

(The Lord - Merciful and Gracious) 3. the Lord on the Side of the Poor and Needy

by Roy Hession

The Lord is merciful and gracious, and is on the side of the poor and needy, delivering them from oppression and judgment.

Duration: 51:32

Scripture: Exodus 22:22, Psalm 40:17, Psalm 74:21, Psalm 113:6, Proverbs 14:21, Isaiah 41:17, Matthew 6:33

Topics: "Mercy Of God"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker begins by describing the dramatic and thunderous opening of the sermon, comparing it to the witches in Hammett's play. The speaker then mentions a beautiful flute melody that he heard in Switzerland and relates it to the act of mercy and loving kindness. The sermon then shifts to discussing the concept of mercy and how it is shown to the poor and needy. The speaker emphasizes that God is on the side of the poor and oppressed, just like David facing Goliath, and that there is hope for those who are unable to help themselves. The sermon concludes by stating that the poor and needy are in their situation because of the oppression of their enemies.

Transcript

I remind you that our overall theme is The Lord, or Jehovah, Merciful and Gracious. And our first study was seeing that that was indeed the revelation he gave of himself, the character he gave of himself. The Lord, Merciful and Gracious.

Not only merciful, but a mercy that's sure to fail you, because he's gracious. And then yesterday morning we saw that second pair of words that proliferates through our Old Testament, that I am poor and needy. On the one hand, the merciful and gracious.

On the other hand, the poor and the needy. And we saw that just because he was merciful and gracious, he's strangely attracted to the poor and the needy. And when they confess themselves to be such, they become candidates indeed for the mercy and grace that flows to us from the cross.

And now this morning, we're going to go to a third aspect of our subject, and we're going to see how the Bible teaches us a precious, wonderful lesson. And it says that the merciful and gracious is always on the side of the poor and needy. And the two are joined, and the two fit like a hand inside the glove.

The poor and needy qualify for the merciful and gracious, just because he is merciful and gracious, and just because we admit ourselves to be poor and needy. Before, however, we go to our reading with regard to that further subject, I want to go back and say just two things about the phrase, the poor and needy. I'm not at all sure that I emphasise, as I would have liked to have done, this question of what it means not only to be needy, but to be poor and needy.

To be in need, but have no means by which to get ourselves out of that need. And it's a traumatic thing to be in that state in practical circumstances. To have got yourself into a situation and now being unable to get out of it.

To have forfeited something precious in your life and have nothing which you could give in exchange for that which you've lost, apart from grace. But thank God we're not apart from grace, but we've got to see the situation apart from grace before we see the grace. Now, the point I must want to underline is this question of being poor as well as needy means you are beat.

Very often, especially since yesterday morning, we've been using in our fellowship about being poor and needy. It's a big thing to confess that thing, man. It means you're confessing you're beat apart from grace.

Bear it in mind. It's a deep thing. And yet I want to tell you there is hope for the beat.

There's hope for the poor and needy, for the great Jehovah, the merciful and gracious is on the side of those who are not only needy but beat, unable to extricate themselves, and yet he himself demonstrates himself. On that's their side. So, dear brother, there's hope indeed for the poor and needy, even when that's true of you at the very deepest level.

And the second thing I want to say to add to what we've been saying is this, that the poor and needy are such because of the oppression of their enemies. Now, this is what you see all the way through. It was certainly true of David.

It's he who says more than any other writer that he is poor and needy. And why is he poor and needy? Because he's encompassed about with enemies. I've been trying to list the psalms.

I can't get out of the psalms these days. I love them more than I ever did before. And I've listed the penitential psalms and the psalms about sickness.

You know, he nearly died of sickness. He thought he was going to. He said, but there's no profit in my blood if I go down to death.

Shall the dead praise thee? He hadn't a very clear revelation yet of the resurrection. All the hymns about sin and songs, psalms about forgiveness, psalms about sickness, and a great number about enemies. And it's because he was encompassed about with enemies that he found himself poor and needy.

And he was. He went through hell, I don't know how many years it was, when he had to flee for his life from Saul, who hunted him as a partridge among the mountains, when he had to live in dens and caves of the earth, when he never knew who was friend and foe. And it's in that situation that so many of the psalms are written.

