

What is the best kind of wealth? (15:6)

Great wealth is in the house of the righteous, but trouble is in the income of the wicked.

THE TEXT (NASB)

Great wealth is in the house of the righteous, but trouble is in the income of the wicked.

*In the house of the righteous is much treasure: but in the revenues of the wicked is trouble.
Classic KJV - Proverbs 15:6*

INTRODUCTION



The best kind of wealth is trouble-free wealth.

There's more to money than meets the eye. Sometimes money has "issues." It comes "with strings attached." The wicked have income, but it's encumbered, contaminated, even vicious.

The righteous have access to an uncomplicated wealth. What kind of wealth would you prefer? How clean is your paycheck? How trouble-free is your income?



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COMMENTARY

This proverb is a little mysterious. Many righteous people seem to have little wealth in their houses. But here, there are three comparisons at work: The virtuous versus the vicious, great wealth versus trouble, and the house versus the income. The righteous and the wicked are direct opposites, yet great wealth is not contrasted with poverty, but with trouble. Likewise, the house is not contrasted with a hut, but with income. This asymmetrical structure helps untangle the knotted message. We can start with the easier comparison: “trouble is in the income the wicked.”

Translation: *Trouble*

The word “trouble” is translated from the Hebrew word, עָכָר (ā•kār, pronounced “ah-khar”), which is used fourteen times in the Scriptures. The first time ā•kār is seen in the Bible, it describes the turmoil and anxiety that Simeon and Levi bring to their father, Jacob, through their deadly rampage in the city of Shechem. Joshua uses the same word to describe the effects of Achan’s theft in Jericho. Trouble shatters the peace and threatens terror. It’s no longer “business as usual.”



The Hebrew word ā•kār is also used in Proverbs 11:29 and 15:27. In order for us to live well, God has provided us with a blueprint in the natural law and an instruction manual in the Bible. Those who ignore the rules for success not surprisingly suffer various unexpected calamities:

Upheaval: Roughly 3,400 years ago, as documented, a soldier violated the direct order of his commander not to pillage a captured city, but instead hid some booty in the family tent. This brought trouble to the whole nation and cost his whole family their lives. The tragic story: Joshua 7:13-26.

Infection: About 2,800 years ago, an assistant minister of the true God was dissatisfied with his income, so he disobeyed his pastor and accepted a gratuity from a patron, which then brought with it the trouble of leprosy. Read all about it: 2 Kings 5:1-27.

Sudden Death: A married couple tried to scam the early church, 1,980 years ago, lying to the Holy Spirit by pretending to donate all their property to God. They had not been obliged to give



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anything to the church, but their pretending to give everything was a spiritual fraud that brought them fatal trouble. Read about Ananias and Sapphira: Acts 5:1-10.

Family Ruin: In 1877, Cornelius Vanderbilt was the richest man in America, and fifty years later, his family was ruined. In his insatiable drive for riches, he disdained his wife and children. He was greedy, rude and unloving, but very, very wealthy. Read about this family trouble in *Fortune's Children: The Fall of the House of Vanderbilt*, or check http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cornelius_Vanderbilt.

Inner Pain: Spiritual trouble exemplified at 1 Timothy 6:8-10.

Prison: For over a decade, Bernie Madoff seemed fabulously wealthy. He was prosperous in every way, but his income was troubled: A massive, sophisticated Ponzi scheme that cheated thousands of investors out of multi-millions, for which, on June 29, 2009, Madoff earned 150 years of in prison. See Madoff's trail of trouble here: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bernard_Madoff.

Curses and Doom: The Bible warns about the trouble coming to everyone who gets rich by taking advantage of others (James 5:1-6).

Possible Implied Warning—Financial Statement Focus

This proverb may implicitly warn about excessive focus on cash-flow. The wicked focus on the flow of wealth (income statement), while the righteous concentrate on existing assets (balance sheet). Early in the last century, a business's financial evaluation emphasized its balance sheet, rather than its earnings statement. Since then, much more attention is given to earnings as a measure of financial health. Some analysts look exclusively at corporate earnings, while others focus on debt-to-equity ratios and stock prices. The first characterizes growth or momentum investing, and the latter, value investing. This text suggests that value investing, pioneered by [Benjamin Graham](#) in 1934, is the healthier style.

