

Inheritance and Wealth

Proverbs 13:22

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“A good man leaves an inheritance to his children’s children: and the wealth of the sinner is laid up for the just.” - Proverbs 13:22 (Cf. 10:22; 11:25; 20:7).

This is a continued examination on Solomon’s part furthering his contrast in relation to advantage and disadvantage in life. In a point that Solomon has made before, basically said, a good men’s estates remain with their families, the wealth of the wicked does not. In the providence of God, it will ultimately belong to the righteous (or just). It is interesting that, as in most Hebrew, there is no separate word for “man” used here and we could (and should) understand this as the good ‘one’ and as a group reference to all who fit the category ‘good’. The word appears as “good”, better, well, as a descriptive - “better” or “goodness”. It can appear as merry, fair, prosperity, even prosperity; all based on the particular context in which it is used. It is even used to speak of moral goodness a number of times.

This immediate section speaks of walking with the wise (vv. 20–21) includes prudence to care for children

- (1) by providing a material **inheritance** that extends even to grandchildren (on inheritance in Israel, see Num. 27:5–11; Deut. 21:15–17), and
- (2) by providing moral **discipline** (Prov. 13:24). In thus seeking to provide, a parent ought also to pursue justice (v. 23), exhibiting their faith that the **righteous** will have **enough to satisfy** (v. 25; cf. v. 21).

This verse particularly speaks of two things:

- First, calling the one in view a “good man” pretty much speaking of one who has wisdom and good sense. It declares that such a man sees to it, as best he/she is able, that he family, down to grandchildren and such, are sufficiently provided for.
- Secondly, Solomon contrasts this with what is the truth about those who are “sinners”, or the one who is in the wrong or does things wrongly. He offends or stands culpable for and action(s). This word has the stand and understood of just what “sin” actually is - it is to “miss the mark”.

The implication here is that the good man does as he ought to do and is thus blessed by God. The sinner follows his own course of action and ultimately stands culpable for missing that mark, namely his responsibility to care for his family and grandchildren, etc.

We should mention that this second word has a broader (and more familiar) understanding that applies to moral and/or spiritual application, speaking of

missing the “mark” that God has set for men and bearing the culpability of his missing of it, of his failure to measure up to God’s holy requirement! One demonstration of this, Solomon says, is that he (at least to some degree) lacks God’s blessing and fails to see His increase. This is not referring to the idea that this one simply didn’t save or set enough aside. It seems clear that honoring abey the requirements of God and thus reaping His blessing is what is in view.

That is what we can understand by the term “laid up”. It is not a reference to some haphazard series of events. It’s not investing or anything like it. It isn’t wise use of income, it’s not anything of the like. It is speaking of God’s blessing and increase, of His seeing to it that the resources that come into a persons’ hands in life are taken by God and made to be sufficient, not only for the immediate time, but for the future, for family and next generation as well.

As Solomon has said before, on the other hand, the life resources of the “sinner” actually leave them and fall into the hands of what he calls the “Righteous”. These are the those who HAVE measured up to the standards of God and His holiness. We must recognize that this is NOT speaking of some kind of works thing where someone is “good enough” for God to go ahead and bless. Any time the Word of God speaks of blessing from Him, there is ALWAYS the implication that it a result of God’s grace and mercy.

This is a very important truth. We don’t earn God’s goodness or blessing and it is essential that this knowledge color all that we do. By the Way...notice that the wealth of the sinner is “laid up” for the righteous. The word means “saved up”, sheltered, or reserved and the like. Interestingly, the idea is that God reserves the wealth of the sinner and, ultimately uses it as a part of the lifelong blessing of the righteous.

I can hear some of our more Liberal (religious liberals) saying “Wait!! That’s not fair!!” We need to remember that God does not have any obligation to be fair; but only to be Righteous and/or Just as they are a part of the manifestation and exercise of His nature. God is entirely Just in using the wasted “wealth” of a “sinner” (remember the definition earlier) for the benefit and blessing of those who are a part of His family.

One thing we can take from this and be encouraged by is the truth that this sets for us a reliable expression of Gods’ mind that we can depend upon and look forward to in our lives. It’s a wonderful thing!!

Rehearsing our interpretation - These words may be understood literally and metaphorically. Literally, they state what has often, not always, come to pass. Good men who acquire and use their property *well*, do often leave an inheritance which remains for long in their families, especially if the heirs are well brought up. Whereas, not seldom, though not always, ill-gotten wealth reaches not to the third generation, and even passes out of the family into the hands of good men, whom God thus rewards. Metaphorically, it is true of the inheritance of a good man’s principles and name; and in a mystical sense of certain spiritual privileges which may be (as by baptism) conveyed to others, or may be transferred from one nation or individual to another.

Likewise, it is profitable for us to look at some Scriptural illustrations of this truth:

- Abraham, not willing to be rich at *any* cost, and only anxious to please God and order his household aright, transmitted an inheritance of wealth, and above all of covenant blessings, to his posterity.
- It went to Jacob, pious and diligent, God gave of the grasping Laban's property; and his grandsons, Ephraim and Manasseh, as well as their father, inherited his blessing.
- David's lamp burned for seventeen generations; and
- Upon Esther was Haman's house bestowed (Esth. 8:1).
- The kingdom of God was taken from the Jews and given to other nations (Matt. 21:43).
- The group of servants of Jesus that was disgraced by Judas was transferred to Matthias.
- Children are "holy" by federal union with the Church, through even one Christian parent (1 Cor. 7:14).

Thinking by way of application we can see that they who "*make haste to be rich,*" and love their riches, leave God out of their calculations. But sooner or later, in one way or another, He asserts Himself as the "*Disposer of all of it*" (Job 34:13). History must have taught men this, even if their own eyes have not seen it. In how many instances has property acquired by spoliation or dishonesty, wasted in extravagance or vice, hoarded in avarice, or transmitted to ill-reared children, been lost ere long to the family! And, not seldom has that wealth passed into the hands of "*the just,*" and "*the innocent have divided it*" (Job 27:17). Thus (unconsciously) does "*the sinner gather and heap up, that he may give to him that is good before God*" (Eccles. 2:26). But all things are the true Christian's, and amongst these things "*the world*" (1 Cor. 3:22). Let me but serve my Master well, seeking first His kingdom, and He will give me what is best. It may be, my thrift and industry shall be blest to the increase of money, and an inheritance to leave behind become mine. If not, I am secured a sufficiency, and may bequeath that good example, name, and education to my children, which shall serve them instead of riches, and make them "*loved for the father's sake.*"