

6. The phrase, “Begin to concentrate, my fellow believers who are loved by God:” is his *exordium*, the introductory part of an oration. After this he begins his opening *statement*: the presentation of facts or opinions he proclaims he will address in the course of his oration.
7. His *statement* is introduced with this Greek phrase, οὐχ ὁ θεὸς ἐξελέξατο (*ouch ho Theós exeléxato*): “Did not God choose” This is his rational appeal, or the ἦθος (*éthos*) method of persuasion. It includes the character of the individual speaking or, in this case, of the one referenced.
8. Here we again visit our word for election, the aorist middle indicative of ἐκλέγω (*eklégō*): “to elect.” The negative conjunction, *ouch* with the imperative mood of *eklégō* indicates a rhetorical question.
9. James confirms rhetorically that all who are gathered together are elected to privilege and fellow members of the royal family of God.
10. Next he drives home his point with the phrase, “the poor of this world to be rich in faith?”
11. The phrase “the poor of this world” does not refer to the beggar in the previous verses, but to all the poor throughout the world, the accusative plural of the noun πτωχός (*ptōchós*): those who are in abject poverty plus the locative of sphere of the noun κόσμος (*kósmos*): “of the world.”
12. Regardless of economic standing, whenever any person places his personal faith in Jesus for salvation he is delivered from the lake of fire and imputed eternal life.
13. Such individuals have all the assets imputed to them among the 40 things that any other person receives at salvation. They are not poor in terms of their souls but in terms of human possessions and sustenance.
14. Poor people, poverty stricken, are loved by God. He saved them when they were poor. They remain poor now that they are saved. You do not have to be rich to be saved. You do not have to be poor to be saved. You just have to believe in Christ to be saved.
15. Therefore, what does the Bible have to say about poor people? Is there divine guidance that addresses the human condition of poverty? We shall see.

The Doctrine of Poverty

1. God’s grace can raise the poor out from the poverty of their circumstances. The first is found in Hannah’s prayer in 1 Samuel 2:1–11:

1 Samuel 2:7 “The Lord impoverishes and makes wealthy; he humbles and he exalts.



1 Samuel 2:8 He lifts the weak from the dust; he raises the poor [דַּל (dal)¹] from the ash heap to seat them with princes and to bestow on them an honored position. (NET)

Psalm 113:7 He raises the poor from the dirt, and lifts up the needy from the garbage pile. (NET)

2. There is a special happiness for those who help the poor. This does not isolate the rich for such happiness. It refers to anyone who helps the poor including the poor who assist someone poorer. There are several references:

Psalm 42:1 (A Psalm of David.) How blessed is he who treats the poor properly! When trouble comes the Lord delivers him.

v. 2 May the Lord protect him and save his life! May he be blessed in the land! Do not turn him over to his enemies!

Proverbs 19:17 The one who is gracious to the poor lends to the Lord, and the Lord will repay² him for his good deed.

Proverbs 22:9 A generous person will be blessed for he gives some of his food to the poor.

Proverbs 29:14 If a king judges the poor in truth,³ his throne will be established forever. (NET)

3. The poor are not only delivered by God from poverty, but, in the reality of poverty, those who are unbelievers often see the need for salvation and respond to the gospel of faith alone in Christ alone.

PRINCIPLES:

1. In the plan of God, sometimes people are poor in order to bring them to the place where they realize they may use their own free will at God consciousness to respond to the gospel.

¹ “A noun to designate poor and oppressed persons for whom the Lord has a special concern (Exodus 23:3). They are on the opposite social scale from the rich (Exodus 30:15; 1 Samuel 2:8; Proverbs 10:15; 22:16) and their condition often separates them from even their friends (Proverbs 19:4). The poor have no power and are weak, helpless (Job 34:28; Psalm 82:3; Proverbs 22:22)” (Warren Baker and Eugene Carpenter, “דַּל,” in *The Complete Word Study Dictionary: Old Testament* [Chattanooga: AMG Publishers, 2003], 237).

