Proverbs 18:11 Commentary

Proverbs 18:11 A rich man's wealth is his strong city, and like a high wall in his own imagination. (NASB: Lockman)

Greek (Septuagint): huparxis (possessions, wealth) plousiou (rich) andros (man) polis (city) ochura (firm, secure) he de (but, and) doxa (glory) autes (of it) mega (big) episkiazei (3PSPAI) (continually overshadows or continually casts a big shadow, used of God in Lk 1:35!)

English of Greek: The wealth of a rich man is a strong city; and its glory casts a broad shadow.

Amplified: The rich man's wealth is his strong city, and as a high protecting wall in his own imagination and conceit. (Amplified Bible - Lockman)

ASV: The rich man's wealth is his strong city, And as a high wall in his own imagination.

ESV: A rich man's wealth is his strong city, and like a high wall in his imagination. (ESV)

ICB: Rich people trust their wealth to protect them. They think it is like the high walls of a city.

KJV: The rich man's wealth is his strong city, and as an high wall in his own conceit.

MLB: The rich man's wealth is his strong city and as a high wall—so he thinks.

NAB: The rich man's wealth is his strong city; he fancies it a high wall.

NET: The wealth **[1]** of a rich person is **like [2]** a strong city **[3]**, and it is **like** a high wall in his imagination **[4]**. (NET Bible)

NET Bible translation notes:

[1] sn This proverb forms a contrast with the previous one (Pr 18:10). The rich, unlike the righteous, trust in wealth and not in God.

[2] tn The comparative "**like**" does not appear in the Hebrew text, but is implied by the metaphor; it is supplied for the sake of clarity.

[3] tn Hebrew literally reads "**city of his strengt**h"; NIV "**fortified city**." This term refers to their place of refuge, what they look to for security and protection in time of trouble.

[4] tc The Masoretic Text reads בְּמַשְׂכִּיתוֹ (bemaskito, "in his imaginations"). The LXX, Tg. Pr 18:11, and the Latin reflect בִּמְשֻׂכָּתוֹ (bimsukato, "like a fence [or, high wall]") that is, wealth provides protection. The MT reading, on the other hand, suggests that this security is only in the mind.

tn The proverb is an observation saying, reporting a common assumption without commenting on it. The juxtaposition with the last verse is a loud criticism of this misguided faith. The final word בְּמַשְׂכִּיתוֹ ("in his imaginations") indicates that one's wealth is a futile place of refuge.

NIV: The wealth of the rich is their fortified city; they imagine it an unscalable wall. (NIV - IBS)

NJB: The wealth of the rich forms a stronghold, a high wall, as the rich supposes.

NLT: The rich think of their wealth as a strong defense; they imagine it to be a high wall of safety. (NLT - Tyndale House)

TEV: Rich people, however, imagine that their wealth protects them like high, strong walls around a city.

TLB: The rich man thinks of his wealth as an impregnable defense, a high wall of safety. What a dreamer!

UBS: A rich person thinks his wealth puts a wall around him like a strong wall that is built around a city to protect it.

Young's Literal: The wealth of the rich is the city of his strength, And as a wall set on high in his own imagination.

True and False
Security

A study in contrast between
Proverbs 18:10-note and **Proverbs 18:11**.

Our translations…

> Rich people trust their wealth to protect them. They think it is like the high walls of a city. (International Children's Bible)
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> The rich think of their wealth as an impregnable defense; they imagine it is a high wall of safety. (NLT)
>
> But the rich man has his strong city yea and his high walls in his own conceit. (Bridges)

Proverbs 18:10,11 **A DRAMATIC CONTRAST**			
Righteous Pr 18:10-note	**Trust in** (see next) (Place faith in…) (Believe in…)	**Name of Yahweh** **Jehovah**	**Is Safe** **(Fact)**
Rich Pr 18:11		**Money** **(mammon)**	**Imagines safe** **(Fiction)**

Both proverbs speak of a **refuge** - a **sure refuge** in God in Pr 18:10-note but a **shaky refuge** in wealth in Pr 18:11. Jesus warned against the snare of wealth in His Sermon on the Mount…

> No one (Greek = absolute negation) can (dunamai = has the inherent ability to continually [present tense]) serve (douleuo = be a slave, give up your rights to the will of your master!) two masters (kurios); for either he will hate the one and love (agapao) the other, or he will hold to one and despise (kataphroneo) the other. You (absolutely) cannot serve God and mammon (mammonas). (Mt 6:24-note)
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> **Comment**: Mark it down. Jesus is presenting us a vitally important spiritual principle. Simply stated, as the thoughts of the one rise up, the other goes down. **Where are your (and my) thoughts today? Concerned about money? Concentrating on Christ** (Mt 6:33-note)? Your (my) answer will definitely affect the state of our mind today (Jesus uses this principle to expound on worry and anxiety - Mt 6:25, 26-note, Mt 6:27, 28, 29-note, Mt 6:30, 31, 32-note, Mt 6:34-note).
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> **Billy Graham** said it this way: If a person gets his attitude towards money straight, it will help straighten out almost every other area in his life.
>
> **Tryon Edwards**: To possess money is very well; it may be a most valuable servant; to be possessed by it is to be possessed by a "devil", and one of the meanest and worst kind of devils.
>
> **J C Ryle** reminds us that Mt 6:24 is not just for the "rich and famous" commenting that: It is possible to love money without having it, and it is possible to have it without loving it. (**Ryle goes on to add that**) Money, in truth, is one of the most unsatisfying of possessions. It takes away some cares (anxieties, worries), no doubt; but it brings with it quite as many cares (anxieties, worries) as it takes away. There is the **trouble** in the getting of it. There is **anxiety** in the keeping of it. There are **temptations** in the use of it. There is **guilt** in the abuse of it. There is **sorrow** in the losing of it. There is **perplexity** in the disposing of it.
>
> **Spurgeon** commented that: A Christian making money fast is just like a man in a cloud of dust; it will fill his eyes if he is not careful.

Ben Franklin wisely and succinctly stated his thoughts on money when he said…

> Money never made a man happy yet, nor will it. There is nothing in its nature to produce happiness. The more a man has, the more he wants. Instead of its filling a vacuum, it makes one. If it satisfies one want, it doubles and triples that want another way.

Solomon would not argue that it takes money to live, but he would say that that fact is much different than **living for money**. Not only can cash not meet our deepest spiritual needs, it can distort our character if we set our focus on it and begin to "trust" in it!

The contrast is in one sense really about **two different foundations** on which we build our life on earth. Jesus said it best…

> Therefore everyone who hears these words of Mine, and acts upon them, may be compared to a wise man, who built his house upon the rock. And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and burst against that house; and yet it did not fall, for it had been founded upon the rock. And everyone who hears these words of Mine, and does not act upon them, will be like a foolish man, who built his house upon the sand. And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and burst against that house; and it fell, and great was its fall. (Mt 7:24-25-note, Mt 7:26-27-note)

The rich man imagines that his wealth ("the shaky tower of the false god of mammon") can protect him from harm as a high city wall was used to protect from enemy troops, but the rich man is dead wrong (pun intended). The danger of wealth is that it gives its possessor the illusion of greater security than it actually provides. Money simply cannot shield people from many problems and provides no hope for the greatest problem of all, the deadness of one's spirit because of sin and therefore can give no victory over the last enemy which is Death! All of us tend to have our "fortified cities." For some, it may be an advanced college degree with its ticket to a guaranteed position; for others, an insurance policy or a financial nest egg for retirement years. For our nation, it is a superior arsenal of weapons. Anything other than God Himself that we tend to trust in becomes our fortified city with its imagined unscalable walls.

Derek Kidner make a great point noting that…

> The world thinks that the unseen is the unreal (**Ed**: In fact the opposite is true = 2Co 4:18). But it is not the **man of God** (Pr 18:10) but the **man of property**, who must draw on his imagination to feel secure. (Kidner, D. Vol. 17: Proverbs: An Introduction and Commentary: InterVarsity Press, c1964. Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press) (Bolding added)

Kurt Richardson notes that in Pr 18:11 there is

> a surprising irony… since what is imagined to be so powerful is so obviously a delusion. The rich do not need to work to survive. Thus in the midst of a world of misfortune and flux, they boast in the semblance (outward and often specious appearance) of their security and undisturbed comfort. Yet death comes to rich and poor alike… The shadow of death already hangs over the poor. Their lives are full of trouble and woe. But the rich bask in the ***artificial light*** of the ***borrowed time*** their wealth has brought them. In truth they should be humbling themselves to guard against the temptation of trusting in wealth. (**New American Commentary - James**) (**Bolding** and *Italics* added)

Ron Mattoon writes that…

> People believe that money or material possessions will solve all their problems, meet every need, and make them happy. How sad they are when they come to grips with the truth that riches can be stolen, shattered, smashed, swept out of sight or lost. Possessions give people a false sense of security which deceives them into thinking they have no need of Jesus Christ at all. I have all I need is their boast! (**Treasures From Proverbs**)

Gary Brady…

> The temptation for the rich is to trust in their 'wealth'. It becomes 'their fortified city; they imagine it an unscalable wall'. Such trust is misplaced. A fortune can be lost in a moment and certainly will be of no use at death. How many build towers of Babel thinking they can get to heaven, when what they really need is to run to the covenant God (Pr 18:10)! The image of running to the strong tower is powerful. It suggests danger and urgency. Run there now, before it is too late. (Welwyn Commentary Series – Heavenly wisdom: Proverbs simply explained)

Matthew Henry…

> Having described the firm and faithful defence of the righteous man (Pr 18:10), Solomon here shows what is the false and deceitful defence of the rich man, that has his portion and treasure in the things of this world, and sets his heart upon them. His wealth is as much his confidence, and he expects as much from it, as a godly man from his God. See,
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> 1. How he supports himself. He makes his wealth his city, where he dwells, where he rules, with a great deal of self-complacency, as if he had a whole city under his command. It is his strong city, in which he intrenches himself, and then sets danger at defiance, as if nothing could hurt him. His scales are his pride; his wealth is his wall in which he encloses himself, and he thinks it a high wall, which cannot be scaled or got over, Job 31:24; Revelation 18:7-note.

