

# Unseemly Delight

*Proverbs 19:10*

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*“Delight is not seemly for a fool; much less for a servant to have rule over princes.” - Proverbs 19:10 (26:1, 8; 30:22).*

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There are times when the Scripture can be a bit less than clear in what is trying to get across to us. This is especially true and understandable when we consider the differences between the languages it was written in and the languages we are reading it in. Fortunately, God has given a solid and reliable, ongoing series of interpreters, translators to take those original languages and provide them in the different modern languages to make it possible for any and everyone to read and understand God’s Word.

This verse is a fairly good example of what I am talking about. “Delight” here is not speaking about happiness or the like. It is the Hebrew word “ta’ānūg” (pronounced - “*ta’anugah*”) and speaks of the idea of luxurious wealth. It is not even talking about the pleasure that richness brings. Rather it is talking about the personal property of being wealthy and of the luxury it brings.

Solomon’s point is another one that contrasts the fool with the wise. As we have seen, this is a part of a section that speaks to the matter of personal conduct. What Solomon is getting at in the first part of the verse is that which he already said a number of times. The fool is not rewarded for his foolishness. Rather, it is most often so that he/she suffers all of the results of his/her foolishness, and none of those are wealth and what comes with it.

The phrasing at the beginning of the verse is the idea that wealth is not a suitable situation for the fool. They have not earned and will, most likely waste it, not using it in a godly and Biblical fashion. The Scripture tells us that wealth is a gift from God. Solomon especially was clear on this, perhaps because he had been given wealth and had struggled to use it rightly.

We’re told that it is God who gives, it is not simply a happenstance or the result of purely human effort or talent. Moses told us that it DOES take effort, but ultimately comes by the power of God.

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*Deut 8:18 “And you shall remember the LORD your God, for it is He who gives you power to get wealth, that He may establish His covenant which He swore to your fathers, as it is this day.*

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The Prophet Samuel said that God is responsible, in this area, for both wealth and poverty.

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*1 Sam 2:7 The LORD makes poor and makes rich; He brings low and lifts up.*

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The Scripture also makes very clear just where it is that wealth or riches comes from and why...

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**Prov 10:22** *The blessing of the LORD makes one rich, And He adds no sorrow with it.*

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The Bible is very clear that that the blessing of the Lord is not something that just comes willy-nilly, or something that can be earned. It is a function of ones' daily and fervent submission and walking with God as our Father and Master. Again, we must take care that we do not stray over into the give and thus receive end of things, for this is unacceptable. God gives to us because of His goodness, generosity and grace. It is NOT because we earned it. It may be so that in the earthly realm, one can "earn" what one has; but that is a very dangerous concept in the spiritual realm. We must take care, great care to place all of these matters in their right perspective. Solomon spoke to the idea again and again.

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**Ecc1 5:19** *As for every man to whom God has given riches and wealth, and given him power to eat of it, to receive his heritage and rejoice in his labor—this is the gift of God.*

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All that we have, from the very basics, to great wealth is a GIFT of God and must, by His children, be viewed as such. Further we must look at our possession of wealth as a stewardship before the Lord. Paul said, over in 1 Timothy that looking wrongly at the wealth that God gives is a great danger. In this famous verse we read that the love of money is actually the root of all kinds of evil.

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**1 Tim 6:10** *For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil, for which some have strayed from the faith in their greediness, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows.*

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The Bible is very clear that wealth and the love of it can often lead to quite a number of things:

- Pride.

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**Ezek 28:5** *By your great wisdom in trade you have increased your riches, And your heart is lifted up because of your riches), "*

**Hos 12:8** *And Ephraim said, 'Surely I have become rich, I have found wealth for myself; In all my labors They shall find in me no iniquity that is sin.'*

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- Forgetting God.

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**Deut 8:13–14** *and when your herds and your flocks multiply, and your silver and your gold are multiplied, and all that you have is multiplied; 14 when your heart is lifted up, and you forget the LORD your God who brought you out of the land of Egypt, from the house of bondage;*

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- Rebelling against God.
- **Deut 32:15** “But Jeshurun grew fat and kicked; You grew fat, you grew thick, You are obese! Then he forsook God *who* made him, And scornfully esteemed the Rock of his salvation.
- **Neh 9:25–26** And they took strong cities and a rich land, And possessed houses full of all goods, Cisterns *already* dug, vineyards, olive groves, And fruit trees in abundance. So they ate and were filled and grew fat, And delighted themselves in Your great goodness. **26** “Nevertheless they were disobedient And rebelled against You, Cast Your law behind their backs And killed Your prophets, who testified against them To turn them to Yourself; And they worked great provocations.
- **Prov 30:8–9** Remove falsehood and lies far from me; Give me neither poverty nor riches—Feed me with the food allotted to me; **9** Lest I be full and deny *You*, And say, “Who *is* the LORD?” Or lest I be poor and steal, And profane the name of my God.
- Rejecting Christ.

