

# Proverbs 13:8

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

The ransom of a man's life are his riches: but the poor heareth not rebuke.

## Analysis

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This proverb addresses wealth's relative power to rescue or protect. "The ransom of a man's life are his riches" observes that wealthy people can sometimes buy their way out of danger. Kofer nefesh-ish oshro (כֹּפֶר נֶפֶשׁ-אִישׁ עַשְׂרוֹ), the ransom of a man's life—his riches). Kofer (כֹּפֶר) means ransom price, bribe, atonement. Wealth can pay kidnappers, satisfy extortionists, or legally settle disputes.

"But the poor heareth not rebuke" presents an ironic benefit of poverty. The Hebrew is terse: rash lo-shama ge'arah (רַשׁ לֹא-שָׁמַע גֵּרָה), the poor does not hear rebuke/threat). Because the poor have nothing, they're not targets for extortion or kidnapping. They don't hear threats demanding ransom because they have no ransom to give.

The proverb offers sociological observation without moral judgment. Wealth provides certain advantages (protection through ransom), but poverty provides others (immunity from wealth-based threats). Neither condition guarantees security. Proverbs elsewhere warns against trusting riches (11:28, 23:4-5). Job 36:18-19 warns: "Because there is wrath, beware lest he take thee away with his stroke: then a great ransom cannot deliver thee." Ultimate security comes not from wealth or poverty but from God. Jesus warned about deceitfulness of riches (Mark 4:19) and told the rich young ruler to sell all and follow Him (Mark 10:21). Christ is our ransom (Mark 10:45, 1 Peter 1:18-19).

## Historical Context

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Ancient Near Eastern societies experienced kidnapping for ransom, political hostage-taking, and legal fines. Wealthy individuals were targets because they could pay. Exodus 21:30 allowed paying ransom (kofer) for accidental death. Numbers 35:31 prohibited ransom for murderers. The poor, having no resources, weren't worth kidnapping or extorting. This proverb reflects these realities without romanticizing either wealth or poverty.

## Related Passages

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**Romans 1:17** — The righteous shall live by faith

**Hebrews 11:1** — Definition of faith

## Study Questions

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1. In what ways does wealth create vulnerabilities and threats that poverty avoids?
2. How can we maintain proper perspective on wealth—neither trusting it for security nor despising it as evil?
3. How does Christ's ransom (Mark 10:45) provide what no amount of money can purchase—redemption from sin and death?

## Interlinear Text

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לֹא	יְשִׁיבֶת	עַשְׂרֵה	וְ	אֵשׁ	נֶפֶשׁ	כִּפְרָה	הַרְמָאָה
heareth	H3808	H8085			H3726	H5315	H3724
<b>the ransom</b>	<b>life</b>	<b>of a man's</b>	<b>are his riches</b>	<b>but the poor</b>			

גַּעֲרָה:

**not rebuke**

H1606

## Additional Cross-References

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**Matthew 16:26** (Parallel theme): For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?

**Job 2:4** (Parallel theme): And Satan answered the LORD, and said, Skin for skin, yea, all that a man hath will he give for his life.

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