2. How herein he cheats himself. It is a strong city, and a high wall, but it is so only in his own conceit; it will not prove to be really so, but like the house built on the sand, which will fail the builder when he most needs it.

David presents a similar contrast (God vs mammon) in Psalm 20 using a "military metaphor"…

Some boast in chariots and some in horses, but we will boast in the **name of the LORD** (**Jehovah**), our God. (Ps 20:7)

Spurgeon comments that: **Contrasts** frequently bring out the truth vividly (as in Pr 18:10,11)… Some trust in chariots, and some in horses. Chariots and horses make an imposing show, and with their rattling, and dust, and fine caparisons, make so great a figure that vain man is much taken with them; yet the discerning eye of faith sees more in an invisible God than in all these (cp to "high walls in their imagination"). The most dreaded war engine of David's day was the war chariot, armed with scythes, which mowed down men like grass: this was the boast and glory of the neighbouring nations; but the saints considered the **name of Jehovah** to be a far better defence. As the Israelites might not keep horses, it was natural for them to regard the enemy's cavalry with more than usual dread. It is, therefore, all the greater evidence of faith that the bold songster can here disdain even the horse of Egypt in comparison with the **LORD of hosts (of armies)**. Alas, how many in our day who profess to be the Lord's are as abjectly dependent upon their fellow men or upon an arm of flesh in some shape or other, as if they had never known the name of Jehovah at all.

Jesus, be Thou alone our Rock and Refuge,
and never may we mar the simplicity of our faith.

We will remember the name of the Lord our God. "Our God" in covenant, who has chosen us and whom we have chosen; this God is our God. The name of our God is **Jehovah**, and this should never be forgotten; the self existent, independent, immutable, ever present, all filling I AM. Let us adore that matchless name, and never dishonour it by distrust or creature confidence. Reader, you must **know** it before you can **remember** it. (Ed: Consider doing a study on the **Names of the LORD**) May the blessed Spirit reveal it graciously to your soul!

Solomon writing about wealth says…

When you set your eyes on it, it is gone. For wealth certainly makes itself wings, Like an eagle that flies toward the heavens. (Pr 23:5)

NET Bible note: This seventh saying warns people not to expend all their energy trying to get rich because riches are fleeting (cf. Instruction of Amememope, chap. 7, 9:10–11 which says, "they have made themselves wings like geese and have flown away to heaven"). In the ancient world the symbol of birds flying away signified fleeting wealth.

Riches do not profit in the day of wrath, but righteousness delivers from death. (Proverbs 11:4)

A R Fausset: Lust and lucre follow one another as closely akin, both seducing the heart from the Creator to the creature.

A RICH MAN'S WEALTH

See the following Cross-References

Pr 10:15 The rich man's wealth is his fortress (strong city). The ruin of the poor is their poverty.

Comment: Wealth = strong city = a metaphor or picture. In other words his wealth is ***like*** his strong city.

Pr 11:4 Riches do not profit in the day of wrath, but righteousness delivers from death.

Comment: Wealth is not the final good; it carries potentially devastating power for character. It cannot satisfy the claim for righteousness demanded by God and fulfilled only through a faith relationship with Him. Wealth cannot purchase respect and good relationships in this life. Neither can it provide safety from God's judgment. Even in this life a good salary does not purchase life's truly basic needs. (Disciple's Study Bible - Sadly it is out of print)

Dt 32:31 "Indeed their rock is not like our Rock, Even our enemies themselves judge this.

Comment: A contrast between the gods of the nations ("rock") and Israel's true God ("Rock"). Israel could smite its foes with very little difficulty because of the weakness of their gods, who are not like the Rock Jehovah.

Job 31:24 If I have put my confidence (Hebrew = kecel = hope; Lxx = ischus = strength, power, might) in gold, and called fine gold my trust (Hebrew = Mibtach = confidence, refuge, security, assurance, hope), 25 If I have gloated because my wealth was great, And because my hand had secured so much

Comment: See where in fact Job did place his confidence and trust and hope - Job 23:10, 11-note, Job 23:12-note. (I think these passages may give us some insight into how Job was able to "make it" in the face of such devastating personal loss.)

"Here in this uncomplicated statement and by means of a conditional sentence, Job professed that he did not put his trust in gold. In Eliphaz's little evangelistic sermon he promised Job that if he abandoned his gold, God would become his "gold" (Job 22:24, 25). (Robert Alden - New American Commentary - Job)

"Temptation to false worship comes in two major forms: finding security in material possessions or worshiping part of the created order instead of God. Both are unfaithfulness to God, who is the only Object of worship and the only Source of security." (Amen!) (Disciple's Study Bible - Sadly it is out of print)

Ps 49:6 (Context Ps 49:5) Even those who **trust** (Heb = batach - see comment below) in their wealth, and boast in the abundance of their riches? 7 No man can by any means redeem (Heb = padah = achieve transfer of ownership from one to another thru payment of a price or an equivalent substitute ;Lxx = lutroo [word study]) his brother, Or give to God a ransom for him--8 For the redemption of his soul is costly, And he should cease trying forever--

Comment: Riches cannot redeem unless they are the precious blood of Christ (see **Goel - Our Kinsman Redeemer - In Shadow/Type & Substance**) The Hebrew verb for "trust" in v6 is batach = Expresses sense of well-being and security from having something or someone in whom to place confidence (See the first of 117 uses - it is quite instructive - Dt 28:52). This verb is used in Pr 3:5-6 (Trust = batach) in the best sense. **What am I trusting in other than Jehovah?** Whatever it is, it sure to cause me anxiety (and even fear) for whatever it is is "created" and transient. I need to run into **Elohim: My Creator** - Pr 18:10-note.

NET Bible Note: The psalmist pictures God as having a claim on the soul of the individual. When God comes to claim the life that ultimately belongs to him, he demands a ransom price that is beyond the capability of anyone to pay. The psalmist's point is that God has ultimate authority over life and death; all the money in the world cannot buy anyone a single day of life beyond what God has decreed.

Ps 52:5 (Speaking to those who love evil) But God will break you down forever; He will snatch you up, and tear you away from your tent, And uproot you from the land of the living. Selah. 6 And the righteous will see and fear (filial fear, reverential awe), And will laugh (in derision) at him, saying, 7 "Behold, the man who would not make God his refuge (Heb = ma'oz = place of safety, protection, Ma'oz is used of God in Nah 1:7 = "stronghold", 2Sa 22:33, Neh 8:10 = "your strength"), but trusted (Heb = batach - see Ps 49:6 above) in the abundance of his riches, and was strong in his evil desire."

Comment: Note the effect of wealth in this passage is to stimulate wicked desires.

Spurgeon on Ps 52:7: Lo. Look ye here, and read the epitaph of a mighty man, who lorded it proudly during his little hour, and set his heel upon the necks of the Lord's chosen. This is the man that made not God his strength. Behold the man! The great vainglorious (boastful) man. He found a **fortress** (cp Pr 18:11 "strong city… high wall"), but not in God; he gloried in his might, but not in the Almighty. Where is he now? How has it fared with him in the hour of his need? Behold his ruin, and be instructed. But trusted in the abundance of his riches, and strengthened himself in his wickedness. The substance he had gathered, and the mischiefs he had wrought, were his boast and glory. Wealth and wickedness are dreadful companions; when combined they make a monster. When the devil is master of money bags, he is a devil indeed. Beelzebub and Mammon together heat the furnace seven times hotter for the child of God, but in the end that shall work out their own destruction. Wherever we see today a man great in sin and substance, we shall do well to anticipate his end, and view this verse as the divine in memoriam.

Joseph Caryl: Now, what is the setting the heart upon riches but our rejoicing and trusting in them? And because the heart of man is so easily persuaded into this sinful trust upon riches, therefore the apostle is urgent with Timothy to persuade all rich men -- not only mere worldly rich men, but godly rich men --

against it; yea, he urges Timothy to persuade rich men against two sins, which are worse than all the poverty in the world, yet the usual attendants of riches -- pride and confidence: Charge them that are rich in this world, that they be not high minded. 1Ti 6:17.

