

Doctrine of the Poor

1. For purposes of our discussion, the poor shall be confined to those who are truly destitute.

1.1 This will exclude those who do not wish to work and those who choose crime, drug addiction, alcoholism or homelessness.

1.2 We are speaking of those who are physically or mentally disabled.

2. First, a little background about what the Bible teaches about economic systems. For maximum prosperity the economic principles found in the Mosaic law must be implemented.
1Ti 1:8-10

1Ti 1:8 We know that the law is good if one uses it properly.

1Ti 1:9 We also know that law is made not for the righteous but for lawbreakers and rebels, the ungodly and sinful, the unholy and irreligious; for those who kill their fathers or mothers, for murderers,

1Ti 1:10 For whoremongers, for them that defile themselves with mankind, for menstealers, for liars, for perjured persons, and if there be any other thing that is contrary to sound doctrine;

2.1 Maximum freedom for the individual is God's optimum and represents a manifestation of the first divine institution, volition.

2.2 The right of private property and protection of property rights is repeatedly established in Scripture.

Exo 20:15 "You shall not steal.

Exo 20:17 "You shall not covet your neighbor's house. You shall not covet your neighbor's wife, or his manservant or maidservant, his ox or donkey, or anything that belongs to your neighbor."

Exo 22:2 "If a thief is caught breaking in and is struck so that he dies, the defender is not guilty of bloodshed;

Mat 12:29 "Or again, how can anyone enter a strong man's house and carry off his possessions unless he first ties up the strong man? Then he can rob his house."

2Th 3:11 We hear that some among you are idle. They are not busy; they are busybodies.

2Th 3:12 Such people we command and urge in the Lord Jesus Christ to settle down and earn the bread they eat.

2.3 Free enterprise is God's plan for His client nations.

2.4 A free enterprise system will produce excess and thereby provide maximum resources for charity.

3. Scripture provides insight into what causes poverty. In these verses you will find numerous uses of the English word " sluggard " or " slothful . " The word so translated is **Atsel** in the Hebrew and means idle, habitually lazy, lethargic, lean or indolent.

3.1 A failure to work and save for the future. Pro 6:6-11

Pro 6:6 Go to the ant, you sluggard; consider its ways and be wise!

Pro 6:7 It has no commander, no overseer or ruler,

Pro 6:8 yet it stores its provisions in summer and gathers its food at harvest.

Pro 6:9 How long will you lie there, you sluggard? When will you get up from your sleep?

Pro 6:10 A little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to rest--

Pro 6:11 and poverty will come on you like a bandit and scarcity like an armed man.

Pro 10:4 Lazy hands make a man poor, but diligent hands bring wealth.

Pro 10:5 He who gathers crops in summer is a wise son, but he who sleeps during harvest is a disgraceful son.

Pro 13:4 The sluggard craves and gets nothing, but the desires of the diligent are fully satisfied.

Pro 19:15 Laziness brings on deep sleep, and the shiftless man goes hungry.

3.2 Wickedness or evil we call reversionism. Reversionism is the product of a refusal to apply the protocol of God. As a general rule God makes it tough on people negative toward His protocol.

Pro 10:3 The LORD does not let the righteous go hungry but he thwarts the craving of the wicked.

Pro 28:20 A faithful man will be richly blessed, but one eager to get rich will not go unpunished.

3.3 A drunkard or glutton will experience poverty.

Pro 23:20 Do not join those who drink too much wine or gorge themselves on meat,

Pro 23:21 for drunkards and gluttons become poor, and drowsiness clothes them in rags.

3.4 Being industrious is a means of avoiding poverty. Foolish people pursuing impractical fantasies also make for poverty.

Pro 28:19 He who works his land will have abundant food, but the one who chases fantasies will have his fill of poverty.

3.5 A slothful man is lazy and as a result often poor.

Pro 19:24 The sluggard buries his hand in the dish; he will not even bring it back to his mouth!

3.5.1 This would seem to be a good description of the vast majority of those on our welfare rolls today.

3.6 The indolent (in the Old Testament economy) were often lazy and as a result, they quite frequently ended up as slaves.

Pro 12:24 Diligent hands will rule, but laziness ends in slave labor.

