Matthew 26:11a)

"And said, Naked came I out of my mother's womb, and naked shall I return thither: the LORD gave, and the LORD hath taken away; blessed be the name of the LORD." (Job 1:21)

"As he came forth of his mother's womb, naked shall he return to go as he came, and shall take nothing of his labour, which he may carry away in his hand." (Ecclesiastes 5:15)

"[When] the poor and needy seek water, and [there is] none, [and] their tongue faileth for thirst, I the LORD will hear them, I the God of Israel will not forsake them." (Isaiah 41:17)

"Defend the poor and fatherless: do justice to the afflicted and needy. Deliver the poor and needy: rid [them] out of the hand of the wicked." (Psalm 82:3,4)

"[Is it] not to deal thy bread to the hungry, and that thou bring the poor that are cast out to thy house? when thou seest the naked, that thou cover him; and that thou hide not thyself from thine own flesh?" (Isaiah 58:7)

"A little that a righteous man hath [is] better than the riches of many wicked." (Psalm 37:16)

"Behold, these [are] the ungodly, who prosper in the world; they increase [in] riches." (Psalm 73:12)

"He that trusteth in his riches shall fall: but the righteous shall flourish as a branch." (Proverbs 11:28)

"Labour not to be rich: cease from thine own wisdom. Wilt thou set thine eyes upon that which is not? for [riches] certainly make themselves wings; they fly away as an eagle toward heaven." (Proverbs 23:4,5)

"Riches profit not in the day of wrath: but righteousness delivereth from death." (Proverbs 11:4)

"[Yet] a little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to sleep: So shall thy poverty come as one that travelleth, and thy want as an armed man." (Proverbs 6:10,11)

"Giving thanks always for all things unto God and the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ." (Ephesians 5:20)

"But my God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus." (Philippians 4:19)

"[Let your] conversation [be] without covetousness; [and be] content with such things as ye have: for he hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee." (Hebrews 13:5)

"No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon." (Matthew 6:24)

"For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?" (Matthew 16:26)

"So likewise, whosoever he be of you that forsaketh not all that he hath, he cannot be my disciple." (Luke 14:33)

"But they that will be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and [into] many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition. For the love of money is the root of all evil: which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows." (1 Timothy 6:9,10)

"And he looked up, and saw the rich men casting their gifts into the treasury. And he saw also a certain poor widow casting in thither two mites. And he said, Of a truth I say unto you, that this poor widow hath cast in more than they all: For all these have of their abundance cast in unto the offerings of God: but she of her penury hath cast in all the living that she had." (Luke 21:1-4)

"For we brought nothing into [this] world, [and it is] certain we can carry nothing out. And having food and raiment let us be therewith content." (1 Timothy 6:7,8)

"And he lifted up his eyes on his disciples, and said, Blessed [be ye] poor: for yours is the kingdom of God...But woe unto you that are rich! for ye have received your consolation." (Luke 6:20,24)

"So likewise, whosoever he be of you that forsaketh not all that he hath, he cannot be my disciple." (Luke 14:33)

"Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where

thieves break through and steal: But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal: For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also." (Matthew 6:19-21)

"And when Jesus saw that he was very sorrowful, he said, How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of God! For it is easier for a camel to go through a needle's eye, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God." (Luke 18:24,25)

"For the love of money is the root of all evil: which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows. But thou, O man of God, flee these things; and follow after righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, meekness." (1 Timothy 6:10,11)

Clearly, God wants us to help the poor. We are to help the poor brothers and sisters in Christ first. He wants us not to be lazy. He wants us to not trust or hold on to riches. He wants us to know and by faith believe He provides for our every need. He would have us give up all to follow Jesus our Lord, and flee from riches and the wealth of the wicked. Brothers and sisters, remember these:

"And he lifted up his eyes on his disciples, and said, Blessed [be ye] poor: for yours is the kingdom of God...But woe unto you that are rich! for ye have received your consolation." (Luke 6:20,24)

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