

Daily Bible Study

“The Riches of Poverty”

James 2:5-7

May 22–26, 2023

MONDAY –As we continue our study of James this week we take as our text, **James 2:5-7**: “Listen, my beloved brethren: Has God not chosen 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. Do not the rich oppress you and drag you into the courts? Do they not blaspheme that noble name by which you are called?” In our study, **“The Riches of Poverty”** we will see that incredible paradox that you can be “rich” in the things of this world and yet still be a pauper and also that you can be “poor” and yet be abundantly wealthy where it matters most. Christianity has always had a special message for the poor. Jesus claimed in his very first sermon in the synagogue at Nazareth that “He has anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor” (**Luke 4:18**). When confronted by some men sent by John The Baptist to see if Jesus truly was the sent, anointed Messiah, he told them to go tell John, “The poor have the Gospel preached to them” (**Matthew 11:5**). In The Sermon on The Mount the very first of the beatitudes was: “Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven” (**Matthew 5:3**). And in **Luke 6:20**, we find an even more direct and bold statement that, “Blessed are you poor, for yours is the kingdom of God.” All through Scripture, Jesus ministry, and the days of the early church we find that “the poor” mattered to God and He was intent on getting the message of the gospel to them. Paul reminded the believers in Corinth, “Remember, dear brothers and sisters, that few of you were wise in the world’s eyes or powerful or wealthy when God called you.” (**1 Corinthians 1:26**). As we will see, it is to those who ultimately recognize their poverty of Spirit and are often discriminated against or marginalized and outcast that God chooses to work in and through for His Glory.

(Meditate) Do I consider myself to be rich or poor and how do I define it?

(Apply) What things in my life illustrate the answer I have given above?

(Pray): Father, teach me this week from Your Word. Let me learn why you have compassion on the poor and may I understand it actually is about my attitude rather than my net worth.

TUESDAY – **James 2:5**: “Listen, my beloved brethren: Has God not chosen the poor of this world to be rich in faith and heirs of the kingdom which He promised to those who love Him?” James starts this verse by attempting to get the undivided attention of his listeners. Although he is asking them to *listen* and take note, he is doing it with gentleness as he calls them *my beloved brethren*. He asks them a question which can only be answered affirmatively. He says, “Has God not chosen...” Obviously the answer is yes. The Scriptures clearly teach that God chooses people not on the basis of our merit or anything we are or do but because of His love toward us. **Deuteronomy 7:7**, “The Lord did not set His love on you nor choose you because you were more in number than any other people, for you were the least of all peoples.” The Scripture also tells us that God has *chosen the poor of this world to be rich*. He directs his love to the poor and needy and He also is watching over them (**Job 5:15–16, Psalm 9:18, 12:5, Proverbs 22:22–23**). This does not mean that all the poor are included as God’s elect ones or that He has chosen only the poor. God simply likes to choose as Paul states, “...the lowly things ... so that no one may boast before him” (**1 Corinthians 1:28–29, Ephesians 1:4**). God loves people who see themselves in need of Him and who love Him for being the gracious Father He is and therefore bring Him glory and praise. So He takes those poor loved ones and makes them to *be rich in faith and heirs of the kingdom*. We will unpack this more tomorrow.

(Meditate) Why does James want me to listen to what he is saying about God’s choosing?

(Apply) What things in my life has God had to overlook and graciously love me in spite of?

(Pray): Father God, thanks for loving me in spite of my horrible sinful selfishness. Help me live thankful to You for graciously putting Your love on me and working in my life.

WEDNESDAY – **James 2:5**: “Listen, my beloved brethren: Has God not chosen the poor of this world to be rich in faith and heirs of the kingdom which He promised to those who love Him?” If you remember back in **chapter 1** James said, “Let the lowly brother glory in his exaltation...” (**1:9**). He now reiterates that thought when he says the *poor of this world* have been chosen to be *rich in faith*. Obviously earthly riches aren’t in view; but rather, spiritual treasure (**Matthew 6:19–21, Luke 12:16–21**). God sees man’s material possessions for what they are; unstable and temporary. He doesn’t look there to judge a man’s character but to see if the man trusts God and is confident and sure of and in Him. This is what God rewards as the writer of Hebrews reminds us; “But without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he