² “The Promise of reward does not necessarily mean that the person who gives to the poor will get money back; the rewards in the book of Proverbs involve life and prosperity in general” (*The Net Bible* in Proverbs 19:17sn18).

³ “There must be no miscarriage of justice for these people simply because they are poor” (Ibid., Proverbs 29:14tn8).



2. On the other hand, those who have always lived in prosperity often do not have a concern about the reality of the eternal future. In order to get them to the point of giving the gospel an objective hearing, God removes their prosperity and puts them into poverty.
3. With prosperity removed, the newly impoverished are led to consider the uncertainties of life in this world and turn their attention to spiritual things.
4. It is in this environment that they are brought to the place of impartiality so they can give the gospel an objective hearing. This is the subject of:

Psalm 72:12 For He will rescue the needy when they cry out for help, and the oppressed who have no defender.

v. 13 He will take pity on the poor and needy; the lives of the needy he will save.

v. 14 From harm and violence he will defend them; he will value their lives. (NET)

Psalm 72: The Glory of the Davidic Kingdom. This psalm is a *royal psalm*, wherein petition is made for the prosperity of the Lord's anointed. The psalm is messianic in the sense that Jesus is the "Christ" ("anointed one") who shares in all the promises made to David and to his descendants (cf. 2 Samuel 7). While the community of God's people prospered under the descendants of David, God's appointed theocratic leadership, the benefits of the rule of Christ, the son of David, are so much greater. Therefore the prayer of the Davidic king is at the same time an expression of hope in the glorious and just rule of Jesus over the earth. It is as much an expectation now as it was before the coming of Jesus. (p. 469)

72:12–14. The psalmist returns to the theme of hope in an era of righteousness and justice. The divinely appointed and blessed king does not serve his own interests but those of others. He represents God's concern for the oppressed. Since his subjects look to him for justice, God's representative, the king, loves them and values their very lives as his own. He will save (rescue) the destitute from their adversaries and from their prosecutors.⁴ (p. 473)

⁴ Willem A. VanGemeren, "Psalm 72," in *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, gen. ed. Frank E. Gaebelein (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1991), 5:469, 473.



Matthew 11:4 Jesus answered and said to them, “Go and report to John what you hear and see:

v. 5 the blind receive 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.” (NASB)

5. In view of these principles, the believer must learn to distinguish between charity and socialism. Charity is a biblical requirement while socialism is evil. Charity to the poor is a doctrinal principle of establishment truth while socialism is a function of *cosmos diabolicus*.

Proverbs 14:31 The one who oppresses the poor insults his Creator, but whoever shows favor to the needy honors Him. (NET)

Proverbs 19:17 The one who is gracious to the poor lends to the Lord, and the Lord will repay him for his good deed. (NET)

It is important to learn to distinguish between charity and the welfare state which may be summarized thusly: Charity is for the helpless poor while welfare makes the poor helpless. There was a policy in the first-century church about working for one’s sustenance:

2 Thessalonians 3:6 Now we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus, that you keep away from every brother who leads an unruly [**undisciplined**] life and not according to the tradition which you received from us.

v. 7 You yourselves know how you ought to follow our example, because we did not act in an undisciplined manner among you,

v. 8 nor did we eat anyone’s bread without paying for it, but with labor and hardship we kept working night and day so that we would not be a burden to any of you;

v. 9 not because we do not have the right to this, but in order to offer ourselves as a model for you, so that you would follow our example.

2 Thessalonians 3:10 For even when we were with you, we used to give you this order: if anyone is not willing to work, then he is not to eat, either. (NASB)

6. One of the circumstances experienced by the poor is that former friends desert them because of their poverty for concern they will want something from them.

Proverbs 19:4 Wealth has many friends, but a poor person is separated from his friends. (NET)

7. There is a special curse assigned to those who ignore helping poor people that are helpless or take advantage of them. Proverbs addresses this issue:

Proverbs 21:13 The one who shuts his ears to the cry of the poor, he too will cry out and will not be answered. (NET)

“Shuts his ears,” means to ignore or refuse to offer assistance. The underlying principle is those who show mercy will receive mercy. A historical event that teaches the application of this proverb is the report of the rich man and Lazarus in Luke 16:19–31. Some have taught this as a parable, however, parables never assign proper names to its characters. This passage includes references to Abraham, Lazarus, and Moses.