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***Matt 10:22** And you will be hated by all for My name’s sake. But he who endures to the end will be saved.*

***Matt 19:22** But when the young man heard that saying, he went away sorrowful, for he had great possessions.*

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- Self-sufficiency.

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***Prov 28:11** The rich man is wise in his own eyes, But the poor who has understanding searches him out.*

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- Anxiety.

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***Ecc1 5:12** The sleep of a laboring man is sweet, Whether he eats little or much; But the abundance of the rich will not permit him to sleep.*

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- An overbearing spirit.

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***Prov 18:23** The poor man uses entreaties, But the rich answers roughly.*

*Violence.*

***Mic 6:12** For her rich men are full of violence, Her inhabitants have spoken lies, And their tongue is deceitful in their mouth.*

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- Oppression.

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***James 2:6** But you have dishonored the poor man. Do not the rich oppress you and drag you into the courts?*

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- Fraud.

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*James 5:4 Indeed the wages of the laborers who mowed your fields, which you kept back by fraud, cry out; and the cries of the reapers have reached the ears of the Lord of Sabaoth.*

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- Sensual indulgence.

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*Luke 16:19 "There was a certain rich man who was clothed in purple and fine linen and fared sumptuously every day.*

*James 5:5 You have lived on the earth in pleasure and luxury; you have fattened your hearts as in a day of slaughter.*

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Looking and thinking these matters over it is easy to see why Solomon was so very firm in this passage (and others) concerning the danger of and the serious fashion in which we need to deal with the matter of wealth and possessions. It is clear that Solomon believes that those who possess wealth and riches, should be sure that, in their minds and hearts, they view them in a Biblical and godly fashion by:

- They must ascribe them to God.

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*1 Chr 29:12 Both riches and honor come from You, And You reign over all. In Your hand is power and might; In Your hand it is to make great And to give strength to all.*

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- They must be sure that they do not trust in them.

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*Job 31:24 "If I have made gold my hope, Or said to fine gold, 'You are my confidence';*

*1 Tim 6:17 Command those who are rich in this present age not to be haughty, nor to trust in uncertain riches but in the living God, who gives us richly all things to enjoy.*

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- They ought to be sure that they do not boast of obtaining them.

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*Deut 8:17 then you say in your heart, 'My power and the might of my hand have gained me this wealth.'*

*Jer 9:23 Thus says the LORD: "Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, Let not the mighty man glory in his might, Nor let the rich man glory in his riches;*

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- They surely ought not hoard them.

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*Matt 6:19 "Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal;*

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- Instead of hoarding them, they should be sure that they devote them to God's service.

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*1 Chr 29:3* Moreover, because I have set my affection on the house of my God, I have given to the house of my God, over and above all that I have prepared for the holy house, my own special treasure of gold and silver:

*Mark 12:42–44* Then one poor widow came and threw in two mites, which make a quadrans. **43** So He called His disciples to Himself and said to them, “Assuredly, I say to you that this poor widow has put in more than all those who have given to the treasury; **44** for they all put in out of their abundance, but she out of her poverty put in all that she had, her whole livelihood.”

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- There is also a very clear priority to use our resources to the giving of them to the poor.

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*Matt 19:21* Jesus said to him, “If you want to be perfect, go, sell what you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow Me.”

*1 John 3:17* But whoever has this world’s goods, and sees his brother in need, and shuts up his heart from him, how does the love of God abide in him?

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- A priority for us as believers ought to be that we use them in promoting the salvation of others.

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*Luke 16:9* “And I say to you, make friends for yourselves by unrighteous mammon, that when you fail, they may receive you into an everlasting home.”

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- In the most general of senses, God is very clear that we must be generous in all things.

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*1 Chr 29:14* But who am I, and who are my people, That we should be able to offer so willingly as this? For all things come from You, And of Your own we have given You.

*1 Tim 6:18* Let them do good, that they be rich in good works, ready to give, willing to share,

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- In contrast to the unredeemed and their view, we must be sure that are not being haughty with regard to our possessions.

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*1 Tim 6:17* Command those who are rich in this present age not to be haughty, nor to trust in uncertain riches but in the living God, who gives us richly all things to enjoy.