3.7 The habitually lazy are very often wasteful.

Pro 12:27 The lazy man does not roast his game, but the diligent man prizes his possessions.

3.8 There is a great difference between the life of the habitually lazy man and the life of the energetic man. Pro 15:19

Pro 15:19 The way of the sluggard is blocked with thorns, but the path of the upright is a highway.

3.9 The slothful person will suffer hunger.

Pro 19:15 Laziness brings on deep sleep, and the shiftless man goes hungry.

3.10 The person who seeks a fast profit often finds poverty. The same is true for the miser.

Pro 28:22 A stingy man is eager to get rich and is unaware that poverty awaits him.

2Co 9:6 Remember this: Whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows generously will also reap generously.

Mal 3:10 Bring the whole tithe into the storehouse, that there may be food in my house. Test me in this," says the LORD Almighty, "and see if I will not throw open the floodgates of heaven and pour out so much blessing that you will not have room enough for it.

4. No matter how hard we try to eliminate poverty, these efforts will prove futile; the poor will always be with us. Poverty will only be eliminated when Jesus returns at His Second Advent.

Deu 15:11 There will always be poor people in the land. Therefore I command you to be open handed toward your brothers and toward the poor and needy in your land.

Mat 26:11 "The poor you will always have with you, but you will not always have me."

4.1 Jesus' prediction of pervasive and everlasting poverty was part of a rebuke to the world's greatest Liberal--Judas Iscariot.

Joh 12:4 But one of his disciples, Judas Iscariot, who was later to betray him, objected,

Joh 12:5 "Why wasn't this perfume sold and the money given to the poor? It was worth a year's wages."

Joh 12:6 He did not say this because he cared about the poor but because he was a thief; as keeper of the money bag, he used to help himself to what was put into it.

4.2 Judas like many "do gooders" loved the masses but hated the individual.

4.3 Judas like so many "do gooders" knew better what should be done with your money.

5. This does not mean that we should refuse to perform what God commands with reference to assisting those less fortunate. God does provide certain mandates with reference to assistance.

6. It is the Lord who makes the poor and the rich; therefore, it is He who can eradicate poverty as well as bestow affluence.

1Sa 2:7 The LORD sends poverty and wealth; he humbles and he exalts.

Psa 113:7 He raises the poor from the dust and lifts the needy from the ash heap;

Psa 75:6 No one from the east or the west or from the desert can exalt a man.

Psa 75:7 But it is God who judges: He brings one down, he exalts another.

7. Charity for the truly destitute is a bona fide function for establishment.

Pro 29:14 If a king judges the poor with fairness, his throne will always be secure.

Exo 23:11 but during the seventh year let the land lie unplowed and unused. Then the poor among your people may get food from it, and the wild animals may eat what they leave. Do the same with your vineyard and your olive grove.

Lev 19:9 "When you reap the harvest of your land, do not reap to the very edges of your field or gather the gleanings of your harvest.

Lev 19:10 Do not go over your vineyard a second time or pick up the grapes that have fallen. Leave them for the poor and the alien. I am the LORD your God.

7.1 The tithe paid to the national treasury every third year went to a fund designated for the Levite priest, and the poor of the land.

Deu 14:28 At the end of every three years, bring all the tithes of that year's produce and store it in your towns,

Deu 14:29 so that the Levites (who have no allotment or inheritance of their own) and the aliens, the fatherless and the widows who live in your towns may come and eat and be satisfied, and so that the LORD your God may bless you in all the work of your hands.

7.2 There is no authorization in Scripture for assisting the poor in other lands; internationalism is always evil. There is one exception.

7.2.1 We are to evangelize the entire world. However, each national entity is responsible for

what occurs within its national boundaries.

7.2.2 Nationalism is one of the divine institutions; it is Satan who weakens the nations and encourages internationalism. Isa 14:12

Isa 14:12 How you have fallen from heaven, O morning star, son of the dawn! You have been cast down to the earth, you who once laid low the nations!

8. There is a special blessing for those who help the poor.

Pro 22:9 A generous man will himself be blessed, for he shares his food with the poor.

