

# Born to Win

## A Widow's Plea

by Ronald L. Dart

Not so long ago, I got a letter from a widow that I knew I would have to respond to sooner or later. She wrote this:

Dear Mr. Dart,

Could you possibly preach a sermon on the following lines for widows that are treated unfairly, so we could have a bit of encouragement?

What followed was a list of a more than a dozen scriptures that she wished and hoped that people would consider in their dealings with widows and with the poor. And what sobered me more than a little bit is that she wanted this *as a sermon*—presumably because whoever it was that she was concerned about would hear the sermon. And since I know that there is a finite number of people who actually hear these sermons, and they are by and large in church somewhere (or at least meant to be in church) that makes me stop and think. It suggests not merely encouragement for the widows, but some *admonition* to those who might take advantage of a widow or of a poor person.

Now, this resonated with me for a curious reason: For some 15 years or so while my wife Allie was in real estate, she would oftentimes be bending over backwards—really pressing hard—for one of her customers. And I would say, “Boy, I don’t know”, you know? And I would inquire about it, and she would tell me that this woman is a widow, and that she was very careful to take care of the widows. And oftentimes she would cite the scriptures to me involved with taking care of widows. It seemed like, during a great deal of her time in real estate, she had almost all the time at least one widow somewhere in the group of people that she was working with. And she *always* felt that whatever it took to take care of them was something she had to do.

I’m going to fulfill this widow’s request. I’m going to go over everyone—every single one—of the scriptures that she listed with you. But she neglected to cite the *one*—that particular passage that, I think, Allie quoted most often. And it’s the basis, in the Law, for all the other scriptures that this lady quoted. It actually forms the foundation for it—establishes, in the Law, the principle that’s involved in it. It’s found in the 22<sup>nd</sup> chapter of the Book of Exodus. It’s in that section of the Law that follows *right on the heels* of the Ten Commandments—when God starts handing down the things that *he* thinks are important. Exodus 22, in verse 21:

### Exodus 22

AKJV

<sup>21</sup> You shall neither vex a stranger, nor oppress him: for you were strangers in the land of Egypt.

“You know you’ve been a foreigner. You know how you’ve been treated. I don’t want to ever hear of you treating other people that way. Got it? Good.” Then he goes on to say next:

**Exodus 22**

*KJ2000*

<sup>22</sup> You shall not afflict any widow, or fatherless child.

<sup>23</sup> If you afflict them in any way, [...]

You notice there’s no slack in here. It’s not “major”. It’s not a question of “important” things. He said, “If you afflict them in *any* way”:

**Exodus 22**

*KJ2000*

<sup>23</sup> [...] and they cry at all unto me, [...]

That means to me that, if you do *one* thing to her, and she makes *one* prayer to me about it:

**Exodus 22**

*AKJV*

<sup>23</sup> [...] I will surely hear their cry;

<sup>24</sup> And my wrath shall wax hot, and I will kill you with the sword; and your wives shall be widows, and your children fatherless.

Now, I don’t know about you, but that gets my attention. I mean bolt upright, eyes wide open. I think we ought to pay close attention to that. God says there’s not going to be any messing around on this thing. The way you treat widows...that’s what’s going to happen to you. And *your* wives and *your* kids may be without a husband and without a daddy.

**Exodus 22**

*AKJV*

<sup>25</sup> If you lend money to any of my people that is poor by you, you shall not be to him as an usurer, neither shall you lay on him usury.

<sup>26</sup> If you at all take your neighbor’s raiment to pledge, [...]

Which, God doesn’t really care very much, but if you say, “Okay, I’ll tell you what: I’ll lend you 14 bob until next week, but I’ve got to have coat. Give me your coat so that I know you’ll come back and pay me back this money, okay?” If you do that, even though it’s a week-long loan, when the sun goes down you go give him his coat.

**Exodus 22**

*AKJV*

<sup>26</sup> [...] you shall deliver it to him by that the sun goes down:

<sup>27</sup> For that is his covering only, it is his raiment for his skin: wherein shall he sleep? [*What’s he going to sleep in?*] and it shall come to pass, when he cries to me, that I will hear; [...]

Now, these are illustrations taken out of that time, that place, that circumstance, and they resonate down through all these generations to us today—that there are certain categories of people that, if you take advantage of them and they cry *at all* to God about it, God will avenge them. He’ll take care of them, and will “take care” of you in the process. God says:

**Exodus 22**

AKJV

<sup>27</sup> [...] I will hear; for I am gracious.

And I can hear the echo, “whether *you* are or not.”