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- One of the points that Scripture makes clear is that, when converted, believers ought to rejoice in being humbled.

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*James 1:9–10 Let the lowly brother glory in his exaltation, **10** but the rich in his humiliation, because as a flower of the field he will pass away.*

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Getting back to our discussion of Proverbs 19:10 we should, in passing that this passage does not mean it is always wrong for a slave (or servant) to rise to power; otherwise, Joseph's ascent in the Egyptian government would be an example of moral disorder in the world. Rather, it suggests that fortune and misfortune are not always fair: sometimes a **fool** becomes wealthy without doing anything to merit that wealth, and sometimes a slave rises to power without an ability to rule well. Solomon's point here is that the two are completely unseemly or contradictory.

Just to quickly rehearse our interpretation of the passage - Good sense revolts from incongruity. And such is witnessed when "a fool," an inferior person mentally, morally, and spiritually, is seen leading a soft and delicate life, with the trappings of rank and of a splendid prosperity. As these are not suited to him, so under such circumstances is he sure to make himself ridiculous or worse. Still more unbecoming, still less seemly, (remember that the time in which the Bible was lived out and written was time during which indentured servitude was common. This is not to lend any kind of approval on the matter, but simply to note that it was so. It was far beyond the purview, societally, of the Bible writers to snap their fingers and do away with the matter, but they do address the need of these who "owned" slaves to do so kindly and responsibly. again, this is not to say it is in any way acceptable as an institution but that its' existence, if it exists, MUST be subject the rules and regulations God put on all things) Solomon's point is that the matter in view is still more unbecoming, and less seemly to the spectacle from the beginning of the verse, that is of one born in servitude and not superior to his position by education or gifts, elevated as a favorite by the weakness of his master (whether a king or not) over the heads of men, his "betters" from every point of view. The power put into the hands of such an underling is almost certain to be insolently and intolerably misused.

As we usually observe, there are places in the Bible where there are effective illustrations to demonstrate our point:

- Haman, whatever his extraction, was but a subject raised to a height of power from which, giddy with pride and ambition, he fell after a discreditable career.
- Tobiah, to whose name the opprobrious title, "*the servant*," is constantly affixed, was probably a slave by birth, who, having been raised out of that mean position, thrust himself forward as an opponent of the rebuilding of Jerusalem till thrust away by Nehemiah (Neh. 2:10, 19; 4; 6; 13:8).
- It was out of keeping with order and dignity that David should have to complain of any of his subjects that they were "too hard" for him (2 Sam. 3:39), or to submit to insolent language as from Joab (2 Sam. 3:24, 19:5).

By way of application we should observe that “*Order is Heaven’s first law.*” There are ranks and degrees among its sublime inhabitants. And so on earth. “*God is not the author of confusion*” (1 Cor. 14:33). We observe, accordingly, that violations of what is congruous and becoming in social life are seldom unattended by serious evils. The principle which, Biblically, no matter how we despise or disapprove of the office itself, applies to slaves and princes extends far wider. It is unwise to raise any one to a position or station of life for which he is unfitted. Now this is a not, as we have said, to lend any approval or endorsement to the existence or legitimacy of these “offices” in or of themselves. It is simply to recognize their existence and to proclaim that, in and when they exist (as well as where) they are subject to God’s authority and rules. People are people and it is the sure testimony of history that people, and society do very, very wicked things. Yet, in the midst of many of those things, the rulership of God still exists. When men will not give up their servants/slaves, they are obligated to treat them Biblically, that is kindly and generously or to suffer the displeasure of the God of heaven.

It would be unwise in my own situation, for existence, to accept such an elevation. Disgrace is almost sure to follow. The Apostle’s advice is good as a general rule, “*Let every man wherein he is called therein abide*” (1 Cor. 7:24). But if, through some natural defect, a man be unsuited to his post, let him give place to a fitter man. Far wiser to do this than to allow himself to be swayed and practically superseded by a subordinate. Harmonious surroundings are essential to true greatness. How would the Baptist have fulfilled his mission had he “*lived delicately in kings’ courts*” (Luke 7:25)? It was his wisdom to lead an ascetic life, and thus, though a subject, he acquired power even over a king’s conscience.

Let it be said in closing that we need to be careful to see and acknowledge our “place” in things. This not to eschew ambition or hard work. There are, surely, occasions in life where another ranks higher than we; and when we move along the “tree” to a place above others. Solomon’s point here is that there are also times when this occurs in an incongruous and inappropriate fashion. I believe he desires for us to, when we can, see to it that this does not happen on our “watch”.