Ps 62:10 Do not trust (Heb = batach) in oppression, and do not vainly hope in robbery; If riches increase, do not set your heart upon them (See Pr 23:5).11 Once God has spoken; Twice I have heard this: That power belongs to God;

Comment: Dramatic contrast between v10 and v11 parallel to Pr 18:10, 11. The Greek translation (Septuagint = Lxx) of v10 reads that when wealth increases "set not the heart". The verb "set not" is present imperative calling for us to stop letting this happen (implying it was happening -- Beloved this is an easy "snare" to fall into!). Make it your lifestyle not to set your heart on wealth! Good advice from David, a man after God's own heart.

Spurgeon: If they grow in an honest, providential manner, as the result of industry or commercial success, do not make much account of the circumstance; be not unduly elated, do not fix your love upon your money bags. To bow an immortal spirit to the constant contemplation of fading possessions is extreme folly. Shall those who call the Lord their glory, glory in yellow earth? Shall the image and superscription of Caesar deprive them of communion with him who is the image of the invisible God? As we must not rest in men, so neither must we repose in money. Gain and fame are only so much foam of the sea. All the wealth and honour the whole world can afford would be too slender a thread to bear up the happiness of an immortal soul.

Luke 12:19 (A **parable** from Jesus) 'And I will say to my soul, "Soul, you have many goods laid up for many years to come; take your ease, eat, drink and be merry."' 20 "But God said to him, 'You fool! This very night your soul is required of you; and now who will own what you have prepared?'21 "So is the man who lays up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God."

Ian Barclay rightly commented that: Nearly half the **parables** Jesus told have the use of money as their main subject. It is sometimes said that we should give until it hurts. But Jesus teaches that it should hurt when we cease to give!

Rich (06223)(**ashir**/**asiyr**) is a masculine noun which refers to wealthy, well to do persons, especially those who possess significant power and influence in both the social and political sphere. God gives a principle in Ex 30:15 - "The **rich** shall not pay more, and the poor shall not pay less." Ashir is opposite of poor (1Sa 12:1, 2, 4). See the uses in Proverbs below to get a good sense of the characteristics of one who is rich (note for example the superficial character of their friends - Pr 14:20). Jeremiah has good advice for the rich - "let not a **rich** man boast of his riches." (Jer 9:23). Isaiah prophesied of the Messiah that "His grave was assigned with wicked men, Yet He was with a **rich** man in His death." (Isa 53:9) Solomon wrote that "The sleep of the working man is pleasant, whether he eats little or much. But the full stomach of the **rich** man does not allow him to sleep. **(Why not?)** (Eccl 5:12) Micah wrote that " the **rich** men of [the] city are full of violence." (Mic 6:12)

Ashir/**asiyr** is translated in Pr 18:11 with the adjective **plousios** which means well to do.

Webster says **rich** means having abundant possessions and especially material wealth, wealthy; opulent; possessing a large portion of land, goods or money, or a larger portion than is common to other men or to men of like rank.

Ashir - Used in 23v in the **NAS** - Ex 30:15; Ru 3:10; 2Sa12:1-2, 4; Job 27:19; Ps 45:12; 49:2; Pr 10:15; 14:20; 18:11, 23; 22:2, 7, 16; 28:6, 11; Ec 5:12; 10:6, 20; Isa 53:9; Jer 9:23; Mic 6:12.

NAS = rich(13), rich man(6), rich man's(2), rich men(2).

Prov 10:15 The **rich** man's wealth is his fortress, The ruin of the poor is their poverty.

Prov 14:20 The poor is hated even by his neighbor, But those who love the**rich** are many.

Prov 18:11 A **rich** man's wealth is his strong city, And like a high wall in his own imagination.

Prov 18:23 The poor man utters supplications, But the **rich** man answers roughly.

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

Prov 22:7 The **rich** rules over the poor, And the borrower [becomes] the lender's slave.

Prov 22:16 He who oppresses the poor to make much for himself Or who gives to the**rich**, [will] only [come to] poverty.

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

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

John Blanchard wisely reminds us that…

> Few things test a person's spirituality more accurately than the way he uses money. (Blanchard, John: Complete Gathered Gold: A Treasury of Quotations for Christians OR Computer Version - Recommended)

Wealth (01952)(**hon**) basically refers to goods or substance in sufficient quantity to be consider as riches, wealth or possessions. The majority of the uses are in Proverbs (17x). "Hon usually refers to movable goods considered as "wealth" In the Proverbs "wealth" is usually an indication of ungodliness: "The rich man's wealth is his strong city: the destruction of the poor is their poverty" (Pr. 10:15). (Vine)

Someone has well said that the two great tests of character are wealth and poverty.

The poorest person is one whose only wealth is money as attested by some of the quotes from some of the wealthiest of the wealthy…

- **W. H. Vanderbilt**…The care of $200 million [equivalent to ~$200 billion in 2010 dollars]… is enough to kill a man… There is no pleasure in it.
- **John Jacob Astor**…I am the most miserable man on earth.
- **John D. Rockefeller**…I have made many millions, but they have brought me no happiness.
- **Andrew Carnegie**…Millionaires seldom smile.
- **Henry Ford**…I was happier when doing a mechanic's job.

Hon - Used 26v in the **NAS** - Ps 44:12; 112:3; 119:14; Pr 1:13; 3:9; 6:31; 8:18; 10:15; 11:4; 12:27; 13:7, 11; 18:11; 19:4, 14; 24:4; 28:8, 22; 29:3; 30:15, 16; Song 8:7; Ezek 27:12, 18, 27, 33. **NAS** = cheaply*(1), enough(2), possession(1), riches(4), substance(1), wealth(17).

He possessed all the world had to give him,
He had reached every coveted goal;
But, alas, his life was a failure,
For he had forgotten his soul.**—Denison**

Wealth can do us no good unless it help us toward heaven. --Thomas Adams

Proverbs speaks a great deal about what money can do - Pr 3:9, 10; 10:15; 13:8; 14:20; 18:11; 19:4, 6, 7. Remember as someone once said money is like sea-water; the more a man drinks, the more thirsty he becomes!

As **George Swinnock** said "Many a man's gold has lost him his God."

Worldlings make gold their god
Saints make God their gold.
--Matthew Henry

Spurgeon in a sermon on godliness (1Ti 4:8) writes that it is…

> certain that no promise of the life that is to come is given to **wealth**. Men hoard it, and gather it, and keep it, and seal it down by bonds and settlements, as if they thought they could carry something with them; but when they have gained their utmost, they do not find that wealth has the promise even of this life, for it yields small contentment to the man who possesses it. Their inward thought is, that their houses shall continue for ever, and their dwelling places to all generations; they call their lands after their own names. Nevertheless a man's honor does not abide. As for the life to come, is there any supposable connection between the millions of the miser's wealth and the glory that is to be revealed hereafter? Nay, but by so much the more as the man lives for this world, by so much the more shall he be accursed. He said, "I will pull down my barns and build greater;" (Lk 12:18, 19, 20, 21) but God calls him a fool, and a fool he is, for when his soul is required of him, whose shall these things be which he had prepared? No, you may grasp the Indies if you will; you may seek to compass within your estates all the lands that you can see far and wide, but you shall not be nearer to heaven

when you have reached the climax of your avarice. There is no promise of the life that is to come in the pursuits of usury and covetousness. (**Profit of Godliness in Life to Come**)

John Trapp - **The rich man's wealth is his strong city.** It is hard to have wealth, and not to trust to it. [Matthew 19:24 1 Timothy 5:17; see the notes there} But wealth was never true to those that trusted it; there is an utter uncertainty, {1 Timothy 5:17] a nonentity, [Proverbs 23:5-6] an impotence to help in the evil day, [Zephaniah 1:18] an impossibility to stretch to eternity, unless it be to destroy the owner for ever. [Ecclesiastes 5:13 James 5:1-2] A wicked man beaten out of earthly comforts is as a naked man in a storm, and an unarmed man in the field, or a ship tossed in the sea without an anchor, which presently dasheth upon rocks, or falleth upon quicksands. Totam igitur anchoram sacram figamus in Deo, qui solus nec potest, nec vult fallere; Cast we anchor therefore upon God, who neither can nor will fail us, saith a learned interpreter. **And as an high wall in his own conceit.**] It is "conceit" only that sets a price upon these outward comforts, and bears men in hand, that thereby, as by a high wall, they shall not only be secured, but secreted in their lewdness, from the eyes of God and men. But what said the oracle to bloody Phocas? Though thou set up thy walls as high as heaven, sin lies at the foundation, and all will out - yea, all be overturned. (a)

LIKE A
HIGH WALL

High (**07682**) (**sagab [word study]**) Same word is used in Pr 18:10 translated in NASB as "safe" and serves to further closely link these two proverbs which contrast two means to obtain "security" in our very tenuous, sinful, insecure world! And so Solomon uses "**sagab**" to describe those who are **truly safe** in Jehovah's Name (His perfect character, His unchanging attributes) and contrast him with the rich man who "thinks" he is safe (lifted up and thus protected from ill winds, adverse circumstances, etc). The righteous man doesn't just think he is sage, but knows he is safe in Christ (and forever, eternally safe in the "Ark" from the impending flood of God's judgment).

