

Three Ways to Be Poor

Sermon by Andy Sochor

Text: John 12:8

Our society places a lot of emphasis on those who are poor – some sincerely, some with ulterior motives. God's people are to be concerned about the poor (Galatians 2:10; Proverbs 29:7). However, despite the concern we should have, there will always be people who are poor (John 12:8). Yet when the Bible talks about people who are poor, it is not only referring to material things. Just as Jesus said that one class will always be with us, the others will always exist as well. In this lesson, we are going to look at what the Bible says about the three ways to be poor.

Poor in Relation to Material Things

- Example of Lazarus (Luke 16:20-21) – did not have what he needed to take care of himself
- Being poor in relation to material things is not inherently good or bad – could be poor through sacrificing for others (cf. 2 Corinthians 8:9); could be poor because of circumstances outside of our control (Job 1:3, 13-21); could be poor by refusing to work (Proverbs 6:9-11)
- This could make one more receptive to the gospel (James 2:5; Matthew 11:5)
- This could also make one reject God (Proverbs 30:7-9)

Poor in Relation to Spiritual Things

- Example of the church in Laodicea (Revelation 3:15-19) – thought they were rich (focusing on material things); did not have what they needed for their spiritual well-being
- Being poor in relation to spiritual things is a condition that needs immediate correction – our inheritance as God's children is in jeopardy (1 Peter 1:4); our white garments become stained by sin (2 Peter 2:20-22); our vision becomes clouded by worldly things (cf. 2 Corinthians 5:7)
- Those who are poor in relation to spiritual things need to repent (Revelation 3:19)

Poor in Spirit

- Fundamental characteristic of a disciple (Matthew 5:3) – this means to be humble; we cannot follow Christ without this characteristic
- Why being poor in spirit (humble) is necessary to please the Lord – we will recognize our place before God (Psalm 100:3); we will recognize our need for salvation (Luke 18:13-14); we will accept what His word teaches (James 1:21)
- Those in this category will receive the kingdom of heaven (Matthew 5:3)

Conclusion

- If we find ourselves poor in relation to material things – turn to the Lord, not away from Him
- If we find ourselves poor in relation to spiritual things – turn back to the Lord
- Whatever our physical circumstances, we must strive to be poor in spirit – humbly serving the Lord

(Idea for this sermon from an article by Barton W. Stone in A Plea for the Union of All Christians.)