

Poverty and Prosperity

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- [0 : 0 0] So, James chapter 2, verses 1 through 10. My brethren, do not hold your faith in our glorious Lord Jesus Christ with an attitude of personal favoritism.
- For if a man comes into your assembly with a gold ring and dressed in fine clothes, and there also comes in a poor man in dirty clothes, and you pay special attention to the one who is wearing the fine clothes, and you say, You sit here in a good place, and you say to the poor man, You stand over there or sit down by my footstool.
- Have you not made distinctions among yourselves and become judges with evil motives?
- Listen, my beloved brethren. Did not God choose the poor of this world to be rich in faith and heirs of the kingdom, which he promised to those who love him?
- But you have dishonored the poor man. Is it not the rich who oppress you and personally drag you into court?
- [1 : 3 7] Do they not blaspheme the fair name by which you have been called? If, however, you are fulfilling the royal law according to the scripture, you shall love your neighbor as yourself, you are doing well.
- But if you show partiality, you are committing sin and are convicted by the law as transgressors.
- For whoever keeps the whole law and yet stumbles in one point, he has become guilty of all.
- Thank you. For lack of a better name, I guess we could call this brief series, The Doctrines of Poverty and Prosperity.
- And I think of it in terms of the necessity of poverty and God's attitude toward the poor.
- [2 : 5 5] Somehow that doesn't sound right, does it? The necessity of poverty? Why, pray tell me, should poverty be looked upon as a necessity?
- Many, particularly those in government, whether liberal or conservative, do not see economic poverty as a necessity.
- They see it as anything but a necessity. They view poverty as a scourge on humanity that can and should be eliminated.
- The thinking is, if we elect the right people and put in place the right programs, poverty can and should be eliminated.
- Theoretically, that sounds good. And I'm sure that when the master designers in the 1960s, led by then President Lyndon B. Johnson and the Great Society, vowed to eliminate poverty, some optimistic individuals were probably thinking, at last, poverty is going to die the death.
- [4 : 1 6] Because when Uncle Sam throws its massive weight, influence, and dollars behind the program, you can be sure it's going to succeed.
- And multiplied billions, probably by now, trillions have been plowed into this so-called war on poverty that we have been steadily losing since it was begun in the 1960s.

Massive government aid programs, often referred to as entitlements, were put in place with the best of motives and the best of intentions.

Huge bureaucratic machinery was cranked up, involving thousands of new bureaucrats to implement the programs. Fraud and corruption, engaged in by those who quickly learned to work the system, called for more bureaucrats to be put in place to ferret out the violators.

Every now and then, with one of our principal programs, from which many of us have benefited, the Medicare program, you read about cases of massive fraud involving dozens of people, many of them upstanding doctors, and those in the medical practitioner ministries are brought into court and some are sent to prison and others are fined for massive cases of fraud where the government has been ripped off to the tune of multiplied millions of dollars paying benefits to people who did not deserve them or benefits to people who, in reality, were really somebody else.

[6 : 17] So, this goes on. And the very system designed to correct the problems of poverty has, in fact, exacerbated the problem by inflicting a dependency on government that would have horrified our founding fathers.

Our founding fathers were all about freedom and independence from government. Not only the government of England, but the new government that they were in the process of establishing.

I think we can say almost to a person our founding fathers thought that Americans should be as independent and as self-sustaining as possible with the full recognition that there are people in our society who are simply unable to be independent and self-sustaining.

They are to be adequately cared for by those who are. That's the way it's supposed to work. Our founding fathers were coming from a biblical mindset in their understanding of people and how and why people were to be governed.

They understood the nature of humanity as the Bible revealed it. I was struck by perusing the pages of an old McGuffey reader which was a standard textbook used by elementary children probably a hundred years or more ago and every child that came through the public education system was exposed to the McGuffey reader and they started out by learning of course the alphabet.

[8 : 11] Can you believe that kids back then knew how to read and write? remarkable. Some could even write a letter you know and they would start out with the letter A for alphabet A for Adam in Adam's fall we sinned all.

Can you imagine finding that in a public school today? Why you'd get sued wouldn't you? In Adam's sin in Adam's fall we sinned all.

That was the A of the alphabet. Today in stark contrast man is not seen by many as having fallen and can't get up.

He is seen as man ever progressing upward. That man is perfectible. We only need the right government and the right policies to urge man on up the ladder of perfection.

