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W. O. Vaught

Ouachita Baptist University

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THREE LESSONS FOR THE SHORTSIGHTED USHER

A STUDY OF THE BOOK OF JAMES
NUMBER 15
JAMES 2:5-7

Dr. W. O. Vaught
Immanuel Baptist Church
Little Rock, Arkansas

JAMES 2:5-7 "Hearken, my beloved brethren, Hath not God chosen the poor of this world rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom which he hath promised to them that love him? But ye have despised the poor. Do not rich men oppress you, and draw you before the judgment seats? Do not they blaspheme that worthy name by the which ye are called?"

Under reverse process reversionism, in our last study, we saw how believers can, through the neglect of Bible doctrine, erase the edification complex that has been erected in the soul. In our last study we saw "Mr. Gold Fingers" and how he was treated with partiality and discrimination. We also saw "Mr. Ptochos--Mr. Poor Man" and how he got the short end of the stick. As we say in jest, he "got the shaft." The shortsighted usher was in reverse process reversionism.

Mr. Gold Fingers, wearing magnificent clothing, got all of the attention and "Mr. Ptochos" got the short end of the deal because he was poor and dressed in rags. But the lowest one of the three was the shortsighted usher because of his partiality, who by his act proved that he had fallen into reversionism. He seated Mr. Gold Fingers in the best seat of honor in all the house and he seated Mr. Ptochos in the worst seat of all.

In the next three verses we will see how James will show what God thinks about all of this.

Verse 5 will give the doctrinal application to this illustration.

Verse 6 will give the common sense application.

Verse 7 will give the logical viewpoint application.

Remember this, doctrine is always compatible with common sense and with logic. Doctrine always leads one to a practical conclusion.

JAMES 2:5 "Hearken, my beloved brethren, Hath not God chosen the poor of this world rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom which he hath promised to them that love him?" Here we have the doctrinal viewpoint. The word "hearken" is from "akouo" and it is an aorist, active, imperative. But these people are too far away to hear what James is saying. So the real meaning of this word is "Concentrate on this." "My beloved brethren" refers to the Jews to whom James is writing and to all believers of all time who will read this message. So James is actually saying, "All you believers who read this message concentrate on this." If those who have slipped into reversionism through discrimination are going to rebound and get back in fellowship with God, they will have to concentrate on doctrine. In this reference before us, God leads us right back to eternity past to see a great principle that he had written into the very fiber of human life.

So the verse says, "Hath not The God chosen" and the word chosen is an aorist, middle, indicative of "eklego" and it means an occurrence in eternity past, God did the electing. The middle voice means that God did this electing all by himself and the indicative mood means the reality of the electing of every single believer in eternity past.

A BRIEF REVIEW OF THE DOCTRINE OF ELECTION

1. ALL MEMBERS OF THE HUMAN RACE ARE POTENTIALLY ELECTED IN JESUS CHRIST.
 This is the doctrine of unlimited atonement and the doctrine of election brought together.
2 TIMOTHY 2:10 "Therefore I endure all things for the elect's sakes that they may also obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory."

2. CHRIST WAS ELECTED IN ETERNITY PAST.
ISAIAH 42:1 "Behold my servant, whom I uphold; mine elect, in whom my soul delighteth; I have put my spirit upon him: he shall bring forth judgment to the Gentiles."

1 PETER 2:4 "To whom coming, as unto a living stone, disallowed indeed of men, but chosen of God, and precious."

1 PETER 2:6 "Wherefore also it is contained in the scripture, Behold, I lay in Sion a chief corner stone, elect, precious: and he that believeth on him shall not be confounded."

3. THE ELECTION OF JESUS CHRIST IS THE DOCTRINE OF DIVINE DECREES.
JOHN 15:16 "Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain: that whatsoever ye shall ask of the Father in my name, he may give it you."

EPHESIANS 1:4 "According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love:"

4. EVERY BELIEVER SHARES THE ELECTION OF JESUS CHRIST.
1 CORINTHIANS 1:2 "Unto the church of God which is at Corinth, to them that are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints, with all that in every place call upon the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, both theirs and ours:"

ROMANS 8:28 "And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose."

5. ELECTION IS THE PRESENT AS WELL AS THE ETERNAL POSSESSION OF EVERY BELIEVER.
COLOSSIANS 3:12 "Put on therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, longsuffering;"

6. THE ELECTION OCCURS AT THE MOMENT OF SALVATION.
1 THESSALONIANS 1:4 "Knowing, brethren beloved, your election of God."

