

## Help Of The Helpless

Text : **James 2: 8-26**

### INTRODUCTION :

**A. In our last lesson we saw that, though one's relationship with God requires faith, it also requires that one's faith manifest itself in some practical ways.**

1. **James 1: 26-27** If anyone thinks himself to be religious, and yet does not bridle his tongue but deceives his own heart, this man's religion is worthless. <sup>27</sup> Pure and undefiled religion in the sight of our God and Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their distress, and to keep oneself unstained by the world.
2. These verses list at least 3 qualifications for the religion that God accepts.
  - a. It must affect the way we deal with other people. (*The words reflect one's heart.*)
  - b. It must affect the way we treat those who are in need. (*widows = helpless.*)
  - c. It must affect the way we live. (*Though in the world, we must not be of the world.*)
3. God expects His people to be like Him. *The prophet David describes God as :*  
**Psa. 68: 5-** A father of the fatherless and a judge for the widows,  
 Is God in His holy habitation.

**B. Today's text explains that the verity of one's faith is tested by his attitude toward those in need.**

1. **James 2: 14-17** What use is it, my brethren, if someone says he has faith but he has no works? Can that faith save him? <sup>15</sup> If a brother or sister is without clothing and in need of daily food, <sup>16</sup> and one of you says to them, "Go in peace, be warmed and be filled," and yet you do not give them what is necessary for *their* body, what use is that? <sup>17</sup> Even so faith, if it has no works, is dead, *being by itself.*
2. Faith that does not motivate one to compassionate action is not really faith.
  - a. There is a difference between academic acceptance (*belief*) and faith.
  - b. Faith motivates one's heart to put his body into action. (**doer = apply the word**)

**C. God and His people have always had a heart for the poor.**

1. God commanded His people of old to care for the poor.
  - a. **Deut. 15:11-** For the poor will never cease to be in the land; therefore I command you, saying, 'You shall freely open your hand to your brother, to your needy and poor in your land.'

- b. **Psa. 82: 3-4** Vindicate the weak and fatherless;  
Do justice to the afflicted and destitute.  
4 Rescue the weak and needy;  
Deliver *them* out of the hand of the wicked.

2. Jesus instructed Christians to give preference to the poor.

**Luke 14: 13-14** 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.

3. Our Lord's Apostle commanded it as is an essential to salvation.

**I John 3: 17-18** But whoever has the world's goods, and sees 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 truth.

- a. Like faith, love is an action word.
- b. Without a love that motivates action one cannot have a relationship with God.

#### D. The New Testament church had a heart for the poor.

1. Needy

- a. **Acts 2: 44-45** And all those who had believed were together and had all things in common; 45 and they *began* selling their property and possessions and were sharing them with all, as anyone might have need.

- b. **Acts 4: 32f** This practice continued on.

2. Widows

- a. **Act 6** ... Deacons exist to make sure widows are properly cared for.
- b. **I Tim 5** ... Timothy was given instructions regarding the care of widows.
- c. Ongoing, organized program in all churches and between the churches.

#### E. The New Testament church was proactive in caring for the poor.

- 1. Paul's collection demonstrates a caring even between congregations.
- 2. **II Cor. 8** ... The Macedonian Christians gave though in "deep poverty" themselves.
- 3. **Jas 1: 27** .. The word "visit" puts responsibility of Christians to go, seek out & help.

**As we approach the thanksgiving holiday, it is good for us to look at the extent to which God has blessed us materially and look at the responsibility which is inherent with such blessings.**

## I. Poverty is an urgent problem in the world today.

### A. Poverty is a relative term. (*Some of us feel poor because others are much richer.*)

1. Many wealthy do not consider themselves wealthy – compared to other wealthy.
2. Most Americans do not consider themselves wealthy, because others have more.
  - a. We live in the richest nation in the history of the world. (*ungrateful = feel entitled*)
  - b. 99+ % of Americans are rich by world standards. (*Not characterized by gratitude*)
4. The combined GDP of the 41 poorest countries is less than wealth of one of 7 men.