And many feel of course that it is the government's responsibility to do that. One of the famous quotes and I'm not giving it exact but it predates the democratic philosophy long before the United States was ever born.

[9 : 28] It goes all the way back to ancient Greek democracy and the statement or the essence of it was something like this. A democracy or a republic a democratic republic can work very well only until its principles learn that they can legislate benefits from the public treasury for their own good.

And that's when the system starts falling apart. So it takes a while for a democratic government to realize that but eventually the people start catching on and they find ways to benefit from that and that's precisely what's taking place here.

And the reason it is taking place here is because we're human beings. We're just made like we've always been made and we are all part of that fall. It is a moral and spiritual blindness that embraces and perpetuates the myth that man has all that is needed inside of him.

to realize the worldwide utopia he so fondly desires. It is in reality nothing but a massive denial of history and reality fueled by an enormous corporate human ego which is all as well part of the problem.

Failure of any government including the United States to reckon with the long proven continually demonstrated nature of man will surely result in the establishment of government that cannot and will not govern man in a way that is equitable just and consistent.

[11 : 17] And this is exactly why Christ said in Matthew 26 in Mark 14 and in John 12 the poor you have with you always.

Now think about that. What's the connection between what I've just said and having the poor with us always? Another way of saying what Christ said is this there is no end in this present world to an ongoing supply of poor people.

You're never going to run out of them. as long as this world exists you will never exhaust the supply of poor people despite all attempts to eliminate poverty.

Poverty is systemic to the fallen human condition. If you understand that you understand the whole concept of why there are poor people.

Poverty is systemic to the fallen human condition. I'm very well aware that many see this pronouncement as defeatist or negative or just giving up.

[12 : 41] people but they are nothing what I have said are nothing but an accurate reflection of reality.

Poverty is systemic that is it is ingrained it is built in to the human fallen condition. early on in this brief series let me identify that systemic element that guarantees the truth that Christ spoke about always having the poor with us.

And please understand this concept because it is not only critical to understanding poverty it's also critical to understanding prosperity and it's critical to understanding everything else that is in the human condition.

It is very simple and yet very profound and thoroughly biblical. Poverty like its opposite prosperity are both the predictable products of human volition.

That's it. that's very simple. We have poverty because we have human volition. We have prosperity and wealth because we have human volition.

[14 : 13] Volition is that gift that God has granted to each and every human being. It is the power to make choices.

The power to render decisions all normal people have it. The only ones who are not responsible for their use of their volition are those who are mentally deficient and simply don't have the ability to make choices in a responsible way.

But every ordinary normal person is endowed by God with a will, with a decider, with a determiner.

you have the ability and the responsibility to make choices. All through life, life consists of making one choice after another.

Sometimes it's where you're going to go to school. Sometimes it's where you're going to live. Sometimes it's who you're going to marry. Sometimes it's where you're going to work. Whatever course you're going to pursue by way of an occupation, these are all choices that we make.

[15 : 22] Life is made up of this. This is life. Volition is life. Choices. Human volition is the power that each of us possess.

It is an ability that allows us to say yay or nay. Poverty is the result of decisions that people make.

Poverty is a consequence of having made wrong decisions, either directly or indirectly. A principal value of education is to enable us to make beneficial decisions about anything and everything.

And this really ought to be the rationale behind education. People are supposed to get educated because theoretically, now granted it doesn't always work this way, but theoretically the more educated you are, the more able you are to make responsible choices about life because as you move through life, decisions are thrust upon you daily in the way you spend your money and all the things that we've already enumerated.

You just go through daily routine activities, making one decision after another, and many of them you don't even think about because a lot of times it's a repetitive decision.

[16 : 51] It's the decision that you've made before. So you just make it again because that's the way you operate. And we're all like that. How many people do you know who are wealthy and illiterate?

can't read, can't write, but they've got a lot of money. How many people do you know like that? Probably not many. How many Forrest Gumps are there out there?

Probably not very many. Now this is a real baseline value of education because the more education you get, the greater is the likelihood.

And I'm not saying it's guaranteeing. No, no. We know plenty of really dumb people who are well educated. There are a lot of people educated beyond their intelligence, you know.

But theoretically, ordinarily, the more education you have, the better it will serve you for making good choices because the more you understand about things and the more you are able to correctly assess situations that confront you, the more likely you are to make a good, judicious decision about what you are going to do.

