

Proverbs 24:34

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

So shall thy poverty come as one that travelleth; and thy want as an armed man.

Analysis

This verse completes the lesson with stark consequences. 'So shall thy poverty come as one that travelleth' (וְבָא-מִתְהַלֵּךְ רָאשָׁךְ/uva-mithallekh reshekha, and your poverty will come like a traveler) depicts poverty arriving steadily, inevitably, like someone walking toward you. 'And thy want as an armed man' (וְמַחְסָךְ כְּאֵישׁ מַגֵּן/umachsorka ke'ish magen, and your want/need like a man with a shield) suggests poverty comes both unstoppable (traveler) and powerfully (armed man). You cannot prevent or resist it once the process begins. This repeats the warning from 6:11, reinforcing the lesson. The imagery is powerful—poverty doesn't suddenly appear but approaches steadily through accumulated neglect. By the time it arrives, resistance is futile. The solution is prevention through diligence. Paul promised: 'he which soweth bountifully shall reap also bountifully' (2 Corinthians 9:6). Conversely, sowing little (through laziness) yields little.

Historical Context

Ancient Israel knew poverty's devastation. Without social safety nets, the poor faced hunger, homelessness, vulnerability to oppression, and potential slavery (selling oneself or family to pay debts). The law provided some protections—gleaning rights (Leviticus 19:9-10), debt forgiveness every seven years (Deuteronomy 15:1-2), prohibition against charging interest to fellow Israelites (Exodus 22:25). Yet poverty remained harsh. Proverbs repeatedly connects laziness to poverty (10:4; 13:4; 20:4; 21:17; 23:21; 28:19) and diligence to prosperity (10:4; 12:24; 13:4; 21:5). This isn't prosperity gospel but recognition that God generally

blesses diligence and disciplines laziness through natural consequences. Exceptions exist—Job suffered despite righteousness; some wicked prosper temporarily. But the general principle holds. In the early church, believers shared to prevent poverty among members (Acts 2:44-45; 4:32-35). Yet Paul commanded: 'if any would not work, neither should he eat' (2 Thessalonians 3:10), distinguishing unable from unwilling.

Related Passages

1 John 4:8 — God is love

1 Corinthians 13:4 — Characteristics of love

Revelation 20:12 — Judgment according to deeds

Matthew 25:31 — Final judgment

Study Questions

1. What 'poverty'—financial, relational, spiritual—do you see approaching due to accumulated negligence?
2. How does understanding poverty's inevitable approach through laziness motivate immediate diligence?
3. What specific steps will you take today to prevent the 'traveler' and 'armed man' from arriving at your door?

Interlinear Text

כִּאֵן יְשָׁא וְמַחְסֵךְ יְבָא מַתְבֵּל בָּהּ כִּיְשָׁא בָּהּ

come as one that travelleth So shall thy poverty and thy want man

H935

H1980

H7389

H4270

H376

מַטְלָה:

as an armed

H4043

Additional Cross-References

Proverbs 10:4 (Parallel theme): He becometh poor that dealeth with a slack hand: but the hand of the diligent maketh rich.

Proverbs 13:4 (Parallel theme): The soul of the sluggard desireth, and hath nothing: but the soul of the diligent shall be made fat.

From KJV Study • kjvstudy.org