

Kingdom Report

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There Shall Be No Poor Among You

That is the promise and command of the Lord in Deut.15:4. And yet in Deut. 15:11 we are faced with the challenge...."For the poor shall ever cease out of the land". Some thoughts about the poverty challenge scripture presents us with.

I have been working on the issue of poverty and the church response in my coming book "The Jubilee Economy" and thought just share with you this week an interesting aspect for your consideration.

We face a massive issue in both South Africa and all of Africa about poverty. Poverty in all its aspects. It's a human social and spiritual tragedy in a continent so rich in promise. We in Southern Africa have been placed in one of the greatest pieces of God's real estate on earth. Truly a "Promised Land" full of potential wealth promise and yet filled with poverty in the midst of potential plenty.

There are far too many aspects to the poverty issue both in terms of causes and solutions for me to even begin to address in a short weekend blog. However let me share with you an interesting anomalous challenge from Deuteronomy 15. which is part of my response to the poverty issue in the book.

I want to quote for you Deut. 15:4 and where you see "the land which the Lord gives you for an inheritance" I want you to consciously think of Southern Africa....

Deu 15:4 There shall be no poor among you; for the LORD shall greatly bless you in the land which the LORD your God gives you for an inheritance to possess it:

Here the Lord defines what a land that He has blessed looks like. By being obedient to the law of the Lord the visible result will be poverty eradication. Please note that South Africa is not blessed even though 83% of the population confesses to be Christian. We have the fourth highest poverty rate in the world I recently read.

Which brings up the reality of the land just seven verses later in Deut 15:11.....

Deu 15:11 For the poor shall never cease out of the land: therefore I command you, saying, You shall open your hand wide unto your brother, to your poor, and to the needy, in your land.

God's goal for us as a people and a nation is that He wants to bless us in such a way that there are no poor in the land. But he also tells us that the way the world and people are made there will always be poor...and therefore there must always be a national and church program to raise the newly poor to prosperity.

Why are there always poor? Because as Jesus said to each is given talents...1,3,5 some are specially gifted, others are not. There are always differences in people. Some work hard, others are lazy or sick or bad family circumstances or tragedy strikes, or a company fails or people are robbed. Therefore there will always be poor in the land but there is no need for them to remain poor..

So God expects us to take action about the poverty issue in our land. What I found interesting about the prescriptions for how to "possess the land" in order to create prosperity for all are the many varied requirements and instructions that the Lord gives about establishing a prosperous economy.

Yes there is a need for personal charity. But there are also instructions about limited government, decentralization of power, the rule of law, the right to private property, a sound currency, limited liability, education and skills development, a sound family structure etc. I will address these issues in the book. I have a different point to make here this week.

I want to give you a personal encouragement about the issue of your involvement in poverty relief. I need to make a slight detour to get my message across. It is found in 2 Peter 1:4...

2Pe 1:4 Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises: that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust.

The Lord holds as it were great and precious promises in front of us like carrots. And as we pursue these promises to make them come to pass, the scripture tells us that something changes inside of us in our spirits...we become partakers of the divine nature.

What is the "divine nature"? Well it is the 9 fruits of the Spirit...love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, self control (Gal. 5:22-23).

God gives us a challenge and a precious promise...there will be no poor in the land! I can think of few promises which if we individually pursue that promise in any way that we can help the poor, something changes inside of us.

Let me give you two examples.....

The first is in that very chapter of Deuteronomy 15 which has several ways we can be involved in poverty relief. The verses 12 - 14 are addressed to business owners and their relationship to their employees for instance...

It says suppose someone works for you for 6 years and he has finished his work contract. You have paid him faithfully an honest wage for an honest days world...that is "just". You have now participated in that divine nature of God which is his justice. But then the Lord makes this challenge...verses 13-14:

Deu 15:13 And when you send him out free from you, you shall not let him go away empty: You shall furnish him liberally out of your flock, and out of your

floor, and out of your winepress: of that wherewith the LORD your God has blessed you shall you give unto him.

Meaning if he has worked well for you for years and you paid him his agreed wage which is just...how about giving him a share of the profits as extra blessing. That is how you "partake of the divine nature" of God called "goodness". Be especially good to people beyond what they deserve because that is how the Lord is by nature. Partake of that nature! Now that person has something extra given to them to pass on "goodness" to the next person.

Second illustration from Jesus about personal charity....Luke 14:12-14....

“When you give a luncheon or a dinner, do not invite your friends or your brothers or your relatives or rich neighbors, otherwise they may also invite you in return and that will be your repayment. ¹³ But when you give a reception, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, the blind, ¹⁴ and you will be blessed, since they do not have the means to repay you; for you will be repaid at the resurrection of the righteous.”

Please be assured your good works are seen by the Lord and the angels of heaven. There are consequences. Even for the unsaved like the Roman centurion Cornelius as recorded in Acts 10...

Act 10:1-4 There was a certain man in Caesarea called Cornelius, a centurion of the band called the Italian band. A devout man and one that feared God with all his house, which gave much alms to the people, and prayed to God always He saw in a vision evidently about the ninth hour of the day an angel of God coming in to him, and saying unto him, Cornelius. And when he looked on him, he was afraid, and said, What is it, Lord? And he said unto him, Thy prayers and your alms are come up for a memorial before God.

God has called us all to do "good works". Especially the kind for which there is no visible reward on earth. But there is in heaven.

Eph 2:10 For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.

Good works are structured in such a way that you have something that someone else needs and share that with them. And through that moment of sharing something happens in your spirit. You are changed. You have participated in the nature of God. As you express that part of God's nature here on earth your spirit person is changed into His nature.

When you give love to the unloved, when you give peace to the troubled, God's love and peace are multiplied. When keep your anger and desire for vengeance when you have been wronged unjustly you develop meekness and self control. When you give to the poor and needy you partake of God's goodness. When you share friendship to the friendless you share the joy of the Lord.

God has made a world of inequality as a world which requires and calls out for "good works" from us. Because the Lord not only wants to save us but He wants to impart

His character to us. And it is only in this troubled world where you have the opportunity to do that. Heaven is not a place where poor need to be cared for.

That is why the poor will always be with us on earth but God has no intention for them to remain poor. That is why He created good works for us to do from the foundation of the world when He created the world the way it is....a world of opportunity for good works.

Tit 2:14 Who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works.

Tit 3:8 This is a faithful saying, and these things I will that thou affirm constantly, that they which have believed in God might be careful to maintain good works. These things are good and profitable unto men.

Tit 3:14 And let ours also learn to maintain good works for necessary uses, that we be not unfruitful.

Here in our nation we cannot leave the issue of poverty alleviation to government and corporations alone. We can as a church and as individuals each day do our part in acts of good works to demonstrate the love and care of the Lord for the poor.

However in the long run this sub-continent of Southern Africa is our Promised Land and our economy, our financial system and our corporate sector are not being operated according to God's law principles. Which is a major cause of structural poverty.

And here we need God anointed people who can do the "good works" needed to turn our national systems around to create a land flowing with milk and honey for all... not just for the political and economic elite.

But those are issues that will be tackled in larger book format.

In the meantime....let's grab and confess the promise of God for our land "there will be no poor among you!" and make it happen.