Wealth and Poverty

I. Proverbs that Deal with Wealth and Poverty

A. From Prov 1-9
   1. 1:10-19 - The foolish way to gain wealth, the example of the bird
   2. 3:9-10 - What to do with your wealth and the result
   3. 3:13-16 - The best kind of wealth
   4. 6:1-5 - On debt, loans and collateral
   5. 6:6-11 - The example of the ant
   5. 8:18-21 - The source of good wealth

B. From Prov 10:1ff (From the NASB Bible)

10:4 "Poor is he who works with a negligent hand,
   But the hand of the diligent makes rich,"
10:15 "The rich man's wealth is his fortress\footnote{\textsuperscript{12}}
   The ruin of the poor is their poverty."
11:4 "Riches do not profit in the day of wrath,
   But righteousness delivers from death."
11:18 "The wicked earns deceptive wages,
   But he who sows righteousness gets a true reward."
11:24 "There is one who scatters and yet increases all the more,
   And there is one who withholds what is justly due
   and yet it results only in want.
11:25 "The generous man will be prosperous,
   And he who waters will himself be watered."
11:26 "He who withholds grain, the people will curse him,
   But blessing will be on the head of him who sells it."
11:28 "He who trusts in his riches will fall,
   But the righteous will flourish like the green leaf."
13:7\footnote{\textsuperscript{13}} "There is one who pretends to be rich, but has nothing;
   Another pretends to be poor, but has great wealth.
13:8\footnote{\textsuperscript{14}} "The ransom of a man's life is his wealth,

\textsuperscript{12} quryat 'uzzō - Literally, "his city of strength"
\textsuperscript{13} Some translations read, "there is one who maketh himself rich..." The verb for "one who pretends/maketh himself to be rich." is a Hithpael participle from the root, מַעֲנֶשׁ, which means, "to be/become rich." This is a causative, reflexive verb, which means that the one causes something to happen to himself. So, normally you would translate this, "There is one who causes himself to be rich." However, the Hithpael often denotes pretentiousness. For example in 2 Sam 13:5, there is a Hithpael which means "to pretend to be sick," not "cause yourself to be sick." The context bears this out. The Hithpael in Prov 13:7 may also denote pretentiousness, "There is one who makes himself out to be rich" or "pretends to be rich." Both the reflexive and pretentious meanings fit the context. It is interesting to reflect on both meanings here.
\textsuperscript{14} The rich have money to buy their way out of trouble, which seems to be a blessing. The second line points out that the poor do not even receive threats. In other words, no one wants anything from them so they
But the poor hears no rebuke."

13:11 "Wealth obtained by fraud\textsuperscript{15} dwindles,
But the one who gathers by labor\textsuperscript{16} increases it."

13:18 "Poverty and shame will come to him who neglects discipline,
But he who regards reproof will be honored."

13:21 "Adversity pursues sinners,
But the righteous will be rewarded with prosperity.

13:22 "A good man leaves an inheritance to his children's children,
And the wealth of the sinner is stored up for the righteous

13:23 "Abundant food is in the fallow ground of the poor,
But it is swept away by injustice.

14:20\textsuperscript{17} "The poor is hated even by his neighbor,
But those who love the rich are many."

14:21 "He who despises his neighbor sins,
But happy is he who is gracious to the poor."

14:23 "In all labor there is profit,
But mere talk leads only to poverty."

14:24 "The crown of the wise is their riches\textsuperscript{18},
But the folly of fools is foolishness."

14:31 "He who oppresses the poor taunts his Maker,
But he who is gracious to the needy honors Him."

15:6 "Great wealth is in the house of the righteous,
But trouble is in the income of the wicked."

15:16 "Better is a little with the fear of the \textsc{lord}
Than great treasure and turmoil with it."

15:17 "Better is a dish of vegetables where love is
Than a fattened ox served with hatred."

15:27 "He who profits illicitly troubles his own house,
But he who hates bribes will live."

16:8 "Better is a little with righteousness
Than great income with injustice."

16:16 "How much better it is to get wisdom than gold!
And to get understanding is to be chosen above silver."

17:1 "Better is a dry morsel and quietness with it
Than a house full of feasting with strife."

17:5 "He who mocks the poor taunts his Maker;
He who rejoices at calamity will not go unpunished."

---

\textsuperscript{15} The first line is " Wealth from meaninglessness/vanity/emptiness/vapor with be diminished." The word \textit{hebel} "meaninglessness/vanity" is a common word in Ecclesiastes. In this Proverb, it seems to suggest that something for nothing will be worth nothing. This is a warning against easy money.