2 THESSALONIANS 2:13 "But we are bound to give thanks alway to God for you, brethren beloved of the Lord, because God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth:"

2 TIMOTHY 1:9 "Who hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began,"

7. THIS ELECTION IS THE FOUNDATION OF THE UNIVERSAL CHURCH.
1 THESSALONIANS 1:4 "Knowing, brethren beloved, your election of God."
8. ORIENTATION TO ELECTION COMES THROUGH DOCTRINE LEARNED AND TRANSFERRED INTO THE HUMAN SPIRIT.
TITUS 1:1 "Paul, a servant of God, and an apostle of Jesus Christ according to the faith of God's elect, and the acknowledging of the truth which is after godliness;"

"The poor of this world" and the word for poor here is plural and it means that here God is stating a doctrinal principle as it applies to the poor.

THE DOCTRINE OF THE POOR

1. GOD CAN RAISE THE POOR OUT OF THE POVERTY OF THEIR CIRCUMSTANCES.
1 SAMUEL 2:8 "He raiseth up the poor out of the dust, and lifteth up the beggar from the dunghill, to set them among princes, and to make them inherit the throne of glory: for the pillars of the earth are the Lord's, and he hath set the world upon them."

PSALM 113:7 "He raiseth up the poor out of the dust, and lifteth the needy out of the dunghill;"
2. SPECIAL HAPPINESS COMES TO THOSE WHO HELP THE POOR.
PSALM 41:1-2 "Blessed is he that considereth the poor: the Lord will deliver him in time of trouble. The Lord will preserve him, and keep him alive; and he shall be blessed upon the earth: and thou wilt not deliver him unto the will of his enemies."

PROVERBS 19:17 "He that hath pity upon the poor lendeth unto the Lord; and that which he hath given will he pay him again."
3. GOD DELIVERS THE POOR.
Not only does God deliver the poor, but in their poverty many people are caused by their poverty to see the need for salvation and they, thereby, respond to the gospel. Poverty often brings people to positive volition.
MATTHEW 11:5 "The blind receive their sight, and the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear, the dead are raised up, and the poor have the gospel preached to them."

PSALM 72:12-14 "For he shall deliver the needy when he crieth, the poor also, and him that hath no helper. He shall spare the poor and needy, and shall save the souls of the needy. He shall redeem their soul from deceit and violence and precious shall their blood be in his sight."
4. LEARN TO DISTINGUISH BETWEEN CHARITY AND SOCIALISM.
Charity to the poor is a bona fide part of God's plan
PROVERBS 14:30-31 "A sound heart is the life of the flesh: but envy the rottenness of the bones. He that oppresseth the poor reproacheth his Maker: but he that honoureth him hath mercy on the poor."

Charity is for the helpless poor, while welfare makes the poor helpless.

GALATIANS 2:10 "Only they would that we should remember the poor; the same which I also was forward to do."

5. THE POOR CANNOT ENTER INTO PSEUDO FRIENDSHIP BECAUSE OF HIS POVERTY
PROVERBS 19:4 "Wealth maketh many friends; but the poor is separated from his neighbour."
6. THERE IS A SPECIAL CURSE ON THOSE WHO IGNORE THE HELPLESS POOR.
PROVERBS 21:13 "Whoso stoppeth his ears at the cry of the poor, he also shall cry himself, but shall not be heard."

There is also a special curse on those who take advantage of the poor.

PROVERBS 22:22-23 "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."

7. UNTIL THE MILLENNIUM THERE WILL ALWAYS BE POVERTY IN THE HUMAN RACE.
MATTHEW 26:11 "For ye have the poor always with you; but me ye have not always."
Man cannot eliminate poverty from the human race.
8. IT IS POSSIBLE TO BE POOR AND HAVE GREAT HAPPINESS AT THE SAME TIME.
MARK 12:43 "And he called unto him his disciples, and saith unto them, Verily I say unto you, That this poor widow hath cast more in, than all they which have cast into the treasury:"
9. THE POOR ARE A TARGET OF HYPOCRISY.
JOHN 12:5 "Why was not this ointment sold for three hundred pence, and given to the poor?"
10. POOR BELIEVERS HAVE THE SAME SPIRITUAL PRIVILEGES AS RICH BELIEVERS
Our passage here in James 2:5

This verse goes on to say "rich in faith" and the word is the plural "plousias." Being financially poor does not keep one from being rich in faith and doctrine. "Faith" here refers to the whole accumulation of Bible doctrine.

