

# POVERTY AND WEALTH

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*"The rich and the poor have this in common, the Lord is the maker of them all." (22:2)*

**INTRODUCTION**—In the world there are rich people and poor people. Some can afford all of life's luxuries, others have to struggle to make ends meet, while many others are destitute. That is a fact of life not likely to change (22:2; 29:13; cf. Matthew 26:11).

Unlike men, God is impartial—neither man is better than the other. So wealth is not an end in itself, but an aid to achieving a prosperous life. It is ultimately righteousness, not wealth, which delivers us from death (10:2; 11:4,28).

## I. ADVANTAGES OF WEALTH AND DISADVANTAGES OF POVERTY

- A. Wealth Gives a Man Security (10:15; 18:11; cf. 13:8).
- B. Wealth Brings a Man Friends (14:20; 19:4,6-7). Friendships with the poor are too demanding. People have enough troubles without taking on a poor man's troubles too. So people are drawn to the wealthy.
- C. Wealth Brings a Man Power (22:7).
- D. Wealth Lets a Man Say What he Wants (18:23).

## II. WHY POVERTY COMES

- A. Some People are Victims of Poverty.
  - 1. Greed and Oppression. The greed of others is the source of their distress (22:16; 30:14; 28:3).
    - a. God takes that as a personal insult (14:31; 17:5; cf. Matthew 25:41-46)!!
    - b. God will settle the account (15:25; 22:22-23).
- B. Some People Have Only Themselves to Blame.
  - 1. Idleness (10:4; 14:23; 20:13; cf. 6:6-11; 24:30-34).
  - 2. Sensuous Self-Indulgences (21:17; 23:21).
  - 3. Use No Wisdom (13:18; 21:20).
  - 4. Waste Time and Energy on Frivolous Things (12:11; 28:19).

## III. WISE ACQUISITION AND USE OF WEALTH

- A. Best and Most Enduring Wealth is That Which is Gradually Acquired (13:11; 10:4). Like the shepherd, his prosperity is self-perpetuating (27:23-27). Often the wealth gained in a short time is lost in the same short time (20:21; 28:20).
- B. Wealth Acquired Unscrupulously is Temporary and Bitter (20:17; 21:5-6; 28:8; 15:27; 10:2). God will take it away from him (13:22).
- C. Our Own Priorities in Acquiring Wealth (11:28; 28:11; 23:4-5). While wealth is a good thing to have, and even comes as a blessing from God (10:22), there are still things which are much *"better"* to have in life:
  - 1. Wisdom and Knowledge (8:10-11,18-19; 16:16; 20:15; 24:4).
  - 2. Fear of the Lord (15:16).
  - 3. Good Name (22:1).
  - 4. Integrity (28:6; 19:1).

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5. Honesty (19:22).
  6. Righteousness (16:8,19).

We must be sure that wealth does not blind us to those things that far excel it! What is important is not whether we are rich or poor, but whether we stand upright before God (30:7-9).

- D. Caring for the Poor (11:24-26; 13:7). The great benefit of riches is not **having** them but **using** them. The reason the giver will be requited for his gifts and generosity is because he is lending to the Lord (19:17; 22:9; 28:27). We cannot help the poor too much—God sees to that. God listens to the cries of those who listen to the cries of others (21:13).

### DISCUSSION QUESTIONS—

- 1) *Why did the wise man not suggest or propose programs for bringing financial equality to all men and women?*
- 2) *Does wealth have its advantages? Is ‘money the root of all evil’ (1 Timothy 6:10)?*
- 3) *Why do the rich oppress the poor? Why do the poor sometimes oppress the poor (28:3)?*
- 4) *How do some people bring poverty on themselves? Is poverty always the fault of the poor?*
- 5) *What things are “better” than money? Should men completely withdraw from the pursuit of wealth?*
- 6) *How may one make himself rich through greed, vanity, and selfishness, yet still have nothing worthwhile (13:7,11)?*
- 7) *What are the dangers of worldly prosperity (30:7-9)? Of poverty? Is it better to be rich, poor, or merely content in whatever state we find ourselves (Philippians 4:11-12)?*
- 8) *How may one make himself poor through generous and liberal giving, and yet enjoy great riches (11:25; 13:7)?*
- 9) *In what sense am I “lending to the Lord” (19:17) when I help the poor?*
- 10) *What is necessary on our part before God will ever hear our cries of need (21:23)?*
- 11) *What is usury (28:2)? Why is such a thing evil?*