

**PROVERBS:**  
**BLESSED ARE THE POOR**

Friday, April 17

Reading: Proverbs 19:1-17

**Proverbs 19:1** *Better the poor whose walk is blameless than a fool whose lips are perverse.*

God has a great concern for the poor – for those who cannot help themselves. Scripture constantly warns against taking advantage of them and commands us to “look after orphans and widows in their distress” (James 1:27). In the Beatitudes Jesus said, “Blessed are you who are poor, for yours is the kingdom of heaven” (Luke 6:20). This is one of the themes that run through Proverbs 19.

**PLIGHT OF THE POOR (19:4, 6-7)** – In these verses, Proverbs is describing the way things are, not necessarily the way things ought to be. People are naturally drawn to wealthy and influential people, but often not for the right reasons. They are usually looking for what they can gain from being associated with them. In contrast, these ‘fair-weather friends’ are not drawn to the poor because they see no benefit for themselves. The poor are often seen as a nuisance to be avoided. Verse 4 reminds us that the rich are often used for their wealth, while the poor are often abused for their poverty. The book of James gives a stern warning against showing favoritism, especially based on social status (James 2).

**SERVING THE POOR (19:17)** – The word translated “kind” means to be gracious, to show favor, to have mercy. As followers of God, we are to help those who cannot help themselves. In serving the poor we are in fact serving the Lord. Besides the idea of lending, this Hebrew word (*lawah*) also has the idea of joining or attaching to something. When we graciously serve the needy, we are joining with God – we are attaching ourselves to His will and purpose. This verse says that God will reward those who do this. This does not mean that our motive is ‘giving so we can get.’ While the poor may not be able to ‘pay us back’ God always will. We give out of love for the Lord who loves the poor and needy. Serving with this proper attitude will not go unrewarded. “It is an investment in heaven’s markets...the Lord will repay him. The payment may not be in the same currency in which the kindness was shown, but it will more than compensate.”<sup>1</sup>

The words of Deuteronomy 15 are a fitting close to this discussion on the poor.

**Deuteronomy 15:7** If anyone is poor among your fellow Israelites in any of the towns of the land the LORD your God is giving you, do not be hardhearted or tightfisted toward them. **8** Rather, be openhanded and freely lend them whatever they need. **10** Give generously to them and do so without a grudging heart; then because of this the LORD your God will bless you in all your work and in everything you put your hand to. **11** There will always be poor people in the land. Therefore I command you to be openhanded toward your fellow Israelites who are poor and needy in your land.

What is your attitude toward the poor? What can you do to help those in need?

<sup>1</sup> A. J. Higgins. What the Bible Teaches: Proverbs (Ritchie Old Testament Commentary), p. 214