"Heirs of the kingdom" is related to the riches the believer will possess in eternity. This word "kingdom" is "basileia" and it refers to a kingdom governed by a king and it is referring to the Millennium and the final eternal reign of Jesus Christ forever. The word for promised is from "epaggello" and it means to undertake, to assure them that this is a reality. They become wealthy by the accumulation of doctrine.

"To them that love him" is a general term for all believers. This is a relaxed mental attitude love. Being rich in doctrine causes one to love God with a relaxed mental attitude.

Now get an accurate translation of this verse--

"Concentrate, my beloved brethren--has not The God elected the destitute of this world, wealthy by means of accumulated doctrine, heirs of the kingdom which he has promised those who love him?"

JAMES 2:6 "But ye have despised the poor. Do not rich men oppress you, and draw you before the judgment seats?"

Here we come to the common sense viewpoint. Doctrine can always be correlated to common sense. So this verse really goes something like this--

"Mr. Shortsighted Usher, have you had anything to do with Mr. Gold Fingers prior to this time? Well, I'll say you have! He oppressed you in the past and he dragged you off to court and to jail. But what has your old buddy, Mr. Ptochos, done for you? He has been a good friend. Now, Shortsighted Usher, common sense ought to teach you how to treat these two men. But, Mr. Shortsighted Usher, you are in reverse process reversionism and you just don't have common sense enough to realize what you have done." That is exactly what we have here in this verse. This usher had actually despised this poor man who had accumulated doctrine and was rich in faith, and showed discrimination toward Mr. Gold Fingers who in the past oppressed him and dragged him off to court.

"Now listen to this, Mr. Shortsighted Usher, this is not even common sense!" The word despised is an aorist, active, indicative of "atimazo" and it means to dishonor, to degrade, to dethrone. The conclusion is this-- "Mr. Shortsighted Usher, you have degraded the poor."

Summary

1. This does not refer to all rich people, but only to those rich who abuse their wealth and are arrogant and oppressive. They dishonor the poor by destroying their rights and privileges.
2. Wealth means a certain amount of power, but it also carries with it great responsibilities. If wealth is not responsible, then it turns into a curse to those who possess it. (Wealthy men like J. L. Kraft, J. C. Penney, and R. G. LeTourneau were wealthy but were still responsible.)
3. Wealth has both authority and responsibility not only to oppress the poor, but to protect the poor and see that they get their rights and also to provide for the helpless poor.
4. The shortsighted usher was in reversionism, was in an emotional revolt in his soul, and was building up scar tissue on his soul. Therefore, he lacked common sense.
5. Common sense should have reminded the shortsighted usher that by his actions, he was actually digging his own grave and actually made a fool of himself by catering to the wealthy. (It is good to remind preachers never to cater to the wealthy and become men-pleasers.)
6. Why would this usher treat this wealthy man with partiality? Because this usher was envious of the rich man's power and influence. He wanted some of that power to rub off on him. (Going through the usher's mind was something like this. He would tell his friends, "Do you know I seated Mr. Gold Fingers in the best seat in the house last Sunday and on the side he gave me a little suggestion on how I might make a little money on the stock market.")

7. As a believer, this shortsighted usher has given us and the whole world a picture of reverse process reversionism.

This wealthy man had actually dragged the usher to court. The word translated "draw" is a present, active, indicative of "helko" and it means to drag violently and by force. Gold Fingers had actually treated this usher very cruelly. "Kriterion" is the word used for judgment seat and it means a court of law.

JAMES 2:7 "Do not they blaspheme that worthy name by the which ye are called?" Here we have the logical viewpoint.

The word translated blaspheme is "blasphemo" and it means to dishonor, to violate, to malign the holy name of Jesus Christ. "That worthy name" is a technical name for Jesus Christ. "By which ye are called" simply means that when you become a believer, you take the name of Christ, you are called a Christian. So the question being asked our usher here is this--

"Why do you cater to Mr. Gold Fingers when he actually maligns the sacred name of Jesus Christ?"

THE LOWEST THING ANYONE CAN DO IS TO MALIGN THE HOLY NAME OF JESUS CHRIST. IF YOU HAVE FRIENDS WHO THROW AROUND LIGHTLY THE HOLY NAME OF JESUS CHRIST, YOU GET AWAY FROM THEM AS FAST AS YOU CAN. THERE IS NOTHING LOWER THAN THIS IN ALL THE EARTH.