

Audio Transcript of Sermon

July 22, 2023

Evil Persecutes the Poor

Hello. Thank you for joining us today. My name is Tom Laign with Sabbath Bible Study. On the Sabbath, we take a pause from this world and the evil that is frequently seen in it. Most of what we see as evil is the work of wicked people, the personification of evil, and one thing that wicked, or evil, people do is persecute the poor. David wrote of this in Psalm ten and even mentioned how it seems like God stands far off and in times of trouble is nowhere to be found. Imagine David, a man after God's own heart reflecting that at times God seems distant and is nowhere to be found. We might think David is living in the here and now, but David lived thousands of years ago, showing the difficulties people face remain constant, because evil, or wickedness, remains constant. David also showed that evil, or wicked people, persecute the poor. Psalm ten verse one.

Psalm 10:1-2

- 1. Why standest thou afar off, O LORD? why hidest thou thyself in times of trouble?**
- 2. The wicked in his pride doth persecute the poor: let them be taken in the devices that they have imagined.**

Reading the full context of the Psalm would show us that God does hear the cries of all those who are oppressed so that this type of oppression will one day be no more. We look to the Kingdom of God knowing that this type of oppression will stop. Those who do not know about the Kingdom of God only can wonder why God seems to be taking no action, not understanding that the world of today is under the sway of Satan. The evil that we see and experience stems from his doings and influence over people, including the evil of persecuting the poor.

The Hebrew word for persecute is *dalaq*, Strong's number 1814, and it means to hotly pursue, to inflame, to persecute. Jacob was hotly pursued by Laban, Rachel's father. Jacob had agreed to work for Laban for seven years for the right to marry Rachel, but was deceived by him into marry Leah. Imagine thinking you are marry one person only to find out you are married to somebody else. That's what happened to Jacob. Jacob was convinced to work another seven years to marry Rachel, and then married her. Through all of this, Leah fell out of favor to

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the point where God took pity on her, allowing her to have children but withholding children from Rachel. Rachel became jealous of her sister, and what followed were various sexual encounters with Leah, Rachel, and their handmaids, almost like something out of a steamy streaming television series. Eventually Rachel gave birth to Joseph, and after that point, Jacob thought it would be good to leave and establish his own household. Laban and Jacob did come to terms on their leaving, but it did not set well with Laban's sons, who thought Jacob got way too much out of the deal. They shared their concerns with Laban, and Laban's view on the deal changed. Jacob knew Laban was deceiving him and constantly changing terms to his work. He thought it would be good time for he and his family to leave, which is where we pick of the account in Genesis thirty-one verse seventeen.

Genesis 31:17-36

- 17. Then Jacob rose up, and set his sons and his wives upon camels;**
- 18. And he carried away all his cattle, and all his goods which he had gotten, the cattle of his getting, which he had gotten in Padanaram, for to go to Isaac his father in the land of Canaan.**
- 19. And Laban went to shear his sheep: and Rachel had stolen the images that were her father's.**
- 20. And Jacob stole away unawares to Laban the Syrian, in that he told him not that he fled.**
- 21. So he fled with all that he had; and he rose up, and passed over the river, and set his face toward the mount Gilead.**
- 22. And it was told Laban on the third day that Jacob was fled.**
- 23. And he took his brethren with him, and pursued after him seven days' journey; and they overtook him in the mount Gilead.**
- 24. And God came to Laban the Syrian in a dream by night, and said unto him, Take heed that thou speak not to Jacob either good or bad.**

With Laban pursuing Jacob, and a warning from God which was ignored, eventually, he overtook Jacob. With a three-day head start, it meant Laban had to pursue with longer days and shorter resting times. Laban was angry with Jacob, and Jacob was just trying to get his family away from his father-in-law who deceived and lied to him. Even though Laban told Jacob that a wild going away celebration would have been held, Jacob remembered all of the lies and deception, and thought if Laban knew they were leaving, he would have

prevented it. What Jacob didn't know was that Rachel had taken idols worshipped by her father, and when Laban brought up the missing idols, Jacob thought that person should die. Laban looked all over camp, but couldn't find them, and when he came to Rachel sitting on a camel, Rachel politely declined to dismount the camel so it could be searched, resulting in Laban being unable to find the idols. When Laban's search came up empty, Jacob was very angry and wanted to know why Laban hotly pursued him. Verse twenty-five.