I have to say, I’ve been astonished in my lifetime at what some people seem to think that religion is. Religion, for some, is knowing the truth—getting all the doctrines right. For others, it’s ritual; it’s ceremony. For other people, it’s going to church. For some people, it’s talk—and they can talk religion all the way into the wee, small hours of the morning. That’s religion. For others, well, it’s the sacrifices that they make. In ancient times, it was animals. It was calves and goats and all the blood that they sacrificed. For some people, it’s perhaps a sacrifice to keep the Sabbath and the holy days. “I lost my job over the Sabbath, and then I lost another job to go to the Feast of Tabernacles.” (And they were happy to tell you about it.) Or they sacrifice in terms of the offerings they give, and maybe it’s tithes that they’ve sacrificed on.

You know, there’s a funny thing about this, though. In most of these things, the religion focuses on *the self*. It’s what *I* had to give up. It was the sacrifice that *I* made. It was the things that *I* know that you *don’t know*. It’s the ceremony or the ritual that *I* do. It’s the church that *I* go to. In other words, it’s “I”, and everything seems to focus in, in these things, on the self.

Now, this thing of sacrifices is of singular interest to me, and it goes a long way back. In Isaiah, the first chapter and verse 11, there’s a section in here that I think people need to think very carefully about. In Isaiah chapter 1, verse 11, God says this to Israel:

**Isaiah 1**

AKJV

<sup>11</sup> To what purpose is the multitude of your sacrifices to me? said the LORD: I am full of the burnt offerings of rams, and the fat of fed beasts; and I delight not in the blood of bullocks, or of lambs, or of he goats.

Now, I can just hear an Israelite saying, “Well, what’s it in the Law for!? What do you want from me? I bring these sacrifices to the temple; I sacrifice these animals; It costs me a *lot* of money to bring them in here and now God says, ‘I don’t want them! I’m full up with them. I’m fed up with them. I don’t *want* any more of this stuff from you people.’” What’s going on here? God says:

**Isaiah 1**

AKJV

<sup>12</sup> When you come to appear before me, who has required this at your hand, to tread my courts?

And I can hear them saying, “Well, *you* did, didn’t you?” But God says:

**Isaiah 1**

AKJV

<sup>13</sup> Bring no more vain oblations; incense is an abomination to me; the new moons and sabbaths, the calling of assemblies, I cannot away with; it is iniquity, even the solemn meeting.

<sup>14</sup> Your new moons and your appointed feasts my soul hates: they are a trouble to me; I am weary to bear them.

“Talk to me all you want to about your sacrifices, and what you’ve done without, and how hard it was for you to pay your times consistently every month—how *hard* it was for you to make the sacrifices,

how much you gave up in terms of Sabbath observance and losing jobs and so forth, and family turning against you. Tell me all about it.”

**Isaiah 1**

AKJV

<sup>15</sup> And when you spread forth your hands, I will hide my eyes from you: yes, when you make many prayers, I will not hear: your hands are full of blood.

“The things that you do, that you think are religious, are not the things that count with me”, God said. “You can’t do all those things and then violate other commandments, like the one against murder, and expect me to turn a blind eye to it.”

**Isaiah 1**

AKJV

<sup>16</sup> Wash you, make you clean; put away the evil of your doings from before my eyes; cease to do evil;

<sup>17</sup> Learn to do well; seek judgment, [*and listen to this*] relieve the oppressed, judge the fatherless, plead for the widow.

“Look after the helpless people in your society, and stop stomping all over them in your haste to take care of the rich people and the people who’ve got money to come to court.” It’s clear, isn’t it. Then he says this:

**Isaiah 1**

AKJV

<sup>18</sup> Come now, and let us reason together, said the LORD: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool.

Now, I know that you have heard this last verse many times. “Come now, let’s reason together. Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow.” (I think we may even have a hymn in our hymnal that sings that very verse [*Jesus Paid It All*].) But how often have you heard it as a part of the same paragraph as the verse immediately before it?

**Isaiah 1**

AKJV

<sup>17</sup> Learn to do well; seek judgment, [*and listen to this*] relieve the oppressed, judge the fatherless, plead for the widow.

<sup>18</sup> [...T]hough your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool.

“Now, I thought all I had to do was confess Christ and be baptized, and all my sins were washed away and I never had deal with them anymore.” Well, there is a certain amount of truth involved in that. But if you think that confessing Christ, and being baptized, and then going out to live the Christian life, and then *oppressing* the widows, *oppressing* fatherless children, *failing* to take care of the needy and the hungry who come to your door...if you think that that’s going to cut it with God, you’re on another planet. You’re somewhere else. You’re not paying attention to the things that God says in his Word.