As **Ron Dunn** once said "In the battle of faith, money is usually the last stronghold to fall."

W all (**02346**) (**chomah/homah [word study]**) means a literal wall and includes connotations such as enclosure, divider, protection (Lev 25:29, 30), safety, or impenetrability, depending on the context. Clearly **walls** were a major part of the fortification of ancient cities. Some OT uses are metaphorical: of David's men as protectors (1Sa 25:16); of Israel as a wall out of plumb or alignment (Amos 7:7, 8); of the resoluteness of Jeremiah under attack (Jer 1:18), of sin (iniquity) as a bulge in a high wall (Is 30:13), ready to collapse and destroy those beneath who trusted in it.

In view of the fact that **walls** were a basic element to ensure the security of a city, it is not surprising that Jehovah's judgment focused on the destruction of the city walls (Amos 1:7, 10, 14, Jer 49:27, Ezek 26:9, 10, 11, 12). The Babylonian sacking of Jerusalem began with a final siege in 588BC and lasted some 18 months, with the walls of the city finally being breached in July, 586BC (2Ki 25:4 - "two walls" - double walls were known as casemate and served a strategic purpose in that they were easy to construct and could be filled in with rocks and dirt in the case of a siege).

Chomah - 123v in the **NAS** - Ex 14:22, 29; Lev 25:29ff; Dt 3:5; 28:52; Josh 2:15; 6:5, 20; 1 Sam 25:16; 31:10, 12; 2Sa 11:20f, 24; 18:24; 20:15, 21; 1 Kgs 3:1; 4:13; 9:15; 20:30; 2 Kgs 3:27; 6:26, 30; 14:13; 18:26f; 25:4, 10; 2 Chr 8:5; 14:7; 25:23; 26:6; 27:3; 32:5, 18; 33:14; 36:19; Neh 1:3; 2:8, 13, 15, 17; 3:8, 13, 15, 27; 4:1, 3, 6f, 10, 13, 15, 17, 19; 5:16; 6:1, 6, 15; 7:1; 12:27, 30f, 37f; 13:21; Ps 51:18; 55:10; Prov 18:11; 25:28; Song 5:7; 8:9f; Isa 2:15; 22:10f; 25:12; 26:1; 30:13; 36:11f; 49:16; 56:5; 60:10, 18; 62:6; Jer 1:15, 18; 15:20; 21:4; 39:4, 8; 49:27; 50:15; 51:12, 44, 58; 52:7, 14; Lam 2:7f, 18; Ezek 26:4, 9, 10, 12; 27:11; 38:11, 20; 40:5; 42:20; Joel 2:7, 9; Amos 1:7, 10, 14; 7:7; Nah 2:5; 3:8; Zech 2:5. **NAS** = two walls(1), Wall(2), wall(93), walled(2), walls(36).

I magination (04906) (**maskiyth [word study]**) first means an image (as a carved or sculpted image usually some reference to an idol - Lv 26:11 = "figured", Pr 25:11 = "settings", Nu 33:52, Ezek 8:12) and then in the figurative sense referring to one's imagination (Ps 73:7, Pr 11:11) which is in essence an "image" in one's mind which is unreal and illusory even as are vain, worthless idols (includes the deceitful "idol" of mammon or money!).

And so the rich man (even the fabulously wealthy are not immune) believes a lie and imagines his wealth to be his high wall that provides a strong defense which will give him security in any and all the storms of life. Solomon says such a man is deceived in his own estimation for only God is a mortal man's sure refuge.

As **Matthew Henry** says

> It is a strong city and a high wall only in his own conceit; for it will fail when most in need. They will be exposed

to the just wrath of that Judge whom they despised as a Saviour.

Maskiyth - 6v in **NAS** - Lev 26:1; Nu 33:52; Ps 73:7; Prov 18:11; 25:11; Ezek 8:12. NAS = carved images(1), figured(1), figured stones(1), imagination(1), imaginations(1), settings(1).

Our mind is a funny thing - we can look at what we want to look at and what we look at can become our all in all. A person can blot out the sun (or "**the Son**" - pun intended!) if they hold a penny close enough to your eye (Mt 6:24note). It is as if their "penny" has become their "all in all"!

To reiterate (we need to hear this over and over for it is so contra the message the world is incessantly broadcasting) the man or woman who trusts in the strong tower of their God can know beyond a shadow of a doubt that they are safe, but the man or woman who trusts in their wealth (they think it's theirs - God is just allowing them to "borrow" it for a season!) only think they are safe and will in this life or the life to come discover that their pride in their fleeting wealth will lead to eternal destruction. Jesus Christ is the "Ark" they need to enter by grace through faith, before the flood of God's righteous wrath begins to fall. Beloved it is not easy to share the Gospel with the rich for they have made money their god and see no need for Him. And yet we are called to be His witnesses (Acts 1:8), so don't shy away from sharing the Gospel of Grace with your "temporarily wealthy" friends, bosses, relatives. You never know what God's grace might do -- For encouragement read the story of a man named Naaman, the prominent captain of the the army of the King of Aram, who was a leper. And who shared the good news with this powerful man? A little girl! (See 2Ki 5:1,2,3,4, 5-27).

Money often unmakes the man who makes it and can eventually lead to his eternal separation from God. Remember that there are no "U Haul" in the rich man's funeral possession, not to mention that the shroud clothing his lifeless body has no pockets! This reminds me of the story of John D. Rockefeller who in his day was one of the wealthiest men in the world. After his death someone asked his accountant, "How much money did he leave?" to which the accountant quipped "All of it!" So while we can't take our money with us, Jesus made it clear that we can send it on ahead! (Mt 6:20).

Jesus gave the best advice on money instructing us…

> Do not lay up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. But **lay up** (present imperative = command to make this your lifestyle, your habitual practice) for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys, and where thieves do not break in or steal for where your treasure is, there will your heart be also. (Mt 6:19, 20, 21-note)
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> **Comment**: "If your treasure is on earth, you are going from it; if it is in heaven, you are going to it." (Anonymous)

Matthew Henry spared no punches when he remarked that…

> Money is no defence against the arrests of death, nor any alleviation to the miseries of the damned.

John Henry Jowett "nails" most of us with his comment that…

> The real measure of our wealth is how much we'd be worth if we lost all our money.

And if Jowett's comment did not convict you (me), perhaps **W. Graham Scroggie's** question will…

> There are two ways in which a Christian may view his money—'How much of my money shall I use for God?' or 'How much of God's money shall I use for myself?'

The godly preacher of yesteryear, **John Wesley**, had a good (godly) approach to money declaring…

> When I have any money I get rid of it as quickly as possible, least it find a way into my heart.

As **C H Spurgeon** rightly remarked…

> Ignorance is worst when it amounts to ignorance of God, and knowledge is best when it exercises itself upon the name of God. This most excellent knowledge leads to the most excellent grace of faith. O, to learn more of the attributes and character of God. Unbelief, that hooting night bird, cannot live in the light of divine knowledge, it flies before the sun of God's great and gracious Name. If we read this verse literally, there is, no doubt, a glorious fulness of assurance in the names of God.

Bible Knowledge Commentary - Though wealth is more desirable than poverty and does help keep a person from disaster (cf. Pr 10:15 where the first line is identical with the first line of Pr 18:11), money cannot replace the Lord as a base of security. The wealthy think (imagine) that their wealth can protect them from harm as a high city wall used to protect from enemy troops, but the wealthy are wrong. Money simply cannot shield people from many problems. (Walvoord, J. F., Zuck, R. B., et al: The Bible Knowledge

Commentary. 1985. Victor)

James Smith - “The wealth of the rich person is his strong city, but like a high wall [only] in his estimation.” Wealth affords protection (cf. Pr 10:15); but if that wealth is misused the protection is illusionary. The fool imagines that his wealth is an unassailable defense which will preserve him amid all the storms of life. Such is not the case. That “high wall” would one day fall, smashed by Yahweh in the judgment (Pr 18:11).