25. Then Laban overtook Jacob. Now Jacob had pitched his tent in the mount: and Laban with his brethren pitched in the mount of Gilead.

26. And Laban said to Jacob, What hast thou done, that thou hast stolen away unawares to me, and carried away my daughters, as captives taken with the sword?

27. Wherefore didst thou flee away secretly, and steal away from me; and didst not tell me, that I might have sent thee away with mirth, and with songs, with tabret, and with harp?

28. And hast not suffered me to kiss my sons and my daughters? thou hast now done foolishly in so doing.

29. It is in the power of my hand to do you hurt: but the God of your father spake unto me yesternight, saying, Take thou heed that thou speak not to Jacob either good or bad.

30. And now, though thou wouldest needs be gone, because thou sore longedst after thy father's house, yet wherefore hast thou stolen my gods?

31. And Jacob answered and said to Laban, Because I was afraid: for I said, Peradventure thou wouldest take by force thy daughters from me.

32. With whomsoever thou findest thy gods, let him not live: before our brethren discern thou what is thine with me, and take it to thee. For Jacob knew not that Rachel had stolen them.

33. And Laban went into Jacob's tent, and into Leah's tent, and into the two maidservants' tents; but he found them not. Then went he out of Leah's tent, and entered into Rachel's tent.

34. Now Rachel had taken the images, and put them in the camel's furniture, and sat upon them. And Laban searched all the tent, but found them not.

35. And she said to her father, Let it not displease my lord that I cannot rise up before thee; for the custom of women is upon me. And he searched, but found not the images.

36. And Jacob was wroth, and chode with Laban: and Jacob answered and said to Laban, What is my trespass? what is my sin, that thou hast so hotly pursued after me?

That hot pursuit is the same Hebrew word, *dalaq*, that David used to describe the wicked persecuting the poor. Why go after somebody like that who is poor? Jacob feared Laban would attempt to continue to control and exploit him. The reality is people try to exploit other people all of the time, and people perceived as weak are seen as the easiest to exploit. Lamentations gives us a perspective of those who are exploited. Described for us are feelings that not anyone is able to help, not even the nation. Also described is the sense of being hunted by people who are swifter than eagles no matter where they go to try and hide. Lamentations four verse seventeen.

Lamentations 4:17-19

17. As for us, our eyes as yet failed for our vain help: in our watching we have watched for a nation that could not save us.

18. They hunt our steps, that we cannot go in our streets: our end is near, our days are fulfilled; for our end is come.

19. Our persecutors are swifter than the eagles of the heaven: they pursued us upon the mountains, they laid wait for us in the wilderness.

God makes it clear that we are not to exploit the poor, and gives us expectations in living with the poor. For instance, when it comes to food, God gave instructions to leave some food for the poor, explaining that at harvest not every last bit of food was to be harvested, that some was to be left for the poor. Leviticus nineteen verse nine.

Leviticus 19:9-10

9. And when ye reap the harvest of your land, thou shalt not wholly reap the corners of thy field, neither shalt thou gather the gleanings of thy harvest.

10. And thou shalt not glean thy vineyard, neither shalt thou gather every grape of thy vineyard; thou shalt leave them for the poor and stranger: I am the LORD your God.

Today, most people get their food at grocery stores instead of growing it, so while there may not be fields that we harvest, the principle remains. We do not exploit

people through food. When it comes to poor people trying to make too little money last to the end of the month, there are many ways they can be exploited financially, such as very high interest rates. When interest rates and fees are considered, some of these financial products offered to poor people have impoverishing interest rates. God's expectation with the poor was to take no usury from them in repayment, nor to make any kind of a profit over items loaned to the person. Leviticus twenty-five verse thirty-five.

Leviticus 25:35-38

35. And if thy brother be waxen poor, and fallen in decay with thee; then thou shalt relieve him: yea, though he be a stranger, or a sojourner; that he may live with thee.

36. Take thou no usury of him, or increase: but fear thy God; that thy brother may live with thee.

37. Thou shalt not give him thy money upon usury, nor lend him thy victuals for increase.

38. I am the LORD your God, which brought you forth out of the land of Egypt, to give you the land of Canaan, and to be your God.