He had his notebook with him. And even his saddest moments, he used to scribble down gorgeous poetry. A poet on the run, but a poet still.

And if he was poor and needy, it was because, so often, of his enemies, who were oppressing him and wronging him. And so he told God, Oh Lord, I'm poor and needy, look at them. You notice the number of psalms there are about his enemies.

Yes, that's true of the poor and needy in David's writings. It was true of him personally. But it was also true of Israel.

For very often the psalmist or the writer, in some other part, is not talking about himself only, but the nation. And they were poor and needy as they wasted away in captivity, as they suffered from the incursion of surrounding nations. They were reduced to great weakness.

It's a terrible decimation, all because of their enemies. And if God is going to show himself on the side of the poor and needy, either personally, as in David's case, or nationally, as in the case of Israel, he's only going to do so by destroying their enemies. If I say we're going to think about Jehovah the Merciful and Gracious on the side of the poor and needy, we're going to see him dealing with and destroying those that oppress his dear ones, that render them into this low place of being poor and needy.

And it's your enemies that make you poor and needy, chief of which is that old serpent, the devil. He's the one who knows how to rub your nose in the dust. He's the one who knows how to magnify difficulties and make things so difficult for you.

Other people do too. But supremely, that old serpent, the devil. And if the Lord, the Merciful and Gracious, is going to show himself on the side of the poor and needy, he's going to deal with my enemies.

That's how he's going to do it. And that's the news. We have to tell him he's already done it.

Bear that in mind. Now our reading. Because our reading, these are Bible readings, but we're not reading one passage, we're reading a selection of verses all teaching the same.

Will you turn to Psalm 40? What's our theme then? The Merciful and Gracious on the side of the poor and the needy. Psalm 40, verse 17. And I quoted this yesterday, just one of the verses where it's clearly said, we are poor and needy, but it says more than that.

Verse 17 of Psalm 40, But I am poor and needy yet. Hallelujah. The Lord's thinking on me.

Now I believe it's very important, this. Because you can end up with a negative sort of testimony, I'm poor and needy. What did you learn at Southwell? Oh, that I was poor and needy.

Nothing more than that. Well, that was a great thing. I was poor and needy.

And really, we can have a fixation, almost, on the fact that we're poor, that we have nothing. And it's right to see it. It was so good that God took us deeper onto that aspect last night.

But we mustn't stay there. We'll be a poor, negative people. David didn't.

I am poor and needy yet. Hallelujah. The merciful and gracious think is on me.

And my testimony is one of the poor and needy upon whom the Lord has fought and done things. So here we have it. Hallelujah.

The Lord on the side of the confessedly poor and needy. Psalm 9, verse 18. Oh, this is encouraging.

This is good. Psalm 9, verse 18. For the needy shall not always be forgotten.

The expectation of the poor shall not perish forever. Isn't that good? There you have it. Chapter 9, verse 18.

The needy shall not always be forgotten. Looks as if they are sometimes. The troubles continue.

But not for long. His disciplines are only for a moment. His favour for a lifetime.

The needy shall not always be forgotten, dear one. The expectation of the poor shall not perish forever. Psalm 12, verse 5. Here we have it.

For the oppression of the poor. For the sighing of the needy. Now will I arise, saith the Lord.

I will set him in safety from him that puffeth at him. Oh, I want to tell you. He does indeed rise on behalf of the poor and needy.

Not only the spiritually poor and needy, but sometimes the physically and circumstantially poor and needy. Listen, man. He's on their side.

Where there's misery, there's Jesus. Drawn to it. Just because he is merciful and gracious.

And when he sees the poor and the needy being oppressed, and some of them are, very much so, in iron-curtained jails and elsewhere. This is what my Bible says. For the oppression of the poor.

For the sighing of the needy. Now will I arise, saith the Lord. I will set him in safety from him that puffeth at him.

And although sometimes the full fulfilment has to wait to the next life, it's going to happen. God's going to deal with the oppressor. And right down to spiritual oppression.

I will arise on behalf of the poor and needy. Psalm 35, verse 10. Psalm 35, verse 10.

I like this one. All my bones shall say. You see, he was a man who at one place spoke about broken bones.