Excess Stress Brings Trouble

Stress is a massive trouble, plaguing wealth creators in modern society, piled upon broken relationships, guilt, fear, worry, and regrets. These troubles rob earners of their joy in their income. This text doesn't say the "wicked" fail to get rich, but in getting rich, they inadvertently ruin their well-being. And anyone partnering with the wicked can expect a share of the contaminated "trouble."

At this point, though, we still need to ask about the many righteous homes lacking great wealth. Some argue that great wealth doesn't necessarily mean material riches, but spiritual wealth like love, joy, peace, and contentment. But the text doesn't say, "great virtue is in the house of the



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righteous.” It says, “great wealth is in the house of the righteous.” What does “wealth” really mean in this context?

Translating: *Wealth*

The Hebrew word for “wealth,” נָכֹס (ḥō•sēn, pronounced “kho-sen”), appears first here and then only four more times in Scripture. Usually “kho-sen” refers to material abundance or prosperity. The KJV twice translates the word as “strength.” It comes from a root meaning “stored” or “treasured.” In Proverbs 27:24, this word is used to teach us not to rely on the permanence of stored treasure. The word here may refer to spiritual wealth, but it’s never used like that elsewhere. ḥō•sēn seems to refer exclusively to material assets. So the text asserts indirectly that wealth is desirable. Otherwise, though it may always be a test or a challenge, God would not give it to the righteous.

God Moves Wealth from Place to Place



Historically, when a nation publicly esteems the Bible and at least tries to live accordingly, it is blessed with material prosperity. At Great Britain’s height under Queen Victoria, its colonies spanned the globe. “The sun never set on the British Empire”—literally. For the two centuries prior, the Bible had been Britain’s most important book. Contrast this with the defunct Soviet Union (USSR), which, though geographically vast, imploded, because it disdained biblical truth and aggressively attacked its teaching.

Sometimes, God blesses the righteous, like Abraham and Job, with great, visible wealth. At other times, he strips the wealth from the righteous, like Job and Elijah. Yet, though God removes the wealth from their own holdings, does that mean God removes the wealth from their “house,” their family—or spiritual family?

Family Wealth or Personal Income

“House” here refers not only to a physical dwelling, but also to the household, home and family. This implies that the righteous focus on family wealth, while the wicked focus on personal cash-flow.

God’s blessing of God and treasure comes upon the whole household of the righteous, not just the current income stream. Consider the power of children’s prayers within a virtuous family,



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and the absence of prayer in the life of the vicious. Often, the children of righteous receive the great material wealth, rather than their parents. For example, Chinese multi-billionaire Huang Guang-yu lives very frugally. His mother tells of his ancestors, who traveled to Thailand to trade sugar and beans—and to share Bible stories. The children and grandchildren of godly Christians are the financial beneficiaries.

Family wealth typically arises with the parents, most particularly the father or grandfather. A half-hearted, vicious king like Rehoboam had much wealth in his house, due to the righteousness of his forefather kings David and Solomon, but his income, current cash-flow, was contaminated by trouble.

God is the True Righteous Father

“Great wealth is in the house of the righteous,” because the true father of this household owns the entire Universe. The righteous have God Almighty as their Father. When people are re-born into the family of God, they are born into incredible wealth, spanning two whole worlds. God says, “Heaven is my throne and earth is my footstool.” The material wealth that God’s children enjoy on earth is only “footstool wealth.” The “throne wealth” is yet untasted!

Using Great Wealth

God often does not give his children wealth. He supplies their needs, not their greeds. Great wealth is not meant for the personal indulgence of God’s children, but for the running of His Kingdom. 19th century China missionary Hudson Taylor stated this truth precisely: “God’s work, done God’s way, will not lack God’s supply.” All God’s Children are given great wealth, but never for their indulgence. But is it not simply childish to trust in Daddy’s money? Not really. We are told to pray to God as our “Father in heaven.” Yet praying for God to supply does not absolve God’s children from using it well.