God did not expect the poor people to be given things for free, just no usury or profit. There was to be no, "I'll give you one hundred dollars today, and when you have the money, pay me one hundred fifty dollars." There was to be no, "I'll buy groceries for two weeks, and when you are back on your feet you can buy me groceries for four weeks." There also wasn't to be any type of ignoring of poor people, described as hardening of the heart and shutting the hand. God also showed that at times, we might give to poor people and not get anything back. God tells us to open our hands wide to the poor, to be generous as we have means. Deuteronomy fifteen verse seven.

Deuteronomy 15:7-11

7. If there be among you a poor man of one of thy brethren within any of thy gates in thy land which the LORD thy God giveth thee, thou shalt not harden thine heart, nor shut thine hand from thy poor brother:

8. But thou shalt open thine hand wide unto him, and shalt surely lend him sufficient for his need, in that which he wanteth.

9. Beware that there be not a thought in thy wicked heart, saying, The seventh year, the year of release, is at hand; and thine eye be evil against thy poor

brother, and thou givest him nought; and he cry unto the LORD against thee, and it be sin unto thee.

10. Thou shalt surely give him, and thine heart shall not be grieved when thou givest unto him: because that for this thing the LORD thy God shall bless thee in all thy works, and in all that thou puttest thine hand unto.

11. For the poor shall never cease out of the land: therefore I command thee, saying, Thou shalt open thine hand wide unto thy brother, to thy poor, and to thy needy, in thy land.

At no time does God expect us to give what we don't have and at all times God expects us never to oppress a poor person knowing that if we honor God, we do so by having mercy on the poor. Proverbs fourteen verse thirty-one.

Proverbs 14:31

31. He that oppresseth the poor reproacheth his Maker: but he that honoureth him hath mercy on the poor.

Sometimes people mock the poor, making fun of a person for their hardships, and mocking can be a form of oppression. Jesus was mocked on the cross and immediately before with people wondering why He couldn't save himself and Jesus endured that hardship for us, but the poor aren't expected to take the hardship of mocking, so there is no need to mock the poor, unless we would be the type to mock Jesus Christ and God the Father. Proverbs seventeen verse five.

Proverbs 17:5

5. Whoso mocketh the poor reproacheth his Maker: and he that is glad at calamities shall not be unpunished.

The connection between God and the poor is touched on in many different ways, and we are told that when we have pity on the poor it is the same as lending to God, Who repays. Even if the poor person cannot repay us, God will repay us. Proverbs nineteen verse seventeen.

Proverbs 19:17

17. He that hath pity upon the poor lendeth unto the LORD; and that which he hath given will he pay him again.

We are also told that if we have a bountiful eye, we will be blessed because we give of our bread to the poor. We live in a world where people can donate money to just about any type of cause or non-profit organization, and repeatedly, God is focused on the poor, the needy, the widows, the fatherless, the stranger, all of whom present with elements of being poor. Proverbs twenty-two verse nine.

Proverbs 22:9

9. He that hath a bountiful eye shall be blessed; for he giveth of his bread to the poor.

If we choose to ignore the poor we will be cursed, and conversely if we give to the poor, we will not lack. It is easy to hide our eyes to poverty, and it goes well beyond covering our eyes or looking the other way. We can hide our eyes to poverty by choosing to ignore the poor or treat them as if they are less than other people. We can focus on financial success as proof of God's blessing and in turn blame the poor for their lack of faith. We cannot do any of that. We are expected to give to the poor and as we do, we will not lack. Proverbs twenty-eight verse twenty-seven.

Proverbs 28:27

27. He that giveth unto the poor shall not lack: but he that hideth his eyes shall have many a curse.

With all of the descriptions of the wicked, we also see that the wicked borrow and does not repay. Sometimes we might think it's acceptable to pull a fast one on the system because the system is evil, and anyone who has borrowed money can understand the pain of making monthly payments, but the Bible shows it is the wicked who borrow and does not repay. The righteous are shown differently as having mercy and giving. If we look at the verse from a money perspective, we can see the economic impact when there are higher rates of loan defaults. We see banks closing and housing bubbles that burst, both with an impact on other people other than the lender and borrower. Let's look at Psalm thirty-seven verse twenty-one.

Psalm 37:21-27

21. The wicked borroweth, and payeth not again: but the righteous sheweth mercy, and giveth.

If we want to inherit the earth, be part of the Kingdom of God, we have to show mercy and give. We cannot be the person who borrows and does not repay with money or in other ways. We cannot expect mercy to be given to us and then withhold mercy from others, as an example. As we do what God expects we will be supported by God, and how are the righteous described? As being merciful and giving. We are encouraged to depart from evil and do good to dwell forevermore. Verse twenty-two.

