

Principles from Proverbs: A Biblical View of Wealth

Introduction: Money is always controversial. While some segments of society elevate wealth to the status of a god, others vilify it as the ultimate evil. The Bible, however, presents a distinct, balanced view of wealth. Solomon possessed fabulous wealth by the standards of his day, yet he understood the dangers of wealth and the necessity for a balanced perspective.

I. Limitations of Wealth

A. Wealth is temporary and may be easily lost.

“Labour not to be rich: cease from thine own wisdom. Wilt thou set thine eyes upon that which is not? For riches certainly make themselves wings; they fly away as an eagle toward heaven.” (Proverbs 23:4, 5)

“For riches are not forever: and doth the crown endure to every generation?” (Proverbs 27:24)

“An inheritance may be gotten hastily at the beginning; but the end thereof shall not be blessed.” (Proverbs 20:21)

1. It is proper to have sound, balanced financial goals. However, the goal of labor should be “to be rich.” When being rich becomes the ultimate goal, the permanent and the eternal will be cheated or sacrificed altogether.
2. Riches, once obtained, are difficult to hold. The more money you have, the more pressure you will have on your money.
3. Earthly riches are painfully temporary. Death is the great equalizer. Even great legacies eventually diminish.
4. Proverbs 20:21 indicates that one who receives an inheritance prematurely or illegitimately will encounter problems. Windfalls are always dangerous, particularly to the immature.

B. Wealth is meaningless in eternity.

“He that trusteth in his riches shall fall: but the righteous shall flourish as a branch.” (Proverbs 11:28)

“Riches profit not in the day of wrath: but righteousness delivereth from death.” (Proverbs 11:4)

1. Money is not the ultimate answer. The best health care money can buy will not keep one alive forever.
2. Wealth does nothing to improve ones standing with God *unless* that wealth has been consistently used for God and His work. God rewards *generosity*, not accumulation.

II. Cautions Concerning Wealth

A. Wealth turns some people away from God.

“...give me neither poverty nor riches; feed me with food convenient for me: Lest I be full, and deny thee, and say, Who is the Lord? Or lest I be poor and steal, and take the name of my God in vain.”
(Proverbs 30:8, 9)

1. Solomon recognized the spiritual danger inherent in material independence. In some people, wealth engenders pride and an arrogant refusal to acknowledge God.
2. Note that Solomon did not recognize poverty as a virtue. In some people, poverty promotes dishonesty. There is no virtue in being materially poor. Virtue and character are ultimately matters of the heart, not the wallet.

B. Wealth produces pride in some people.

“The rich man is wise in his own conceit...” (Proverbs 28:11)

Great wealth is not an indication of great wisdom. However, wealth frequently blinds men to their own foolishness. (Luke 12:16-21)

“The poor useth entreaties; but the rich answereth roughly.” (Proverbs 18:23)

1. In small minded men, wealth produces an arrogance that finds reflection in the ill treatment of others. Sometimes wealthy people develop inflated expectations regarding goods and services. When disappointed, they tend to treat people poorly.
2. Christians do not have the luxury of rude and abusive behavior. Humility teaches us that we have all received far better than we deserve.
3. In situations where it is necessary to point out a shortcoming or failure, Christians must always use tact and courtesy. It is not wrong to be firm; it is wrong to be rude.
4. Never allow money to make you feel superior to others. If God has blessed you with wealth, His blessing should humble you, not inflate you.