

What can help you when your money disappears? (27:23-27)

“Know well the condition of your flocks, and give attention to your herds, for riches do not last forever, and does a crown endure to all generations? When the grass is gone and the new growth appears and the vegetation of the mountains is gathered, the lambs will provide your clothing, and the goats the price of a field. There will be enough goats’ milk for your food, for the food of your household, and maintenance of your girls.”

THE TEXT (NASB)

“Know well the condition of your flocks, and give attention to your herds, for riches do not last forever, and does a crown endure to all generations? When the grass is gone and the new growth appears and the vegetation of the mountains is gathered, the lambs will provide your clothing, and the goats the price of a field. There will be enough goats’ milk for your food, for the food of your household, and maintenance of your girls.”

Be thou diligent to know the state of thy flocks, and look well to thy herds. For riches are not for ever: And doth the crown endure to every generation? The hay appeareth, and the tender grass sheweth itself, and herbs of the mountains are gathered. The lambs are for thy clothing, and the goats are the price of the field. And thou shalt have goats' milk enough for thy food, for the food of thy household, and for the maintenance for thy maidens. KJV - Proverbs 27:23

INTRODUCTION



Get back to basics. Better yet, never abandon the basics. Self-reproducing resources provide better security than wealth or position. This message is not just for shepherds and ranchers. It also applies to our choice of investments.

Some investments are idle (e.g. hard cash, precious metals, fine art, jewellery) and others are dynamic (e.g. dividend paying stocks with capital growth, corporate bonds, government bonds). The text promotes the second type of investment even though caring for animals is harder than counting coins. Genuine financial security always requires “initiative and industry”—either we work or someone else works. Security does not come through passive reliance on stored-up wealth or on government aid.

But does the text imply that we should all start an agrarian lifestyle? Are the farmers financially more stable than urban dwellers?



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COMMENTARY

Slow Wealth Strategy



Animal husbandry is a dirty job. **Flocks** and **herds** need to be fed, protected, nursed, and cleaned. They need daily attention. Big ranch - much manure. This type of financial strategy is not popular and it's not a way to get rich quickly.

Flocks and herds refer to two different kinds of animals—perhaps sheep and cattle. They are similar in their ability to grow and multiply. They both provide regular benefits of milk and wool or hides for clothing.

Flocks and herds provide primary necessities of food and clothing. No further trading is necessary for these basic needs. Furthermore when we read **the goats will provide the price of a field** we see resources increase enough to expand the physical size of the ranch. In other words, following this strategy may accumulate significant wealth. Some ranchers are very wealthy and others are very poor, but certainly farming is a primary industry whereas manufacturing and banking are secondary and tertiary industries.

Classic Comments

The Jamieson, Fausset and Brown (JFB) commentary provides the following insight:

The possession of treasures and a lofty place of power and honour has not in itself the security of everlasting duration. However, a rural economy, and particularly the rearing of cattle, gives security for food and clothing.

Charles Bridges notes that:

David kept his flocks and herds under constant inspection... The rule requires personal attention. Everything should not be left to servants....Riches are a fickle possession.

All Strategies Have Shortcomings

Flocks and herds are vulnerable to disease (e.g. the “mad cow” BSE scare in Alberta 2003) and



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drought (dust-bowls of the 1930s). Thus, even this financial strategy has limitations.

Nevertheless, we are advised to develop and maintain a source of self-replenishing, reproducing wealth. Why? We are given two reasons. **Riches do not last forever** and dependence on a **crown** (government benefits) is unwise.

Riches can be stolen, lost, or devalued. They are inert and lifeless. They provide no benefit stored in a vault, safety deposit box, or under a mattress. They can be used up. Even a large lump sum can be spent quickly. Investments in assets that are merely stores of value (e.g. art, stamp, coin collections, cash, and jewellery) provide limited benefits. On the other hand, dividend paying stocks and corporate bonds produce a regular yield - rather like milk and wool from a flock. Money invested in "living assets" takes regular watching, but it is a good investment.

Even Crowns Crumble and Governments Fail



Governments, although not mentioned explicitly in this text, are identified by the word *crown*. The *crown*, כִּנֹּר (n?•z?r, pronounced “n?-zer”), referred to in this text may imply that royalty is being addressed directly in this text (also see 2 Samuel 1:10.) Perhaps a prince is being warned not to take his position of royal privilege with the associated financial benefits as a guarantee. This is one application of the passage but I believe there are more.

It may be a healthy reminder to a country’s residents that the current government, the “powers that be,” are transitory. Therefore becoming financially dependent solely on government benefits is foolish and dangerous. Human government changes easily and is unpredictable. Political, financial, and demographic forces cause governments to revise or retract benefits. This is especially evident in the area of continually changing tax regulations. An unstable tax regime fosters financial insecurity.