22. For such as be blessed of him shall inherit the earth; and they that be cursed of him shall be cut off.

23. The steps of a good man are ordered by the LORD: and he delighteth in his way.

24. Though he fall, he shall not be utterly cast down: for the LORD upholdeth him with his hand.

25. I have been young, and now am old; yet have I not seen the righteous forsaken, nor his seed begging bread.

26. He is ever merciful, and lendeth; and his seed is blessed.

27. Depart from evil, and do good; and dwell for evermore.

When Job was trying to reconcile his troubles, he examined how he treated the poor as part of his reflection, and concluded if he brought any harm to poor people, including widows and orphans, that he deserved all of his problems and even more. Job thirty-one verse sixteen.

Job 31:16-23

16. If I have withheld the poor from their desire, or have caused the eyes of the widow to fail;

17. Or have eaten my morsel myself alone, and the fatherless hath not eaten thereof;

18. For from my youth he was brought up with me, as with a father, and I have guided her from my mother's womb;

19. If I have seen any perish for want of clothing, or any poor without covering;

20. If his loins have not blessed me, and if he were not warmed with the fleece of my sheep;

21. If I have lifted up my hand against the fatherless, when I saw my help in the gate:

22. Then let mine arm fall from my shoulder blade, and mine arm be broken from the bone.

23. For destruction from God was a terror to me, and by reason of his highness I could not endure.

In Isaiah, God is described as standing up to plead and judge the people and has determined that the elites are made on the backs of the poor people, to the point where they think nothing of bringing harm and destruction to the poor. Isaiah three verse thirteen.

Isaiah 3:13-26

13. The LORD standeth up to plead, and standeth to judge the people.

14. The LORD will enter into judgment with the ancients of his people, and the princes thereof: for ye have eaten up the vineyard; the spoil of the poor is in your houses.

15. What mean ye that ye beat my people to pieces, and grind the faces of the poor? saith the Lord GOD of hosts.

Having exploited the poor, what do these elites do? They focus on personal beauty, jewelry, clothes, and fashion accessories. God warns when the poor are exploited to benefit the elites like this, things will turn bad, undoing everything that these elites tried to do, ultimately ending in utter defeat and loneliness. Verse sixteen.

16. Moreover the LORD saith, Because the daughters of Zion are haughty, and walk with stretched forth necks and wanton eyes, walking and mincing as they go, and making a tinkling with their feet:

17. Therefore the Lord will smite with a scab the crown of the head of the daughters of Zion, and the LORD will discover their secret parts.

18. In that day the Lord will take away the bravery of their tinkling ornaments about their feet, and their cauls, and their round tires like the moon,

19. The chains, and the bracelets, and the mufflers,

20. The bonnets, and the ornaments of the legs, and the headbands, and the tablets, and the earrings,

21. The rings, and nose jewels,

22. The changeable suits of apparel, and the mantles, and the wimples, and the crisping pins,

- 23. The glasses, and the fine linen, and the hoods, and the veils.**
- 24. And it shall come to pass, that instead of sweet smell there shall be stink; and instead of a girdle a rent; and instead of well set hair baldness; and instead of a stomacher a girding of sackcloth; and burning instead of beauty.**
- 25. Thy men shall fall by the sword, and thy mighty in the war.**
- 26. And her gates shall lament and mourn; and she being desolate shall sit upon the ground.**

God is nothing like those elites who take from the poor. Instead, God is a strength to the poor and needy, and a refuge in bad times. Isaiah twenty-five verse one.

Isaiah 25:1-4

- 1. O LORD, thou art my God; I will exalt thee, I will praise thy name; for thou hast done wonderful things; thy counsels of old are faithfulness and truth.**
- 2. For thou hast made of a city an heap; of a defenced city a ruin: a palace of strangers to be no city; it shall never be built.**
- 3. Therefore shall the strong people glorify thee, the city of the terrible nations shall fear thee.**
- 4. For thou hast been a strength to the poor, a strength to the needy in his distress, a refuge from the storm, a shadow from the heat, when the blast of the terrible ones is as a storm against the wall.**

