

What is more desirable than great wealth? (22:1)

A good name is to be more desired than great wealth. Favour is better than silver and gold.

THE TEXT (NASB)

A good name is to be more desired than great wealth. Favour is better than silver and gold.

A good name is rather to be chosen than great riches, and loving favour rather than silver and gold. KJV - Proverbs 22:1

INTRODUCTION



Great wealth is not as desirable as it looks.

Imagine being fabulously wealthy, but completely scorned and friendless. You may have billions, but if your name is despised by all, if you dare not show your face in public, your riches will be ashes in your mouth.

And it can get worse—much worse.



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COMMENTARY

Wealth can be held privately, but it cannot be enjoyed privately. The first half of this proverb makes that point emphatically, and the second half makes it more concrete. We are social creatures. We can celebrate some great achievement with others, but before we're going to party with them, they must be honestly happy for us.

In referring to wealth, the key words in this text are currency—silver and gold—not food and clothing. The text describes a dilemma arising once the bare necessities of life have been secured. It is a most basic conflict of priorities. What's more important to us, having good friendships or good investments?

Translation

What is at issue here? A good name. In the original Hebrew, the word, "good," is absent. It simply reads "a name," and yet virtually all translations including the German and Spanish modify this with "good" or some equivalent. Why? The second phrase answers this: "Favour is better than silver and gold." What is favour? Clearly it's very important. You might think that more people would be looking for it.

The Hebrew word for "favour" here is חֵן (hēn, pronounced "khen"), which interestingly is most often translated as "acceptance" or "grace." Used fully 67 times in the Bible, its first appearance is at Genesis 6:8, where Noah, in stark contrast with all the rest of humanity, is described as finding favour-grace-acceptance in the eyes of God. Indeed, the vast majority of uses refer to the favour of God and from God. Sometimes God's favour is directed to the beneficiary through other people, rather than directly from God.

Allies Trump Assets

The implications are profound. Though it's good to find favour with people, good to be respected in society, it's much more important to find favour with God Almighty. Simply put, if we've found favour with God Almighty, if He is our ally, then we'll benefit more than from billions of dollars. The favour of God is worth more than all the wealth of the world. But then, what does this have to do with our name? Being favoured by God means having our names recorded in His Book of Life, something very much better than being rich. So how do we obtain this good name and favour, since they are better than riches?

No Man is an Island



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Some commentators believe that this proverb describes not one, but two things being more valuable than wealth: A good name and favour. I think the two are so closely related, they can be considered a single quality: Treating others charitably. No one is an island. If we treat other people with kindness, honesty, and wisdom, we should win their respect. We should build a good reputation. We appreciate other human beings, and we will be appreciated by them. Yet the fact remains that wealth, in itself, has no such assurance of friendship.

History is full of those who have been incalculably wealthy, but friendless. Who would want to party with Adolf Hitler, knowing that his delicacies were bought with gold pried from the teeth of the millions slaughtered in the Holocaust?

Classic Comments

Adam Clarke comments on our text: “Character will support a man in many circumstances; and there are many rich men that have no name: But the word of the man of character will go farther than all their riches.”

The great Matthew Henry observes:



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We should be more careful to do that by which we may get and keep a good name, than that by which we may raise and increase a great estate. Great riches bring great cares with them, expose men to danger, and add no real value to a man.... To be well beloved, to have an interest in the esteem and affections of all about us; this is better than silver and gold... This should teach us to look with a holy contempt upon the wealth of this world.

Indirectly both commentators imply that being debt-free with few assets is better than to have a balance sheet with many assets and many liabilities.

Wealth Can Grow or Shrink



A person's financial "net worth" (an expression I hate) is not stable, but rises or falls, given a host of factors the market conditions, spending patterns and work ethic. Similarly, a person's reputation can be affected by external factors, like the rumour mill. Yet over time, our reputation will rise or fall from our personal behavior. A good reputation can be suddenly shattered, perhaps from a scandal, or shine from an act of kindness or heroism.

OUR CREATOR, REDEEMER, AND FRIEND

Jesus was not financially wealthy.

Jesus had no house or dwelling, (Matthew 8:20). We know little about His youth, yet we know "He grew in wisdom and honour and in favor with God and man," Luke 2:52, despite the fact his parents were poor. Even when young, He gained something more valuable than gold.

When Jesus started His public preaching ministry, He humbled Himself. He insisted that he be baptized with common sinners, though he himself was without sin. For this, His Father God was "well pleased" with His Son (Matthew 3:16-17).



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APPLICATION

- Memorize the text in your favourite Bible translation and think about it often.
- Seek a good reputation instead of wealth, especially once you have the basics of food and clothing.
- Pay more attention to your relationships- with God and others- than to your riches.
- By going into debt you risk a default on the debt and hence damaging your reputation. It may be better to avoid the debt altogether.

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



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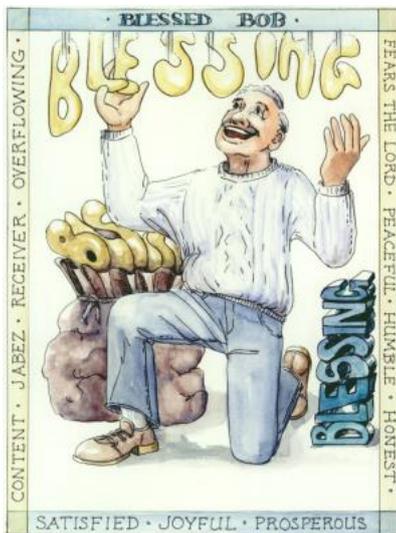
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KEY WORDS

assets, accounting, better life (quality), debt, gold, honor, investments, reputation, shame, silver, wealth

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!