Now, let me take you through the scriptures this widow—scriptures that a widow oppressed—wants us to hear. She used *The Living Bible*, so for the most part, I will too. The first one is Psalm 106, verse three. (Some of these are very short. I don’t know that you absolutely need to turn to them. Feel free to do so, if you’d like.) Psalm 106, verse three:

**Psalm 106**

TLB

<sup>3</sup> Happiness comes to those who are fair to others and are always just and good.

You know, to be “just” means to do the right thing by people. It means to treat people fairly. And she cites this scripture here: “Happiness comes to those who are fair to others and are always just and good.” You know, take just a minute to stop and think about how the powerless feel when this is violated. This woman, interestingly enough...and none of the scriptures that she cites in here really amount to a request for any kind of favoritism. They are request for *fairness*. Scripture after scripture... you don’t get it so much in the *King James Version*, but in her *Living Bible* it’s all staring at her—just jumping off the page every time she reads through the Psalms and the Proverbs. All she wants is *fairness*—to not be taken advantage of because she is powerless and hasn’t got what it takes to protect herself from that.

I mean, there are a lot of powerless people in the world. There are people who are powerless because they are sick. There are people who are powerless because they’re mentally ill. There are people who are powerless because they’re old and poor. There are all kinds of people. There are people who are powerless because they are children. And they are taken advantage of *every time they turn around* by people in this world. And she wanted me to preach a sermon to people *in the church* about this, so at least all of us can maybe get it straight about how we are supposed to treat people like her. Psalm 112, verse four:

**Psalm 112**

NIV '84

<sup>4</sup> Even in darkness light dawns for the upright,  
for the gracious and compassionate and righteous man.

I love that combination: *upright* and *gracious* and *compassionate* person.

**Psalm 112**

NIV '84

<sup>5</sup> Good will come to him who is generous and lends freely,  
who conducts his affairs with justice.

*The Living Bible* that she was using is:

**Psalm 112**

TLB

<sup>5</sup> [...] who conducts his business fairly.

I don’t know what happened to her. I don’t know who took advantage of her and what way he did it. But it’s very evident, in reading through the scriptures that she chose to cite back and wanted them preached in a sermon sometime, that somebody had not conducted his business fairly and had taken unfair advantage of her. And folks, it’s going on all the time. Not necessarily a matter of the church (I don’t think there’s that much of it in the church), but in society as a whole there are people out there who are earning their living—day-in day-out, day-in day-out—by scams against poor people and elderly people in this country. It’s going on *all* the time. So don’t think that she’s talking about things here that don’t happen. Coming down to Psalm 119, verse 124:

**Psalm 119**

TLB

<sup>124</sup> Lord, deal with me in loving-kindness, and teach me, your servant, to obey;

<sup>125</sup> for I am your servant; therefore give me common sense to apply your rules to everything I do.

*That's a prayer.* That's a prayer. "Give me the common sense to apply your rules in everything that I do, and to at least treat the weak the same way I would treat the strong." You know, we'll treat the strong—the well-to-do people...we'll be careful about them because we know they can make us *pay*. They can hurt us back. But there's a temptation sometimes to hurt the people who can't hurt you back. Proverbs 11, verse one:

**Proverbs 11**

TLB

<sup>1</sup> The Lord hates cheating and delights in honesty.

[...]

<sup>3</sup> A good man is guided by his honesty; the evil man is destroyed by his dishonesty.

And again, it makes you wonder what went on, to cause her to choose that one. Proverbs 16:11:

**Proverbs 16**

TLB

<sup>11</sup> The Lord demands fairness in every business deal. He established this principle.

Now, I don't have a bit of a problem with understanding exactly what that means—in *The Living Bible* or the *King James*. The Lord *demands* fairness—which means justice, equity, and balance—in *every business deal*. He established this principle; that he demands it. Now, what's interesting to me is that in her citation of this, as she wrote all of this out in longhand in her letter, she underlined four words in that verse. The words are "demands fairness", and the second two are, "[every] business deal"—which, again, makes me wonder what had happened to her sometime prior to this letter being written, as to someone who had been unfair with her in a business dealing, and had probably cost her quite a bit of money. And, you know, when you're old and poor, having somebody steal something from you *really, really hurts*. Proverbs 20, and verse 21:

**Proverbs 20**

<sup>21</sup> A fortune can be made from cheating but there is a curse that goes with it.

"A *fortune* can be made with cheating." You can make a lot of money out there by lying to people and cheating people, but there's a curse that comes along with it.

**Proverbs 20**

<sup>22</sup> Don't repay evil for evil—wait for the Lord of the universe to handle the matter.

