

Proverbs 10:15

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

The rich man's wealth is his strong city: the destruction of the poor is their poverty.

Analysis

This observation describes contrasting securities: wealth for the rich, poverty for the poor. "The rich man's wealth is his strong city" uses qiryat uzzo (קִרְעֹזֶת, his fortified city)—a metaphor for security and protection. Ancient cities with thick walls, towers, and gates provided refuge from enemies. The rich trust their resources as others trust defensive fortifications.

"The destruction of the poor is their poverty" reverses the image. For those lacking resources, poverty itself becomes mechittah (מְחִתָּה, destruction, ruin). While wealth creates options and security, poverty limits opportunities and leaves one vulnerable. This isn't moral judgment but sociological observation—material resources significantly impact one's security and possibilities.

However, Proverbs 10:2 warns that "treasures of wickedness profit nothing," and 18:11 notes that the rich man's wealth is only a strong city "in his own conceit." True security comes from the LORD (Proverbs 18:10). Jesus warned against trusting riches (Mark 10:23-25) and commanded storing treasures in heaven (Matthew 6:19-21). Paul instructed the wealthy not to trust uncertain riches but God who provides richly (1 Timothy 6:17). The proverb describes reality without endorsing materialism—only God provides ultimate security.

Historical Context

Solomon's wealth made him keenly aware of affluence's advantages and temptations. Ancient Near Eastern society had stark divisions between wealthy landowners and poor laborers. Walled cities provided security during Israel's conflicts with surrounding nations. The rich could afford homes within protected cities, while the poor lived vulnerably outside walls or in less fortified areas. This proverb reflects these realities while warning against false confidence in wealth.

Related Passages

Ephesians 2:8 — Salvation by grace through faith

Romans 10:9 — Confession and belief for salvation

Study Questions

1. In what ways do you treat wealth (or its pursuit) as your 'strong city' rather than trusting God?
2. How should Christians balance wisdom about financial prudence with warnings against trusting in riches?
3. What does it mean practically to make the 'name of the LORD' your strong tower (Proverbs 18:10) rather than wealth?

Interlinear Text

דָּלִים	מְחַת	תְּעִזָּה	עַשְׂרֵת	תְּקִרְבַּת	הַזְּרִיר	וְהַזְּרִיר	וְהַזְּרִיר
of the poor	the destruction	is his strong	city	The rich man's	wealth		

Notes:
דָּלִים (H1800) is the plural form of **dal**, meaning 'poor'.
מְחַת (H4288) is the singular form of **malchut**, meaning 'destruction'.
תְּקִרְבַּת (H7151) is the singular form of **qirbat**, meaning 'city'.
הַזְּרִיר (H6223) is the singular form of **zirer**, meaning 'rich man'.
וְהַזְּרִיר (H1952) is the singular form of **zirer**, meaning 'rich man'.
וְהַזְּרִיר (H7389) is the singular form of **zirer**, meaning 'rich man'.
עַשְׂרֵת (H5797) is the singular form of **asaret**, meaning 'strong'.

Additional Cross-References

Proverbs 18:11 (Parallel theme): The rich man's wealth is his strong city, and as an high wall in his own conceit.

Proverbs 19:7 (Parallel theme): All the brethren of the poor do hate him: how much more do his friends go far from him? he pursueth them with words, yet they are wanting to him.

Psalms 52:7 (Parallel theme): Lo, this is the man that made not God his strength; but trusted in the abundance of his riches, and strengthened himself in his wickedness.

Proverbs 14:20 (Parallel theme): The poor is hated even of his own neighbour: but the rich hath many friends.

Ecclesiastes 7:12 (Parallel theme): For wisdom is a defence, and money is a defence: but the excellency of knowledge is, that wisdom giveth life to them that have it.

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