But now they've been restored. All my bones shall say. Lord, who is like unto thee, which delivereth the poor from him that is too strong for him? Yea, the poor and the needy from him that spoils him.

The merciful and gracious. Going into bat on behalf of the poor and needy. Delivering them from those that are too strong for them.

From their great ancient enemy. And any other physical enemies. Because there's no Christian that doesn't get criticised, sometimes even by fellow Christians.

Could be your criticism of another has reduced him to great unhappiness. Hear this, will you? He delivers the poor from him that is too strong for him. And the needy from him that spoils him.

And then, more than any, Psalm 72. Now, of course, you may not have been in the Psalms lately. It is difficult, this Bible of ours.

It's got 66 books. And it's so full of meaning, I can't read my Bible quickly. And if I'm in one part of the Bible, getting great treasure, there's part that I haven't been in for a year or two.

And you may not realise that this Psalm 72 is one of the greats. It's the great Messianic Psalm, where David is praying for the king. Where he's praying for Solomon.

The heading is a prayer for Solomon, who was to be the king. Both David and Solomon are types of Christ. And Solomon is especially a type of the Lord Jesus Christ in his millennial reign.

And what things he speaks. He knows he's speaking of Messiah. Of course he does.

Being a prophet, he speaks of another. They said on the day of Pentecost. And he talks about this king that's to reign, Solomon, over the nation.

And he sees another king, Solomon's greatest son, Jesus, reigning in millennial reign over the earth. And it says of him in verse 4, He shall judge the poor of the people, he shall save the children of the needy, and shall break in pieces the oppressor. Understand this word, judge.

It's a difficult word as it comes in our Bibles. It really doesn't make a lot of sense unless you know its real meaning. When David says, Judge me, I pray thee, O Lord.

What does he mean? Will you please set up a special judgment seat for me, Nana? It always means, nearly always, judging on behalf of. Judge thou on behalf of me. And so it is, he shall judge on behalf of the poor and the wronged, he shall save the children of the needy, and shall break in pieces the oppressor.

And this is going to be the principal feature of the millennial reign of our Lord Jesus. It's going to be justice at last, justice for the poor, justice for the needy. And so he goes on.

Look at verse 11. This is a wonderful psalm. Yay! It's on this psalm that the famous hymn is based, Jesus shall reign, where all the sun doth his successive journeys run.

And if you go through that hymn, you'll see. It summarises the thought of this psalm. Verse 11.

Yay! All kings shall fall down before him. Amen. Hallelujah.

They're going to do it. Dictators and all. All nations shall serve him.

For. For. For.

Why? Why? Why this great exaltation of the Lord Jesus in that coming day? For he shall deliver the needy when he cries, and the poor also, and him that hath no helper. He shall specialise in spearing the poor and the needy, and shall save the souls of the needy. He shall redeem their souls from deceit and violence.

Violence. Violence. It's a word for today.

The earth, it says in Noah's day, was full of violence. It is today. And the violent are oppressing the poor and the needy.

But there's coming a day when he shall redeem the soul of such from oppression and violence. And precious shall their blood be in his sight, though some may lose their lives. It's precious.

It's remembered. And God is going to make inquisition for blood. And then, as he goes on, verse 17, his name shall endure forever.

What a text! His name! Just because he's this sort of Lord, for no other reason. Not because he can break in pieces those that oppose him, but because he's merciful to the poor and needy. His name shall endure forever.

I was so moved in reading the biography or the autobiography that it's thought to be of Spurgeon. It's not a good book from a literary point of view because it's patchwork. Some of it's Spurgeon's own story, when he had time to write it.

Some of it is his wife's and some of it is somebody else's. But it makes wonderful reading. And she tells of her young husband, preaching in the Exeter Hall.

He went as a boy preacher, 19 or 20, to a church, Park Street Chapel, to begin his ministry in London, fearful. A country boy! And you know he never went to seminary. Never.

He started one, later. The only time when Spurgeon went to seminary, he said, well you know, you've obviously got a gift, you ought to go to seminary and get some training. And very reluctantly he agreed.

And he went to a certain college to meet a certain great man, principal or something like that, for an interview. And the maid, the servant, received him in and said, if you will take your place in the drawing room, sit there, it won't be long before Mr. Searns or the Dr. Searns will come and see you. And he sat.

