

THE GOSPEL AND THE CHURCH'S MINISTRY TO THE POOR: LIVING OUT PURE RELIGION

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*"Blessed is the one who considers the poor!
In the day of trouble the LORD delivers him."
—Ps 41:1*

Defining Poverty:

Why Must We Engage in Mercy Ministry to the Poor?

▪ Texts for Thought:

- Group 1: Exod 22:21; 23:9; Deut 10:12–13, 18–19; 15:7–8, 24:17–18, 21–22
 - Group 2: Ps 41:1; Prov 14:31; 19:17; Jer 9:23–24; Matt 5:43–45; Luke 6:35–36
 - Group 3: Matt 25:31–46
 - Group 4: 2 Cor 8:1–2, 7–9, 13–14, 24; 9:6–15
 - Group 5: Gal 2:7, 9–10; 1 John 3:16–19; Jas 1:22, 27
 - Group 6: Jas 2:1–18
1. Carrying out the gospel ministry Christ initiated, God calls us to remember the poor (Mark 2:17; Luke 4:18–19; Gal 2:9–10; 1 John 3:17; cf. Deut 15:7–8, 11; Ps 41:1; Prov 14:31).

 2. Our care for the poor is a necessary consequence of our personal experience of gospel grace—both common grace (Matt 5:44–45) and saving grace (2 Cor 8:9; 9:13; Jas 2:5; 1 John 3:16; cf. Exod 22:21; 23:9; Deut 10:19; 24:17–18, 21–22).

 3. Loving and following God necessitates that we delight in what he delights and go where he goes, which includes care for the poor (Deut 10:12, 18–19; Jer 9:23–24; Matt 5:43–48; Luke 6:35–36; Jas 2:5).

 4. In loving the poor, we are manifesting and proving our love for Christ (Matt 5:44–45; 25:40; Luke 6:35; 2 Cor 8:1–2, 8, 24; 9:13; cf. Prov 14:31; 19:17).

5. Failure to extend mercy to needy believers identifies that we ourselves are not believers and liable for severe judgment (Matt 25:41–45; Jas 2:8–9, 12–13).

6. Care for the poor serves as a pointer to the eternal-saving grace of the gospel and supplies a context from which to evangelize, speaking of relief from eternal suffering (Matt 5:16, 44–45; John 6:14, 26–27, 35; 9:1–7, 35–41; cf. Gen 8:20–22; Acts 14:17; Rom 2:4; 3:25–26).

7. Through Christ’s death and resurrection, God is reconciling “to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, making peace by the blood of the cross” (Col 1:20). Through care for the poor we are declaring and demonstrating the already elements of Jesus’s declaring, “I am making all things new” (Rev 21:5; cf. 2 Cor 5:17; Rev. 7:15–17).

Further Reading:

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