[18 : 20] And sometimes, particularly if you're dealing in the areas of finance, that means you're going to make money. money. I've known a few people in my life, and you probably know some too, they just have an uncanny knack for seeing where a dollar can be made.

And they make it. It's almost like they have a sense of smell as to where money can be made. They know what to invest and how to invest it, and boy, they turn over a buck while somebody else is just sitting there wondering, scratching their head.

How do they do that? And there are other people. If you gave them \$50,000 tomorrow, a month from now, they'd be flat broke.

There are plenty of people like this. One extreme to the other. And there are a lot of complexities that play into this mix. I realize in some of the things we're talking about, there is great simplicity.

And anybody can understand it? And in other ways, there are so many complications that go into the mix that make it very difficult, and we're just at a loss to figure out some of these things because they just don't seem to compute.

[19 : 41] And you all know situations like this. First thing I want to cover right now, and this is really, really important, very important. two great extremes that we need to avoid in dealing with both poverty and prosperity.

And when I hear people make statements like that, I'm going to give you, I just, I vibrate, I just cringe because in the first place, you are mystified as how somebody can be so stupid.

But there are a lot of stupid people out there. One of my favorite philosophers, John Wayne, used to say, life is tough, and if you're stupid, it's a lot tougher.

Well, there are a lot of stupid people out there, and sometimes stupid people make statements like this. All poor people are poor by choice because they are too lazy to work and they simply want everything given to them.

You ever hear that? I've only heard it a couple times, and I couldn't let it go unchallenged, and I did challenge it, and they backed down because they realized in thinking of it, in thinking it through, that it really is an irresponsible statement.

[21 : 02] Are there some poor people like that? Oh, yeah. Yeah, there are. The book of Proverbs talks about some people being so lazy, they create situations.

Why? I can't go to work today, there may be a lion in the street. Well, if I step out of my house to go to work, how do I know that lion won't attack me?

I mean, you can just come up with all kinds of and this kind of attitude leads to poverty, and it should, because some people are poor because they are lazy, but there are a lot of people who are poor, who are very industrious, and they want to work, and when they can work, they work hard, and they do a good job.

So it is terribly unfair and really stupid to paint everybody with a broad brush like that and put them in that category.

And the same can be said, an equally stupid statement. All wealthy people are undeserving of their wealth. They either had it given to them by their parents, or they made the money by taking unfair advantage of the less fortunate.

[22 : 20] There are people who believe that. Is there anyone like that? Oh, yeah. Yeah, there are. And we will see in the scriptures how some people embellished themselves by taking advantage of those who were less fortunate.

So there are people like that. But to say all or never or always is a big, big mistake almost all the time. In the Bible, there are godly people who are wealthy and godly people who are poor.

In the Bible, there are ungodly people who are wealthy and ungodly people who are poor. And what I want to do for the time we have remaining is go to the scriptures and consider God's view of the poor.

And the first passage we want to consider is in Leviticus chapter 19. This is a place you don't visit very often. Leviticus chapter 19. And I would realize and admit that we are talking about the Old Testament Mosaic economy.

They were under the law. We are not under the law. However, I want you to note that even in the Old Testament there are principles that are enforced that never change.

[23 : 48] And many of these principles reflect God's attitude regarding things and his attitude regarding the poor is one of them. So this is a very important passage and we need to understand that even though we are not under the law, this is still a principle that reflects God's attitude regarding this particular subject.

And in Leviticus chapter 19, I want you to look at verse well, let's just begin with I can't read it all.

It's just too long. I read it all with great prophet but I can't expect you to do that. Let's start with verse 9. Leviticus 19 and verse 9.

And this, by the way, is an expression of God's built-in welfare system for the poor of Israel because there were people who for one reason or another were unemployed or unable to work or unable to do much work.

And God had a system whereby he provided for the poor and it was those who had adequate that were to be used to provide.

[25 : 10] And this will explain it. Verse 9. Now, when you reap the harvest of your land, you shall not reap to the very corners of your field.

Neither shall you gather the gleanings of your harvest, nor shall you glean your vineyard, nor shall you gather the fallen fruit of your vineyard.

You shall leave them for the needy and for the stranger. I am the Lord your God. Here, he is simply looking out for the poor.

This is a reflection of God's attitude toward the poor. And he says, when you go out into the field to harvest your field of barley, oats, wheat, whatever it may be, you just cut one swath through and you're not allowed to go into the corners.