Now, I don't really know this lady, and I don't know exactly what happened to her, but if I were a person who had taken advantage of her and I read the scripture it was scare the life out of me. Because what I see is a woman who has said to herself, "Okay, somebody's made some money off of me, but there's a curse that goes with it. *I'm* not going to repay evil for evil, for the *Lord Of The Universe* will handle the matter." And what's really chilling about it (if you're ever in the position of having taken

advantage of someone like that) is that it's *right there in the Law*. "I will see it", God says, "and *I'll* pay it back. Don't make any mistake about it." I don't know who cheated her, but God does, and that man ought to tremble because she has obviously decided to wait for God to do whatever it is that needs to be done. Proverbs, chapter 21, verse three:

### Proverbs 21

TLB

<sup>3</sup> God is more pleased when we are just and fair than when we give him gifts.

I think that's fascinating. You think in terms of, "Well, you know, I brought an animal down to the temple, and I made this sacrifice before God, and I know that's pleasing in his sight, and it went up as a sweets savor before God." Or, "You know, I made a generous offering. I gave a holy day offering last year that must have really bumped the whole average up for everybody, because I put a lot of money in that holy day offering thing." And what the scripture says to us is that God is more pleased when we are *just and fair* than with any gift that we can give to him.

Now, I think that's a *very* revealing statement because what it is talking about is that, in our minds, religion gets confused with the things that we do where God is concerned. Whereas, in the Bible, religion seems to be *very much* concerned with what we do to, with, and for *one another*—with the way we actually conduct our affairs in the world; with how we treat one another, day by day, in the things that we do, isn't it? The Bible's a very down-to-earth book, and it's concerned about *how you live your life*, and how you treat one another, how you talk to people, how you answer people, what demands you make of people, whether you are fair with people, whether you cheat people, whether you take things that don't belong to you.

I mean, people are even prone to think of stealing in selfish terms. They think in terms of, "Well, I shouldn't steal. Because if I steal, God will get me." They don't think in terms of the fact, "If I steal, it's going to hurt *like everything* the person that I stole from." And there's something about being stolen from that makes you feel *violated*. It's a terrible thing. It isn't just the property. It isn't just the money. It isn't just the item that somebody took from you. It's the feeling of violation—that somebody has invaded your home and burgled something that you have, or they've looked in your purse and taken money from you, or that in some way they have actually *taken* something that belongs to you. It's a very *discouraging* experience to have someone steal from.

Well, God says giving him gifts is one thing. What he really wants to see out of us—what he's impressed with, what *pleases* him—is the way we treat one another and the way we are just and fair in our dealings. Proverbs 21, verse six. (I told you, she had a lot of scriptures in here.)

### Proverbs 21

TLB

<sup>6</sup> Dishonest gain will never last, so why take the risk?

<sup>7</sup> Because the wicked are unfair, their violence boomerangs and destroys them.

Yeah, it does. And we have a saying, don't we: "What goes around, comes around." You keep on doing evil to other people and, sooner or later, it's going to come down on your head and you're going to pay for it. So, it isn't worth it. You really ought to get right in the first place. Proverbs 22, verse four:

### Proverbs 22

TLB

<sup>4</sup> True humility and respect for the Lord lead a man to riches, honor, and long life.

Now, it's interesting that she should say that. And I take it as an admonition coming from an elderly lady, who is a widow in God's church, who says to me and to you and to all of us, "True humility, respect for the Lord, lead you to riches and honor and a long life." Which suggests, maybe, that the way in which we go about attempting to achieve our riches leaves somewhat to be desired. Especially, if we do so in the process of taking advantage of another person. That seems to be her thrust. Proverbs 22, verse 22:

**Proverbs 22**

TLB

<sup>22</sup> Don't rob the poor and sick!

Now, it's a shabby person that has to be told that, isn't it?

**Proverbs 22**

TLB

<sup>22</sup> Don't rob the poor and sick!

<sup>23</sup> For the Lord is their defender. If you injure them, he will punish you.

Now, I'll tell you what got me when I read that, and that is the fact that God doesn't do a lot of punishing—that, for the most part, God is content to let the Law exact its own penalty. I mean, if you lie to people you're going to lose your reputation, people are going to distrust you, and you will wreck your business dealings, you'll wreck your relationships with other people, and you're going to be a miserable person, and God doesn't have to lift a finger to punish you for your lies. The Law *will make you pay*. But there are a few things in the Bible that God says, "I'm not going to stand for this. I'm not going to sit back and wait for the Law to take care of you. *I'm going to punish you.*" And here's one of them: someone who would rob the poor and the sick, for the Lord is their defender.

