

What is the most common form of slavery? (22:7)

The rich rules over the poor, and the borrower becomes the lender's slave.

THE TEXT (NASB)

The rich rules over the poor, and the borrower becomes the lender's slave.

The rich ruleth over the poor, and the borrower is servant to the lender. KJV - Proverbs 22:7

INTRODUCTION



Slavery endures in our world: Wealth gives some power over others, and power can be abused. So be careful how much you borrow—and from whom.

Your lender will exert influence over you.

The more money you owe others, the less free you are, risking your integrity.



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COMMENTARY



All else being equal, rich people wield power and influence over the poor. That's one reason why people prefer wealth to poverty. No one likes being the underdog. The poor are always governed by the rich, but when the poor begin to borrow from the rich, they become dependents. If the lender is kind, the relationship is benevolent. Sometimes borrowing is voluntary, but other times, it seems necessary. Yet always, the borrower enters some sort of servitude. So their need or desire for more exceeds their fear of servitude.

For this reason, you should never lend money to a friend. Friendship must be a level playing-field, and debt tilts it against the friend. So a smaller gift, if possible, may be better than a larger loan. Otherwise, if you really want power over your friend, hold a loan over them.

Translation: poor, slave



The Hebrew word for “poor,” שָׁרַץ (rāš, pronounced “rash”), is usually used in the literal sense of material need. The Hebrew word for “slave,” עֶבֶד (ʿē•bēd, pronounced “ēh-vēd”), appears almost 800 times in the Bible. It can also be translated “servant;” so in its first use at Genesis 9:25, Noah curses Canaan to become a “servant of servants.” The Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament (TWOT) observes, “Slavery in Israel was not so irksome, since this [slave] status involved rights and often positions of trust.” Slavery is not so bad, when the master is kind, so the word עֶבֶד is not necessarily pejorative. Yet it necessarily denotes being under the authority of another.

Private Property

Almost unnoticed, this proverb assumes an underlying principle: Private property. Everyone is



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assumed to hold their own substance, whether great or small. There's no state-enforced equalization, so the proverb indirectly validates the principle of ownership. There's no communism here. God recognizes the legitimacy of private property. However unhappy is debt, when someone borrows what is rightfully another's, he must return it, or work to pay it off.

Tax Incentives

These days, the real cost of debt is often hidden by tax incentives. Many investors borrow for their investments, to reduce their taxable income with the deduction of the interest paid on the loan. As the investment grows, and the interest rate stays low, the investor gains twice. It's like using a lever—"leverage"—as a tool to increase our ability to move weights. However, this proverb reveals a problem with this strategy. The borrower, trying to multiply his assets, forfeits his personal freedom. This becomes a problem if market conditions change, as happened dramatically in the fall of 2008.

Credit Crisis



The collapse of the stock markets in late-2008 was primarily the result of careless and bloated credit loads. Much of this was triggered by sub-prime mortgages—artificially low interest rates, to stoke an already inflated housing market. Once buyers committed to purchase homes, they were trapped into payments on houses that were way too expensive, plummeting in value, and for which they had no collateral. Cowardly, the government delayed the pain of the crisis, and then spread the burden throughout the financial industry, to others not directly responsible for over-borrowing. When governments bail out industries that push careless credit, it moves the financial pain from the culprits to the entire taxpaying community.

The Almighty God Trumps the Almighty Dollar

Even though the rich generally rule over the poor, the LORD God rules over them both. He can aid the poor, when he chooses. And he reminds the wealthy with cues—like illnesses, wayward family members, corrupt institutions, and wars—that riches do not make us invulnerable. There's no financial issue that God can't handle, providing that we mere mortals are willing to receive His assistance on His terms.



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OUR CREATOR, REDEEMER, AND FRIEND

Jesus said, "Give to him who asks of you, *and do not turn away from him who wants to borrow from you*," Matthew 5:42.

Does this mean that Jesus wants his followers to lend money to anyone who asks?

Jesus clarified: "Love your enemies and do good and lend, expecting nothing in return; and your reward will be great, and you will be sons of the Most High; for He Himself is kind to ungrateful and evil men," Luke 6:35.

APPLICATION

- Memorize the text in your favourite Bible translation and think about it often.
- Try to avoid poverty or indebtedness lest people end up controlling you.
- Avoid borrowing or lending money to or from friends, but be generous.
- Minimize your servitude to other people by minimizing debt if you are poor.

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



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KEY WORDS

assets, better life (quality), borrow, communist, credit, debt, freedom, friend, government, lending, mortgage, ownership, poor (rāš pronounced “rash”), power, private property, rich, slavery, taxes, bf spending

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.