Bridges - Little does he think, that in a moment they may crumble to the dust, and leave him in the fearful ruin of an unsheltered state. ‘Trouble will find an entrance into his castle. Death will storm, and take it. And judgment will sweep both him and it into perdition.' (Scott. Comp. Ezek 28:1-10. Lk 12:18, 19, 20) The histories of David and Saul contrast most strikingly trouble with or without a refuge. (1Sa 30:6; with 1Sa 28:15. Cp Isa. 1:10, 11) An affecting contrast does our Lord draw between a real and an imaginary refuge! (Mt 7:24, 25, 26, 27) Every man is as his trust. A trust in God communicates a divine and lofty spirit. We feel that we are surrounded with God, and dwelling on high with Him. Oh, the sweet security of the weakest believer, shut up in an impregnable fortress! A vain trust brings a vain and proud heart, the immediate forerunner of ruin. (**Proverbs 18:10 Commentary**)

Toy comments that Pr 18:11 is a parallel comparison - lit. picture, then, apparently, imagination, thought; cf. $ 737, and note on Pr. 25:11. A better parallelism is given by reading: and like a high wall is his riches. The Heb. appears to say that wealth is a protection not really, but only in the opinion of its possessor; this is possibly the correction of an editor who took offence at the role ascribed to wealth. Whichever reading be adopted, the couplet simply states a fact; it is doubtful whether praise or blame is implied ; cf. 1015, in which our first cl. occurs. Wealth is regarded in Pr. sometimes as a desirable source of power, sometimes as associated with immoral and irreligious pride. — From the collocation of v.10u it might be surmised that the former is a correction of the latter, or a protest against it. Such protest may have been added or inserted by an editor; v.11 stood originally, no doubt, as a simple record of observation. (A critical and exegetical commentary on the book of Proverbs)

J Vernon McGee writes his usual pithy comment on Pr 18:11…

> The child of God needs to be fortified. He needs to get into the strong tower. He needs to be in this strong city and have the high wall around him. What is it? Well, it is a knowledge of the Word of God. We need to recognize that we are living in very difficult times and we are being tested. Oh, how important is a knowledge of the Word of God! My friend, don't try to substitute these little courses that teach you how to witness and how to get along with your wife. They may have a certain value, but they are only surface stuff. There is no substitute for digging into the Word of God. My friend, learn to read the Word of God. If you don't understand it, read it again. If you don't understand it the second time, go over it once more. Then if you don't understand it the third time through, something is wrong, and you need to go to the Lord and tell Him you're not getting it. Ask Him to help you. The Spirit of God is our teacher. I know I am telling you this accurately because He hasn't yet let me down in this matter of understanding His Word. (McGee, J V: Thru the Bible Commentary: Thomas Nelson)

H A Ironside - The fortress of the man who trusts God contrasts sharply with the fortress of the man who trusts in his wealth. He does not know the name of the Lord, and in his conceit he thinks that he is forever secure. However his riches soon vanish away and leave him desolate and forsaken. How often did the Savior, when on earth, have to rebuke those who trusted in uncertain riches! See especially Luke 6:24 and Mark 10:24.

Don’t let riches—or the pursuit of riches—
derail your pursuit of Jesus.

Ehlke - If we trust in this kind of thing as our “fortified city,” our imaginations have gotten the best of us. What good is any of that when we stand naked before our Maker? (Proverbs. The People's Bible. Milwaukee, Wis.: Northwestern Pub. House)

John Trapp - **The name of the Lord is a strong tower**. God’s attributes are called "His name"; because by them he is known as a man is, by his name. These are said to be Arx roboris, a tower so deep, no pioneer can undermine it; so thick, no cannon can pierce it; so high, no ladder can scale it; - "a rock," an "old rock"; [Isaiah 26:4] yea, "munitions of rocks"; [Isaiah 33:16] rocks within rocks; a tower impregnable - inexpugnable. (a) **The righteous run into it.]** All creatures run to their refuges when hunted, [Proverbs 30:26 Ps 104:18 Proverbs 18:11 Da 4:10-11, 9:50-51] which yet fail them many times, as the tower of Shechem did; [Judges 9:46-49] as the stronghold of Sion did those Jebusites that scorned David and his host - as conceited, that the very lame and blind, those most shiftless creatures, might there easily hold it out against him. [2Samuel 5:6-7] The hunted hare runs to her form, but that cannot secure her; the traveler to his bush, but that, when once wet through, does him more hurt than good; as the physicians did the hemorrhoids. [Mark 5:26] But as she, when she had spent all before, came to Christ and was cured, so the righteous being poor and destitute of wealth - which is the **rich man’s strong city** [Proverbs 18:11] - and of all human helps (God loves to relieve such as are forsaken of their hopes), runs to this strong refuge, and is not only safe, but ‘set aloft,’ as the word signifies, out of the gunshot. (b) None can pull them out of his hands. Run therefore to God, by praying and not fainting. [Luke 18:1] This is the best policy for

security. That which is said of wily persons that are full of fetches, of windings, and of turnings in the world, that such will never break, is much more true of a righteous, praying Christian. He hath but one grand policy to secure him in all dangers; and that is, to run to God.

Matthew Poole - He trusts to his wealth, as that which will either enable him to resist his enemy, or at least purchase his favor.

Keil and Delitzsch - Two proverbs, of the fortress of faith, and of the fortress of presumption: A strong tower is the name of Jahve;The righteous runneth into it, and is high. The name of Jahve is the Revelation of God, and the God of Revelation Himself, the creative and historical Revelation, and who is always continually revealing Himself; His name is His nature representing itself, and therefore capable of being described and named, before all the Tetragramm, as the Anagramm of the overruling and inworking historical being of God, as the Chiffre of His free and all-powerful government in grace and truth, as the self-naming of God the Saviour. This name, which is afterwards interwoven in the name Jesus, is מגדל־עז (Psalm 61:4), a strong high tower bidding defiance to every hostile assault. Into this the righteous runneth, to hide himself behind its walls, and is thus lifted (perf. consec.) high above all danger (cf. ישׂגּב, Proverbs 29:25). רוּץ אל means, Job 15:26, to run against anything, רוּץ, seq. acc., to invest, blockade anything, רוּץ בּ, to hasten within; Hitzig's conjecture, ירוּם riseth up high, instead of ירוּץ, is a freak. רוּץ בּ is speedily בּוֹא בּ, the idea the same as Psalm 27:5; Psalm 31:21. **Pr 18:11 The possession of the righteous is his strong fort, And is like a high wall in his imagination.** - Line first = Proverbs 10:15. מִשׂכּית from שׂכה, Chald. סכה (whence after Megilla 14a, יסכה, she who looks), R. שׂך, cogn. זך, to pierce, to fix, means the image as a medal, and thus also intellectually: image (conception, and particularly the imagination) of the heart (Psalm 73:7), here the fancy, conceit; Fleischer compares (Arab.) (tṣwwr), to imagine something to oneself, French se figurer. Translators from the lxx to Luther incorrectly think on שׂכך (סכך), to entertain; only the Venet. is correct in the rendering: εν φαντασία αυ του ; better than Kimchi, who, after Ezra 8:12, thinks on the chamber where the riches delighted in are treasured, and where he fancies himself in the midst of his treasures as if surrounded by an inaccessible wall.

Joseph Benson - Proverbs 18:10-11. **The name of the Lord** — That is, the Lord, as he hath revealed himself in his works, and especially in his word, by his promises, and the declarations of his infinite perfections, and of his good-will to his people; **is a strong tower** — Is sufficient for our protection in the greatest dangers. **The righteous** — By faith and prayer, devotion toward God, and dependence on him; run into it — As their city of refuge. Having made sure of their interest in God's name, they take the comfort and benefit of it: they go out of themselves, retire from the world, live above it, dwell in God and God in them, and so they are safe, as if they were in an impregnable fortress. They think themselves so, and they shall find themselves so. Observe, reader, there is enough in God, and in the discoveries which he has made of himself to us, to make us easy at all times. The wealth laid up in this tower is enough to enrich us, to be a continual feast, and a continuing treasure to us; the strength of this tower is enough to protect us; the name of the Lord, or that whereby he has made himself known as God, and as our God; his titles and attributes; his covenant, and all the promises of it, make up a tower, and a strong tower, impenetrable, impregnable, for us, if we be his people. This is necessary; for it is only the righteous that run into this tower, as is here stated, or that have access to it, according to Isaiah 26:2, which is signified to beat down the vain confidences of those who, though they live in a gross neglect and contempt of God, yet presume to expect salvation from him.

Matthew Poole - What a refuge there is in a covenant God in Christ for a believer, however buffeted, to take shelter in? Let a child of God sit down if he will, and ponder over all his discouragements and difficulties; and I will be bold to say, that in the Lord's name, that is in Christ Jesus, he will find somewhat exactly corresponding, to suit and answer for all. Is he poor? Christ's name is riches; yea, durable riches and righteousness. Proverbs 8:18. Is he surrounded with enemies? Then Christ is the mighty God. Isaiah 9:6. Is he sick? He saith, I am the Lord that healeth thee (**Jehovah Rapha**). Ex 15:26. Do his people need in critical moments a thousand supplies, they know not what, and they know not how? How blessed is that name by which Abraham called the Lord in his moment of necessity; **Jehovah Jireh**, the Lord shall provide; and at this day in the mount of the Lord it shall be seen. Genesis 22:14. In short, in the name of Jehovah we have all; wisdom to guide, power to help, grace to save, mercy to pardon, righteousness to justify, and all temporal, spiritual, and eternal blessings. Surely, Lord, they that know thy name will put their trust in thee; for thou, Lord, hast not forsaken them that seek thee. Ps 9:10-**note**.

Matthew Henry - Having described the firm and faithful defense of the righteous man (Proverbs 18:10), Solomon here shows what is the false and deceitful defense of the rich man, that has his portion and treasure in the things of this world, and sets his heart upon them. His wealth is as much his confidence, and he expects as much from it, as a godly man from his God. See, **1. How he supports himself.** He makes his wealth his city, where he dwells, where he rules, with a great deal of self-complacency, as if he had a whole city under his command. It is his strong city, in which he entrenches himself, and then sets danger at defiance, as if nothing could hurt him. His scales are his pride; his wealth is his wall in which he encloses himself, and he thinks it a high wall, which cannot be scaled or got over, Job 31:24; Rev 18:7. **2. How herein he cheats himself**. It is a strong city, and a high wall, but it is so only in his own conceit; it will not prove to be really so, but like the house built on the sand, which will fail the builder when he most needs it.