### B. What we call “poverty” in the U.S. is rich by world standards.

1. The official “poverty” line in America is \$ 22, 050 for family of four per year.
  - a. People at this level qualify for much government assistance.
  - b. Those below the line get an “*earned income tax credit*” of \$2000, plus Medicaid.
2. People in American “poverty” live luxurious lifestyles.
  - a. They have cars. (*.07 % of people in the world own a car.*)
  - b. They have phones. (*80 to 85 % of the people in the world have never even made a call*)

### C. Most people in the world are FAR below our “extreme poverty” level.

1. The average American make \$70 to \$90 per day. (average hourly wage \$15)
2. 80 % of the world’s population lives on less than \$10 per day. (**5.15 Billion**)
3. **3 Billion** people live on less than \$2.50 per day. (*half the people in the world*)
4. Of the 3 billion more than **1 billion** live on less than \$1 per day.
  - a. \$.46 per day in Sub-Saharan Africa.
  - b. \$.27 per day in much of Asia.

\* **The things we have cost as much there as they do here.**

### D. Hunger is a major problem in the world today.

1. **34,000** children and **16,000** adults starve to death every **DAY**. (*50% in poverty*)
2. Americans spend \$ **60 billion** per year on weight loss products.
  - a. We are fighting an epidemic of childhood obesity.
  - b. Much of the world would fight to get our garbage. (*Painted ships for it.*)

## II. Our attitude toward the poor is directly related to our relationship with God.

### A. Most of us try to avoid the poor.

1. Like the priest and the Levite in the parable, we don’t want to be involved.

2. The poor have a different lifestyle and value system than we have.
3. Poor people tend to have problems which are hard to deal with.

**B. That which one does for the poor glorifies God.**

1. **Prov. 14: 31**- He who oppresses the poor taunts his Maker,  
But he who is gracious to the needy honors Him.
2. That which one does for the poor manifests godly character.
  - a. **James 2: 14** ... It proves the faith one has in God / in Christ.
  - b. **I John 3: 17-18** ... It demonstrates that one has a heart of love.

**C. Benefitting the poor benefits the giver more than it benefits the recipients.**

1. **Psa. 41: 1**- How blessed is he who considers the helpless;  
The Lord will deliver him in a day of trouble.
2. **Acts 20: 35**- In everything I showed you that by working hard in this  
manner you must help the weak and remember the words  
of the Lord Jesus, that He Himself said, "It is more blessed  
to give than to receive."
3. **Luke 6: 38**- Give, and it will be given to you. They will pour into your lap a  
good measure—pressed down, shaken together, and running over.  
For by your standard of measure it will be measured to you in return.

\* *The best feeling in the world is to have helped another with no thought of self.*

**III. To truly help the poor has always been difficult.**

**A. It has been difficult from the very beginning of the church.**

1. "Great experience is required to distinguish between those who are really poor and those who beg only that they may collect money. He who gives to a distressed and sick person gives to God, and will receive a reward. But he who gives to a vagabond and parasite...gives it to men who deserve contempt for their audacity, rather than pity for their poverty."  
— Bishop Basil, 4th Century
2. "[Church Deacons] rendered a great individualizing possible in the relief of the poor. Every one received the assistance that his necessities required. Efforts were above all made to render the poor again capable of work, and put them in a condition to earn their own livelihood. They were directed where to find work, and were furnished with tools."  
From "Christian Charity in the Ancient Church" by Gerhard Uhlhorn
3. All profitable relief is done on an individual basis.

**B. There are 6 classifications of poor. ( *To help one must know the poor.* )**

1. The oppressed poor.

- a. Maniacal dictators keep whole populations poor. ( *North Korea* )
  - b. The third world feudal system keeps poor locked to the land.
  - c. These populations can only be helped by liberation.
2. The Uninformed poor.
    - a. They don't know how to be anything else. ( **no information** )
    - b. Generational poverty ... "circle of poverty" ... lifestyle taught by parents.
    - c. These people can be helped, but it takes a long-term commitment.
      - \* *Being made disciples of Jesus will change their value system.*
  3. The lazy poor. "*He's so lazy he wouldn't work as a taster in a pie factory.*"
    - a. The uninformed poor sometimes appear to be lazy, but one must form a relationship before he can tell the difference. ( can't judge another's heart )
    - b. We do wrong when we assist a lazy person; doing so affirms their sins.
    - c. **II Thes. 3: 10-** For even when we were with you, we used to give you this order: if anyone is not willing to work, then he is not to eat, either.
      - \* *Hunger I a great motivator in overcoming laziness.*
  4. The prodigal poor.
    - a. He's reaping what he has sown. ( *sin, drugs, alcohol, gambling - Prov. 23:21* )
    - b. God may be working in their lives to bring them to repentance.
    - c. A prodigal cannot be helped until he leaves the hog pen. ( **Luke 15: 8** )
  5. The handicapped poor.
    - a. Mental or physically disabled through no fault of their own.
    - b. Some can be taught and be semi-sufficient, but others must be maintained.
    - c. When we help these people we serve God and glorify Him. ( *let light so shine ..* )
      - \* *These people enable Christians put God's love on display before the world.*
  6. The circumstantial poor.
    - a. Poverty through no fault of their own. ( *lost job* )
    - b. Natural disasters ... *hurricanes, floods, fires, earthquakes, etc.*
    - c. Sudden loss of health ... *disease, accident, etc.*
- C. There are at least three ways we help the poor. ( *All take money, and TIME* )**
1. Relief
    - a. Urgent and temporary aide.
    - b. Response to disasters.
    - c. The "Good Samaritan" is a biblical example.