who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him” (**Hebrews 11:6**). James words echo those of Jesus recorded in the beatitudes, “Blessed are you poor, for yours is the Kingdom of God” **Luke 6:20**. Who are the rich in faith who inherit the kingdom? Those who are poor in spirit and trusting in God, who believe Him fully; they are the ones whom God makes rich. John Calvin says it this way, “Since the Lord deals bountifully with all, every one becomes partaker of his gifts according to the measure of his own faith. If, then, we are empty or needy, that proves the deficiency of our faith; for if we only enlarge the bosom of faith, God is always ready to fill it.” Notice, God has *promised* the kingdom to those who love him. The promise is to all people whether rich or poor who love the Lord. “I love those who love me, and those who seek me find me” (**Proverbs 8:17**). In Scripture, the references to inheriting the kingdom of God are many: One example is when Jesus states that in the judgment day the King will welcome his people by saying, “Come, you blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world” (**Matthew 25:34**). And tragically, for those who are wicked, we find Scripture declare they will NOT inherit the Kingdom. “Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived. Neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor homosexuals, nor sodomites, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners will inherit the kingdom of God” (**1 Corinthians 6:9–10**).

(Meditate) Am I completely and fully trusting and believing In God?

(Apply) What specific area can I obey and trust God with to see Him enrich and bless me?

(Pray): Lord, help me trust You and believe You more completely. Help me prove that trust through obedience and therefore live worthy of and see Your blessing.

THURSDAY – James 2:6: “But you have dishonored the poor man. Do not the rich oppress you and drag you into the courts?” I said in Mondays study that it is those who ultimately recognize their poverty of Spirit that God chooses and saves. This is indeed true beloved. It is poverty of Spirit, recognition of one’s need for forgiveness and grace before God and faith in Jesus death for me in my place that is rewarded with saving faith. But a materially “rich” person can be poor in spirit and genuinely saved, “rich in faith”. On the other hand, a person can be dirt poor materially and be completely lost and without salvation because they are not humble and poor in spirit recognizing their need. With all that being said, we find that James is speaking about the economically poor in our current text. I want to be clear that as he addresses favoritism and discrimination that was in the church of his day, he is pointing out it is easy for people to look down on the economically poor and *dishonor the poor man*. James

has pointed out that God has compassion for the poor and downtrodden and has in many instances, *chosen the poor of this world to be rich in faith and heirs of the kingdom*. He tells us we *dishonor the poor man* when we despise, reject, and look down on him whom The Lord has specifically chosen. He is asking us how we claim to be God’s child and then think and act so differently than Him.

(Meditate) What is my very first thought and reaction when I see a poor man?

(Apply) What can I change in my thoughts toward the poor that will better please The Lord?

(Pray): Father, help me be ever aware of the way You feel toward the poor. May my first thoughts and actions toward a poor person be pleasing and in line with Your mind.

FRIDAY– James 2:6b-7 “...Do not the rich oppress you and drag you into the courts? Do they not blaspheme that noble name by which you are called?” James now points out that it is in fact the rich who persecute believers (*oppress you*), and sue them and *drag you into court*. They also and, in particular, *blaspheme that noble name*, that is, the name of the Lord Jesus, by *which they are called*. He is asking them what is the sense in going against the poor whom God has chosen by looking down at them and favoring and treating special the rich who are often blasphemers of Jesus? In summary, we have seen it was simply fact that the gospel offered so much to the poor, and demanded so much from the rich, that it was often the poor ordinary people who came to Jesus and His church. But we see that to many, their riches were a hindrance to the kingdom and like the rich young ruler who *went away sorrowfully because he had great possessions* kept them from coming to faith in Christ. James has showed us the gospel is especially dear to the poor and that in it there is a welcome for those who have no one to welcome them, and that in it they find value set on those the world regards as valueless.

(Meditate) Is there an illustration in my life where I’ve seen the rich oppress and blaspheme?

(Apply) What should I do toward those who oppress, blaspheme and sue God’s people?

(Pray): Father God, thank You for choosing to put Your love on me. Help me to treat both rich and poor people in a way that honors and glorifies You.