
CONSIDER THE POOR

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Blessed is he who considers the poor: The Lord will deliver him in the day of evil. God will preserve him, and keep him alive, He shall be blessed on the earth, and God will not surrender him to the will of his enemies. The Lord will sustain him on his sickbed, and restore him from his bed of illness.

Psalm 41:1-3

What does it mean to "consider" the poor, or weak, as other translations render it? Taken in the context of the many other scriptures commanding us to actively perform God's will toward the unfortunate of society, it's obvious intent is that we do more than just think about the poor. We must act on what we know! James said we should be "doers of the word, and not just hearers" (James 1:22). And Jesus said that entrance into his kingdom was based not only on worshipful proclamations, but also on doing the will of God (Matt. 7:21). Unless action verbs describe our consideration of the poor, we fall short of God's wishes.

God's promises commit God to act in behalf of those who consider the poor. As they proclaim, The Lord will:

- Deliver him in the day of evil. The Lord does not always prevent evil from occurring, but he does promise deliverance from it. Perhaps the evil itself will not be modified, but we will be given grace sufficient to endure it. Or we may learn from it something of value that we would never have experienced in any other way. Or we may be spiritually transformed by it. What matters is that God promises deliverance by whatever method he may choose, and that we are the recipients of that deliverance.

- Preserve him and keep him alive. We "preserve" food to keep it wholesome and useful. When God preserves us he keeps us in a state of grace sufficient so that we can be useful to him and others through our obedience to his commands. Preservation includes keeping us alive. But physical life is more than just being warm and breathing. Real life includes a sense of purpose, inner joy and peace, economic sufficiency, and protection from evil. God provides all these as he delivers on his promise to keep us alive.

- Bless him upon the earth. As an example of this type of blessing, remember the patriarch Abraham who was given not only wealth and possessions, but the respect of his peers, a blessed family, health and long life, and future greatness as

the father of nations and a blessing to the earth.

- Not surrender him to the will of his enemies. King David had many personal enemies, so to him this promise must have meant a great deal. Today, most of us don't have personal enemies seeking to take out lives, but we do have insidious enemies dedicated just as surely to destroying justice and decency in our lives. Think of the financial manipulators and their effect upon our economic welfare, or the moral corruption that threatens our families, or the incessant political lies having the power to severely damage the very foundations of democracy.

- Sustain him upon his sickbed. We all get sick from time to time. But with some of us serious illness brings a sense of abandonment by God and isolation from productive, meaningful life. This frame of mind certainly inhibits quick, full recovery. But God promises to sustain us in spirit even though our physical bodies may fail. We all are appointed once to die physically, but not spiritually.

- Restore him from his bed of illness. I'm reminded of what King Hezekiah of Judah did when informed by God through the prophet Isaiah that he should get his house in order for he was soon to die (Isa. 38). He turned his face to the wall and wept as he prayed that God would remember that he had walked before God in truth and with a perfect heart, and had done what was good in God's sight. God responded to his what we might call intercessory prayer by telling Isaiah to go to the king with the message that his prayer had been heard. God promised not only fifteen more years of life, but also deliverance from his torment by the king of Assyria.

Yes, there are great rewards for those who consider the poor, not only in heaven, but here on earth in the here and now. Why not take God up on what he promises?