

CAUSES AND CURES

OF

POVERTY

SAMPLE PAGES

By

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Causes and Cures of Poverty

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Hagerstown, MD
January, 2016

ISBN 978-0-9962591-9-4

Published by
Blessed Hope Publishers
Hagerstown, Md.

Publishing and Formatting Assisted by
The Old Paths Publications
142 Gold Flume Way
Cleveland, GA 30528

Web address: www.theoldpathspublications.com
Email address: TOP@theoldpathspublications.com

All Scripture quotations in this book are taken from the King James Version of the Bible.

“All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness.

That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works.”

(II Tim. 3:16, 17)

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CHAPTER 1

CAUSES AND CURES OF POVERTY

WHAT IS POVERTY?

Poverty is not a definite condition, rather it is an issue of degree. We are all poor to some degree or another, just as we are all rich to some degree. Some of us have greater degrees of poverty and lesser degrees of wealth.

POVERTY IS A SPIRITUAL ISSUE

I am convinced this is a real spiritual issue, though I know there are many people that preach a “Health-and-Wealth Gospel” as if that was all there is to it. If that is all that you are interested in, then you have made an idol of health and become covetous over wealth. There is danger in a health and wealth gospel, but there is also danger in those that care nothing about their health and are foolish in the matter of their wealth.

GOD WANTS YOU TO PROSPER

Those two extremes are both out of balance with the Word of God. In III John, the Apostle John wrote to Gaius that he wished that he might prosper and be in health, even as his soul prospered. That would be an insult to some people because by saying that you would be wishing they were broke and dead. These are vital issues for us to consider that have some effects spiritually and Biblically on our life and our testimony before a lost and dying world.

Let's begin by looking at **Matthew 26:6-11**. It says,

“Now when Jesus was in Bethany, in the house of Simon the leper, There came unto him a woman

having an alabaster box of very precious ointment, and poured it on his head, as he sat at meat. But when his disciples saw it, they had indignation, saying, To what purpose is this waste? For this ointment might have been sold for much, and given to the poor. When Jesus understood it, he said unto them, Why trouble ye the woman? for she hath wrought a good work upon me. For ye have the poor always with you; but me ye have not always."

THE CAUSES OF POVERTY

There is such a thing recognized Biblically as "poverty" and the Bible is quite precise in spelling out the causes of it. Some causes are beyond our control. For example, sickness can cause poverty. There was a woman in the New Testament that had spent all that she had on doctors but was not any better (**Mark 5:25-29**). Death can bring poverty to a family, particularly when it hits the man of the house before there is any chance for finances to be set aside. Taxes can bring poverty. Some governments try to make their people poor by taxing and manipulation. Disasters, such as earthquakes or fires that burn out businesses, can bring poverty. Weather can bring poverty for farmers. They can lose what they have worked years for because of one bad season. Some other examples of causes of poverty are handicaps, war, bad economy, lack of opportunity, or the judgment of God on a people. These are some things that we don't control.

There are far more causes of poverty that we do control than those which we can't do anything about. These are the ones that I want to deal with. We would like to blame everything on what we cannot control, but we need to face that at least part of our poverty is self-induced and brought upon ourselves by ignorance of the laws of God.

SATAN DECEIVES IN THE REALM OF FINANCES

I also believe Satan has deceived the thinking of Christians in the realm of finances, so as to bind up the children of God financially. This, in turn, causes a lack of free money for God's program. There was a time when there was adequate money among the people of God to buy a piece of ground, build a building for a Christian college or new church, or send a missionary out within a couple of months of when he was ready. In the area of missions now it takes years before believers can bind together to even think about promising enough to send someone to the field. There are a number of reasons for this, but I believe Satan has deceived our thinking and confused the saints, getting them into a state of poverty so that they are not able to operate according to God's plan for meeting needs.

WILLINGLY CHOOSING POVERTY?

Further, many Christians that have not been deceived have ignorantly or even willingly chosen poverty. Some believers and churches think that the poorer you are the more spiritual you are. I am convinced that some churches feel that it is their obligation to keep their members financially strapped, bound up, behind on their bills and feeling guilty if they ever can get two nickels to rub together in their pocket before they get the next paycheck. They say, "You can wait to pay your bills while the church pays hers."

Taking vows of poverty does not make a person spiritual. If God leads someone to do that, fine. But I do not believe that Abraham was wicked when he had all those servants, possessions, and jobs for those servants. Neither do I believe that David was a wicked sinner when he was able to lay aside millions and millions of dollars worth of gold and silver to build the temple. I don't believe that Solomon was in deep sin when he was able to roll in the millions of dollars every year, adding to his

income and the treasure house for building to the glory of the God that he worshipped. Neither do I believe that Job was wicked when he was blessed of God and given double what he used to have. Remember, Job was given all those things by God. God sometimes finds a saint that He can trust and then He prospers them.

POVERTY IS A PART OF LIVING ON EARTH

The Biblical principle is that the *“poor ye have always with you”* (**Matthew 26:11**). Poverty is a permanent part of living here on earth. You can't eradicate poverty. The richest government with the finest and strongest economy in the world has just about gone bankrupt, nearly destroying its' economy trying to prove that Jesus was wrong on this verse when it had a war on poverty. By the way – we lost. Poverty is still here.

I can remember as a boy when we established the minimum wage of 60¢ an hour to get rid of poverty! You can laugh now, but with the present minimum wage at \$10.00 an hour in some places in 2016, we still have poverty. More money doesn't mean less poverty. In fact, there are some people that are poorer on \$40,000 and \$45,000 a year than others that are doing fine on \$20,000 and \$25,000 a year or even less.