And he sat. And he sat! And no one turned up. So Spurgeon picked up his hat and walked out.

And that was his only time spent in a theological seminary. That maid made a foolish mistake. There was a principal waiting for Spurgeon in one room and there was Spurgeon waiting for the principal in another.

Well, I don't know what you make of that. Gives me some thoughts. It gives me some thoughts.

The Holy Ghost is the best theological teacher. And he taught my dear brother Spurgeon. And he went as a boy preacher to London.

And immediately the message he gave, it wasn't the man so much, though there were gifts, it was the message! He struck a note that had been lost. He preached the message of grace! The old Puritan message of grace in the mouth of a youngster. And London hung upon his lips.

And that old, that church which had gone right and run right down was packed and they had to close it and remodel it. And during that time they went to a big public hall, one of the biggest in London, called the Exeter Hall. And she tells, his wife does, how this boy preacher spoke on this verse, his name shall endure forever.

And as he spoke he was overcome. And he almost lost his voice. He kept on, as he ended his sermon, his name shall endure forever! Not Spurgeon's name, not anybody else's, his name! And why? Because he delivers the poor.

And because the poor also and him that hath no helper. This is that which is the glory of our Lord Jesus. He hasn't come into the world to condemn the world, there's no good news about that.

But that the poor and needy, oppressed by Satan, despairing of themselves, perhaps having a rough time at other people's hands, should be saved. And for that reason, for that reason, his name shall endure forever. And so we could go through other verses too.

As I said yesterday, it's very difficult to find a verse out of the thirty references to poor and needy, which just states that we are poor and needy. It's always in relation to grace. It's always given us in relation to what? A God of grace.

A God of grace is prepared to do for the poor and needy. But if Israel, the poor and needy, are going to receive mercy from the merciful and gracious, quite obviously it can only be by him judging those that oppress her. We've seen that, from him that has no helper, from those that oppress my people, is put in there.

But there are other places even more clearly. And mercy for Israel is only going to come through judgment upon her enemies. I want to turn you to Isaiah 63.

Isaiah 63. Very dramatic passage. Isaiah 63.

Here it is. I don't know how you're getting on with your version. I'm sorry if you've got another version.

All I would say, don't bother too much about that version. Just listen to the authorized version. I'm reading for the only authorized version there is.

It has authorized to be read in churches. Well, actually, I make reference to the other versions almost every day, to see if there's some extra bit of help I can get. And I do sometimes, yes.

But, oh, if you're comparing what I'm reading with what you're reading, it's going to be difficult. Just listen. The poetry of it.

Who is this that cometh from Edom, with dyed garments from Bosra? This that is glorious in his apparel, travelling in the greatness of his strength. I that speak in righteousness, mighty to say. Wherefore art thou red in thine apparel? And thy garments, like him that treadeth in the wine vat.

Says he, I've trodden the wine-press alone. And of the people there was none with me. For I will tread them in anger, and trample them in my fury.

And their blood shall be sprinkled upon my garments, and I will stain all my raiment. Sometimes we'd like to think that this that comes from Bosra, with red-stained garments, is Jesus coming from Calvary. It isn't that at all.

He's stained with the blood of his enemies. And the wine-press of the anger of God, it's he who treads it. Those that have oppressed the poor and the needy.

They've triumphed too long, but not forever. That's what it says. For the day of vengeance is in mine heart.

Hallelujah! And the year of my redeemed is come. They will not always be oppressed. The expectation of the poor shall not always be cut off.

The year of my redeemed is come. And I looked, and there was none to help my redeemed. And I wondered that there was none to uphold.

Therefore mine own arm brought salvation unto me. And my fury, it upheld me. And I will tread down the people in mine anger, and make them drunk in my fury, and I will bring down their strength to the earth.

And so you get used to reading then, suddenly, there's a pause. And the next verse says, I will make mention of the loving kindness of the Lord, and the praises of the Lord, according to all that the Lord hath bestowed on us. And the great goodness toward the house of Israel, which he hath bestowed on them, according to his mercies, and according to the multitude of his loving kindness.

For he says, surely they are my people, surely they will not lie. So he was their saviour. I tell you, when I read that, I came home, I said, that's a funny one.