Proverbs 22:16 The one who oppresses the poor to increase his own gain [**usury**] and the one who gives to the rich [**bribe**]—both end up only in poverty. (NET)

The human condition’s proclivity for evil is evident in the devil’s world, but when we observe that even the poor oppress those who are even worse off than they, we calculate that evil knows no bounds:

Proverbs 28:3 A poor [רָשׁוּ (rus): without resources] person who oppresses the weak [דַּל (dal)] is like a driving rain without food. (NET)

8. The presence of poverty in this world will continue until the Lord sets up the perfect environment of His millennial kingdom, a fact He addresses in:

Matthew 26:11 You will always have the poor [πτωχός (*ptōchós*): destitute] with you, but you will not always have Me!

v. 12 When she poured this oil on My body, she did it to prepare me for burial. (NET)

The disciples were with the Lord at the home of Simon the leper. When the woman went to the Lord and poured the expensive oil on Him, the disciples protested:

Matthew 26:8b-9 Why this waste! It could have been sold at a high price and the money given to the poor [*ptōchós*]!" (NET)

PRINCIPLE: There is nothing the human race can do to eliminate poverty; no campaign, plan, legislation, program, or coordinated effort, either voluntary or enforced, will ever accomplish the total elimination of poverty.

9. Regardless of this reality, it is possible for the poor to function in the rarified atmosphere of the copacetic spiritual life:

Luke 21:1 Jesus looked up and saw the rich putting their gifts into the offering box.

The offerings made by the rich were ostentatious. Motivated by approbation lust, they liked to be seen in public putting in large amounts of money.

v. 2 He also saw a poor widow put in two small copper coins.

“These *two small copper coins* were leptä (singular “leptön”), the smallest and least valuable coins in circulation in Palestine, worth one half of a quādrans or 1/128 of a denārius, or about six minutes of an average daily wage. This was next to nothing in value.”⁵

Her offering was small but her motivation was from her soul based on gratitude and personal love for God.

v. 3 He said, “I tell you the truth, this poor widow has put in more than all of them.

⁵ (The NET Bible, Luke 21:2sn15).



The widow's offering was offered in grace with gratitude. The offerings of the rich were human good at best, evil at worst.

Luke 21:4 “For they all offered their gifts out of their wealth. But she, out of her poverty, put in everything she had to live on.” (NET)

The rich had plenty of money and did not suffer financially or personally from their contributions. The widow gave all she had and happy to do so. The halfpenny would provide nothing for her sustenance. She knew God would provide through His matchless grace.

10. Those who are poor but are believers have the same spiritual privileges and assets as do rich believers. Both are among the elect. Both have the privileges associated with the spiritual life. Divine operating assets may be enjoyed by every member of the royal family of God.

These principles take us back to our passage in James 2:5 where we have noted that the verse begins with our fifteenth imperative mood, the aorist active imperative of **ἀκούω (akouō)**: “to listen.” “Begin to concentrate” would be much better.

It is here that James's oration advances into his Argument supported by the mode of persuasion called: **λόγος (lógos)**: rational appeal based on evidence presented. This appeals to the intellect.

James's *lógos* approach is presented in three phases: (1) election which occurs in Phase 1, eternity past, (2) the circumstance of poverty which occurs in the world, i.e., time, Phase 2, and (3) heirs referring to the kingdom in the Millennium, yet future, Phase 3.

James 2:5 [IM #15] Begin to concentrate,
fellow members of the royal family of God; did
God not elect to privilege [Phase 1: eternity
past] the poor of this world [Phase 2, time] ...

1. The verse continues with the word “rich,” the adjective **πλούσιος (plousios)** referring to the imputation of the forty things at salvation, the spiritual assets associated with life in the divine power system, and the accumulation of Bible doctrine in the advance to spiritual maturity.