\textsuperscript{16} \textit{yād} - Literally, "hand." The hand is meant to convey the idea of work.

\textsuperscript{17} This saying could point out a blessing, or it could be a warning, or both.

\textsuperscript{18} The RSV reads, "wisdom." The Hebrew has "riches." The Septuagint uses, \textit{πανορός}, "crafty," which may have resulted in the Greek translators misreading \textit{μηνηρας} "craftiness."

Apparently, the RSV has followed the Septuagint reading rather than the Hebrew.
17:8 "A bribe is a charm in the sight of its owner; wherever he turns, he prospers."

18:23 "The poor man utters supplications, but the rich man answers roughly."

19:4 "Wealth adds many friends, but a poor man is separated from his friend."

19:7 "All the brothers of a poor man hate him; how much more do his friends abandon him! He pursues them with words, but they are gone.

19:17 "One who is gracious to a poor man lends to the LORD, and He will repay him for his good deed."

20:4 "The sluggard does not plow after the autumn, so he begs during the harvest and has nothing."

20:21 "An inheritance gained hurriedly at the beginning will not be blessed in the end."

21:6 "The acquisition of treasures by a lying tongue is a fleeting vapor, the pursuit of death."

21:13 "He who shuts his ear to the cry of the poor will also cry himself and not be answered."

21:17 "He who loves pleasure will become a poor man; he who loves wine and oil will not become rich."

21:20 "There is precious treasure and oil in the dwelling of the wise, but a foolish man swallows it up."

22:1 "A good name is to be more desired than great wealth, favor is better than silver and gold."

22:2 "The rich and the poor have a common bond, the LORD is the maker of them all."

22:7 "The rich rules over the poor, and the borrower becomes the lender's slave."

22:9 "He who is generous will be blessed, for he gives some of his food to the poor."

22:16 "He who oppresses the poor to make more for himself or who gives to the rich, will only come to poverty."

22:22-23 "Do not rob the poor because he is poor,

---

19 This should be read with 15:27. This verse could be an observation, sarcasm or something else. The pronouns in the verse could also read, "Wherever it turns, it prospers." In this case it is talking about the nature of a bribe and how it can take on a life of its own, often with disastrous results. It "turns" and can wind up "turning" against you.

20 Some translate this "present." In nearly every case where this word, דַּמָּנוּס, is used, it means a present in order to gain a favor, which is basically a "bribe." There are other words that clearly mean "gift" in Hebrew, but that is not what is used here. The same word is used in 17:23, and there is clearly is "bribe." Other places where the word is used are: 1 Sam 8:3; 1 Kng 15:19; 2 Kng 16:8; Deut 10:17; 2 Chr 19:7; Psa 15:5; Isa 33:15; Exo 23:8; Deut 16:19; Prov 21:14.

21 אֶבֶן הֶנֶם "Stone of grace/favor."

22 The last line is unintelligible in Hebrew - Lit: "He who chases words not are they." An emendation suggested by a Masoretic footnote is to change the negative particle נָו to a preposition with pronoun לּוֹ "to him," which would render the last line: "He who chases words to him are they," or "A chaser of words are they to him."
Or crush the afflicted at the gate;
For the LORD will plead their case
And take the life of those who rob them."

23:4-5 "Do not weary yourself to gain wealth,
Cease from your consideration of it.
When you set your eyes on it, it is gone.
For wealth certainly makes itself wings
Like an eagle that flies toward the heavens.

23:20-21 " Do not be with heavy drinkers of wine,
Or with gluttonous eaters of meat;
For the heavy drinker and the glutton will come to poverty,
And drowsiness will clothe one with rags.

24:3-4 "By wisdom a house is built,
And by understanding it is established;
And by knowledge the rooms are filled
With all precious and pleasant riches."

28:6 "Better is the poor who walks in his integrity
Than he who is crooked though he be rich.

28:8 "He who increases his wealth by interest and usury
Gathers it for him who is gracious to the poor."

28:11 "The rich man is wise in his own eyes,
But the poor who has understanding sees through him."

28:27 "He who gives to the poor will never want,
But he who shuts his eyes will have many curses."

29:7 "The righteous is concerned for the rights of the poor,
The wicked does not understand such concern."

29:14 "If a king judges the poor with truth,
His throne will be established forever.

