

Does poverty promote compassion? (28:3)

A poor man who oppresses the lowly is *like* a driving rain which leaves no food.

THE TEXT (NASB)

A poor man who oppresses the lowly is *like* a driving rain which leaves no food.

A poor man that oppresseth the poor is like a sweeping rain which leaveth no food. KJV - Proverbs 28:3

INTRODUCTION



One would think that **a poor man** would understand the plight of **the lowly** and show compassion. Not so!

Some are cruel to others despite having once been poor themselves. When this happens the humble feel betrayed and rejected. Usually rainfall results in better crops and hence more **food** but a **driving rain** brings floods and destruction.

Poverty itself does not promote compassion. Some people choose to be poor. We must understand that there are different kinds of poor people.



Does poverty promote compassion? (28:3)

A poor man who oppresses the lowly is *like* a driving rain which leaves no food.

COMMENTARY

Imagine the disappointment of a farmer expecting rain from the clouds, getting his hopes up, only to have them dashed by a destructive downpour. Torrential rains, floods, and hail, instead of promoting growth, only bring ruin. We want the blessings of a gentle rain not the terrors of a devastating downpour.

Translation: *poor, lowly*

The Hebrew text uses the word “poor” twice but there are two different Hebrew words used. The first word, רָשׁ (rəš, pronounced “rash”), refers to those who do not have enough income for normal financial needs. It also could refer to the “poor” as in the lower class. The second word, דָּל (dal, pronounced “dahl”), stems from the word “to languish” or “to hang down.” In Proverbs, דָּל usually refers to “the poor” as in the lower class. The two Hebrew words, רָשׁ and דָּל, are similar; they are both used to describe the financially poor. However, sometimes when the Hebrew word “rash” is used, it refers to those who are poor because of their own attitudes and actions. The message of the text is this: It is absolutely horrible when the poor use their strength (albeit little strength) to take advantage of those who are even weaker. The lower class kicks the lowest class. It's a terrible thing but it happens.

Analyzing Poverty



Based on a careful study of their usage in the book of Proverbs, I found that דָּל has undertones of humility and weakness not present in the word רָשׁ. It appears that the poor—דָּל—are poor through no fault of their own. They might have been born into a poor family, or they might be poor through physical disability. The poor—רָשׁ—may also be poor through no fault of their own perhaps because of natural disaster, government oppression, business injustice, or personal theft. The רָשׁ may also be poor based on personal choices both positive and negative. Some people choose to be רָשׁ rather than compromising their integrity. Others end up רָשׁ because they choose to be lazy and foolish. Using another verbal form of רָשׁ, Proverbs 13:7 refers to the one who “maketh himself poor.”

Here's my point. There are different causes for poverty just as there are different causes for



Does poverty promote compassion? (28:3)

A poor man who oppresses the lowly is *like* a driving rain which leaves no food.

sickness.

Prescribing Remedies



If we visited a doctor and told him we were sick and he quickly replied, “Here take some medicine,” without investigating the sickness, we would call the doctor a quack. Similarly a wise financial counselor must discern the causes of poverty before planning a remedy. However, when it comes to helping the poor, don’t spend too much time in analyzing the cause of the poverty, lest it deter you from assisting them. Now let’s get back to the text.

Avoiding Conflict

There is a temptation in any field of endeavour, including business, to take advantage of those who don’t fight—perhaps because they don’t have the strength, will, or temperament. Often the weaker ones get attacked simply because they are weaker. When the weak are oppressed by their own kind, so to speak (someone who is poor) then it’s a great tragedy. Poverty can humble an individual and make him more sensitive to the needs of others—more compassionate. But an attitude change is not guaranteed. Some respond to poverty with anger, bitterness, and a vengeful spirit. They “do it to others” whenever they get a chance. The poor, once in power can become oppressive.

The Humanist/Socialist Solution

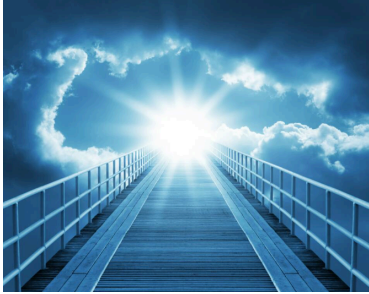
A socialist government appeals to the poor because it offers hope that, when the rich elite are removed from power and replaced by “commoners,” there will be a greater sharing of wealth. Ironically, many of the lower-class embrace socialism as a solution to an oppressive leadership only to find that conditions under a communist state are even worse than before. Unfortunately both the rich and poor can abuse power.

The God Solution



Does poverty promote compassion? (28:3)

A poor man who oppresses the lowly is *like* a driving rain which leaves no food.



The only ones who handle power and authority properly are those who recognize that God is in supreme command and that *everyone*, including themselves, will answer to God, personally, for all their actions. In answer to the question, “What *does* promote compassion?”, we must recognize that compassion is a compound word combining “com” (with) and “passion” (suffer/intense feeling). By first connecting with God and receiving God’s compassion [“God is love” (1 John 4:8)] people will be able to show compassion with other people.

OUR CREATOR, REDEEMER, AND FRIEND

Jesus gave us an example of a commoner abusing his privilege in the story of the unforgiving slave (Matthew 18:23-35).

Jesus was both poor and lowly. He never owned a home. Just before He died the only earthly possessions He had were the clothes on His back. The only character description, which Jesus gave of Himself in the Gospels, is found in Matthew 11:29 where Jesus said, “I am gentle and humble of heart.” Jesus said, “A battered reed he will not break off, and a smouldering wick he will not put out,” (Matthew 12:20).

Jesus came not to oppress and harass, but to rescue and help all those who want help.

APPLICATION

- Memorize the text in your favourite Bible translation and think about it often.
- Reject the notion that you get “up” by pushing others “down.” It’s a lie!
- Help those who are weaker than you. Don’t take advantage of their weakness or poverty. Treat them with respect.
- Give to the poor, especially those in need of food. Don’t belittle or look down on them.

Which of these steps, if any, does Jesus want you to take first? Ask Him.



Does poverty promote compassion? (28:3)

A poor man who oppresses the lowly is *like* a driving rain which leaves no food.

KEY WORDS

abuse, communist, food, debt, monopoly, more assets (quantity), oppression, poor (rāš pronounced “rash”), poor (dāl pronounced “dahl”), protection, credit, bf sharing

ILLUSTRATION

Who is Prudent Pauline?



Prudent Pauline is a planner. She looks before she leaps, she thinks before she speaks. Her favourite mottos are: “Haste makes waste,” “brains over brawn,” and “don’t jump to conclusions.”

When Pauline first heard that famous maxim: “The journey of a thousand miles begins with the first step,” she said NO! It begins with a good map. The map must be studied and the best route plotted. Consider road conditions, terrain, rest stops, refuelling, hostile territory, expected weather, travelling companions, clothing, supplies, and many more factors, including (if necessary) a guide.

She has studied the wisdom of Solomon and even helped teach him a thing or two. Solomon wrote these words about 3,000 years ago in honour of Prudent Pauline. “Whatever your hand finds to do (no matter what you are doing) do it with all your might (give it your full ability and energy) for there is no activity or planning or wisdom after you die—it will be too late.” Pauline says, “First comes wisdom, then comes planning (her favourite activity), and then comes activity.”

Pauline makes the time to do tax planning. She does a work plan every day. She uses a day



Does poverty promote compassion? (28:3)

A poor man who oppresses the lowly is *like* a driving rain which leaves no food.

timer or planner to assign priorities to her activities. She and Diligent Daniel are an incredible pair. Pauline does all her homework before she starts an activity.