POVERTY IS A RESULT OF CHOICES

It is not the size of your income that decides your level of poverty, contrary to what our government would tell us. There will always be poor people because there are causes for poverty that cannot be totally removed. In fact, many people choose poverty. Most of them don't choose poverty by saying they want to be poor, but they choose what causes their poverty. Poverty will never be fully solved this side of the millennium. It may still be around during the millennium because there will be some people with a sinful nature, and that is all it takes to have poverty.

God's laws on finance are not likely going to get written up in the Wall Street Journal because the world does not think like God does. Notice **Proverbs 30:8, 9**,

"Remove far from me vanity and lies: give me neither poverty nor riches; feed me with food convenient for me: Lest I be full, and deny thee, and say, "Who is the LORD? or lest I be poor, and steal, and take the name of my God in vain."

Have you ever heard of asking the Lord not to make you rich? This Scripture is saying that the writer wants to live on a level somewhere between poverty and riches. Do you think that we could get the Wall Street Journal or even most of the religious journals to do an article on that prayer?

Also in this passage, we see that wealth has problems as does poverty. This man is so poor that his stomach is wrapped around his backbone and he is not sure if he can eat a full piece of bread. He is so desperate that he steals to keep from collapsing dead from hunger. He is saying, "Lord save me from poverty so that I don't steal, so that I don't compromise to earn my living, and so I won't speak in a way that I shouldn't." But then he is also saying, "Lord, please don't let me get riches."

The Apostle Paul said that he had learned,

"...in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content. I know both how to be abased, and I know how to abound: everywhere and in all things I am instructed both to be full and to be hungry"
(Philippians 4:11).

LEARNING TO BE CONTENT

There is the matter of learning to be content in whatever station of life God has placed you, rather than seeking poverty or wealth.

Let me remind you that in the passage in Proverbs it is Solomon speaking. Can you imagine that? If you read Ecclesiastes, he will tell you that riches don't have the answer. Here he fears becoming so rich that he might feel he would not need God's help. That is exactly why some people want to get rich – so that they won't have to trust God for anything. They don't want to pray. *"Give us this day our daily bread."* They don't even want to ask the Lord to give them their yearly bonus. They want to quit working like God said was healthy and right for us to do, and live the life of a loafer. We need to need God. Solomon is asking the Lord to save him from these two extremes. There are problems with both of them.

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF INCOME AMOUNTS

Keep in mind also that some Christians can prosper on less than what amounts to poverty to others. The amount of your income determines only to a degree how you live. This thought can be carried to an extreme by saying that you can't live like you are making \$50,000 when you are really only bringing home \$15,000. Still some people can live like they only have \$15,000 coming in when they actually have \$50,000. There is much more to poverty than the actual dollar level of income.

How many people do you know that have said that if they got a better job they would be better off? Then they got the better job and fell deeper into debt. They thought that riches would be the answer but they didn't know how to handle the riches. It is amazing how some people will drop in their income, and find out that less went further than more. In fact, they recover themselves faster than when they were making more and winding up further in debt.

Frequently, the more money made, the deeper the debt level, and the less made, the less debt. Your banker feels the

same way – the less you make, the less he will let you go in debt and the more you make, the more he wants you to go in debt. They don't want to loan money to those that "need" it because they want to make sure they get it back – from those that didn't "need" it. That is how lending institutions think, and if you have money in the bank, that is how you want them to think. You don't want them loaning money to people that can't pay it back, because in such cases you might not get your money back and the bank would go under.

SCRIPTURE ASKS US TO CONSIDER THE CAUSE OF THE POOR

Let us look at the Scripture which will be our key text,

*"The righteous considereth the cause of the poor:
but the wicked regardeth not to know it."
(Proverbs 29:7)*

God says that if you are righteous you are going to want to know why people are poor and what the causes are. It is amazing the practical truths of God's Word. When God saved us, He not only made us positionally righteous, but practically righteous also, and told us to stay in a righteous condition. He wants us to live that way and one of the marks of the righteous is that they consider the cause of the poor.

The problem is we have been trying to solve poverty without knowing the cause. The righteous person is going to seek, search, find out, figure, and learn. They are going to consider what caused the poverty and therefore will know something about how to cure poverty – in themselves or in others.

A VICIOUS CYCLE

Many Christians have come to me saying they were in a financial mess. Seldom did they know exactly how they got there, but they wanted to get out. I urge them to find out how they fell in, because no one gets out of such a mess until he first finds out how he got there. The alternative to this is that if you remove a person from their poverty, you have only to allow them time and they will be right back into it. Unless they can find the cause, they won't know the cure. The doctor who only deals with symptoms instead of causes never sees his patients get well.

We must soberly consider the cause as to why we are all poorer than we need to be, paying attention to all the aspects. You may not have a problem in one given area, but in years to come you may be able to help someone else out of that very trap. I have found that helping young couples in this realm has opened them up to the gospel. They found that I cared more about them than whether I was getting a decision that I could record in a booklet. The one thing that is about as close to a person's heart as anything is his financial condition. If you learn to help someone, he might be willing to listen to the God of your help.

THE BIBLE HAS A FINANCIAL PHILOSOPHY

The Bible has a financial philosophy that the world knows nothing about. Two or three generations ago, the world was operating by a Biblical philosophy because our godly forefathers had preached these things. They quit preaching it, and now the church has accepted a "foreign" philosophy financially. If we can get back to the Biblical way, we can offer financial sanity to an insane world.

Things may be going fairly well with the economy now, but in our lifetime, we will go through another recession or depression somewhere down the road. It won't hurt to get ready