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THE SURE WORD by Jonnie Hutchison

ARE YOU POOR?

Poverty is a definite problem in the world in which we live. According to the Federal Safety Net website, the latest figures available indicate that over 39 million Americans live below the poverty level. It is much worse in many parts of the world. In one African nation 85% of people live in extreme poverty. There are many factors that contribute to poverty including personal choices. Yet, God has always expressed His care for the poor (E.g. Lev. 14:21; Deut. 15:7-11; Psa. 9:18; 35:10; Prov. 14:21; 19:17). The apostles and elders of the church in Jerusalem expressed their conclusions that God's people should "remember the poor" (Gal. 2:10). The churches in Macedonia and Achaia did just that for the poor among the brethren in Jerusalem (Rom. 15:26). In addition, we are not to show partiality to the rich over the poor (James 2:1-9). While the church is under obligation to help the poor there are certain restrictions (1 Tim. 5:3-5; 2 Thess. 3:10; 2 John 9-11).

Paul, in his letter to the church in Corinth, wrote of the riches and the poverty of Jesus. "For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor, that you through His poverty might become rich" (2 Corinthians 8:9). Jesus was not materially rich. The riches He left were spiritual heavenly riches. He left those when He left heaven to take upon Himself flesh and bone to experience death on the cross for the sins of the world. It was through His willing poverty that you and I can enjoy the spiritual riches which He has made possible for us to obtain. These are heavenly treasures and include the hope of eternal life in heaven (Titus 1:2).

To come to Jesus requires one to become poor. No, not materially poor necessarily, but "poor in spirit" (Matthew 5:3). This is the humility of mind which expresses itself in humble obedience to all God has commanded. It is "laying up treasures in heaven and not on the earth. Jesus said, "for where your treasure is there your heart will be also." (Matthew 6:19-21).

So, are you poor? Where are you laying up your treasures? As for the material things of life, the Bible tells us, "For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out" (1 Timothy 6:7). No, you can't take it with you when you die. On the other hand, trusting in Jesus has eternal gain.

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