

Episode #636 The Why Question 21: Why Poverty?

I. One of the most difficult questions we must ask ourselves regarding God, life, and the world is the “why” question. We who believe that there is a God Who is all-good and all-loving and Who made the world must answer why then this world is such a terrible place and in such a mess.

II. One of the sad situations we face in this world is the reality of poverty. As our country shut down its economy out of fear of a virus, many people have lost their jobs, their businesses, and their dreams, and have ended up in poverty. We saw last time six kinds of poverty and some of the things that cause them. Today we are going to consider the New Testament and what it says about poverty. Why does God allow such a thing in the world?

III. The Lord Jesus and the Poor (*ptochos*). There were plenty of poor in Israel in His days.

- A. Matthew 19:21. His command to the rich young ruler was to sell his possessions and give his money to the poor.
- B. Mark 12:41-44. A poor widow gave more than all the rich because she gave all she had to live on.
- C. Luke 14:12-14. The recompense for giving to the poor is at the resurrection.
- D. John 12:3-8. The Lord is more important than the poor. Yet these words do not let anyone out of caring for the poor! Remember Deuteronomy 15.

IV. The Book of Acts and the Poor.

- A. Acts 4:32-35. The love of the believers for each other caused them to share all things in common, the rich caring for the poor, and the inspired apostles overseeing it all.
- B. Acts 6:1-4. When the distribution became too much for the apostles, they came up with a new plan.
- C. Psalm 145:16. Acts is a foretaste of how God will care for everyone in His kingdom.

V. The Poor in the Epistles.

- A. Romans 15:25-26. The saints in Greece were pleased to contribute to the poor saints in Jerusalem.
- B. Galatians 2:9-10. The apostles wanted Paul to remember the poor.
- C. James 2:1-7. James warns against favoring the rich over the poor.

VI. Poverty and Oppression.

- A. Exodus 1:8-14. The new Pharaoh over Egypt became the first great oppressor in the Bible, putting the Israelites to slavery.
- B. Exodus 5:1-2. Yahweh Elohim demanded that Pharaoh release the people.
- C. Judges 4:1-3. Over and over in Judges the Israelites were oppressed by foreign peoples who invaded and enslaved them.
- D. II Chronicles 16:7-10. The other kind of oppression Israel faced was oppression from within, from their own rulers.
- E. II Kings 21:16. Manasseh became the worst of oppressors in the southern kingdom.
- F. Isaiah 1:17-18. Much of the message of the prophets was urging those in power to be just and not oppress.

VII. Conclusion: it was the Lord’s constant command to remember the poor, and in the New Testament especially the poor among the believers. Yet oppression is often the lot of the poor and helpless. Ultimately we will always have the poor with us until God’s kingdom comes, when He will judge their cause. Yet until that time, it is our job to help the poor as we can.