John Gill - Comments on Proverbs 18:11 - **The rich man's wealth is his strong city -** In which he dwells, over which he presides; in which he places his trust and confidence, and thinks himself safe from every enemy and from all trouble: as one

observes, "the abundance of a rich man's wealth he conceives to be as it were the abundance of people in a "city"; the telling of his money he imagines to be the walking of people up and down the streets; his bags standing thick together to be so many houses standing close one to the other; his iron barred chests to be so mary bulwarks; his bonds and bills to be his cannons and demi-cannons, his great ordinance; and in the midst of these he thinks himself environed with a "great wall", which no trouble is able to leap over, which no misery is able to break through.' As it follows; **and as a high wall in his own conceit:** which not only separates and distinguishes him from others; but, as he imagines, will secure him from all dangers, and will be abiding, lasting, and durable: but all this is only "in his own conceit", or "imagery"F20; in the chambers of his imagery, as Jarchi, referring to Ezekiel 8:12; where the same word is used; for this wall shall not stand; these riches cannot secure themselves, they take wing and fly away; and much less the owner of them, not from public calamities, nor from personal diseases of body, nor from death, nor from wrath to come.

Pulpit Commentary - Proverbs 18:11 In contrast with the Divine tower of safety in the preceding verse is here brought forward the earthly refuge of the worldly man. The rich man's wealth is his strong city. The clause is repeated from Proverbs 10:15, but with quite a different conclusion. And as an high wall in his own conceit. The rich man imagines his wealth to be, as it were, an unassailable defence, to preserve him safe amid all the storms of life. בְּמַשְׂכִּיתוֹ (bemaskitho), rendered "in his own conceit," is, as Venetian has, εν φαντασία αυ του , "in his imagination," maskith being "an image or picture," as in Proverbs 26:1; Ezekiel 8:12; but see on Proverbs 25:11. Aben Ezra brings out the opposition between the secure and stable trust of the righteous in the Lord's protection, and the confidence of the rich worldling in his possessions, which is only imaginary and delusive. Vulgate, Et quasi murus validus circumdans eum, "Like a strong wall surrounding him;" Septuagint, "And its glory (**doxa**) greatly overshadows him;" i.e. the pomp and splendour of his wealth are his protection, or merely paint him like a picture, having no real substance. The commentators explain the word ε πισκιάζει in both senses.

Thomas Constable - Wealth does provide some security, but one may falsely imagine it a higher safeguard against calamity than it really is, "as anyone who has faced a terminal illness knows." [Note: Ibid., p. 77.]

H A Ironside - The fortress of the man who trusts God contrasts sharply with the fortress of the**man who trusts in his wealth**. He does not know the name of the Lord, and in his conceit he thinks that he is forever secure. However his riches soon vanish away and leave him desolate and forsaken. How often did the Savior, when on earth, have to rebuke those who trusted in uncertain riches! See especially Luke 6:24 and Mark 10:24.

G Campbell Morgan - Proverbs 18:10-11. Each of these verses taken separately constitutes a perfect proverb; but the force of either is diminished unless we note the antithesis created by considering them together. On the one hand, the true refuge of the soul is declared. On the other, a false refuge is described.

George Lawson - Few of the rich are righteous. God is the hope and strength of his people; but the rich are generally dazzled with the luster of their gold and jewels, and mistake those precious metals for gods; and so they say unto the gold, Thou art our hope, and to the fine gold, Thou art our confidence. They trust not to the Rock of ages, but lean upon a broken reed which will soon break, and pierce their arms, and leave them to fall into perdition, after they have been pierced through with many sorrows. Riches are good things when they are well used, but confidence in riches is a grievous sin, because it is an alienation of the spirit from God, who requires the homage of the heart still more than the worship of the knee. It is a source of many iniquities, because it prompts men to injustice and oppression, to despise God, and to forget death and judgment. It shuts up men’s bowels of compassion from the indigent, and makes it as difficult for men to get into the kingdom of God, as for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle. This second warning the wise man here gives against this vain confidence. Examine yourselves, ye rich men, and see whether you have not the symptoms of this vain confidence. Trust not in uncertain riches, but in the living God, and show that your confidence is in God by a readiness to lend unto the Lord*. Murmur not, ye that are poor, because you are not under the same temptation with some others, to make to yourselves god’s of gold. Trust in the Lord, and you shall want no good thing. (Exposition of the Book of Proverbs, Volume 1, 1821)

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When Gold is Your God - Perhaps the most famous gold strike in American history occurred in January 1848 when a man named John Marshall found gold at Sutter’s Mill in northern California. The find set off a gold rush that reached a frenzied pitch and even attracted prospectors from Europe—but it ruined Marshall and John Stutter, the man who owned the land where gold lay for the taking. Sutter’s land was overrun by gold seekers, his cattle were stolen, and he was driven into bankruptcy. Marshall died drunken and penniless. (Today in the Word)

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Toxic Living - Picher, Oklahoma, is no more. In mid-2009, this once-bustling town of 20,000 went out of business. In the first quarter of the 1900s, Picher was a boomtown because of its abundant lead and zinc. Workers extracted the ore, which was used to help arm the US during both World Wars.

The town faded as the ore began to run out—but the biggest problem was that while the lead and zinc brought wealth, they also brought pollution. Because nothing was done to deal with the pollution, Picher became a toxic wasteland, and the government condemned the land.

What happened to Picher can happen to people. Prosperity can look so good that it's hard to think about possible downsides. Actions that are detrimental to long-term spiritual health are accepted, and unless the problem is corrected, destruction follows. It happened to King Saul. He began as a good king, but in seeking success he failed to see the damage he was doing. Turning his back on God's commands, he acted "foolishly" (1Sa 13:13) and lost his kingdom (1Sa 13:14).

In our attempts to find success, we need to watch out for spiritual pollution that comes when we fail to follow God's clear scriptural guidelines. Godly living always beats toxic living. (Our Daily Bread)

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Thomas Brooks (Puritan writer) comments on Pr 18:11 noting that…

> There are many who rely on their riches, prosperity, and worldly grandeur and glory.
>
> **Proverbs 18:11,**
> **"The rich man's wealth is his strong city."**
>
> "Don't weary yourself trying to get rich. Why waste your time? For riches can disappear as though they had the wings of a bird!" Proverbs 23:4,5.
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> It is hard to have wealth, and not trust to it, Mt 19:24. Wealth was never true to those who have trusted it. There is an utter uncertainty in riches, 1Ti 6:17; an impotency to help in an evil day, Zeph 1:18; an impossibility to stretch to eternity, unless it be to destroy the owner forever, [Rich men's wealth proves an hindrance to their happiness, Ec 5:13; Jas 5:1, 2.] Pr 10:15; Ps 73:19; Mt 20:26.
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> There is nothing more clear in Scripture and history, than that riches, prosperity, and worldly glory—have been commonly their portion who never have had a God for their portion, Lk 16:25.
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> It was an excellent saying of Lewis, emperor of Germany:
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> "Such goods are worth getting and owning—which will not sink or wash away if a shipwreck happens."
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> [Riches are called thick clay, Hab. 2:6, which will sooner break the back, than lighten the heart.]
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> "Only the wise man is the rich man," says the philosopher.
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> Augustine says, "that earthly riches are full of poverty, they cannot enrich the soul; for oftentimes under silken apparel there is a threadbare soul."
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> He who is rich in conscience, sleeps more soundly than he who is richly clothed in purple.
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> "No man is rich, who cannot carry into eternity, that which he has. That which we must leave behind us, is not ours—but belongs to someone else." [Ambrose]
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> "The shortest way to true riches is by their contempt. It is great riches not to desire riches. He has most—who covets least." [Seneca.]
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> When one was commending the riches and wealth of merchants; the poor man replied,
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> "I do not love that wealth which hangs upon ropes; for if they break, the ship miscarries, and then where is the merchant's riches?"
>
> Latimer
>
> "If I had an enemy, whom it was lawful to wish evil unto, I would chiefly wish him great store of riches, for then he should never enjoy peace and quiet."
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> The historian Tacitus observes, that the riches of Cyprus invited the Romans to hazard many dangerous fights for the conquering of it.
>
> Augustine
>
> Earthly riches are an evil master, a treacherous servant, fathers of flattery, sons of grief, a cause of fear to those that have them, and a cause of sorrow to those who lack them."
>
> I have read a famous story of Zelimus, emperor of Constantinople, who after he had captured Egypt, he found

a great deal of treasure there; and the soldiers coming to him, and asked him what they should do with the rich citizens of Egypt. "Oh," says the emperor, "hang them all—for they are too rich to be made slaves!" This was all the thanks they had for the riches they were robbed of. What more contemptible than a rich fool, a golden beast? Note that some few are great and gracious, rich and righteous, as Abraham, Lot, Job, David, Hezekiah, etc.