You just round that off and you leave what is in the corners. And when you've made one pass over your grain field, collecting what you can, in that initial pass, you don't go back.

[26 : 14] You cannot go back and pick up the stalks that you missed. You leave them. The poor will come into your field and glean what is left off.

They are called the gleaners. You're familiar with Ruth and Naomi in the Old Testament. Ruth was a gleaner. And she went out on the field. This is the way they supported themselves. This is the way they had their daily bread.

And they made bread daily. They would go out in the field and glean the grain to make the bread for that day. This was God's provision for them. And the same way with the vineyard. You do not glean your vineyard, nor shall you gather the fallen fruit of your vineyard.

You don't go around and pick up the droppings on the ground. You leave them. Now this is built into the Mosaic Law. God required this of his people. And what this did, it not only provided sustenance for those who didn't have fields or didn't own property, but it allowed them to maintain some sense of dignity in that they went out and went to work.

In other words, the gleanings were not collected and delivered to them at their front door. They had to go out and get it. And in doing that, there is a sense of satisfaction, a sense of accomplishment, achievement.

[27 : 39] This is something you did for yourself. And it makes a huge difference the way the individual views themselves. Today, there is a popular phrase.

Every time I hear it, I go, I want to feel good about myself. Well, I don't want to feel bad about myself, but the phrase is really overworked and sometimes one almost gets the impression that nothing matters except being able to feel good about yourself.

And it gets kind of ridiculous. It's a hangover from the self-esteem thing. But there is a sense of legitimacy to the self-esteem. Self-esteem is not something that can be given to you or granted to you.

It is something you have because you deserve it. And you deserve it because you worked for it and you achieved it. It is a good, appropriate feeling, a sense of satisfaction, accomplishment because you accomplished something.

Not because somebody said you did, but because you did. Today, today in some of our schools, kids get medals and trophies for everything.

[28 : 49] Well, you didn't win, but you tried hard. Here, this is yours, you know, and you tried hard too. And you didn't try as hard as he did, but you tried hard. That gets ridiculous. us. We need meaningful work.

Something that we can feel good inside about having accomplished because it's something that you did. I don't care if it's mowing the yard or working for somebody or what.

Deuteronomy chapter 15. Come over to the Deuteronomy chapter 15. At the end of every seven years, you shall grant a remission of debts.

That means you forgive the debt. somebody owes you money. At the end of seven years, you forgive the debt. And this is the manner of remission.

Every creditor shall release what he has loaned to his neighbor. That means he forgives it. He shall not exact it of his neighbor and his brother because the Lord's remission has been proclaimed.

[30 : 15] From a foreigner, you may exact it, but your hand shall release whatever of yours is with your brother. However, there shall be no poor among you, since the Lord will surely bless you in the land which the Lord your God is giving you as an inheritance to possess.

If only, see, God is saying this is how poverty is going to be eliminated in Israel. Israel. But, you see the first two words of verse 5?

They didn't. And they didn't get the benefit. God said, I will eliminate poverty from the children of Israel if you implement the principles I give you.

The problem is they didn't. Why didn't they? For the same reason we wouldn't. Selfishness overtook them. Greed overtook them.

And they did not implement the principles. If only you listen obedient to the voice of the Lord your God to observe carefully all these commandments which I am commanding you today. For the Lord your God will bless you as he has promised.

[31 : 33] And you, Israel, will lend to many nations, but you, Israel, will not borrow. And you will rule over many nations, but they will not rule over you.

If there is a poor man with you, one of your brothers in any of your towns in your land which the Lord your God is giving you, you shall not harden your heart nor close your hand from your poor brother.

And by the way, this is not limited to blood brother. that is one of the same mother and father as you. The brother here is a fellow Israelite.

It is any other Jew. And granted, this is a Jewish economy we're talking about, and it is under the law. But I am pointing this out to show you what God's attitude is toward the care of the poor.

And I can assure you, God's attitude has not changed in the church age from what it was prior to the church age. God feels the same way about the poor today that he felt about them then.

[32 : 40] God has a heart and a sympathy for the poor. But the reason he can't just move in and eliminate poverty so that it doesn't exist anymore is because he is committed to the gift of volition that he has given to each of us.

That means God has put himself in a position where he has to stand back and allow man's volition to run the course even though it often engages in things that are contrary to God's position and God's will.