You know, in these days when a lot of these people who are widows, living alone, are getting quite old, they have a lot of health problems; they oftentimes can't drive their own cars anymore; they have trouble getting around; they have lots of trips to the doctors; they are sickly; they're living on Social Security and their medical bills are being paid by Medicare. They don't have a lot. You have to stop and ask: What kind of a person does it take to take advantage of, or to step on, or to be unfair in a business dealing with someone in that category? They are *beneath contempt*. God says it's more than contempt where he's concerned. He says, "I going to *punish* for that." It's a sobering thought. Proverbs 28, verse six:

**Proverbs 28**

TLB

<sup>6</sup> Better to be poor and honest than rich and a cheater.

[...]

<sup>13</sup> A man who refuses to admit his mistakes can never be successful. But if he confesses and forsakes them, he gets another chance.

This is a really poignant appeal to me, coming from the woman it came from—from someone who has been taken advantage of, been stepped on, who has suffered loss because she is a widow. And she has prayed to God that he would avenge her in this situation. But she is still willing to say that "whoever refuses to admit mistakes could never be successful, but if he will confess and forsake them, he'll get another chance." I think that's a wonderful spirit, and I think God looks upon that, and it may make the punishment of the person involved in this even more severe as a result of her willingness to let him off.

**Proverbs 28**

TLB

<sup>20</sup> The man who wants to do right will get a rich reward. But the man who wants to get rich quick will quickly fail.

The man who wants to do right. “That will get a rich reward”, she says (and Proverbs says), “but the man who is out to be rich, well...he will quickly fail.” And then she came back, and what’s interesting about this is (and this is the last one that she listed in all of her scriptures that were here) she had it in there twice. I think it was sort of accidental, in a way. I don’t know if she realized she had it in there twice. But since she’s got it in there twice, I’ll read it twice. It’s Proverbs 16:11.

**Proverbs 16**

TLB

<sup>11</sup> The Lord demands fairness in every business deal. He established this principle.

Now, I don’t know about you, but I think I can live with that. I think that’s something that I can take to heart. It’s something I can keep in mind, make it a point never to forget—that God *demands fairness* in every business deal I’m involved in, and I can’t afford to take advantage of anyone, *much less* a widow or someone who is helpless. Now, I don’t know about you, but she had me thinking over all my business deals to be sure that I’m not taking unfair advantage of people—especially any dealings that involve widows and fatherless children. You know, if I get a little careless and take advantage of some person who’s doing just fine...well, I’ll be sorry for that, I’ll put it right with him, we’ll go on from there. But I’m *really* concerned about any possibility of taking advantage of a widow or fatherless children in any deal that I have.

Now, we have a little time left today, so let’s take a few minutes to drive this lesson home—so that we don’t forget it, so we don’t let it slip, so we don’t get careless in our dealings with one another. Turn back to Deuteronomy, chapter 10, and verse 17. There are several passages of scripture, I think, that we need to hear read to us over and over and over again—need to mark them in our Bibles and go back and remind ourselves of them, maybe make some notes in the margins and what have you, so that you can always find them and come back to them. Deuteronomy 10 and verse 17:

**Deuteronomy 10**

AKJV

<sup>17</sup> FOR the LORD your God is God of gods, and Lord of lords, a great God, a mighty, and a terrible, which regards not persons, nor takes reward:

You *cannot*, because of who you are or how much reward you could give, buy yourself off with this God.

**Deuteronomy 10**

AKJV

<sup>18</sup> He does execute the judgment of the fatherless and widow, and loves the stranger, in giving him food and raiment.

Okay? This is what God does. He’ll execute judgement for the fatherless and for the widow and he loves the stranger in giving him food and raiment.

**Deuteronomy 10**

AKJV

<sup>19</sup> Love you therefore the stranger: for you were strangers in the land of Egypt.

You and I were never in Egypt. We were never slaves in Egypt. We were never in bondage in that sense, but we were in bondage in sin in the world. We all have our little unfortunate things in our past lives. We've all made our mistakes. We've all been through these things. And what God is saying is: "Think of all the patience I have had with you. Think of all I have put up with from you. Think of all the mercy that I have shown toward you. Think of all the love that I have given to you. Now *you go and do likewise*. I execute judgement for the fatherless and the widow, and I expect you to be my agent in the world to go out and do likewise." We have a chance to be God's agent in the world—to judge and be fair with the fatherless children and with widows. Try Deuteronomy 24, verse 17:

#### **Deuteronomy 24**

AKJV

<sup>17</sup> You shall not pervert the judgment of the stranger, nor of the fatherless; nor take a widow's raiment to pledge[.]

