

Giving to the Poor

By Bill Scheidler

The Spiritual Climate of Our Day

II Timothy 3:1-5

*But know this, that in the last days perilous times will come: For men will be **lovers of themselves, lovers of money**, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, unloving, unforgiving, slanderers, without self-control, brutal, despisers of good, traitors, headstrong, haughty, **lovers of pleasure** rather than lovers of God, having a form of godliness but denying its power. And from such people turn away!*

This is a generation that is characterized by covetousness, selfishness, love of pleasure and ease.

Proverbs 30:11-14

There is a generation that curses its father, and does not bless its mother. 12 There is a generation that is pure in its own eyes, yet is not washed from its filthiness. 13 There is a generation-- oh, how lofty are their eyes! And their eyelids are lifted up. 14 There is a generation whose teeth are like swords, and whose fangs are like knives, to devour the poor from off the earth, and the needy from among men.

This is a generation that is lawless, filthy, arrogant and exploiters of the poor.

It is interesting that God should put our attitude toward the poor in such a high place in His mind. God wants us to know that the way we treat the poor has a bearing on His attitude toward us.

God challenges us to swim against the current.

In the midst of this negative generation God is going to have His **chosen generation** who will be different. His chosen ones will demonstrate His virtues.

I Peter 2:9

But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light;

Peter encouraged the multitudes in response to God's grace to save or distinguish themselves from their corrupt generation (Acts 2:40).

With many other words he warned them; and he pleaded with them, "Save yourselves from this corrupt generation."

We distinguish ourselves or save ourselves by cultivating the opposite attitudes found in the culture and society. We overcome evil with good.

Instead of rebellion, wickedness, pride and selfishness, we cultivate:

1. A respect for authority
2. A love for righteousness
3. A spirit of humility
4. An attitude of giving to the poor

God is very interested in the plight of the poor.

In the nation of Israel:

- 1. The people were not to harvest their field in the seventh year so that it could be reaped by the poor and needy (Ex. 23:11).**
- 2. The people were not to reap the corners of their field or pick up the gleanings so that the poor and needy to share in the harvest (Lev. 23:22).**
- 3. The people were to give an extra tithe every third year for the poor (Deut. 14:28-29).**
- 4. The people were instructed not to harden their hearts toward or shut their hands to the poor. But they were to bless them by giving to them with a good attitude (Deut. 15:7-11).**

“If there is among you a poor man of your brethren, within any of the gates in your land which the LORD your God is giving you, you shall not harden your heart nor shut your hand from your poor brother, 8 but you shall open your hand wide to him and willingly lend him sufficient for his need, whatever he needs. 9 Beware lest there be a wicked thought in your heart, saying, ‘The seventh year, the year of release, is at hand,’ and your eye be evil against your poor brother and you give him nothing, and he cry out to the LORD against you, and it become sin among you. 10 You shall surely give to him, and your heart should not be grieved when you give to him, because for this thing the LORD your God will bless you in all your works and in all to which you put your hand. 11 For the poor will never cease from the land; therefore I command you, saying, ‘You shall open your hand wide to your brother, to your poor and your needy, in your land.’”

The Bible is full of admonitions regarding the poor.

Here are the top seven:

- 1. When we give to the poor we lend to the Lord (Pro. 19:17).**

He who has pity on the poor lends to the LORD, and He will pay back what he has given.

- 2. When we give to the poor we actually make ourselves rich (Pro. 11:24-25).**

There is one who scatters, yet increases more; and there is one who withholds more than is right, but it leads to poverty. The generous soul will be made rich, and he who waters will also be watered himself.

There is a German proverb that states, “Charity gives itself rich, covetousness hoards itself poor.”

3. When we give to the poor we honor God (Pro. 14:31).

He who oppresses the poor reproaches his Maker, but he who honors Him has mercy on the needy.

4. When we are sensitive to the needs of the poor, God is more sensitive to our needs (Pro. 21:13).

Whoever shuts his ears to the cry of the poor will also cry himself and not be heard.

Those who shut their ears to the cries of the poor will be ignored in their own time of need. –NLT

5. When we are liberal with others, God is liberal to us (Pro. 22:9).

He who has a generous eye will be blessed, for he gives of his bread to the poor.

6. When we give to the poor we insure ourselves against personal calamity (Pro. 28:27).

He who gives to the poor will not lack, but he who hides his eyes will have many curses.

7. When we give to the poor, we lay up for ourselves a reward in heaven (Luke 14:13-14).

But when you give a feast, invite the poor, the maimed, the lame, the blind. And you will be blessed, because they cannot repay you; for you shall be repaid at the resurrection of the just.

Treasure in heaven is laid up only when treasure on earth is laid down.

Do we really believe these promises? Do we really believe Jesus’ words that it is more blessed to give than to receive? If we do it will affect how we act.

God indicates that ministry to those in need is the spiritual fast that He has chosen.

Isaiah 58:1-14, NLT

Shout with the voice of a trumpet blast. Tell my people Israel of their sins! 2 Yet they act so pious! They come to the Temple every day and seem delighted to hear my laws. You would almost think this was a righteous nation that would never abandon its God. They love to make a show of coming to me and asking me to take action on their behalf. 3 ‘We have fasted

before you!’ they say. ‘Why aren’t you impressed? We have done much penance, and you don’t even notice it!’