He will not override your volition or take it away from you to keep you from making bad choices. He allows you to exercise your volition and that includes making good choices and bad ones.

This is a really, really important principle. And along with the volition he's given us, there are not only consequences that come from it, but there is accountability that goes with it.

Now, let's continue reading on here. Verse 9. Beware, lest there is a base thought in your heart saying, the seventh year, the year of remission is near, and your eye is hostile toward your poor brother, and you give him nothing.

[34 : 05] Then he may cry to the Lord against you, and it will be a sin in you. You shall give generously to him, and your heart shall not be grieved when you give to him, because for this thing the Lord your God will bless you in all your work and in all your undertakings.

For the poor will never cease to be in the land. land. This is where Christ got that statement that he made in the Gospels. The poor you have with you always.

You shall freely open your hand to your brother, to your needy, and pour in the land. Remarkable passage.

Chapter 24. Deuteronomy. Chapter 24. Verse 10.

This is a very practical one. When you make your neighbor alone of any sort, you shall not enter his house to take his pledge.

[35 : 10] What's that? That's his outer garment. Christ was wearing one that they took off of him before he was crucified.

This pledge is what soldiers gambled over. It's called a robe. It was that outer garment that was used as a blanket.

And at nighttime, it was your comforter. It was your quilt, your comforter, your everything. And this is what people slept in. They didn't have bed clothes. They didn't have PJs.

They wrapped this around them. This is the pledge. And Moses is saying, when you make your neighbor a loan of any sort, you loan him a few shekels.

How do you know he's going to pay that money back? How do you know he's good for it? Well, you get some collateral. You get some item of value that is your brother's that you loan the money to that you can hold as collateral to make sure that he pays you back the money.

[36 : 22] And here Moses is saying, okay, so you loan this man money. You don't walk into this man's house and take his cloak that is hanging there on the wall. You shall remain outside and the man to whom you make the loan shall bring the pledge out to you.

This is unreasonable demands. This is kind of like a search and seizure thing. You just, well, I'm going in and get this to make sure that he pays me back. No, no. You allow the man the dignity.

He goes in the house and he gets his own pledge. He gets his own coat. This was a heavy woven blanket like coat. We see pictures of them all the time. We call them robes and they wear them and they're full length.

This is mid-eastern garb. He is a poor man. You shall not sleep with his pledge. And when the sun goes down, you shall surely return the pledge to him that he may sleep in his cloak and bless you.

This is the guy's blanket. It's the only thing he's got to keep himself warm. And it will be righteousness for you before the Lord your God. You shall not oppress a hired servant who is poor and needy.

[37 : 37] Whether he is one of your countrymen or one of your aliens, a stranger who is in your town, in your land, in your towns, you shall give him his wages on his day before the sun sets.

They didn't pay on a weekly basis or monthly basis. They paid on a daily basis. And if a man was unemployed, he would go into town and hang out at the marketplace.

He would just stand around there at the marketplace. And pretty soon, there would be some landowners that would show up and say, okay, for my fields today, I need four laborers.

You, you, you, and you. And he might know them as experienced laborers who do a good job. So he hires those people and they walk off with him from the marketplace to the field and they go out and they work the field all day long.

And when the day's labor is over, he pays them at the end of the day. He doesn't make them wait for their money. He pays them right then at the end of the day. fathers shall not be put to death for their sons.

[38 : 50] Well, this is an entirely different thing. We won't go there. That's a different subject. Now, come over to Psalm 10. Psalm 10. Psalm 10. Psalm 10.

Psalm 10. Psalm 10. Psalm 10. Psalm 10. 2.

In pride, the wicked hotly pursue the afflicted. This is another term for the poor or the needy. Let them be caught in the plots which they have devised.

God really doesn't appreciate people taking unfair advantage of the poor. The poor, by virtue of their poverty, have no clout.

They usually have no one going to bat for them. They are a sitting duck to be taken advantage of. And God does not look upon that kindly. People who are poor usually have no monetary means.

[40 : 00] and because they have no monetary means, they usually have little or no influence with the authorities because after all, why do people look down on the poor?

Why do they disregard the poor? Why do they ignore the poor? More often than not, it's because the poor are not in a position to do anything for you. They'll never be able to contribute to you in any way.

So you just write them off and ignore them. That's what often happens to poverty in just about any country. And if you go to some place like India where they have it coupled with their religion, it's devastating.

