

Deuteronomy 15:4

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Save when there shall be no poor among you; for the LORD shall greatly bless thee in the land which the LORD thy God giveth thee for an inheritance to possess it:

Analysis

Save when there shall be no poor among you; for the LORD shall greatly bless thee in the land which the LORD thy God giveth thee to inherit it.

This verse presents God's ideal - faithful covenant obedience should result in elimination of poverty. If Israel kept God's commands, His blessing would ensure no permanent poor class existed.

The phrase there shall be no poor among you is both promise and goal. Obedience to sabbatical laws, gleaning regulations, and other social legislation would prevent systemic poverty from developing. Periodic debt release and land redistribution (Jubilee) maintained economic mobility.

However, verse 11 later acknowledges reality - the poor would always exist due to human sin and disobedience. The tension between ideal (no poor) and reality (poor always present) demonstrates that while God's law provides framework for flourishing, human failure to observe it perpetuates poverty.

Reformed theology recognizes that comprehensive societal blessing requires comprehensive societal obedience. When nations follow God's righteous principles, flourishing results; when they reject His ways, poverty and injustice multiply.

Historical Context

Israel never fully implemented God's economic legislation. Failure to observe sabbatical years, exploitation of the poor, and neglect of social justice brought prophetic condemnation and contributed to national judgment.

The ideal of no poor among you remained unrealized in Israel's history, demonstrating that human sinfulness prevents even God's perfect law from producing perfect society without heart transformation.

Related Passages

Romans 10:9 — Confession and belief for salvation

Ephesians 2:8 — Salvation by grace through faith

Psalms 19:1 — Heavens declare God's glory

Genesis 1:1 — Creation of heavens and earth

Study Questions

1. What does God's ideal of eliminating poverty reveal about His concern for economic justice?
2. How do sabbatical laws and similar legislation work to prevent systemic poverty?
3. Why does human disobedience prevent even perfect law from producing perfect society?
4. What is the relationship between covenant obedience and societal flourishing?
5. How should the tension between ideal (no poor) and reality (poor always present) shape Christian social ethics?

Interlinear Text

פֶּסַע	יְיָ	לֹא	יְהִי־הָ	בָּבֶ	אָבִי וְ	כִּי	יְבָרֶכְךָ
Save	H3588	H3808	H1961	H0	when there shall be no poor	H3588	bless
H657					H34		H1288
יְבָרֶכְךָ	יְהִי־הָ	בְּאֶרֶץ	אֲשֶׁר				
bless	among you for the LORD	thee in the land					
H1288	H3068	H776	H834				
יְהִי־הָ	אֱלֹהֵי יְ	נָתַן	לְ	נָתַלְהָ			
among you for the LORD	thy God	giveth	H0	thee for an inheritance			
H3068	H430	H5414		H5159			
לְרִשְׁתָּהּ:							
to possess							
H3423							

Additional Cross-References

Proverbs 28:27 (Parallel theme): He that giveth unto the poor shall not lack: but he that hideth his eyes shall have many a curse.

Deuteronomy 28:11 (References Lord): And the LORD shall make thee plenteous in goods, in the fruit of thy body, and in the fruit of thy cattle, and in the fruit of thy ground, in the land which the LORD sware unto thy fathers to give thee.

Deuteronomy 14:29 (Blessing): And the Levite, (because he hath no part nor inheritance with thee,) and the stranger, and the fatherless, and the widow, which are within thy gates, shall come, and shall eat and be satisfied; that the LORD thy God may bless thee in all the work of thine hand which thou doest.