

Proverbs 22

¹ A good name is to be chosen rather than great riches, and favor is better than silver or gold.

At the core of this proverb is the issue of idolatry! Follow me here.

A good name = an honorable reputation because of good character.

is to be chosen has the sense of choice based on a system of value. People *choose something because it is “more desirable” (NIV), “preferable” (NJB), or “worth much more.”*¹

The Holy Spirit inspired Solomon to pen this proverb because the collection of men and women organizing themselves without God and against God (aka: “the World) have bought into a broken value system in which wealth trumps godly character and the honorable reputation that flows from godly character.

DON'T MISS THIS — This is a worship problem. Idolatry is the perversion of true worship — it is putting something created in the place of God the creator. You have an idol when a created thing is glorified; becomes the source of your identity and your joy, the object of your affection, your greatest treasure, your deepest longing. Whatever it is that occupies that place in our heart and life — we worship.

QUOTE: Harold Best — *Worship is the continuous outpouring of all that I am, all that I do and all that I can ever become....*

Some people pour out all that they are, all that they do and all that they can ever become for financial and material gain. In Biblical times that was the worship of a false god named “Mammon.”

MAKE THIS CONNECTION with me — That which we worship is the recipient of our greatest sacrifices. If you worship money and the stuff it

¹ Reyburn, W. D., & Fry, E. M. (2000). *A handbook on Proverbs* (p. 461). New York: United Bible Societies.

can get you, you will sacrifice people on the altar of that idol. You love money and use people to get it. If you worship money the stuff it can get you, you will sacrifice an honorable reputation on the altar of that idol.

If you've sacrificed the well being of others in the pursuit of your master passion it's a clear sign that Jesus is not your master passion, because Jesus laid down His life for others. If you've sacrificed your godly character and reputation in the pursuit of your master passion it's a clear sign that Jesus is not your master passion, because everything Jesus did and said was intended to please His Father and bring glory to His Father. If we love Jesus we want to live in a way that brings glory to Jesus.

QUOTE: Oswald Chambers — our purpose should be to display the glory of God in human life....²

We want to make sure that God is the one who informs us about the nature of a “good name,” because God’s standard for a good name is different than the worlds.

Luke 6:26 Woe to you, when all people speak well of you, for so their fathers did to the false prophets.

It's possible to have “a good name,” have others speak well of you, because you don't have godly character. They speak well of you in the same way people spoke well of the false prophets in the Old Testament. Those prophets had a “good name” because they never spoke the truth and because they condemned the men and the message that actually came from God. So, if you want an unbelieving world to have a good opinion about you, don't talk to them about Jesus or the Bible. Don't stand up for right and wrong. That is the world's definition of a good Christian man. You're not their kind of Christian if you stand for the truth; if you verbalize your convictions! Bob Dylan was constantly called a prophet of his generation. Then he became a Christian and openly professed faith in Jesus and began to write songs about his faith in Jesus. Suddenly Bob Dylan was no longer considered *their* prophet.

² Chambers, Oswald (2010-10-22). My Utmost for His Highest, Updated Edition Discovery House Publishers. Kindle Edition.

QUOTE: Bob Dylan; “I Believe In You” —

And they, they look at me and frown
They'd like to drive me from this town
They don't want me around' — Cause I believe in you.

They show me to the door
They say don't come back no more — 'Cause I don't be like they'd like
me to

And I, I walk out on my own
A thousand miles from home
But I don't feel alone — 'Cause I believe in you.

If you stand for Jesus, speak about Jesus, talk about the Bible, your name is mud! If you do that they consider you to be a narrow-minded bigot. If you do that they consider you to be the cause of every evil known to man.

1 Kings 18:17 When Ahab saw Elijah, Ahab said to him, “Is it you, you troubler of Israel?”

Ahab and his wife Jezebel subsidized the worship of idols in the Northern kingdom of Israel — They were the ones who troubled Israel because that idolatry brought the judgment of God in the form of a drought! Elijah was sent by God to turn the Northern kingdom from idolatry.

Having a “good name” with God trumps having a good name in the eyes of fallen man. If God is the truly the object of your worship, you will put your “reputation,” your ambitions and aspirations on the altar of your worship of God. There is no earthly treasure, no praise of man you would ever exchange for reputation with God!