By these short hints you may see the folly and vanity of those men who trust in their riches. (**Paradise Opened**)

Spurgeon in **Our Stronghold** contrasts "refuges"…

The character of God is the refuge of the Christian, in opposition to other refuges which godless men have chosen. Solomon suggestively puts the following words in Pr 18:11—

"The rich man's wealth is his strong city,
and as an high wall in his own conceit."

The rich man feels that his wealth may afford him comfort. Should he be attacked in law, his wealth can procure him an advocate; should he be insulted in the streets, the dignity of a full purse will avenge him; should he be sick, he can fee the best physicians; should he need ministers to his pleasures, or helpers of his infirmities, they will be at his call; should famine stalk through the land, it will avoid his door; should war itself break forth he can purchase an escape from the sword, for his wealth is his strong tower.

In contra-distinction to this, the righteous man finds in his God all that the wealthy man finds in his substance, and a vast deal more.

**"The Lord is my portion, saith my soul;
therefore will I trust (~hope) in Him."**
(Lam 3:24)

God is our treasure; He is to us better than the fullest purse, or the most magnificent income; broad acres yield not such peace as a well attested interest in the love and faithfulness of our heavenly Father. Provinces under our sway could not bring to us greater revenues than we possess in Him who makes us heirs of all things by Christ Jesus (Ro 8:17).

Other men who trust not in their wealth, nevertheless make **their own names** a strong tower. To say the truth, a man's good name is no mean defense against the attacks of his fellow-men. To wrap one's self about in the garment of integrity is to defy the chill blast of calumny (malicious utterance of false charges), and to be mailed (enclosed by armor that defends one's body) against the arrows of slander. If we can appeal to God, and say, "Lord, them knows that in this thing I am not wicked," then let the mouth of the liar pour forth his slanders, let him scatter his venom where he may, we bear an antidote within before which his poison yields its power. But this is only true in a very limited sense; death soon proves to men that their own good name can afford them no consolation, and under conviction of sin a good repute is no shelter.

When conscience is awake, when the judgment is unbiased, when we come to know something of the law of God and of the justice of his character, we soon discover that **self-righteousness** is no hiding-place for us, a crumbling battlement which will fall on the neck of him that hides behind it — a pasteboard fortification yielding to the first shock of the law — a refuge of lies to be beaten down with the great hailstones of eternal vengeance — such is the righteousness of man.

The **righteous** trusts not in this; not his own name, but the name of his God, not his own character, but the character of the Most High is his strong tower. Numberless are those "castles in the air" to which men hasten in the hour of peril: ceremonies lift their towers into the clouds; professions pile their walls high as mountains, and works of the flesh paint their delusions till they seem substantial bulwarks; but all, all shall melt like snow, and vanish like a mist.

**Happy is he who leaves the sand for the rock,
the phantom for the substance**.

Lane comments on the contrast writing that…

"The rich man feels he is more secure than 'the righteous'… 'The name of the Lord' is only words but he has tangible money and goods. 'The righteous' has 'a strong tower' but the rich has a whole fortified city. 'The righteous' is placed in a room at the top of the tower which will have steps up to it and which an enemy can

climb, but the rich is behind an unscalable wall. True as all this is, the security of it is something they imagine. He might accuse 'the righteous' of living in an unreal world, trusting a God he can't see, hear or touch, while the rich has visible money and solid city walls. In fact, money, goods and fortifications are vulnerable commodities (Mt 6:19). Even if he retains them throughout his life they won't keep him from death and the judgment of God (Luke 12:19, 20, 21). On the other hand, God is eternal and faith which rests on him is for ever (Isaiah 26:4)." (Lane, E. Focus on the Bible: Proverbs)

David gives us a similar contrast using the figure of battle writing that…

> Some boast in chariots, and some in horses but we will boast in the Name of the Lord, our God. (Ps 20:7)

Comment: Hebrew verb for **boast** is **zakar** which conveys the basic idea of mentioning or recalling something, in this case God's Name, either silently, out loud or by means of a memorial sign. It means to remember, to think about, to think on [sounds somewhat like meditating on His Name]. Do you from time to time, take a moment and recall His Name, taking a mental inventory of what that name signifies? It is a healthy practice to acquire.)

Comment: Once again, as in Pr 18:10-11, we see a striking contrast between God's provision [His Name] and man's provision [chariots, horses]. (Compare Pr 21:31!)

Bob Fromm outlines Man's Strong City (Pr 18:11)

A. Memorials to Men

E.g. John Sutter (Sutter County, the town of Sutter)

E.g. Modesto, Rockefeller Center, and Houston, TX

B. Military cities

1. the role of cities (protect and provide)

2. "high walls" meant protection, important for a strong city (protect)

C. Man's search for security

1. Education

2. Possession

3. People

4. Jobs

5. Fill in the blank_____! Add them all together and if you could build a city out of it and feel secure within it, it is still "like a high wall in your own esteem." (Pr 18:11b) (**Proverbs 18:10-11 -- The Name of the Lord**)

WHAT IS YOUR "STRONG CITY"?

If we are honest, each of us would admit that we have our "strong cities" and/or "chariots and horses" that we trust in rather than choosing to run first into the strong tower of God's Name. Unfortunately it is too often true of us that "seeing is believing"! But when we place our trust in anything other than God's Name, that which we trust becomes to us our "**strong city**" which may seem "real" but is in fact imaginary. Solomon is not saying we are to disregard the means God has provided for our sustenance. It means we must not trust in them in lieu of placing our trust in God, running to His everlasting, immutable Name and not to our imaginary "strong cities"!

A mark of Christian maturity is to continually trust the Lord in the minutiae of daily life. If we learn to trust God in the minor adversities, we will be better prepared to trust Him in the major ones. But whether the difficulty is major or minor, we must choose to trust God.

God will not force us to run into His strong tower, but He will allow circumstances that encourage us to cease relying on our "strong cities" (whatever they might be) and choose to run into His strong tower! Beloved, the more you know God's Name, the more you will trust and believe Him and the quicker you will run to Him!

TWO FORTRESSES

Alexander Maclaren contrasts Pr 18:10 and Pr 18:11…

THE mere reading of these two verses shows that, contrary to the usual rule in the Book of Proverbs, they have a bearing on each other. They are intended to suggest a very strong contrast, and that contrast is even more emphatic in the original than in our translation; because, as the margin of your Bibles will tell you, the last word of the former verse might be more correctly rendered, 'the righteous runneth into it, and is set on high.' It is the same word which is employed in the next verse—'a high wall.'

So we have '**the strong tower**' and '**the strong city**'; the man lifted up above danger on the battlements of the one, and the man fancying himself to be high above it (and only fancying himself) in the imaginary safety of the other.

I. Consider first the two fortresses.

One need only name them side by side to feel the full force of the intended contrast. On the one hand, the name of the Lord with all its depths and glories, with its blaze of lustrous purity, and infinitudes of inexhaustible power; and on the other, 'the rich man's wealth.'

What contempt is expressed in putting the two side by side! It is as if the author had said, 'Look on this picture and on that!' Two fortresses! Yes! The one is like Gibraltar, inexpugnable on its rock, and the other is like a painted castle on the stage; flimsy canvas that you could put your foot through—solidity by the side of nothingness. For even the poor appearance of solidity is an illusion, as our text says with bitter emphasis—'a high wall in his own conceit.'

(1) 'The name of the Lord,' of course, is the Biblical expression for the whole character of God, as He has made it known to us, or in other words, for God Himself, as He has been pleased to reveal Himself to mankind. The syllables of that name are all the deeds by which He has taught us what He is; every act of power, of wisdom, of tenderness, of grace that has manifested these qualities and led us to believe that they are all infinite. In the name, in its narrower sense, the name of Jehovah, there is much of 'the name' in its wider sense. For that name 'Jehovah,' both by its signification and by the circumstances under which it was originally employed, tells us a great deal about God. It tells us, for instance, by virtue of its signification, that He is self-existent, depending upon no other creature. 'I AM THAT I AM!' No other being can say that. All the rest of us have to say, 'I am that which God made me.' Circumstances and a hundred other things have made me; God finds the law of His being and the fountain of His being within Himself.

'He sits on no precarious throne,
Nor borrows leave to be.'

His name proclaims Him to be self-existent, and as self-existent, eternal; and as eternal, changeless; and as self-existent, eternal, changeless, infinite in all the qualities by which He makes Himself known. This boundless Being, all full of wisdom, power, and tenderness, with whom we can enter into relations of amity and concord, surely He is 'a strong tower into which we may run and be safe.'

But far beyond even the sweep of that great name, Jehovah, is the knowledge of God's deepest heart and character which we learn in Him who said, 'I have declared Thy name unto My brethren, and will declare it.' Christ in His life and death, in His meekness, sweetness, gentleness, calm wisdom, infinite patience, attractiveness; yearning over sinful hearts, weeping over rebels, in the graciousness of His life, in the sacredness and the power of His Cross, is the Revealer to our hearts of the heart of God. If I may so say, He has built 'the strong tower' broader, has expanded its area and widened its gate, and lifted its summit yet nearer the heavens, and made the name of God a wider name and a mightier name, and a name of surer defence and blessing than ever it was before.

