



You can take it to the bank: god will recompense the poor

Psalm 12.⁵⁻⁸

⁵“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.”
⁶The words of the LORD are pure words:
as silver tried in a furnace of earth,
purified seven times.
⁷Thou shalt keep them, O LORD,
thou shalt preserve them from this generation for ever.
⁸The wicked walk on every side,
when the vilest men are exalted.”

One of the great strengths of scripture is its adaptability to new conditions and applicability to every reader. Its strength as “a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart” is priceless (Heb. 4.¹²). Many a man and woman has been undone and then remade by the matchless word of God. As valued as scripture’s applicability to each individual and their circumstances, it is, nevertheless, always a good idea to begin one’s understanding and application of scripture fixed within its historical, cultural, and narrative context. Today’s reading provides a good example.

“The words of the LORD are pure words” can be said of all scripture. Yet, here, the Psalmist has a more localized focus on the purity of God’s words. The Psalmist has heard Yahweh forthrightly declare

“For the oppression of the poor,
for the sighing of the needy,
now will I arise...

“I will set him in safety from him that puffeth at him.”

It is this declaration to which the Psalmist refers when he speaks of the purity, the tried-and-true truth of Yahweh’s word. God is watching very closely how the poor and needy are treated—both by individuals, societies, and governments. His eyes see every act of oppression against the poor and needy. His ears are wide open to their every sigh, their every worry, their every heartache. He will rescue them from every oppressor who is so contemptuous of them, and recompense the poor for every troubled sigh.

You can count on this. You can take it to the bank. It is as sure as Yahweh’s rescue of a band of Israelite slaves from their cruel Egyptian taskmasters. So, woe. Woe unto that vile individual, that vile nation, that vile government that is so haughty as to imagine itself safe from God’s pure word. Unless they repent, they will, in the end, find themselves drowned in the depths of the sea, the bodies bobbing on troubled waters.

Today is as good a time as any to acknowledge and act upon the reality that the Lord is deadly serious about protecting the vulnerable poor. It is as good a day as any to silence any puffing, any belittling of the vulnerable poor to which our prejudices might incline us and to get ourselves on the Lord’s side. Today is as good a time as any to praise him for such just fidelity to the poor and find in it something to imitate in our own life.

Even so, come, Lord Jesus!