

Who has an invisible avenger? (22:22-23)

Do not rob the poor because he is poor, or crush the afflicted at the gate; for the LORD will plead their case, and take the life [literally, “rob the soul”] of those who rob them.

THE TEXT (NASB)

Do not rob the poor because he is poor, or crush the afflicted at the gate; for the LORD will plead their case, and take the life [literally, “rob the soul”] of those who rob them.

Rob not the poor, because he is poor: neither oppress the afflicted in the gate, for the LORD will plead their cause, and spoil the soul of those that spoiled them. KJV - Proverbs 22:22

INTRODUCTION



The poor and destitute have an invisible avenger. They may seem an easy target, but beware.

To hurt the poor or weak is to provoke the wrath of God. You do it at the risk of your own health and safety.

Pilfering the poor may even prove fatal.



Who has an invisible avenger? (22:22-23)

Do not rob the poor because he is poor, or crush the afflicted at the gate; for the LORD will plead their case, and take the life [literally, “rob the soul”] of those who rob them.

COMMENTARY

Translation



The KJV translation may seem more enlightening than the NASB, unless we read the literal translation in the NASB footnote. Literally, the text implies that the LORD does not necessarily physically kill those who oppress the poor, but may deprive them of life in other ways. A person can be physically alive, but spiritually dead on the inside. They could be physically healthy, but emotionally crippled and unable to appreciate their lives.

The word translated twice as “poor,” דָּל (dāl, pronounced “dahl”), is the same word used in Proverbs 22:16. In Proverbs, it usually refers to the “humble poor,” not those who are “poor,” .28:3 Proverbs at used as ,sloth careless to due (“rash” pronounced ,rāš) רָשׁ

The word “afflicted,” עָנִי (ā•nî, pronounced “ah-nee”), refers mainly to a person suffering some disability or distress. Note here that beggars typically position themselves where they can be seen by as many people as possible.

The Gate



The proverb refers to the gate of a town or city, or perhaps any place of public gathering, where milling crowds might attract the needy. Some commentators take this to mean the civil courts, which were often held at or near the city gates, for all to see. If this proverb is indicating the locale of the courts of justice—and if an agent of the regime is taking advantage of an underdog—then those committing the evil are in very grave danger, especially if they’re acting under the pretense of justice, as John Wesley surmised.



Who has an invisible avenger? (22:22-23)

Do not rob the poor because he is poor, or crush the afflicted at the gate; for the LORD will plead their case, and take the life [literally, “rob the soul”] of those who rob them.

Classic Comments

The astute Matthew Henry noted, “Not only is it a base and cowardly thing, to take advantage against a man because he is helpless, but it is unnatural, and proves men worse than beasts....He that robs the poor will be found in the end a murderer of himself.”

Similarly, the K&D commented that, “to rob any man is an evil and an injurious thing; but to rob the poor is cruel and barbarous; rather something should be given to them, and not anything taken from them.”

Lose Life

Pillaging the poor or hurting the weak from greed will cost the culprit. Wrongdoers will pay for it with the loss of their lives. This might not mean physical death, but it will mean the death of their humanity. So many who are filthy rich are thoroughly miserable, because their reckless pursuit of wealth has gradually killed their own capacity for enjoyment, friendship, truth, and gratitude for all the good they have. The LORD, the avenger of the weak and helpless, respects their choice and “hardens their hearts” in their own misery. No one, absolutely no one, permanently escapes the LORD’s policing. He is the avenger of the poor and afflicted. Though men may not defend the poor, yet God will.

OUR CREATOR, REDEEMER, AND FRIEND

Jesus was not an avenger but a saviour.

Described himself as “meek and mild,” Matthew 11:29, He harshly rebuked religious leaders, the “scribes and Pharisees,” warning them that they’d be severely punished for exploiting the vulnerable (Mark 12:40). Yet Jesus himself did not punish them, not yet. But that’s only half the story.

The first time Jesus came as the Lamb. He will return as the Lion. Jesus himself will execute forceful judgement over all malicious oppressors (Matthew 25:31-46).

APPLICATION



Who has an invisible avenger? (22:22-23)

Do not rob the poor because he is poor, or crush the afflicted at the gate; for the LORD will plead their case, and take the life [literally, “rob the soul”] of those who rob them.

- Memorize the text in your favourite Bible translation and think about it often.
- Don't take advantage of the little guy and don't cater just to the big guy.
- Don't be fooled by someone who looks defenceless and vulnerable.
- Speak up for the rights of the poor and afflicted. Protect them. This certainly includes children.

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



Who has an invisible avenger? (22:22-23)

Do not rob the poor because he is poor, or crush the afflicted at the gate; for the LORD will plead their case, and take the life [literally, “rob the soul”] of those who rob them.

KEY WORDS

kindness, life, LORD, retribution, poor (dāl pronounced “dahl”), worse life (quality)

ILLUSTRATION

Who is Generous Genevieve?



Generous Genevieve loves to give and has a big heart. Sometimes she chuckles to herself as she gives her gifts. Now here's a secret about her giving: She only gives to those who really need it—not just to anyone who asks for a handout. She gives because she thinks it's the right thing to do.

Strangely enough, the more she gave to those in genuine need, the more she got back. Some people give in order to get, but she considers that mere trading. Generous Genevieve gives for the sheer thrill of it. By giving she is keeping herself from emotional cancer. Emotional cancer, also known as greed, can take over one's heart and destroy their ability to enjoy even the simple things of life. Genevieve gives in order to increase her giving capacity.

Sometimes it hurts Genevieve to give. Sometimes she is short of cash because she has given to someone else, but that shortage doesn't last long.

Genevieve believes that there is always a reward for giving to those in need. She thinks that her generosity will come back to her benefit sooner or later. She coined the expression, “What goes around—comes around.”