1 Thessalonians 2:2-5 ²But though we had already suffered and been shamefully treated at Philippi, as you know, we had boldness in our God to declare to you the gospel of God in the midst of much conflict. ³For our appeal does not spring from error or impurity or any attempt to deceive, ⁴but just as we have been approved by God to be entrusted with the gospel, so we speak, not to please man, but to please God who

tests our hearts. ⁵For we never came with words of flattery, as you know, nor with a pretext for greed—God is witness. ⁶Nor did we seek glory from people, whether from you or from others,

All the money in the world you can't buy a "good name" in the eyes of God. And when the riches of this world fail, a good name in the eyes of God will remain for eternity.

Good and faithful servant! THAT is the "good name" I want to have. I want to enter eternity and hear my Lord Jesus say, "Well done good and faithful servant." I want to enter eternity having lived to please God, not man. That helps simplify my Christianity. Is this attitude, this action, these words, these thoughts, going to please God?

When I'm pleasing God — I know that I will be bringing something of His heart to bear on the world around me. THAT'S the reputation I want

² The rich and the poor meet together; the Lord is the maker of them all.

meet together — does not refer to meeting in a physical sense. We could read this as — *The rich and the poor "have this in common."*³ What they have in common is **not** a zip code. As a rule, rich people don't live in the same neighborhood as those who are poor. What they have in common is **not** where they shop or dine. As a rule, rich people don't shop at Wal Mart, they shop at Barney's.

Here's what the rich and the poor have in common: **The Lord is the maker of the all!** This is where every socio-economic division is obliterated. But here's the deal: Fallen man can't see this because God is nowhere to be found in his worldview. Humanity is reduced to this: We are united by an evolved genetic make up that earns us the label "Human." When man tries to understand humanity apart from God he gets lost in the details, distinctions and disparities of wealth and poverty. For man without God, the perfect world is where no one is "rich" and no one is "poor." Everyone

³ Reyburn, W. D., & Fry, E. M. (2000). *A handbook on Proverbs* (p. 462). New York: United Bible Societies.

has everything they could ever want to make them happy — and that is when we're finally united and there will be no more crime, no more war.

QUOTE: John Lennon; "Imagine" — *Imagine no possessions. I wonder if you can. No need for greed or hunger - A brotherhood of man. Imagine all the people Sharing all the world... You may say I'm a dreamer — But I'm not the only one — I hope someday you'll join us — And the world will live as one*

God informs us that we don't process our humanity or define our humanity in terms of wealth or poverty. God informs us that we can only understand our shared humanity in light of the fact that He is the creator of man.

QUOTE: NEW CITY CATECHISM — Why and How Did God Create Us? God created us male and female in his own image to know him, love him, live with him, and glorify him. And it is right that we who were created by God should live to his glory. **What is the chief end of man?** Man's chief end is to glorify God and to enjoy him forever.

Wealth doesn't define our humanity. Poverty doesn't define our humanity. THAT defines our humanity! Created in the image of God. Created to know him, love him, live with him, and glorify him. THAT is where every human meets. THAT is what every human has in common. The chief end of man is not to get wealthy! The chief end of man isn't not to avoid being poor. The chief end of man isn't hindered by, or helped by, poverty, or wealth. The chief end of every man or woman is to glorify God and to enjoy him no matter what your socio-economic status might be. THAT is what every human has in common. By the sovereign will of God some are wealthy and some are poor. By His perfect wisdom wealth or poverty become the context in which we bear His image, know Him, love Him, live with Him, and glorify Him and enjoy Him! THAT is what every human has in common.

One more thing — It doesn't matter whether you're rich or poor when you stand before your Maker. Because every man and woman created in the image of God also has this in common: Our chief end is to glorify our creator and every one of us has failed to do that! Rich or poor, **all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God (Romans 3:23)**! Rich or poor, we are all guilty of setting up our own little *Kingdoms of One* where we live for

our own glory, rather than the glory of our creator! We all have this in common — Rich or poor, we need to be saved from the penalty and the power of sin.

BUT HERE'S THE GOOD NEWS!