The account of Sodom and Gomorrah is well known by those who read the Bible. Lesser known is their connection to the poor and needy, and what they did not do. Ezekiel compares Jerusalem to the evils around her, including evils of the Hittites, Amorites, Samaritans, and even Sodom. The account provides cursory information about the evils of the Hittites, Amorites, and Samaritans, but gives some background into the people of Sodom, and even though we might today focus on what was recorded in Genesis during the time of Lot, Ezekiel shows the people of Sodom had pride, plenty to eat, and too much time on their hand, and with all of that abundance, they didn't take care of the poor. In God's words, they were haughty, thought too much of themselves, and then they committed abominations, before God took them away. Notice which came first. We might think that abundance leads to generosity, but the words of Ezekiel discredit that assumption and also show that Jerusalem was more guilty than even Sodom. Ezekiel sixteen verse forty-four

Ezekiel 16:44-52

44. Behold, every one that useth proverbs shall use this proverb against thee, saying, As is the mother, so is her daughter.

45. Thou art thy mother's daughter, that lotheth her husband and her children; and thou art the sister of thy sisters, which lothed their husbands and their children: your mother was an Hittite, and your father an Amorite.

46. And thine elder sister is Samaria, she and her daughters that dwell at thy left hand: and thy younger sister, that dwelleth at thy right hand, is Sodom and her daughters.

47. Yet hast thou not walked after their ways, nor done after their abominations: but, as if that were a very little thing, thou wast corrupted more than they in all thy ways.

48. As I live, saith the Lord GOD, Sodom thy sister hath not done, she nor her daughters, as thou hast done, thou and thy daughters.

49. Behold, this was the iniquity of thy sister Sodom, pride, fulness of bread, and abundance of idleness was in her and in her daughters, neither did she strengthen the hand of the poor and needy.

50. And they were haughty, and committed abomination before me: therefore I took them away as I saw good.

51. Neither hath Samaria committed half of thy sins; but thou hast multiplied thine abominations more than they, and hast justified thy sisters in all thine abominations which thou hast done.

52. Thou also, which hast judged thy sisters, bear thine own shame for thy sins that thou hast committed more abominable than they: they are more righteous than thou: yea, be thou confounded also, and bear thy shame, in that thou hast justified thy sisters.

The theme of oppression of the poor and needy continues in Ezekiel focused on the religious elites who like a roaring lion devour prey. By comparison, Peter compares Satan to a roaring lion. Ezekiel continues to describe the priests as violating God's law and making no difference between what is Holy and not Holy, disregarding clean and unclean, and disregarding the Sabbaths, both the weekly Sabbaths and the annual Holy Days. Instead of what God would expect from the religious elites, a thin layer of religious veneer is what counts as faith focusing on the here and now through lies, and the result of this great religious deception is the oppression of the poor, the needy, and the stranger. Ezekiel twenty-two verse twenty-three.

Ezekiel 22:23-31

23. And the word of the LORD came unto me, saying,

24. Son of man, say unto her, Thou art the land that is not cleansed, nor rained upon in the day of indignation.

25. There is a conspiracy of her prophets in the midst thereof, like a roaring lion ravening the prey; they have devoured souls; they have taken the treasure and precious things; they have made her many widows in the midst thereof.

26. Her priests have violated my law, and have profaned mine holy things: they have put no difference between the holy and profane, neither have they shewed difference between the unclean and the clean, and have hid their eyes from my sabbaths, and I am profaned among them.

27. Her princes in the midst thereof are like wolves ravening the prey, to shed blood, and to destroy souls, to get dishonest gain.

28. And her prophets have daubed them with untempered mortar, seeing vanity, and divining lies unto them, saying, Thus saith the Lord GOD, when the LORD hath not spoken.

29. The people of the land have used oppression, and exercised robbery, and have vexed the poor and needy: yea, they have oppressed the stranger wrongfully.

30. And I sought for a man among them, that should make up the hedge, and stand in the gap before me for the land, that I should not destroy it: but I found none.

31. Therefore have I poured out mine indignation upon them; I have consumed them with the fire of my wrath: their own way have I recompensed upon their heads, saith the Lord GOD.

In Amos, God describes the overwhelming sins of Judah and Israel, who are described as despising the law of God, not keeping the commandments, and using lies to cause people to err, how the righteous are sold for silver and the poor for a pair of shoes, stepping all over the poor and meek of the earth while committing religious abominations. The poor are caught in the crosshairs of these evil people. Amos two verse four.