Now, some big-ol', burly working guy out here—young fella—you can take his raiment to pledge, but you have to give it back to him every night so he can sleep in it. You're not even allowed to take a widow's raiment to pledge. If she needs a loan, you lend it to her and don't take anything from her in terms of pledge that she'll pay you back at sometime. Not allowed. No collateral. Now, that's really pretty strenuous business. We're talking about people who are in need here. We're not talking about a widow somewhere who's got a business that she's trying to make a lot of money out of. That's not the point. What we're talking about is a *poor* widow, who needs the money.

I want you to turn back to Deuteronomy 27, because this one is really, I think, fascinating. It's a part of a list of blessings and cursings. And they were read to the people, and all the people were expected to respond, step-by-step in this, with an "Amen". Now, you think about this: You're going to read it to them and they're going to say, "Amen." They're going to say, "Okay. Fine. I agree to that."

#### **Deuteronomy 27**

AKJV

<sup>16</sup> Cursed be he that sets light by his father or his mother. [...]

Alright? "Cursed be he that sets light by his father or his mother." Come on. Amen? "*Amen.*" All right.

#### **Deuteronomy 27**

AKJV

<sup>17</sup> Cursed be he that removes his neighbor's landmark. [...]

"*Amen.*" (Boy, that's *feeble.*) "*Amen!*" Alright.

#### **Deuteronomy 27**

AKJV

<sup>18</sup> Cursed be he that makes the blind to wander out of the way. [...]

"*Amen.*"

#### **Deuteronomy 27**

AKJV

<sup>18</sup> Cursed be he that perverts the judgment of the stranger, fatherless, and widow. [...]

“Amen.” What God wanted them all to do is to pronounce that curse upon *themselves*, basically, and say “Amen”—that anyone who would pervert the judgement of the stranger, the fatherless, and the widow deserves to be under a curse. Now, having said that, then we all have an obligation to be extremely careful in those areas—as Israel had to do, and as I know in fact that all of you in this room are forward and would be very anxious to do. For I’m not talking to a group of people who themselves, as far as I know, would ever do anything like that. Later on, in one of the prophets—Isaiah 10:

### Isaiah 10

AKJV

<sup>1</sup> Woe to them that decree unrighteous decrees, and that write grievousness which they have prescribed;

<sup>2</sup> To turn aside the needy from judgment, and to take away the right from the poor of my people, that widows may be their prey, and that they may rob the fatherless!

<sup>3</sup> And what will you do in the day of visitation, and in the desolation which shall come from far? to whom will you flee for help? and where will you leave your glory?

What are you going to do, folks, when all the stuff comes down on your head. Who? You have turned aside the needy from judgement. Now, again, I really feel like I’m been preaching to the choir in this particular group here, but I want you to think about our society and our civilization today. If we have two different men going into court on the same crime, in the same general area—everything is the same—and one of them has got all the money in the world, and the other one is as poor as a church mouse, which one of them do you think is most likely to go to jail? Not much question about it, is there. There’s not any question about it, at all. The poor man is *far* more likely, by many a times factor, to go to jail than the wealthy man is. Our society favors the rich in every way. And justice *is* perverted in this country—where the rich person can go free and the guy who doesn’t have anything goes straight to jail...and may be guilty, but the point simply is we have a system of justice in our country that has been corrupted by money.

Our political system has been corrupted by money. Nearly everything has. And the result of that is it means that the poor people, that the elderly who are on Social Security, that the people who have to depend on Medicare for their medical treatment...all these people are made a prey and are at a *terrible* disadvantage in our society, because the people who have the money are the ones who determine who gets in office. The people who have the money are the ones who commit crimes and get off. And, in fact, if you’ve gone to law school and you’ve got a degree, you can get away with a lot of stuff that the ordinary man—especially the poor man—never would be able to do. Zechariah, chapter seven, verse nine:

### Zechariah 7

AKJV

<sup>9</sup> Thus speaks the LORD of hosts, saying, Execute true judgment, and show mercy and compassions every man to his brother:

<sup>10</sup> And oppress not the widow, nor the fatherless, the stranger, nor the poor; and let none of you imagine evil against his brother in your heart.

<sup>11</sup> But they refused to listen, [...]

“I told them that but they wouldn’t listen to me.”

### Zechariah 7

AKJV

<sup>11</sup> [...] and pulled away the shoulder, and stopped their ears, that they should not hear.

You know, you can imagine him coming up and putting his hand on the shoulder and saying, “Listen, I want to talk to you about this. Don’t oppress the widow. Don’t oppress the fatherless or the stranger or the poor.” And they pulled their shoulder away, and they stuck their fingers in their ears, and they wouldn’t listen.

### **Zechariah 7**

AKJV

<sup>12</sup> Yes, they made their hearts as an adamant stone, lest they should hear the law, and the words which the LORD of hosts has sent in his spirit by the former prophets: therefore came a great wrath from the LORD of hosts.