What an extraordinary juxtaposition! The thunders of the wrath of God against the unjust rulers of the world, and all those that have been oppressing the poor and the needy. And then, the dulcet tones of praise to him for his loving kindness and mercy. There could only be loving kindness and mercy to Israel by the destruction of those who for so long have oppressed Israel.

And mercy comes to you only through God's judgment on your enemies, sin and death and woe, that have oppressed you for so long. And only he judges them who sing of his mercy to you. There's a wonderful piece of classical music called Night on a Bald Mountain.

Have I got it right? Oh, Bear Mountain! Written by Mussorgsky. Well, I've got a pretty terrific recording of it, a digital recording. Please turn the cassette over now.

Do not fast-wind it in either direction. And the first part is very dramatic and thunderous. It reminds you of Hamlet's witches and their cauldron, weird and wonderful and creepy, and loud, too, as they dance, their wicked dances, on the mountain.

And I've got to respect the neighbours, because a digital recording specialises in giving the louder parts full value. And then suddenly, you hear a church bell and everything goes quiet. And the flute then plays one of the most wonderful melodies in classical music, isolated.

You've never heard anything quite so beautiful, in my opinion. Of course, musical taste differs. I heard that performed in a hall in Thun, in Switzerland, a few years ago.

Pam was with me. And at the end, the thunderous applause, not for the timpani, not for the brass, but for those few last bars that the flute played. And it was the flute player who stood up to receive our thanks and applause.

That's how it is here. Mercy, loving kindness, to the poor and needy, only through those that oppress her, being brought to judgement. I want to tell you, mercy only for you, by Jesus judging your oppressors.

Chief of whom? Is that old serpent the devil? And that's what it is. You won't understand the Gospel, you won't understand the cross until you see the cross as the great act of judgement of God against those foes that have oppressed the poor and needy of his people. He was our David, was Jesus.

Weak, unarmed, and like him he went down into the valley of Elah to face the mighty Goliath who had challenged God's people to find them a man and Saul was chicken, he didn't dare to go. But God had his champion, a stripling, without armour, without any weapon except the sling and stones which shepherds used to use. And as the women watched this boy go down into the valley, he's going into the valley of hell,

going to the jaws of death! He did, he was willing to.

But in going in weakness and without armour he brought down Israel's great foe. And came back with the head of the Philistine held by the hair dripping with blood. And there it was a gory spectacle, it was a sign of great joy to the people because if Goliath had won Israel would have been their slaves.

But if this David had won the Philistines would be the slaves and Israel would be free. And so there was great mercy shown to Israel that day through the judgment of Goliath. And that's what happened when Jesus died.

It wasn't just sort of merely becoming our substitute, it was a bigger issue at stake. As he took our place principalities and powers and satanic forces fastened themselves on him. Now we've got him.

But in paying the price of that which gave them their right to hold us, the price of sin. He robbed them of their power. He spoiled principalities and powers and made a show of them openly in that cross.

As a lovely old hymn says, by weakness and defeat he won the maiden crown. Trod all our foes beneath his feet by being trodden down. Another old hymn says, talks about that great victory or sin and death and woe that needs no second fight and leaves no second foe.

Amen. All that the poor and needy should have their burdens lifted and their needs met that joy should replace their despair. And I want to tell you he's on the side of the poor and the needy only because he's judged their foes.

The one who is accused of the brethren he's lost his power. As another hymn says, once again dear old Charles, Satan has lost his mortal power. He's swallowed up in victory and therefore the merciful and the gracious shows himself on the side of the self-confessed poor and needy, the beat ones, who beat, just plain beat, he's on their side.

And he answers every accusation against them, not only from the devil but he's even prepared to take your side against your critics. Of course it's assumed that you learn from your critics. There's no smoke without fire.

And you learn to see if there is truth, isn't always, but if there is, you admit it. That makes no difference, he's still on your side. Whether you're innocent of those criticisms or whether you're guilty.

The fact that you were wrong makes no difference because of the blood. If you admit it, you're as right as you could be with God and he takes up cudgels on your behalf. I know no verse that so gloriously speaks of the Lord on the side of the poor and needy as that wonderful verse in Romans 8. Romans 8. Who, verse 33, shalt lay anything to the charge of God's elect.