Amos 2:4-7

4. Thus saith the LORD; For three transgressions of Judah, and for four, I will not turn away the punishment thereof; because they have despised the law of the

LORD, and have not kept his commandments, and their lies caused them to err, after the which their fathers have walked:

5. But I will send a fire upon Judah, and it shall devour the palaces of Jerusalem.

6. Thus saith the LORD; For three transgressions of Israel, and for four, I will not turn away the punishment thereof; because they sold the righteous for silver, and the poor for a pair of shoes;

7. That pant after the dust of the earth on the head of the poor, and turn aside the way of the meek: and a man and his father will go in unto the same maid, to profane my holy name:

Within the Church of God we tend to get excited with verses that tell us to cry aloud and spare not, showing people their sin, and yet we overlook the connection of the poor to these types of verses. In Isaiah, people with a form of faith are shown. These are people who go act as if they have faith, and yet live a double standard doing things that they shouldn't do, even when fasting, not realizing that fasting is intended to remove the bands of wickedness, to undo heavy burdens, and to let the oppressed go free, and to feed the hungry and take care of the poor. Fasting with that focus brings spiritual healing and righteousness. Isaiah fifty-eight verse one.

Isaiah 58:1-8

1. Cry aloud, spare not, lift up thy voice like a trumpet, and shew my people their transgression, and the house of Jacob their sins.

2. Yet they seek me daily, and delight to know my ways, as a nation that did righteousness, and forsook not the ordinance of their God: they ask of me the ordinances of justice; they take delight in approaching to God.

3. Wherefore have we fasted, say they, and thou seest not? wherefore have we afflicted our soul, and thou takest no knowledge? Behold, in the day of your fast ye find pleasure, and exact all your labours.

4. Behold, ye fast for strife and debate, and to smite with the fist of wickedness: ye shall not fast as ye do this day, to make your voice to be heard on high.

5. Is it such a fast that I have chosen? a day for a man to afflict his soul? is it to bow down his head as a bulrush, and to spread sackcloth and ashes under him? wilt thou call this a fast, and an acceptable day to the LORD?

6. Is not this the fast that I have chosen? to loose the bands of wickedness, to undo the heavy burdens, and to let the oppressed go free, and that ye break every yoke?

7. Is it not to deal thy bread to the hungry, and that thou bring the poor that are cast out to thy house? when thou seest the naked, that thou cover him; and that thou hide not thyself from thine own flesh?

8. Then shall thy light break forth as the morning, and thine health shall spring forth speedily: and thy righteousness shall go before thee; the glory of the LORD shall be thy rereward.

Jeremiah writes that among God's people are the wicked, who try to ensnare and trap others, through deceit, making themselves look important, using these methods to grow personal wealth. These are the people who because they are wicked, overlook the wicked that other people do. They disregard what is evil and also disregard the needs of the poor as they listen to prophets giving them a false religious message. Jeremiah five verse twenty-six.

Jeremiah 5:26-31

26. For among my people are found wicked men: they lay wait, as he that setteth snares; they set a trap, they catch men.

27. As a cage is full of birds, so are their houses full of deceit: therefore they are become great, and waxen rich.

28. They are waxen fat, they shine: yea, they overpass the deeds of the wicked: they judge not the cause, the cause of the fatherless, yet they prosper; and the right of the needy do they not judge.

29. Shall I not visit for these things? saith the LORD: shall not my soul be avenged on such a nation as this?

30. A wonderful and horrible thing is committed in the land;

31. The prophets prophesy falsely, and the priests bear rule by their means; and my people love to have it so: and what will ye do in the end thereof?

Zechariah records that God spoke of the need to execute true judgment, to show mercy, and to not oppress anyone who is poor, including widows, orphans, and those just traveling through. Zechariah seven verse eight.

Zechariah 7:8-14

8. And the word of the LORD came unto Zechariah, saying,

9. Thus speaketh the LORD of hosts, saying, Execute true judgment, and shew mercy and compassions every man to his brother:

10. And oppress not the widow, nor the fatherless, the stranger, nor the poor; and let none of you imagine evil against his brother in your heart.

Because the people would not see or hear the needs of those who were oppressed, God promised that he would not see or hear the needs of his people crying out to him, scattering them among the nations. Verse eleven.

11. But they refused to hearken, and pulled away the shoulder, and stopped their ears, that they should not hear.

12. Yea, they made their hearts as an adamant stone, lest they should hear the law, and the words which the LORD of hosts hath sent in his spirit by the former prophets: therefore came a great wrath from the LORD of hosts.

