

When is luxury harmful? (19:10)

THE TEXT (NASB)

Luxury is not fitting for a fool, much less for a slave to rule over princes.

Delight is not seemly for a fool; much less for a servant to have rule over princes. KJV - Proverbs 19:10

INTRODUCTION



Luxury is easily abused, so it can be unhappy for some.

Trading wealth for luxury requires careful handling, as proven by the sad fate of most lottery winners. The wise know how to govern their luxuries, but their luxuries govern the foolish.

Some teach that luxury is inherently evil, and only a Spartan lifestyle is noble, but luxury is simply a tool to be used, wisely or foolishly.



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COMMENTARY

Translation: *Luxury, Fool*

This proverb has the first of the Bible's five uses of the Hebrew word for luxury, תַּעֲנוּג (tă'ănûg, pronounced "ta-a-noog"). tă'ănûg is also translated as "daintiness," "pleasures," or comforts.

The word for "fool" here is the Hebrew word, כְּסִיל (kesîl, pronounced "kě-seel"), referring to a dull or obstinate person. The *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament* (TWOT) says that its Hebrew root word, "kasal," apparently has an original meaning, 'to be sluggish,' what is thick, plump or fat.

Three Hebrew words in Proverbs are translated as "fool," says TWOT, meaning the "propensity to make bad choices" (and not a mental deficiency). The other two terms are אִוִּיל (ʾēvîl, pronounced "ě-veel"), referring to an insolent character, and the word, נָבָל (nā·bāl, pronounced "nah-vahl"), meaning a boorish or mean disposition. So the three "fools" are lazy, insolent, or boorish. And the "fool" in this text is the lazy or stubborn, those who simply refuse to expend physical or spiritual energy. They may be intelligent, but undisciplined and weak-willed.

Luxuries and Their Abuse

Luxuries are an expenditure of wealth, not for ordinary necessities, but for out-of-the-ordinary pleasures, comforts, or splendours. And they're generally the product of the efforts of many. The definition of luxury obviously changes from culture to culture, a staple in one society being a luxury in another. Two good meals a day would be a great luxury in much of the world, but not in North America or Europe. Luxuries and some examples of their foolish abuse:

- Abundant food: Overeating or gluttony;
- Extravagant food: Gourmet pretensions or obsessions;
- Expensive clothing: Obvious exhibitionism and inaccessible closets;
- Remarkable cars: Road rage and fender anxiety;
- Plush accommodations and furnishings: Immobility and idleness;
- Leisure time: Vices and idleness;

Gluttony



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Toddlers, naturally foolish, will eat a box of chocolates until their stomach's ache. Adult human beings will wolf down hors d'oeuvres, pastries, "chocolate waterfalls," desserts, and delicacies until they're writhing in pain. The Roman "nobility" in the days of the Caesars would gorge on stuffed mice and flamingo tongues" at sumptuous banquets, vomit up their food, and then gorge again. The dining rooms in Nazi officers' clubs would have a "vomitorium," as much for overdrinking as overeating.

The Christian teaching on "original sin" points to the undeniable fact that any healthy, natural human desire, left to its own devices (or our own devices) becomes unnatural and unhealthy. In our selfishness, our desires can and do destroy us.

Classic Comments

In his *Exposition of the Entire Bible* (ca. 1750) John Gill comments that fools "do not know how to make a right use of their prosperity; nor to moderate their enjoyments, pleasures, and delights." Fools are characterized by excess. Likewise, Matthew Henry says "delights are fitting" for those who need refreshment after strenuous work, but not for fools who live in idleness and abuse their recreation.

It's precisely those with great wealth who most need to learn temperance and habitual moderation. Immoderation—ungovernable appetites—cause so many lottery winners to end up with wrecked lives and broken families. Just as it takes training to handle power tools properly, it takes wisdom to use luxuries appropriately. The Message puts it this way: "Blockheads shouldn't live on easy street."



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OUR CREATOR, REDEEMER, AND FRIEND

Jesus often refused human offers of comfort and power.

When urged by his disciples to eat, Jesus said no (John 4:31). He even refused a pain-killer when agonizing on the cross (Matthew 27:34). When massive crowds tried to make him king of Israel, Jesus fled (John 6:15). Ironically, the One who could handle luxury and authority best always turned it down.

One day Jesus will physically return to Earth in power and great glory—much different than His first visit.

APPLICATION

- Memorize the text in your favourite Bible translation and think about it often.
- Give up your luxuries or grow in wisdom.
- Give luxuries only to those who can handle them well.
- Watch your diet—eat for proper nutrition.

Which of these steps, if any, does Jesus want you to take now? Ask Him.



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KEY WORDS

authority, better life (quality), consumption, folly, gluttony, laziness, lottery, power, scarcity, self-control, training, wealth, bf spending

ILLUSTRATION

Who is Quick Buck Betty?



Quick Buck Betty wants to make money fast, and is always looking for “hot tips.” Researching and understanding investments takes too long; she just cares about the returns—especially the short-term returns.

It doesn't matter how the money is earned—in fact she'd rather not know at all! Betty is just eager to “make it” or, even better, have someone else make it for her. She has little time for Steady Eddy and Diligent Daniel—their methods take too long.

Betty views the stock and bond markets like the lottery and casino. She doesn't invest; she gambles. She likes to “play” the markets. Day trading is one of her passions.