It's God that justifies. If people try to lay charge to God's elect, they've got to deal with God. I'm the one who's declared them right.

They admitted they were wrong and for that reason I now have declared them right with me through the blood of Jesus and if you touch them, I'm on your side. You don't need to argue or try and tell of extenuating circumstances. If God be for us, who can be against us? Again, who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea, rather it is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God making intercession for us.

If he's making intercession for us, how can he be condemning us? And if others try, they have to talk to him, have to deal with him. Nothing is a greater incentive on our part to admit where we are at fault. And you don't make your case worse.

You make it better. Thereafter you stand not on the grounds of your innocence but on the ground of grace. And God is always on the side of the man who at the cross takes the ground of grace.

Who is he that condemneth? And so, as in the case of those who are so with us, mercy and grace through the judgment of our great foes. And as I say, it works out on the earthly level. No weapon that is formed against thee shall prosper.

And every tongue that is risen against thee in judgment thou shalt condemn, for their righteousness is of me. You know, I used to feel when I was criticized, if I had a perfect case before God, it would be okay. But I never could feel I had quite a perfect case.

Till I saw, I said, their righteousness is of me. And the best thing I could do was to put myself in the wrong. Now, they're also not just right then.

I'm the God of the wrong ones. Their righteousness is of me! And mercy and grace comes to the poor and needy who are having a hard time at the hands of other people sometimes because of Jesus, because of the blood, because of grace. Same with circumstances.

He's on the side of the poor and needy. Those circumstances, that sickness, whatever it is, may not have many moral overtones about it one way or the other. But you're pretty needy and you can't see much prospect of any way out.

I want to tell you, dear one, the merciful and the gracious has moved towards you. Like Joseph, he can hardly refrain himself from weeping over you. You're weeping over yourself, don't you worry to do that.

He's done the weeping for you. And so it is, mercy. He's on the side of the poor and the needy and he deals, thank God, with all those things and people and that enemy of the devil that oppresses.

But I haven't quite finished yet. What if one of those, what if you are one of those who's oppressed the poor and needy, who's added to their pain? What man, if you're one of those who's so spoken to his wife that she's gone to bed in tears, what if you are one of those who, by your behaviour, has caused some people to be poor and needy, even unconverted people, by your injustice, by your hardness? What, friend, if you are one of the church leaders that so criticised and opposed your pastor that did you but know it, there have been occasions when that man and woman have cried themselves to sleep? There are cases like that. Indeed, if a man wants to be a minister, I would say, are you prepared to be crucified? Another dear young man saw his dad, a pastor, suffering greatly at the hands of his critics in the congregation.

Oh, what trouble he went through. And that boy said to his father, Daddy, there's that verse that says that where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst. I think that ought to be rewritten.

And it should read, where two or three are gathered together in my name, there's bound to be trouble. What a terrible indictment that he can say that almost in jest. What if you're one of those who's been against someone who's poor and needy? Or who has made them poor and needy? Because it can be the other way round.

It can be pastors who, by a wrong attitude and harsh words, have caused some of their people to be among the poor and needy. It matters not which way round it is. All I can say is this.

If I, and when I'm guilty of being one of such, I'm in for trouble. I've got to face the one who's on the side of the very people who I've been hurting. And I'm on the carpet with him.

Be assured. Deacon, be assured. Church member, be assured.

If, however, under his gracious dealings with you, you repent, say, I've been wrong to be criticising. I've let the man down. When other people have said this and this about him, I've said, yes, yes, I agree with you.

I've become a partner with them in sin. And if a man says that and admits he was wrong so to do, he suddenly becomes one of the poor and needy, on whose side the Lord is. He forgives that man his sin.

He restores his soul. And if he's wise, he'll go to the other and say, no, I want to tell you something. We had that situation in Bristol when the Basque used to live there.

There was a team of us there. And the devil got in between us, criticising. And all of us were supposed to be in Revival Fellowship.

And it caused great sorrow. The devil put wedges between us. And the Lord dealt with first one, then another.

And one, then another. First one said, oh, I see, I've been wrong. And he rang one of the others, his brother.

You know, when we were talking, I let you down. Let me down? You didn't let me down. I did.