II. Principles Related to Wealth

A. Poverty is the result of laziness
   1. 6:6-11; 10:4; 13:11; 14:23; 20:4; 20:21
   2. There is nothing inherently honorable about being poor
      a. Some have the mistaken idea that poverty is more godly
      b. If poverty is a result of laziness, it is clearly condemned
   3. 2 Thess 3:10-14
      a. Only those who worked could get assistance
      b. Those who did not work they were to withdraw from

B. Poverty is the result of wickedness and injustice
   2. Rev 3:17-18 - On true wealth and poverty

23 יעל haggär - To search, examine, find out. This verse contrasts the poor man who is smarter and more discerning than the rich man, who cannot understand due to arrogance.
C. Wealth can be a blessing
   2. There are many things that wealth can do that poverty cannot

D. There are times when poverty can be a greater blessing than riches
   2. Poverty with integrity is better than riches with unrighteousness

E. Wealth and Poverty each have their own problems
   1. 13:8; 14:20; 19:4; 19:7
   2. Perhaps it is good not to call them blessings or curses, they are what they are, and what matters is your attitude and how you use them.

F. The value of wealth is limited
   1. 11:4; 11:28; 15:16-17; 28:6
   2. There are some things money can't buy

G. Those with wealth should be generous
   2. As a general rule, generosity will bring prosperity - The flip side is: Despising the poor leads to poverty
   3. Other passages
      a. Eph 4:28
      b. 1 Tim 6:18
      c. Luke 16:19f

H. The wealth of fools and the wicked is temporary
   2. James 5:1 - The Lord will vindicate the oppressed

I. Loving riches and pleasure (greed) leads to poverty
   1. 21:17; 21:20; 23:4-5; 23:20-21
   2. Other passages:
      a. Eccl 5:10-11
      b. John 12:24-25
      c. 1 John 2:15-17

J. Wisdom and righteousness is better than wealth
   2. Riches will fail, but wisdom and righteousness endures
III. A story that illustrates the result of the rejection of God, righteousness and godly wisdom

BREAKPOINT, with Chuck Colson

Turning from the Truth
The Sad Case of Madalyn Murray O'Hair
December 28, 2005

Why would anyone deliberately turn his or her back on the truth?
I found myself asking this question many years ago, after an encounter with America's most famous atheist, Madalyn Murray O'Hair—a story that I tell in my new book, The Good Life. You probably will recall that it was O'Hair who brought the court case that eliminated official public school prayers in 1963.

Mrs. O'Hair and I had been invited to debate the topic of Christianity on David Frost's NBC variety program. I was aware that she knew the subject well, because she graduated from an evangelical college, and she had a close knowledge of the Scriptures. So I decided it would be a good idea to take my Bible with me. It proved handy when Mrs. O'Hair claimed that the Bible "is a brutal, horrible book."

I held out my Bible and asked her to read to us the passages she was talking about. She backed away as if I held a weapon. All that she would say was, "It's full of hate and murder," even though her refusal to defend her views clearly cost her the sympathy of Frost and the audience.

After the debate, I approached Mrs. O'Hair to tell her that I, like many other Christians, was praying that she would find the truth. She retorted, "Well, I don't pray, but if I did, I'd pray that you will lose. You will lose, Mr. Colson. You will fail."

The whole experience left me with the impression of an angry, bitter woman. But I found it interesting that she couldn't just leave me alone to what she thought was my superstition, or even laugh my views off. My conclusion was that Mrs. O'Hair couldn't leave me alone because she really did know the truth and had turned her back on it.

Sadly, the story of Madalyn Murray O'Hair's last days illustrates what can happen when someone deliberately rejects the truth. You may recall that O'Hair and her son and granddaughter were abducted and killed by one of their former employees.

When the family first disappeared, many of those who knew them suspected that they were going into hiding to live off illegally funded foreign accounts. O'Hair's crooked financial habits were well-known to several of her closest associates. She had surrounded herself with an atmosphere of secrecy and suspicion for so long that few were surprised or concerned by her disappearance. The police did little; the organization she had started carried on as usual. Even after her son eventually filed a missing-persons report, it was years before the dismembered bodies of the Murray-O'Hair family were discovered.

Am I saying that all atheists are doomed to be murdered? No, of course not. What I am saying is that Madalyn Murray O'Hair's willful defiance of God, and her often-mentioned contempt for her fellow human beings, translated into an abrasive manner and a criminal lifestyle that turned people against her and, in the end, caused her gruesome death.

Madalyn Murray O'Hair once said, "I hope I live my life in such a manner that when I die, someone cares." Tragically, her own rebellious, selfish will led her to a very different fate. The lesson? It is sin to reject the truth, and when you do, you become yourself the very thing that blocks the truth—that is, evil.

This commentary first aired on July 27, 2005.