I do not know of any country on the face of the earth, even including Muslim countries, that is so captivated and so distressed and so beaten down because of their religion than India.

over in India, the poor are seen as nothing more than bad karma. You live in the streets, you scrounge from the gutters, you dwell among filth and vermin and everything else because that's what you deserve.

[41 : 19] You're just getting what your due is. In a previous life, you were a real skunk. And now you come back as a poverty-stricken individual. And you know what?

I'm not going to help you. I'm not going to do anything to alleviate your poverty. I'm not going to give you any food because if I did, I would be defeating the purpose of karma.

I am to stand back and do nothing and let karma exact its will upon you, which you have coming and you deserve. Can you imagine living in a society like that?

Rabbi Zacharias talks about it because he was born and reared in India and fortunate for him, he was born in an upper caste family and he didn't have to experience a lot of those things but he is very familiar with them and this is the thinking.

This is what Hinduism is all about. It's a karma thing. It is reincarnation. You were this and thus in a previous life and now you're getting your comeuppance in this life and karma is seeing to it that you are cursed with poverty, disease, weakness, everything else.

[42 : 31] That's just pathetic. A couple more references and then I'm going to open this for a couple comments or questions you may have and these are just let's see, let's take Ezekiel 18 as one.

Ezekiel 18 and verse 12. Well, verse 10. Then he may have a violent son who sheds blood who does any of these things to a brother though he himself did not do any of these things.

That is, he even eats at the mountain shrines and defiles his neighbor's wife. He oppresses the poor and needy, commits wrongness robbery, does not restore a pledge, that's what we were talking about earlier, but lifts up his eyes to the idols and commits abomination.

Now for time's sake I'm not going to go to other references but if you're jotting them down you can consider Daniel 4 and verse 27, Amos chapter 4 and verse 1, Amos chapter 5 verses 11 and 12, Proverbs 14, 21 and 31, Proverbs 21 and verse 13.

All of these verses are a reflection of God's attitude toward the poor. So, when Jesus said, the poor you have with you always, I want you to understand it does not include a mandate and Jesus is not saying the poor you have with you and it is your responsibility to eliminate poverty and stamp it out.

[44 : 12] He never says that. And the reason he doesn't is because volition is in the play and it comes into practice in every act of poverty and prosperity.

So, this has to really be taken into consideration. And there are a whole lot of other things that we need to consider too but this is just introductory material and we'll be following this up in the two or three sessions that follow.

Now, for a few moments we have left, have you comments or questions? Up here, Joe, Joe has a question.

Just a second, Joe, we'll get the microphone up there so it'll be on, it's coming. You read in Deuteronomy where a man should get his pay if he works, you know, at the end of the day, I'm sure he's paid.

Does the Bible say anything about what is fair pay? That's a big thing in society today is what's fair pay for work done. There are many jobs in the country today where you cannot keep a house over you and you can't feed yourself.

[45 : 28] In other words, you live poorer than a slave. Slaves back in Civil War times had a house and food and everything they needed to live. Well, now we have people receiving pay that they can't do that.

They can't feed themselves, they can't have a house because the pay is too low. Is there anything in the Bible that says anything about what is fair pay? No, there is nothing that I can think of that is definitive, but the Bible does simply use the phrase about just wages, that is, fair wages, equitable wages, but we are not told what they are.

And I suspect that the reason that we aren't is because there is such an enormous variation there. I mean, what somebody would earn for backbreaking labor, digging ditches during the day, is different from what somebody would earn at a much easier task.

You know, so there's a lot of relativity that comes into play there that's really hard to pin down. But the scriptures do refer to just wages. And my guess is that there would probably be, it would probably be easy to establish a consensus as to what a just wage would be.

Roger, over here. What do you make of the passage where Jesus talked about the guy that hired the guy the first thing in the morning, the guy, the last hour and he paid him the same?

[47 : 03] How do you, how do we relate that to fair wages? That's a wonderful story. It's one of my favorite parables about the fellow who went out and hired people early in the morning and they came and worked all day long.

Then he went out at noon and hired some others and they worked the rest of the day. And then he went out when there was just like one hour of work left and he hired the last and they worked just one hour.

And then, and this is really a neat parable, and then when it came time at the end of the day for everybody to get paid, he started with the one that was hired last.