I should have seen that I'd been criticising, and I should have, instead of joining with you in the criticism, said, brother, I think you need to repent like I have. But I didn't do it. But the person did.

And they in turn rang somebody else, and said, I've let you down. And that helped someone. And though the devil put the wedges in, Jesus pulled them all out.

Hallelujah. And we were one again. And so if you are, in one degree or another, something of the oppressor, something of the one who's making it hard for the poor and needy, if you repent of that, you become one of the poor and needy yourself.

One of the wrong ones, in whom Jesus specialises. And there's restoration even for you. I close with a story that came to us when we were in the United States in the months of May and June.

We went to a certain Southern Baptist church, and the pastor was a lovely brother, learning the lessons of grace himself, and teaching his people. And I learnt that the church, I thought we were going to a one-horse town. It wasn't.

It had a college, many students, and that church was filled. They didn't use the gallery because it was in such bad shape that it might collapse. But when they got that straight, they'd have room for still more.

But it had been a very bad way before. So weak and it declined so much. And this dear man was a man full of grace and humility, and gave the message of the gospel and the message of grace.

Now the former pastor had had a hard time in that congregation. He was a faithful gospel preacher. They couldn't really fault him on his doctrine, but it was a bit rough in the way he put it, and various other things.

And the people became more and more antagonistic to him. And they had to ask him to leave. He was virtually told to go.

And then this mother came. And they heard the same old message, but with new sweetness. And they became convicted.

That other pastor was the one to pour in the needy. How vulnerable a position a minister is in. How vulnerable.

He's got to live among the people who may be criticizing him. And when he goes, where does he go to? But they weren't concerned about that. They wanted a change.

Things weren't right. They didn't enjoy his ministry. But under the ministry of the second man, they came under conviction of sin.

And they saw they'd rendered this man one of the poor and needy through their attitude and action. And can you believe it? That church and its officers wrote to that man in the next place where he was to confess their sin and ask his forgiveness. And I want to tell you, those people got forgiveness.

And a lot more. A new blessing. A new wave came into that church.

I don't know whether I've got it quite right. I was discussing with Pam. She says, well, I do hope you've got it right.

But as I understood it, in one year they took in 400 new members. Maybe it ought always to have been that strength, but it declined. But grace came back and Jesus came back.

When those that had been oppressing the others took the sinner's place and they became one of the poor and needy themselves. And received the abounding blessing that God's always got for such. And so what a subject we've got.

I read three verses and then I close. Isaiah 41, verse 17. Isaiah 41, verse 17.

Here we have it. The merciful and gracious are the side of the poor and needy when the poor and needy seek water and there is none and their tongue fadeth for thirst. Oh, hallelujah.

They're beat, they're beat. No water. I, the Lord, will hear them.

I, the God of Israel, will not forsake them. I tell you, he's not only awesome, but he's lovable, he's adorable. That sort of God.

Another verse. Psalm 113, verse 6. 113, verse 6. Who is like unto the Lord, verse 5, our God, who dwelleth on high, who humbleth himself, behold, the things that are in heaven and in the earth. He raiseth up the poor out of the dust, hallelujah, and lifteth the needy out of the dunghill that he may set him with princes, even with the princes of his people.

Well, you can translate this, what that means in our New Testament times. He lifteth the poor and the needy up from the dunghill to sit among princes. And the last is 74, verse 12.

Psalm 74, verse 12. 21, I'm sorry. Oh, let not the oppressed return ashamed.

Here it is. Let the poor and needy praise thy name. Now, let that be your testimony.

I'm poor and needy, but that's not the end of the story. The Lord thinks on me. He undertakes my case.

His blood has put things right. And he answers all comers on my behalf. Let the poor and needy praise the Lord.

Amen. Amen. Let's sing our chorus.

The greatest thing in all my life is knowing you. Isn't it so? Praise the Lord. Praise the Lord.

We just want to be among the poor. Who praise thee. You've given us good ground to praise thee.

And Lord, we're asking that we shall have experiences of grace that will give us concrete opportunities, occasions to praise, that the cleansing blood has reached us, that mercy and truth have been manifested. Thank you, Lord, for being the merciful and the gracious to the poor and needy. Amen.

Amen.

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