And, you know, the more I read of this, the more I can understand the wrath of God—how the people who would step on poor helpless people, and take advantage of poor helpless people...I would think God would be *furios* about it and, in fact, he says he is.

### **Zechariah 7**

AKJV

<sup>13</sup> Therefore it is come to pass, that as he cried, and they would not hear; so they cried, and I would not hear, said the LORD of hosts[.]

You know, I don’t think that all of this that we read in here is so much an admonition to us as to go out wholesale and try to create whole new movements and organizations to take care of the poor and the widows and the fatherless—to put together soup kitchens (although that’s a very admirable thing to do in many cases). It’s not so much that as it is that, in your day-to-day walk, that when you encounter the poor, that when you encounter the widow, when you encounter the stranger, when you encounter the person that is weak, that you deal with them fairly and equitably—that when you find someone who is hurting that you try to help, that when you encounter someone...you know, the guy asked the question when Jesus said, “You’ve got to love your neighbor as yourself”, he said, “Who’s my neighbor?” Then comes the parable of the Good Samaritan [**Luke 10**]. And here’s a man wounded, injured, lying by the side of the road, and a couple of guys come along and walk right on by him. One man—a Samaritan, one who was despised by that society—he stopped, and he helped the man. And Jesus said, “Who was his neighbor?” Well, obviously, the man that stopped and helped him. That was his neighbor.

And, to me, what the message of this is: Your neighbor is the person that you encounter in your walk who needs you—who needs help, needs a little guidance, needs advice. I said once in one of my radio programs [*Compassion and the State*] that people talk a lot about government programs that are based on compassion. And I made the point that if you’re looking for compassion, and you’re looking to the government for it, you’re going to sorely disappointed. For compassion is a *human* emotion. Compassion comes from one human being to another human being. And government programs that pour out money upon society are all well and good, I guess, as far as they go, but there’s nothing like having *another human being* to help you out of your hole.

I remember a few years ago there was a gentleman that we had known years gone by up at Big Sandy—a very talented young man, great voice, a lot of personality, a great persona—who had gone his way. And here he came back to us on an occasion asking for help. He was down and out. Everything he owned he had on a bicycle that he pushed around. He slept out in the bushes at night in that sleeping bag that he had. He had absolutely nothing. The poor guy had become mentally ill; he was a manic depressive. And we gave him money for his medication, and we gave him a little money for some food. And he left the area and went back to Dallas. And then after a time he contacted us again wanting 20 dollars for this, that, or the other thing. And I got a friend together and I said, “Tell you what let’s do with him. Let’s offer to get him back on his feet. Let’s set up a deal so that we can find him a place to stay.” (Because when you’re smelly and you haven’t had a bath, and you don’t have any clothes, you can’t even go get a job.) So our idea was to find him an inexpensive place to stay, get him some clothes

to wear, arrange for him to be able to get to and from his job. It wouldn't cost us an arm and a leg to do that. We could actually take hold of this guy and put him back on his feet and set him on the way. And we determined that we would do that, and we offered it to him. And he turned us down. He was sick.

I really felt so terrible about that, but I will tell you this: When we encounter people like that—when God sends them to us or sends us to them—it's a *terrible shame* for us to turn our back. It's a terrible shame for us to harden our hearts. He doesn't expect us to go out and find every homeless person and put them in a shelter somewhere tonight. What God expects of us is to treat the people right that we deal with every day in our lives and come our way. If we could just master that—if we can just master helping the people we know, helping our neighbors, doing good to the people across our path—if we can just master that we would have gone a long way toward being a light in the world, for being a powerful influence. When God says that, of Abraham and his seed, all the nations of the Earth would be blessed [**Genesis 22:18**] this is the kind of thing he's talking about. It is because of the wealth that Abraham and his children would have and the power that they would have, the ability to do good to people of the world and to their neighbors and so forth would be almost overwhelming in the world—if they would just follow through on all the things that God had them do. That's why it's there. Then there's this scripture that you probably knew was coming. James 1, verse 26:

**James 1**

AKJV

<sup>26</sup> If any man among you seem to be religious [...]

That's what we've been talking about, right? All the things we do which are religious.

**James 1**

AKJV

<sup>26</sup> [...] and bridles not his tongue, but deceives his own heart, this man's religion is vain.

If he can't shut up, he's got troubles.

**James 1**

AKJV

<sup>27</sup> Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world.