Psa 41:1 Blessed is he who has regard for the weak; the LORD delivers him in times of trouble.
Psa 41:2 The LORD will protect him and preserve his life; he will bless him in the land and not surrender him to the desire of his foes.

8.1 There is not only a governmental responsibility to assist the destitute but individual citizens are also to assist those in need.

9. There is a special discipline for those who ignore the needs of the poor.

Pro 21:13 If a man shuts his ears to the cry of the poor, he too will cry out and not be answered.

9.1 Through poverty many unbelievers see their need for salvation.

Mar 10:23 Jesus looked around and said to his disciples, "How hard it is for the rich to enter the kingdom of God!"

Mar 10:24 The disciples were amazed at his words. But Jesus said again, "Children, how hard it is to enter the kingdom of God!"

Mar 10:25 "It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God."

10. The poor are fortunate, in one sense, for they avoid superficial or pseudo friendships which come from having wealth.

Pro 19:4 Wealth brings many friends, but a poor man's friend desert him.

11. The poor are often a target for hypocrisy. The poor in the local church should have the same spiritual privileges as the wealthy.

Jam 2:1 My brothers, as believers in our glorious Lord Jesus Christ, don't show favoritism.

Jam 2:2 Suppose a man comes into your meeting wearing a gold ring and fine clothes, and a poor man in shabby clothes also comes in.

Jam 2:3 If you show special attention to the man wearing fine clothes and say, "Here's a good seat for you," but say to the poor man, "You stand there" or "Sit on the floor by my feet,"

Jam 2:4 have you not discriminated among yourselves and become judges with evil thoughts?

12. As the Church Age evolved, we find the Epistles instructing believers with reference to the poor.

13. We are to render unto Caesar that which is Caesar's and we are to never think about revolution or disobeying authority. Thomas Jefferson was flat wrong when he said, and I shall paraphrase, "citizens need to be armed in order to remove those who refuse to leave office." Vote them out, yes; carry them out, no.

13.1 Even when government exceeds its authority and eschews establishment principles, we are to heed its mandates. For example, if the government steals from the rich by requiring more than a ten percent across-the-board income tax and foolishly throws money at every problem, including the eradication of the world's poverty, we are to react with faithful submission.

14. The Epistles seem to demand that each local church address poverty; it is however a matter uniquely the province of individuals within a local church.

14.1 For example, benevolent funds are to be established within each local church to care for their indigent.

1Ti 5:3 Give proper recognition to those widows who are really in need.

1Ti 5:4 But if a widow has **children or grandchildren**, these should learn first of all to put their religion into practice by caring for their own family and so repaying their parents and grandparents, for this is pleasing to God.

1Ti 5:5 The widow who is really in need and left all alone puts her hope in God and continues night and day to pray and to ask God for help.

1Ti 5:6 But the widow who lives for pleasure is dead even while she lives.

1Ti 5:7 Give the people these instructions, too, so that no one may be open to blame.

Jam 1:27 Religion that God our Father accepts as pure and faultless is this: to look after orphans and widows in their distress and to keep oneself from being polluted by the world.

14.2 It should be noted that all of the assistance is based on a free-will offering without pressure.

15. Never do we find instruction to help those who can and will not work; in fact, quite the contrary. 2Th 3:11-15

2Th 3:11 We hear that some among you are idle. They are not busy; they are busybodies.

2Th 3:12 Such people we command and urge in the Lord Jesus Christ to settle down and earn the bread they eat.

2Th 3:13 And as for you, brothers, never tire of doing what is right.

2Th 3:14 If anyone does not obey our instruction in this letter, take special note of him. Do not associate with him, in order that he may feel ashamed.

2Th 3:15 Yet do not regard him as an enemy, but warn him as a brother.

15.1 Let's look at a "problem passage" and apply some of what we have learned.

Acts 4:32 All the believers were one in heart and mind. No one claimed that any of his possessions was his own, but they shared everything they had.

15.2 There are those who teach this passage authorizes Socialism, Communism or Liberalism as the Christian's paradigm.

15.3 Nothing could be further from the truth in the light of a categorical study.

15.4 The ultimate welfare state cannot tolerate private property. The Bible very clearly establishes the right of citizens of a state to own private property. Socialism and Communism in its "purist form" eliminate private property.