Canadian Example

Let’s look at an example. For most of the 20th century Canadian taxpayers were encouraged to save money using low risk investments such as bank savings accounts and Guaranteed Investment Certificates (GICs). The principal of the investment was guaranteed and the growth was a predictable stream of interest income. It was a great way of establishing an emergency



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fund, without paying any tax on it. The *crown* was fostering personal financial stability through a tax break by not taxing the first \$1,000 of interest income. Unfortunately this tax break was removed in 1988. The government changed the rules of financial management and discouraged simple saving. Taxpayers had to adjust their financial strategies.

Changing Tax Rules Drain Resources

I believe that constantly changing tax rules and regulations are an enormous waste of a nation’s economic energy. Accounting games of cat and mouse by the government and taxpayers make a nation less competitive internationally. Governments should keep taxes low, simple, and stable.

Impossible you say! Of course it’s impossible if taxpayers look to the government to solve all their financial problems. This unhealthy dependence on government begins when taxpayers expect the state to meet their needs rather than praying and working as God instructs. Rather than becoming dependent on the state, we are advised in this text to cultivate our own source of financial inflows.

God is Richer than Caesar

However, if trapped in a government system of heavy taxation paying taxes is often better, so you can be free rather than spend excessive time and effort to avoid taxes. Render to Caesar what is Caesar’s. But remember: God is bigger than Caesar—and much richer too. Flocks and herds are not the only source of renewable, reproductive resources. Having good client and customer relations also generates self-reproducing benefits. Often they lead to business referrals including their own relatives and offspring.

Cultivating Clients and Customers



The text reveals the importance of client focus. A professional business consultant once told me that the most valuable asset in business is the relationship between the consumer and supplier, and the client and customer. I believe it. The three rules for success in sales are similar to a shepherd tending his flock:

1. See the Client.
2. See the Client.
3. See the Client.



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Customer Service

Serving customers or shepherding sheep does not bring instant riches. It takes time and an understanding of financial cycles to foster growth. This requires daily contact. It can be messy and unpleasant work. The needs of the flock supersede the convenience of the shepherd. It takes hard effort but provides real benefits.

A wise financial strategy is not based on previously accumulated wealth or on government benefits, but on continuous customer service. Learn to cultivate resources that, with proper care, will provide benefits for daily consumption and will also multiply.

OUR CREATOR, REDEEMER, AND FRIEND

Jesus said, “I am the good shepherd,” (John 10:11).

In fact, He was the greatest Shepherd of all time. He died for His flock (John 10:11-18).

He should be our first resort and our last resort (Revelation 22:13) when it comes to dealing with financial troubles.

APPLICATION

- Memorize the text in your favourite Bible translation and think about it often.
- Start to wean yourself off government handouts if you have become dependent on them.
- Buy tools - not toys. Rent toys. When you buy tools focus on income generating tools.
- Many don't like the regular work associated with herd maintenance and instead prefer to try their luck with lotteries. Bad idea—discover the truth about lottery winners. Read the findings of Michel A. Bell on the topic of gambling.
- Don't focus on the finances but on the flock. Don't let your affections drift from shepherding the flock (your customers) to loving a stockpile of wealth.

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



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KEY WORDS

diligence, focus, speculation, government, investments, laziness, lottery, more assets (quantity), resourcefulness, taxes, bf saving

ILLUSTRATION

Who is Tax-Driven Ted?



Death and taxes: The only things we can be sure of! Certainly that’s the way Tax-Driven Ted sees it. Whereas others pay some or little attention to taxes, he is consumed by tax minimization. Ted is tax obsessed. Why? For many Canadians, if left unmanaged, taxes eliminate over 50% of income. In Canada tax freedom day falls in July.

Tax freedom day is the day of the year when you have paid all your taxes and can now keep the rest of the money you earn. Tax-Driven Ted will spend money just to get a write-off. He fails to seriously evaluate the underlying economics behind the decision and chooses to focus on the tax consequences. He loves to borrow money to invest simply because he can write off the interest costs of amount borrowed. This investment technique is called leveraging and is commonplace.

Ted doesn’t believe he should pay any taxes. After all, the government wastes money. It’s extremely inefficient. He uses every angle to reduce taxes. He’s always looking for loopholes, credits, or write-offs. *His focus is not on customer satisfaction but on tax reduction.*



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He goes on trips and conferences so that he can take the tax write-offs. He loves limited partnerships investments and other tax shelters. For some investors tax considerations are secondary, but for Tax-Driven Ted, they come first.