Training Children in Wealth Management



God’s household may be viewed as an enormous estate, engaging both children and servants. The Father could give the children more wealth than they could handle, but He chooses to deny them much of what they want, or when they want it. Instead, he makes them work, learn skills, and enjoy a sense of accomplishment. During this training, they sometimes feel like mere servants. And yet, they can command much more wealth than any of



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the servants. The Father, head of the house of the righteous, is quick to bestow His vast riches on any of His children, once he is confident the child will use these resources to further the family, rather than the child's personal whims.

OUR CREATOR, REDEEMER, AND FRIEND

Jesus says, "Blessed are the meek for they shall inherit the earth," Matthew 5:5. He uses the word, "inherit," not the words, "conquers" or "overwhelms."

One qualifies for an inheritance based on family ties, not on performance. An inheritance is usually unearned. It comes or becomes available, with family ties. A reward is earned by some accomplishment, but nothing we do earns us this inheritance. It is a gift freely given.

Submission to God, living in His family, is the true basis for receiving great wealth, true wealth.

APPLICATION

- Memorize the text in your favourite translation and think about it often.
- Are you one of God's children or merely one of his creations?
- Are you in the habit of asking God to give you some of his "great wealth?" If not, why not?
- Read the book ***True Riches*** - *What Jesus Really Said about Money and Your Heart* Copyright 2019 by John Cortines and Gregory Baumer.

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



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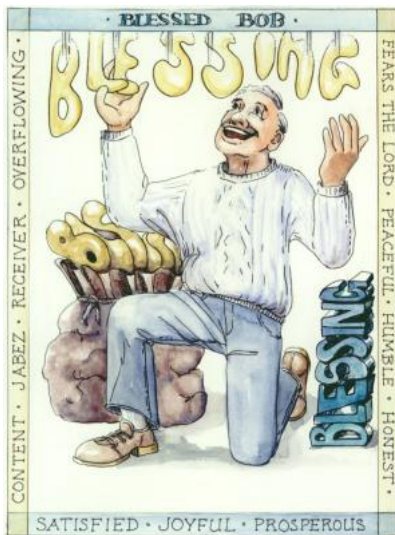
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KEY WORDS

accounting, better life (quality), contamination, contentment, distress, house, income, inheritance, investments, prosperity, righteous, stress, trouble, wealth, wicked

ILLUSTRATION

[Who is Blessed Bob?](#)



Blessed Bob is very fortunate. He recognizes that good things come from God! God is shunned by many, but not by Bob. Bob loves God. He wants to receive all the good things that God has for him. He's not too proud to ask God for help. In fact, Bob prays often. Some think that he prays without ceasing. But he is not without fault. Blessed Bob makes many mistakes, and when he does, he admits his errors. He corrects them and presses on.

Bob gets so many blessings he feels overwhelmed. His cup overflows. But he doesn't hoard his blessings. Like Generous Genevieve, Blessed Bob likes to give to others. He is truly prosperous, even though there are many who are financially richer than he is.

We see examples of Blessed Bob in the Bible in the lives of Job and Joseph. Job went through some very good times (Job 29:2-25) and some very bad times (Job 2:7-8). Joseph had similar financial cycles (Genesis 39:2,21). Both men kept their focus on God, not on their financial condition (Job 1:21, Genesis 50:19-21).

More recently we have examples of those who have lived with the same life focus. R. G. LeTourneau was the inventor of the largest earth moving machines in the 1930's and 1940's. He credited God for his tremendous success. He gave away much of his wealth while he was



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still living saying that, "When I shovel money out to God's interests, God shovels money back to me, but God's shovel is bigger than mine." He was called the mover of men and mountains because of his great work and influence. On his gravestone, R. G. LeTourneau left all visitors with these words, SEEK YE FIRST THE KINGDOM OF GOD AND HIS RIGHTEOUSNESS AND ALL THESE THINGS SHALL BE ADDED UNTO YOU MATTHEW 6:33.

Blessed Bob is full of joy. He is satisfied with life!