1 John 4:10 *In this is love, not that we have loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins.*

Rich **or** poor, not one of us have loved God. But God loves us — rich **and** poor alike — and sent Jesus to hang on a cross in our place to endure the wrath of God that every one of us, rich **or** poor, deserves.

3 The prudent sees danger and hides himself, but the simple go on and suffer for it.

Again we have a truism — It's an observable truth that a sensible person thinks ahead, looks ahead, knows when trouble is coming and takes action to avoid it. By contrast it's also an observable truth that the person who lacks common sense is short-sighted. They go from one moment to the next and get blind-sided.

This observable truth has important spiritual implications. The prudent person is the man or woman informed, defined and directed by the Word of God. The Scriptures have told them that life is not just about the here and now — that they need to live in light of eternity

2 Corinthians 4:16-18 *So we do not lose heart. Though our outer nature is wasting away, our inner nature is being renewed day by day. ¹⁷For this slight momentary affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison, ¹⁸as we look not to the things that are seen but to the things that are unseen. For the things that are seen are transient, but the things that are unseen are eternal.*

The Scriptures have told them about the realities of sin and temptation; the nature of our adversary the devil. The Scriptures have also told him that Jesus is his refuge and his strength. By contrast — The simple person has rejected the wisdom of God and is blind to all of that.

I also believe this is relevant to prophecy.

1 Thessalonians 5:1-6 *¹Now concerning the times and the seasons, brothers, you have no need to have anything written to you. ²For you yourselves are fully aware that the day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night. ³While people are saying, “There is peace and security,” then sudden destruction will come upon them as labor pains come upon a pregnant woman, and they will not escape. ⁴But you are not in darkness, brothers, for that day to surprise you like a thief. ⁵For you are all children of light, children of the day. We are not of the night or of the darkness. ⁶So then let us not sleep, as others do, but let us keep awake and be sober.*

2 Peter 3:11-12 *Since all these things are thus to be dissolved, what sort of people ought you to be in lives of holiness and godliness, ¹²waiting for and hastening the coming of the day of God,*

⁴ The reward for humility and fear of the Lord is riches and honor and life.

humility and fear of the Lord — There is an inseparable connection between humility and fear of the Lord. It is impossible for a person to be fearing God (worshipping, trusting, obeying, and serving Him) and be filled with selfish pride at the same time.

The reward for humility and fear of the Lord is riches and honor and life.

When the Holy Spirit *shines into your heart the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus* the outcome is **humility and fear of the Lord**. Humility because you see yourself for who, and what you are: a sinner — a fake king — a traitor and rebel in God’s universe. Fear of the Lord reverence and worship of God because you see Him for who He is: the God of glory, perfect in power and holiness, the maker of heaven who stooped to save us!

When we see in Jesus the love of God for sinners, we want to fully trust our lives to Him — spend and be spent for Jesus! The outcome of that is **riches and honor and life**.

THIS IS HUGE — The outcome of saving faith is **riches** that cannot be lost.

***Psalm 103:1-4** Bless the Lord, O my soul, and all that is within me, bless his holy name! ² Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits, ³ who forgives all your iniquity, who heals all your diseases, ⁴ who redeems your life from the pit, who crowns you with steadfast love and mercy,*

***1 Peter 1:3-5 NLT** Now we live with great expectation, ⁴and we have a priceless inheritance—an inheritance that is kept in heaven for you, pure and undefiled, beyond the reach of change and decay.*

The outcome of saving faith is **honor** that cannot be tarnished

***1 Peter 1:7** so that the tested genuineness of your faith—more precious than gold that perishes though it is tested by fire—may be found to **result in praise and glory and honor** at the revelation of Jesus Christ.*

***1 Peter 5:4** And when the chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the unfading crown of glory.*

The outcome of saving faith is **life** that lasts forever.

***John 3:16** “For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.*

***1 John 5:11-12** And this is the testimony, that God gave us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. ¹²Whoever has the Son has life; whoever does not have the Son of God does not have life.*

riches and honor and life — That is the longing of every heart. We try to satisfy it without God in the here and now. But real **riches and honor and life** are wrapped up in Jesus.

⁵ Thorns and snares are in the way of the crooked; whoever guards his soul will keep far from them.

God informing us to choose our friends wisely because if we don't we're headed for thorns and snares.