



THE INSUFFICIENCY OF THE WORLD AND THE
SUFFICIENCY OF THE THINGS OF GOD
10:2-3; 11:4; 15:16-17; 16:8, 16; 17:1; 19:1; 28:6

These proverbs deal with the all-important subject of the futility and inadequacy of the world's goods and ways to bring happiness and contentment to man, and the sufficiency of God's ways and the things of God to bring the blessings of God.

“Treasures of wickedness profit nothing: but righteousness delivereth from death. The LORD will not suffer the soul of the righteous to famish: but He casteth away the substance of the wicked” [10:2-3].

The first truth brought forth in these verses is that *“Treasures of wickedness profit nothing”* Earthly treasures are of a fleeting character [Job 20:28; Psalm 49:10; Proverbs 23:5; 27:24; Matthew 6:19; I Timothy 6:7]. Earthly treasures bring danger [Deuteronomy 8:13-14; Psalm 62:10; Proverbs 28:20; I Timothy 6:9]. Earthly treasures are deceptive [Haggai 1:6; Luke 12:21]. Earthly treasures can be disappointing [Job 27:16-17; Psalm 39:6; James 5:3]. If all of this be true of earthly treasures, how much more of *“treasures of wickedness”* (that which is obtained by wickedness). The Scriptures warn against such [Proverbs 21:6; 22:16; Jeremiah 17:11; 22:13; James 5:4]. What was the profit of *Naboth's* vineyard to *Abab*, when in his ivory palace he was withering under the curse of God? What was the profit of the thirty pieces of silver to *Judas*?

The second truth brought forth in these verses is the blessing and sufficiency of that which is spiritually right. *“Righteousness”* has reference to true holiness of heart and life, and to justice and equity in obtaining wealth. THE PROMISE IS THAT GOD WILL PRESERVE SUCH! He will watch over their lives with infinite care [Matthew 6:32; Luke 12:7; I Peter 5:7]. He will sustain them [Isaiah 41:10].

“Riches profit not in the day of wrath: but righteousness delivereth from death” [11:4].

The *“day of wrath”* has reference to the time of God's judgments, when He is executing His wrath and vengeance upon sinners. Riches will not spare or prolong life, and riches will not be able to purchase an escape [Psalm 49:6-7]. The only thing that can deliver from the day of God's wrath is the righteousness of *Christ*! This proverb serves as a rebuke of false trusts [Psalm 52:7; 146:3; Proverbs 11:28; 28:26; Isaiah 31:1; Jeremiah 17:5].

“Better is little with the fear of the LORD than great treasure and trouble therewith. Better is a dinner of herbs where love is, than a stalled ox and hatred therewith” [15:16-17].

The great lesson of these words is found in the teaching of *Christ*; *“for a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth”* [Luke 12:15]. The true riches spoken of in this proverb are fear (reverence) *of the Lord* and love. Again, *“the fear of the LORD is*

the beginning of wisdom” and “*wisdom*” teaches that true riches are with the Lord [Proverbs 8:18]. There is a paradox between spiritual riches and earthly riches [Proverbs 13:7].

“Better is a little with righteousness than great revenues without right” [16:8].

It is implied in these words that it is possible to be honest and good and have but little, and it is possible to grow materially rich by fraud and oppression. But the lesson is, that it is “*better*” (more advantageous, and valuable) to be materially poor, yet righteous, than to be materially rich, and yet unrighteous.

“How much better is it to get wisdom than gold! and to get understanding rather to be chosen than silver” [16:16].

These are the words of one who had the largest portion of both blessings [I Kings 3:12-13]. *Solomon* had calculated the worth of both the material and the spiritual and this is his conclusion! The spiritual is better than the material in its origin, in its nature, and in its purposes. It is better for guiding a man in the affairs of this life.

“Better is a dry morsel, and quietness therewith, than an house full of sacrifices with strife” [17:1].

This is an allusion to the Jewish ordinance of feasting at home upon the remains of the sacrifices [Leviticus 7:16; 19:6]. A “*house full of sacrifices*” was a house of plentiful provision! *Solomon* had learned that a piece of stale bread where there is peace is far better than a house filled with provision, but where there is no peace.

“Better is the poor that walketh in his integrity, than he that is perverse in his lips and a fool” [19:1].

Solomon states that it is better to be poor and possess “*integrity*” (honesty) than to be “*perverse*” (improper, incorrect, irrational) in speech and “*a fool*” (one devoid of wisdom).

“Better is the poor that walketh in his uprightness, than he that is perverse in his ways, though he be rich” [28:6].

Here a contrast is drawn between “*the poor that walketh in his uprightness*” and he that is “*rich*” but “*perverse in his ways*” In such a case the poor man with all his outward disadvantages, is better, more happy, and more useful than the rich man with all his outward advantages.

The word “*better*” occurs in [15:16-17; 16:8, 16; 17:1; 19:1; 28:6] revealing that little with integrity and righteousness is more advantageous, useful, and valuable than much without integrity and righteousness. The practical conclusion of these proverbs is “*Seek ye first the kingdom of God*”