“I will tell you why! It’s because you are living for yourselves even while you are fasting. You keep right on oppressing your workers. 4 What good is fasting when you keep on fighting and quarreling? This kind of fasting will never get you anywhere with me. 5 You humble yourselves by going through the motions of penance, bowing your heads like a blade of grass in the wind. You dress in sackcloth and cover yourselves with ashes. Is this what you call fasting? Do you really think this will please the LORD?

6 “No, the kind of fasting I want calls you to free those who are wrongly imprisoned and to stop oppressing those who work for you. Treat them fairly and give them what they earn. 7 I want you to share your food with the hungry and to welcome poor wanderers into your homes. Give clothes to those who need them, and do not hide from relatives who need your help. 8 “If you do these things, your salvation will come like the dawn. Yes, your healing will come quickly. Your godliness will lead you forward, and the glory of the LORD will protect you from behind. 9 Then when you call, the LORD will answer. ‘Yes, I am here,’ he will quickly reply. “Stop oppressing the helpless and stop making false accusations and spreading vicious rumors!

10 Feed the hungry and help those in trouble. Then your light will shine out from the darkness, and the darkness around you will be as bright as day. 11 The LORD will guide you continually, watering your life when you are dry and keeping you healthy, too. You will be like a well-watered garden, like an ever-flowing spring. 12 Your children will rebuild the deserted ruins of your cities. Then you will be known as the people who rebuild their walls and cities. 13 “Keep the Sabbath day holy. Don’t pursue your own interests on that day, but enjoy the Sabbath and speak of it with delight as the LORD’s holy day. Honor the LORD in everything you do, and don’t follow your own desires or talk idly. If you do this, 14 the LORD will be your delight. I will give you great honor and give you your full share of the inheritance I promised to Jacob, your ancestor. I, the LORD, have spoken”

Jesus indicated that we would give an account of our practical expressions of love.

Matthew 25:31-40

When the Son of Man comes in His glory, and all the holy angels with Him, then He will sit on the throne of His glory. 32 All the nations will be gathered before Him, and He will separate them one from another, as a shepherd divides his sheep from the goats. 33 And He will set the sheep on His right hand, but the goats on the left.

34 Then the King will say to those on His right hand, “Come, you blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world: 35 for I was hungry and you gave Me food; I was thirsty and you gave Me drink; I was a stranger and you took Me in; 36 I was naked and you clothed Me; I was sick and you visited Me; I was in prison and you came to Me.” 37 Then the righteous will answer Him, saying, “Lord, when did we see You hungry and feed You, or thirsty and give You drink? 38 When did we see You a stranger and take You in, or naked and clothe You? 39 Or when did we see You sick, or in

prison, and come to You?” 40 And the King will answer and say to them, “Assuredly, I say to you, inasmuch as you did it to one of the least of these My brethren, you did it to Me.”

These practical expressions of love become a shining testimony of Christ to the world (Mt. 5:16)

Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven.

Our attitude to the poor is a mark of our spiritual maturity.

James 2:14-17

What does it profit, my brethren, if someone says he has faith but does not have works? Can faith save him? If a brother or sister is naked and destitute of daily food, and one of you says to them, “Depart in peace, be warmed and filled,” but you do not give them the things which are needed for the body, what does it profit?

John, the Apostle of love, let it be known how true love is manifest.

I John 3:16-19

By this we know love, because He laid down His life for us. And we also ought to lay down our lives for the brethren. But whoever has this world's goods, and sees his brother in need, and shuts up his heart from him, how does the love of God abide in him? My little children, let us not love in word or in tongue, but in deed and in truth. And by this we know that we are of the truth, and shall assure our hearts before Him.

The answer for the poor is not another government program; the answer is the Church being the Church.

The sin of Sodom has a lot more to do with selfishness and lack of regard for the poor than it does about a particular sexual sin.

Ezekiel 16:49-50

Look, this was the iniquity of your sister Sodom: She and her daughter had pride, fullness of food, and abundance of idleness; neither did she strengthen the hand of the poor and needy. And they were haughty and committed abomination before Me; therefore I took them away as I saw fit.

Now this was the sin of your sister Sodom: She and her daughters were arrogant, overfed and unconcerned; they did not help the poor and needy. They were haughty and did detestable things before me. Therefore I did away with them as you have seen. –NIV

God will have a glorious church (Is. 62:1-12).

Many look at the church as a parasite to society. Therefore, the church is not taken very seriously. But when the church is the church, it is exactly what society needs. When the church is the church, it will be “sought out” once again.

How to respond to this message...

- 1. Ask God for a spirit of generosity.**
- 2. Ask God to open your eyes to the needs around you that are within your power to meet.**

Watch out for those in your neighborhood or sphere of influence with special needs and mobilize others to help.

- 3. Budget a certain amount of your monthly income for ministry to the poor and needy.**

- 4. Become a channel of blessing not merely a receptacle of blessing.**

When extra finances come your way, do not just look for how you might spend it on yourself, look around you, that blessing might just be for someone else.