



WEALTH AND POVERTY 10:15; 11:28; 13:7; 14:20; 19:1; 22:2, 7; 28:11

These **proverbs** deal with the subject of **wealth** and **poverty**, a subject that involves the material aspect of life, and one that is dealt with extensively throughout the Word of God. That this subject is dealt with so extensively by God in His Word shows the importance and the impact of such upon lives, and that there is a Biblical view of the subject. The **material** is a large part of daily life and there must be a proper **spiritual** perspective concerning such! These **proverbs** are not a prohibition against financial success, for neither **wealth** nor **poverty** are indicative of spirituality, but how one becomes rich or poor, and one's attitude toward wealth and poverty are indeed indicative. God neither commends or condemns wealth or poverty, but He does condemn and warn against some methods of obtaining wealth, such as **theft**, **injustice**, and **oppression**, and He does condemn certain attitudes toward wealth such as **covetousness**. THIS DOES NOT IMPLY THAT ALL WHO ARE WEALTHY ARE GUILTY OF THESE THINGS! He also condemns and warns against the things that lead to poverty, such as **slloth** [Proverbs 20:13; 24:33-34], **bad company** [Proverbs 28:19], and **bad habits** [Proverbs 23:21]. THIS DOES NOT IMPLY THAT ALL WHO ARE IN POVERTY ARE GUILTY OF THESE THINGS!

That **Solomon**, a man of great **wisdom** and **wealth** dealt with this subject shows that it is a subject that requires the "**wisdom that is from above**" Throughout history it has always been the case that some people are **rich** and others are **poor**, and no matter what the economic structure, or philosophy this will always continue to be the case [Deuteronomy 15:11; Matthew 26:11]. Therefore what the Word of God says upon the subject is always relevant. With so many misconceptions both in the world, and amongst God's people concerning this subject of **wealth** and **poverty**, and because of the great effect and impact that it can have not only upon the way that people live, but also upon the way that people think, it is of extreme importance to have a Biblical view (wisdom) upon the subject. The Word of God does warn against showing favoritism based upon economic status [James 2:1-3], and that there are definite **dangers** and **temptations** to both wealth and poverty [Proverbs 30:8-9]. The Word of God very plainly teaches that **spiritual** values have an impact upon **materialistic** values, and vice-versa, and that one's values concerning these things has a great effect upon one's way of life [Matthew 6:19-21].

"The rich man's wealth is his strong city: the destruction of the poor is their poverty" [10:15].

What is said here is not meant as a blanket statement, but is a representation of the common misconceptions and mistakes both of the "**rich**" and the "**poor**" The words "**The rich man's wealth is his strong city**" corresponds to Proverbs 18:11 and speaks of a **self-sufficient** attitude that is common amongst the "**rich**" It is a common misconception of the "**rich**" to view their wealth as a "**strong city**" In other words, it is the common mistake of the "**rich**" to find a sense of **safety** and **security** in their wealth. On the other hand, "**the destruction of the poor is their poverty**" A common misconception and mistake of the "**poor**" is to think that they are

ruined because of their poverty. Their poverty takes away their spirit and fills them with great fear and despair. The two statements of this **proverb** reveal that there is a destructive mindset common to both the “*rich*” and the “*poor*” as the result of placing too much security in wealth. Both the “*rich*” and the “*poor*” can place too much safety and security in wealth, and when this is so, the “*rich*” become self-sufficient, and the “*poor*” become despondent!

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

The first part of this **proverb** serves as a warning against trusting, placing confidence in, reliance and dependence upon the material [Job 31:24, 25, 28; Psalm 52:7]. Trust in the material or earthly riches is manifested by setting the heart upon them [Psalm 62:10], by glorying in them [Jeremiah 9:23], by hoarding [Matthew 6:19], by covetousness or the desire to be wealthy [Proverbs 23:1-6; 28:20; I Timothy 6:9-11]. The **proverb** declares that the one who puts their trust in the material “*shall fall*” that is, such trust will end in disappointment [Psalm 49:6-12; Ecclesiastes 5:10-11]. The folly and danger of trusting in riches is illustrated in the parable of “*The Rich Fool*” [Luke 12:16-21]. The second part of the **proverb** teaches that IT IS NOT WEALTH THAT CAUSES ONE TO FLOURISH, BUT RIGHTEOUSNESS! And this is what *Jesus* taught [Matthew 6:19-34]. Both the “*rich*” and the “*poor*” can be guilty of placing trust in the material, though such trust may be manifested in different ways. Lest we place our security and trust in wealth, it is good to remember that EARTHLY RICHES ARE UNCERTAIN AT BEST [Job 20:28; Proverbs 11:4; 23:5; 27:24; I Timothy 6:7].

“There is he that maketh himself rich, yet hath nothing: there is he that maketh himself poor, yet hath great riches” [13:7].

The first part of this **proverb** speaks of those who have little or nothing, but to pretend to live as though they have great riches, either out of pride, or with a desire to gain reputation. The second part of the **proverb** speaks of those who are wealthy, but live in such a way as to cause people to believe that they are poor.

“The poor is hated even of his own neighbor: but the rich hath many friends” [14:20].

This **proverb** contrasts the social problem of the “*poor*” with the fact that many desire to befriend the “*rich*” and this coincides with Proverbs 19:4.

“Better is the poor that walketh in his integrity (honesty, righteousness, strength), than he that is perverse (perverted, wicked), in his lips, and is a fool” [19:1].

The teaching of this **proverb** is the same as 28:6. INTEGRITY IS A GREAT HONOR EVEN IF IT RESULTS IN POVERTY [Hebrews 11:37-38]. What is said in this **proverb** comes back to “*seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness*”

“The rich and the poor meet together: the Lord is the maker of them all” [22:2].

They meet together on the same level as sinners! Both “*rich*” and “*poor*” have the same birth, the same sinful nature, and the same spiritual need, and both will stand before God in judgment [Revelation 20:12].

“The rich ruleth over the poor, and the borrower is servant to the lender” [22:7].

Though they are the same as far as their condition and needs before God; yet God has appointed one to rule over the other.

“The rich man is wise in his own conceit; but the poor that hath understanding searcheth him out” [28:11].

Again, what is said here is not a blanket statement concerning the “*rich*” and the “*poor*” One of the lessons of this **proverb** is that **wealth** does not inevitably imply wisdom, and **poverty** does not inevitably imply foolishness. The “*rich*” are of course not always spiritually wise, and the “*poor*” are not always spiritually ignorant. The first part of this **proverb** addresses a great danger and tendency of the “*rich*” that being, developing a spirit of **self-sufficiency** and **pride** [Ezekiel 28:5]. God warned *Israel* against such [Deuteronomy 8:13-14]. This **self-sufficiency** and **pride** is the result of forgetting where wealth and the ability to obtain such comes from [I Chronicles 29:12].

The one who is truly “*wise*” will not allow the material wealth of the world or the lack thereof blind him or hinder him as to the true riches, which are spiritual. The one who possesses the “*wisdom that is from above*” will always give spiritual wealth priority over material wealth, and will not allow the material to be the determining factor concerning the Lord’s will for their life.