And he gave him a full day's wages. wages. And the other guys standing there who were the first ones hired in the morning, when they saw what they paid this guy who just hired on for one hour, the wheels started turning and they began thinking, wow, he gave him a whole day's wages for just working one hour.

I'll bet he's going to give me a whole lot more because I've been out here all day. And he didn't. He gave them all one day's wages.

[48 : 23] And they had a real squawk. They came to him and they said, what, this isn't fair. How is it, we've been out here all day long, we bore the heat of the day, the noonday sun, these guys didn't come out and work but just one hour, you gave them the same thing you gave us.

That's not fair. And the owner said, no, wait just a minute, just a minute. Did you not agree to work with me for one day, for one day's wages?

Isn't that what you agreed to when I hired you on first thing in the morning? Well, yeah, but, there's the but, this guy only worked, now wait a minute, wait a minute.

I gave you what we both agreed upon. man, I gave you what you had coming. I gave this man much more than he had coming.

Do you know why I did that? Was it because he did as much work in one hour as you did all day long? No. I did that because it was my prerogative to do it.

[49 : 39] I own the land and the money was mine. And what he is setting forth there is the principle of sovereignty, of ownership. Is it not within my power to do what I will with that which is my own?

And all he was doing, he was being fair and just to the man that he gave a day's pay for working the whole day.

He didn't shortchange him, he didn't cheat him. He did not give him more than he earned, he gave him what he earned. The man who worked just one hour, he gave him much more than he earned.

Do you know what you call that? You call that grace. You call that at the discretion of the owner. He can do that which he will with his own.

Has he cheated anybody? Nope. Has he been unfair to anybody? Nope. Everybody got what they contracted for, but he was overly generous. I've often said, God cannot do less than be absolutely just with everybody.

[50 : 50] He cannot be less than just, but he can be more than just. And that's grace. It's a beautiful parable. Yes, Roger? Is that a reference back to I will have mercy on whom I'll have mercy?

I suspect that that would tie in, yes. And it's just a reflection of the sovereignty of the landowner. Yeah. Yeah. Okay. Jim has a comment, question.

You know, there are certainly poor people who are poor through no fault of their own, but there seems to be a growing problem in our country today of people who think it's okay for someone else to take care of them. I don't know if you've seen the latest statistics, but 47 million Americans are now on food stamps.

So when you think about it, that's one in seven of the population think it's okay for someone else to take care of them. So that to me is a growing and troublesome situation.

What is wrong with this picture? Plenty. Yeah, absolutely. You know, there are people who live in poverty, like we were saying, because they make poor choices on their own.

[52 : 02] I call them the voluntary poor, because the choices they make result in their poverty. But there are huge numbers of people that I call the involuntary poor, and they are people living in poverty because of the choice of somebody else that they had no control over.

And particularly is this true with children who are born into this kind of situation? So, it is a huge, huge problem that it cannot be divorced from human volition and accountability.

One of the great problems that we have with our government and with our welfare system, whether it's state or federal, is that the government is not able to do enough for the right kind of people who have the right kind of needs because they are doing so much for those for whom they should be doing nothing.

And because we are giving so much of the public treasury to people who really don't deserve it and don't have it coming, we do not have the wherewithal to adequately care for and allow them to maintain their dignity, people who are in legitimate need.

sorry, this is the ceiling, we can't help you anymore. And they really do need more help. So that's a huge problem. But this goes with the territory of the bigness of government.

[53 : 39] The bigger it is, the harder it is to administer. And the greater the opportunity for corruption and graft and everything. And we've got it coming out the yazoo. It's just incredible.

The money that our government wastes, largely because of its bigness and its inability to police things, is just staggering. Just staggering.

Well, more about this later, but this has just been an introductory thing to it, and I trust that it's been a little bit enlightening to you. And if you have questions, feel free to write them out and drop them in the offering box or ask them from the floor.

May we stand, please? Father, we recognize that this is a subject that is close to the heart of all of us because all of us either are or we know someone who is in dire need and has little or no means of support.

And we are grateful for the revelation that is provided in Scripture about your care and your love and your concern for the poor and how that is to be translated to us.

[54 : 49] Because to whom much is given, him shall much be required. So we ask that as we engage this series, you will give us additional insight, enlightenment as to our attitude toward the poor and toward the wealthy and how we are to function, how we are to serve one another and to be generous with that which you have given us.

We bless you for the truth that is found here in your word and we pray as we attempt to ferret out more of it. In Christ's name, amen.