15.5 The problem passage--Acts 4:32 is a clear display of Christian charity at work and does not imply state control. For the insouciance and misguided, I would simply ask, where is the state mentioned in this passage?

15.5.1 God's protocol protects property rights.

Exo 20:17 "You shall not covet your neighbor's house. You shall not covet your neighbor's wife, or his manservant or maidservant, his ox or donkey, or anything that belongs to your neighbor."

15.6 The welfare state is based on class hatred and a desire for equality of all peoples, even to the transfer of wealth from the rich to the poor by means of government force. God is not an egalitarian. Neither the Millennium nor heaven will be a place of equality.

Jer 31:31 "The time is coming," declares the LORD, "when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah.

Jer 31:32 It will not be like the covenant I made with their forefathers when I took them by the hand to lead them out of Egypt, because they broke my covenant, though I was a husband to them," declares the LORD.

Jer 31:33 "This is the covenant I will make with the house of Israel after that time," declares the LORD. "I will put my law in their minds and write it on their hearts. I will be their God, and they will be my people.

Jer 31:34 No longer will a man teach his neighbor, or a man his brother, saying, 'Know the LORD,' because they will all know me, **from the least of them to the greatest**," declares the LORD. "For I will forgive their wickedness and will remember their sins no more."

Heb 8:10 This is the covenant I will make with the house of Israel after that time, declares the Lord. I will put my laws in their minds and write them on their hearts. I will be their God, and they will be my people.

Heb 8:11 No longer will a man teach his neighbor, or a man his brother, saying, 'Know the Lord,' because they will all know me, **from the least of them to the greatest**.

Heb 8:12 For I will forgive their wickedness and will remember their sins no more."

15.7 Such community of goods as set forth in our "problem passage" was not compulsory but voluntary; it was a way for the Christian to eliminate special needs--an act of voluntary sharing.

15.7.1 Keep in mind that Jerusalem was overflowing with many Jewish people and Gentile converts coming from all over the world to worship during the Passover and those feasts immediately following the Passover.

15.7.2 Many were awaiting the Lord's imminent return and the establishment of His earthly kingdom.

15.7.3 Many of these people had extended their stay beyond original plans and were in special financial need.

15.7.4 The manifest needs of many precipitated a voluntary sharing in a time of great financial disparity.

15.7.5 This occasion recorded for us in Scripture is a beautiful display of oneness and caring among believers.

15.7.6 It must be observed this sharing was voluntary sharing on the part of each believer -- compare Acts 4:32 with Acts 5:4.

Acts 4:32 All the believers were one in heart and mind. No one claimed that any of his possessions was his own, but they shared everything they had.

Acts 5:4 Didn't it belong to you before it was sold? And after it was sold, wasn't the money at your disposal? What made you think of doing such a thing? You have not lied to men but to God."

15.7.7 Ananias was in trouble because he lied to the Holy Spirit, not because he did not give.

15.7.8 All of the sharers (in error) were anticipating the imminent kingdom when, as our Lord said repeatedly, there will be no need for material things.

15.7.9 They were misguided in their assumption that the Second Advent was imminent. After reviewing Peter's first and second sermons, it is clear these early church disciples had not learned of the Church Age and its insertion between the First and Second Advents of Jesus.

16. In the year of our Lord, 1998, America faced the ultimate irony: the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe were madly running away from "big government," while our nation, paradoxically, rushed toward the welfare state.

17. I want to close by reading in part from an article which appeared in the July 27, 1998, issue of Newsweek entitled *The Faces of Famine*.

"Here we go again. Skeletal starving Africans are back in the news, this time from Sudan (a communist country at war with itself). If you are moved - and you'd have to be heartless not to

be - operators are standing by to take your check ... If you have any doubts that your contributions will really help, the charities will assure you that food will reach these victims quickly and save their lives, at least until the next famine ... Now you can change the channel with the warm feeling that you have done what you can to fight hunger. I too feel like reaching for my checkbook when I see the photographs. But I know better. After spending nearly 20 years in Africa as an aid worker and journalist, I know that fighting hunger is anything but simple.

“And I have learned that any donation I might make may in fact insure that next year I will see fresh photographs of starving people ...”