## 2. Rehabilitation

- a. Longer term response to permanently correct problem.
- b. Return people who experienced crisis back to pre-crisis condition.
- c. Teaching to fish as opposed to just giving a fish.

## 3. Development

- a. The vast majority of needs fall into this category.
- b. The process of making disciples of the long-term materially poor so they depend upon God alone and with His help can meet their basic needs.
- c. This requires a lot of time and many tough decisions. (*mentoring*)

### D. At some point, development must replace relief.

1. They must learn to confront tough questions.
    - a. You can't pay your bills ... what about next month, following months.
    - b. It this the 1<sup>st</sup> time you've asked for help, 4<sup>th</sup> .. you need a lifestyle change.
    - c. Approach with love ... never be judgmental.
  2. Teach them a biblical world view of work.
    - a. Tutor them on how to find a job.
    - b. Coach them to help them keep their job.
    - c. Try to work out an arrangement with their employer to mediate problems.
- \* *Continual relief will prevent people from developing.*

## CONCLUSION :

### A. Caring for the poor is NOT the job of the government.

1. It is a command of God.
  2. Preachers are commanded to teach it to the church.
 

**Tit. 3: 14-** Our people must also learn to engage in good deeds to meet pressing needs, so that they will not be unfruitful.
  3. It has been a work of the church from the very beginning. ( **Ax 2, 6, I Tm 5** )
- \* *Caring for the helpless and needy is NOT the work of the government.*

### B. We are blessed above all, but with blessing comes responsibility.

**II Cor. 8: 1-2** Now, brethren, we wish to make known to you the grace of God which has been given in the churches of Macedonia, 2 that in a great ordeal of affliction their abundance of joy and their deep poverty overflowed in the wealth of their liberality.

### C. Greatest Thanksgiving is to use God's blessings to His glory.

**Lesson Text :****James 2: 8-26**

- 8** If, however, you are fulfilling the royal law according to the Scripture, "YOU SHALL LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR AS YOURSELF," you are doing well. **9** But if you show partiality, you are committing sin *and* are convicted by the law as transgressors. **10** For whoever keeps the whole law and yet stumbles in one *point*, he has become guilty of all. **11** For He who said, "DO NOT COMMIT ADULTERY," also said, "DO NOT COMMIT MURDER." Now if you do not commit adultery, but do commit murder, you have become a transgressor of the law. **12** So speak and so act as those who are to be judged by *the* law of liberty. **13** For judgment *will be* merciless to one who has shown no mercy; mercy triumphs over judgment.
- 14** What use is it, my brethren, if someone says he has faith but he has no works? Can that faith save him? **15** If a brother or sister is without clothing and in need of daily food, **16** and one of you says to them, "Go in peace, be warmed and be filled," and yet you do not give them what is necessary for *their* body, what use is that? **17** Even so faith, if it has no works, is dead, *being* by itself.
- 18** But someone may *well* say, "You have faith and I have works; show me your faith without the works, and I will show you my faith by my works." **19** You believe that God is one. You do well; the demons also believe, and shudder. **20** But are you willing to recognize, you foolish fellow, that faith without works is useless? **21** Was not Abraham our father justified by works when he offered up Isaac his son on the altar? **22** You see that faith was working with his works, and as a result of the works, faith was perfected; **23** and the Scripture was fulfilled which says, "AND ABRAHAM BELIEVED GOD, AND IT WAS RECKONED TO HIM AS RIGHTEOUSNESS," and he was called the friend of God. **24** You see that a man is justified by works and not by faith alone. **25** In the same way, was not Rahab the harlot also justified by works when she received the messengers and sent them out by another way? **26** For just as the body without *the* spirit is dead, so also faith without works is dead.