Now, I want to tell you something: Visiting the fatherless and the widows in their affliction does not mean going by and knocking on the door and sitting down and talking to them and drinking their coffee. To visit someone in their affliction is to go and *help* that person. There's a widow out there somewhere right now, that I know about, who is...she's not poor; she's not downtrodden; she's "okay" in her life; she's not particularly well-to-do. But she's *old*—very old—and can't do certain things. Her house needs painting in the worst possible way. Sure would be wonderful if the people of the church who know her—out there, somewhere—would go down there on a work party some day and paint her house. It's not as though she couldn't afford the paint (she probably could) but just that someone cared enough to follow through and help her. Because old people—as they no longer are able to see to certain things, they're no longer able to follow through on some of the maintenance things in their homes, and their homes tend to go to rack and ruin sometimes because they just can't do it—it would really be nice if someone, somewhere would help people like that.

Maybe we should all give a little more attention to our religion. Is it possible that we are so otherworldly—so spiritual—that we've forgotten all this stuff? I know all of us know the scripture: "Faith without works is dead." Right? We all know that. Look at the context of it, though. It's in James 2, and verse 14. Remember: "Faith without works is dead."

**James 1**

AKJV

<sup>14</sup> What does it profit, my brothers, though a man say he has faith, and have not works? can faith save him?

Now listen to the illustration he gives you.

**James 1**

AKJV

<sup>15</sup> If a brother or sister be naked, and destitute of daily food,

<sup>16</sup> And one of you say to them, Depart in peace, be you warmed and filled; notwithstanding you give them not those things which are needful to the body; what does it profit? [*What good have you done?*]

This is really strange, and it's an extreme example, but let's just understand what he's saying here. Somebody comes to you, and they're in trouble, and you say, "Well, the Lord bless you, brother. May the Lord bless you and keep you. Be warm and filled. I hope everything works out for you downstream." And you close the door in his face and leave him naked, cold, and hungry, you have not done *anything*.

**James 1**

AKJV

<sup>17</sup> Even so faith, if it has not works, is dead, being alone.

<sup>18</sup> Yes, a man may say, You have faith, and I have works: show me your faith without your works, and I will show you my faith by my works.

<sup>19</sup> You believe that there is one God; you do well: the devils also believe, and tremble.

<sup>20</sup> But will you know, O vain man, that faith without works is dead?

And guess what the works were he was talking about? Food, clothing, and shelter for someone who needed it. I don't know what it is about religion. This is true from one end of Christianity to the other end of Christianity—and probably Judaism, as well. That it is so much easier to be very *religious*—in ceremony, in ritual, in the keeping of days, in the avoidance of certain types of food. All the things that are selfishly oriented, all the things that meet *our* needs; to be very religious in all of these things is so obvious. And it is really a mystery how it cannot be so obvious that, day by day, week by week, month by month—as we encounter in our walk in the world the needy, the poor, and the downtrodden—not only that we don't take advantage of them, but that we try the best to help.

Is it possible that we spend so much time in doctrinal and prophetic studies, so much time in spiritual pursuit, so much time contemplating the next life—the world to come—that we don't have anything left for *this* life, and the world *here*, and the world *now*? Is it possible that we have forgotten that we have to run *this* race before we can even start the next one? The religion of the Bible is very down-to-earth, as I said earlier. It is about *this* world and how we live in it. And more than anything it has to do with *how we treat our fellow man*. That's the bottom line. You say you love God. Well, if you can't love your brother whom you see, how can we imagine that you love God whom you cannot see?

And finally, 1 John, chapter four, verse 16:

**1 John 4**

AKJV

<sup>16</sup> And we have known and believed the love that God has to us. God is love; and he that dwells in love dwells in God, and God in him.

<sup>17</sup> Herein is our love made perfect, that we may have boldness in the day of judgment: because as he is, so are we in this world.

Notice it? As *he is* gracious, compassionate—and all these things—so are we *in the world*. Don't forget that last phrase. It has to actually somehow get out there and touch it.

**1 John 4**

*AKJV*

<sup>18</sup> There is no fear in love; but perfect love casts out fear: because fear has torment. He that fears is not made perfect in love.

<sup>19</sup> We love him, because he first loved us.

<sup>20</sup> If a man say, I love God, and hates his brother, he is a liar: for he that loves not his brother whom he has seen, how can he love God whom he has not seen?

<sup>21</sup> And this commandment have we from him, That he who loves God love his brother also.

Especially the weak, and the poor, and the widows, and the fatherless.

*Christian Educational Ministries*

P.O. Box 560 ❖ Whitehouse, Texas 75791

Phone: 1-888-BIBLE-44 ❖ Fax: (903) 839-9311

❖ [www.borntowin.net](http://www.borntowin.net) ❖

*A Widow's Plea*

ID: 9922