13. Therefore it is come to pass, that as he cried, and they would not hear; so they cried, and I would not hear, saith the LORD of hosts:

14. But I scattered them with a whirlwind among all the nations whom they knew not. Thus the land was desolate after them, that no man passed through nor returned: for they laid the pleasant land desolate.

This prophecy written for Israel should serve as a stark reminder today, as the Israel of the Old Testament, with the many tribes, is much different than the Israel of today, a nation where the focus is on the Jews of the tribes of Judah. Where is the rest of Israel?

One of those Jews of the time of Jesus came to Him and asked what was needed to have eternal life. Jesus told this person to keep the commandments, especially those related to other people. The person said he had been doing all of these since his youth and wanted to know what he lacked, and Jesus told him to sell what he had and give to the poor, and the man left saddened because he was very rich. Matthew nineteen verse sixteen.

Matthew 19:16-26

16. And, behold, one came and said unto him, Good Master, what good thing shall I do, that I may have eternal life?

17. And he said unto him, Why callest thou me good? there is none good but one, that is, God: but if thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments.

18. He saith unto him, Which? Jesus said, Thou shalt do no murder, Thou shalt not commit adultery, Thou shalt not steal, Thou shalt not bear false witness,

19. Honour thy father and thy mother: and, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.

20. The young man saith unto him, All these things have I kept from my youth up: what lack I yet?

21. Jesus said unto him, If thou wilt be perfect, go and sell that thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come and follow me.

22. But when the young man heard that saying, he went away sorrowful: for he had great possessions.

23. Then said Jesus unto his disciples, Verily I say unto you, That a rich man shall hardly enter into the kingdom of heaven.

24. And again I say unto you, It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God.

25. When his disciples heard it, they were exceedingly amazed, saying, Who then can be saved?

26. But Jesus beheld them, and said unto them, With men this is impossible; but with God all things are possible.

If all we do is keep the commandments, we are like this young man who left Jesus very sorrowful. Keeping the commandments should lead us to see the needs of others and do what we can to fill those needs. We are not asked to do what we cannot do, or to give what we do not have, but we have to do more than just keep the commandments. For instance, when we host social events, we should not exclude those who are commonly excluded, such as the poor and those with disabilities. Luke fourteen verse twelve.

Luke 14:12-14

12. Then said he also to him that bade him, When thou makest a dinner or a supper, call not thy friends, nor thy brethren, neither thy kinsmen, nor thy rich neighbours; lest they also bid thee again, and a recompence be made thee.

13. But when thou makest a feast, call the poor, the maimed, the lame, the blind:

14. And thou shalt be blessed; for they cannot recompense thee: for thou shalt be recompensed at the resurrection of the just.

In the letter of James, we are told not to be partial with the faith we have, but to consider the poor and rich as equals, both being people before God. Should we

despise somebody because of their financial status, we blaspheme the worthy name by which we are called. In other words, by trying to separate ourselves from those who are poor we are taking God's name in vain, because while we have a form of Godliness, we deny its power. We cannot despise those who are poor, nor can we despise those who are rich, or middle class. We cannot arbitrarily reject people or we commit sin. James two verse one.

James 2:1-9

- 1. My brethren, have not the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory, with respect of persons.**
- 2. For if there come unto your assembly a man with a gold ring, in goodly apparel, and there come in also a poor man in vile raiment;**
- 3. And ye have respect to him that weareth the gay clothing, and say unto him, Sit thou here in a good place; and say to the poor, Stand thou there, or sit here under my footstool:**
- 4. Are ye not then partial in yourselves, and are become judges of evil thoughts?**
- 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?**
- 6. But ye have despised the poor. Do not rich men oppress you, and draw you before the judgment seats?**
- 7. Do not they blaspheme that worthy name by the which ye are called?**
- 8. If ye fulfil the royal law according to the scripture, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself, ye do well:**
- 9. But if ye have respect to persons, ye commit sin, and are convinced of the law as transgressors.**

Evil is thoroughly in this world in which we live, and evil seeks to oppress as many as possible, and frequently succeeds with the poor, because we the people can be fooled to become an accomplice of evil. It is through people that evil oppresses poor people, and conversely it is through righteousness that we free people from their oppression, to undo every burden, to break every yoke, and to let the oppressed go free.

Thank you for joining us today. God-willing we'll get together next time on the Sabbath. Until then, thank you for joining us today.