And so, dear brethren! it all comes to this, the name that is 'the strong tower' is the name 'My Father!' a Father of infinite tenderness and wisdom and power. Oh! where can the child rest more quietly than on the mother's breast, where can the child be safer than in the circle of the father's arms? 'The name of the Lord is a strong tower.'

(2) Now turn to the other for a moment: 'The rich man's wealth is' (with great emphasis on the next little word) **'his strong city, and as a high wall in his own conceit.'**

Of course we have not to deal here only with wealth in the shape of money, but all external and material goods, the whole mass of the 'things seen and temporal,' are gathered together here in this phrase.

Men use their imaginations in very strange fashion, and make, or fancy they make, for themselves out of the things of the present life a defence and a strength. Like some poor lunatic, out upon a moor, that fancies himself ensconced in a castle; like some barbarous tribes behind their stockades or crowding at the back of a little turf wall, or in some old tumble-down fort that the first shot will bring rattling down about their ears, fancying themselves perfectly secure and defended—so do men deal with these outward things that are given them for another purpose altogether: they make of them defenses and fortresses.

It is difficult for a man to have them
and not to trust them.

So Jesus said to His disciples once:

'How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the Kingdom' (Mk 10:23KJV)

and when they were astonished at His words, He repeated them with the significant variation,

'How hard is it for them that trust in riches to enter into the Kingdom of God.' (Mk 10:24KJV)

So He would teach that the **misuse** and not the **possession** of wealth is the barrier, but so, too, He would warn us that, nine times out of ten, the **possession** of them in more than a very modest measure, tempts a man into **confidence** in them.

The illusion is one that besets us all. We are all tempted to make a defence of the things that we can see and handle. Is it not strange, and is it not sad, that most of us just turn the truth round about and suppose that the real defence is the imaginary, and that the imaginary one is the real?

How many men are there in this chapel who, if they spoke out of their deepest convictions, would say:

'Oh yes t the promises of God are all very well, but I would rather have the cash down. I suppose that I may trust that He will provide bread and water, and all the things that I need, but I would rather have a good solid balance at the banker's.'

How many of you would rather honestly, and at the bottom of your hearts, have that than God's word for your defence? (**Ed: Gulp!**)

How many of you think that to trust in a living God is but grasping at a very airy and unsubstantial kind of support; and that the real solid defence is the defence made of the things that you can see?

My brother! it is exactly the opposite way (cp 2Co 4:18). Turn it clean round, and you get the truth. The unsubstantial shadows are the material things that you can see and handle; illusory as a dream, and as little able to ward off the blows of fate as a soap bubble. The real is the unseen beyond—'the things that are,' and He who alone really is, and in His boundless and absolute Being is our only defence.

In one aspect or another, that false imagination with which my last text deals is the besetting sin of Manchester. Not the rich man only, but the poor man just as much, is in danger of it. The poor man who thinks that everything would be right if only he were rich, and the rich man who thinks that everything is right because he is rich, are exactly the same man.

The circumstances differ, but the one man is but the other turned inside out. And all round about us we see the fierce fight to get more and more of these things, the tight grip of them when we have got them, the overestimate of the value of them, the contempt for the people who have less of them than ourselves. Our aristocracy is an aristocracy of wealth; in some respects, one by no means to be despised, because there often go a great many good qualities to the making and the stewardship of wealth; but still it is an evil that men should be so largely estimated by their money as they are here. It is not a sound state of opinion which has made 'what is he worth?' mean 'how much of it has he?' We are taught here to look upon the prizes of life as being mainly wealth. To win that is 'success'—'prosperity'—and it is very hard for us all not to be influenced by the prevailing tone (**Ed**: "… of the **world**").

I would urge you, young men, especially to lay this to heart—that of all delusions that can beset you in your course, none will work more disastrously than the notion that the summum bonum (highest good), the shield and stay of a man, is the 'abundance of the things that he possesses.' I fancy I see more listless, discontented, unhappy faces looking out of carriages than I see upon the pavement. And I am sure of this, at any rate, that

all which is noble and sweet and good in life can be wrought out and possessed upon as much bread and water as will keep body and soul together, and as much furniture as will enable a man to sit at his meal and lie down at night. And as for the rest, it has many advantages and blessings, but oh! It is all illusory as a defence against the evils that will come, sooner or later, to every life.

II. Consider Next How To Get Into The True Refuge.

'**The righteous runneth into it and is safe,'** says my text. You may get into the illusory one very easily. Imagination will take you there. There is no difficulty at all about that. And yet the way by which a man makes this world his defence may teach you a lesson as to how you can make God your defence. How does a man make this world his defence? By trusting to it. He that says to the fine gold, 'Thou art my confidence,' has made it his fortress—and that is how you will make God your fortress—by trusting to Him. The very same emotion, the very same act of mind, heart, and will, may be turned either upwards or downwards, as you can turn the beam from a lantern which way you please. Direct it earthwards, and you 'trust in the uncertainty of riches.' Flash it heavenwards, and you 'trust in the living God.'

And that same lesson is taught by the words of our text, '**The righteous runneth into it.**' I do not dwell upon the word '**righteous**.'… I will not speak of that at present, but point to the picturesque metaphor, which will tell us a great deal more about what faith is than many a philosophical dissertation. Many a man who would be perplexed by a theologian's talk will understand this: '**The righteous runneth into the name of the Lord**'

The metaphor brings out the idea of **eager haste** in betaking oneself to the shelter, as when an invading army comes into a country, and the unarmed peasants take their portable belongings and their cattle, and catch up their children in their arms, and set their wives upon their mules, and make all haste to some fortified place; or as when the manslayer in Israel fled to the city of refuge, or as when Lot hurried for his life out of Sodom. There would be no dawdling then; but with every muscle strained, men would run into the stronghold, counting every minute a year till they were inside its walls, and heard the heavy door close between them and the pursuer. No matter how rough the road, or how overpowering the heat—no time to stop to gather flowers, or even diamonds on the road, when a moment's delay might mean the enemy's sword in your heart!

Now that metaphor is frequently used to express the resolved and swift act by which, recognizing in Jesus Christ, who declares the name of the Lord, our hiding-place, we shelter ourselves in Him, and rest secure. One of the picturesque words by which the Old Testament expresses '**trust**' means literally '**to flee to a refuge**.' The Old Testament **trust** is the New Testament **faith**, even as the Old Testament '**Name of the Lord**' answers to the New Testament '**Name of Jesus.**' And so we run into this sure hiding-place and strong fortress of the name of the Lord, when we betake ourselves to Jesus and put our trust in Him as our defence.

Such a faith—the trust of mind, heart, and will—laying hold of the name of the Lord, makes us 'righteous,' and so capable of 'dwelling with the devouring fire' of God's perfect purity. The Old Testament point of view was righteousness, in order to abiding in God. The New Testament begins, as it were, at an earlier stage in the religious life, and tells us how to get the righteousness, without which, it holds as strongly as the Old Testament, 'no man shall see the Lord.' (He 12:14) It shows us that our faith, by which we run into that fortress, fits us to enter the fortress, because it makes us partakers of Christ's purity.

So my earnest question to you all is—

Have you 'fled for refuge to lay hold' on that Saviour
in whom God has set His name?

Like Lot out of Sodom, like the manslayer to the city of refuge, like the unwarlike peasants to the baron's tower, before the border thieves, have you gone thither for shelter from all the sorrows and guilt and dangers that are marching terrible against you? Can you take up as yours the old grand words of exuberant trust in which the Psalmist heaps together the names of the Lord, as if walking about the city of his defence, and telling the towers thereof, 'The Lord is my rock, and my fortress, and my deliverer; my God, my strength, in whom I will trust; my buckler, and the horn of my salvation, and my high tower'? (Ps 18:2) If you have, then 'because you have made the Lord your refuge, there shall no evil befall you.'

III. So We Have, Lastly, What Comes Of Sheltering In These Two Refuges.

As to the former of them, I said at the beginning of these remarks that the words 'is safe' were more accurately as well as picturesquely rendered by 'is set aloft.' They remind us of the psalm which has many points of resemblance with this text, and which gives the very same thought when it says,

‘I will set him on high, because he hath known My name.’ (Ps 91:14)

The fugitive is taken within the safe walls of the strong tower, and is set up high on the battlements, looking down upon the baffled pursuers, and far beyond the reach of their arrows.

To stand upon that tower lifts a man above the region where temptations fly, above the region where sorrow strikes; lifts him above sin and guilt and condemnation and fear, and calumny and slander, and sickness, and separation and loneliness and death; ‘and all the ills that flesh is heir to.’

Or, as one of the old Puritan commentators has it:

The tower is so deep that no pioneer can undermine it,
so thick that no cannon can breach it,
so high that no ladder can scale it.

‘The righteous runneth into it,’ and is perched up there; and can look down like Lear from his cliff, and all the troubles that afflict the lower levels shall ‘show scarce so gross as beetles’ from the height where he stands, safe and high, hidden in the name of the Lord.

I say little about the other side. Brethren! the world in any of its forms, the good things of this life in any shape, whether that of money or any other, can do a great deal for us. They can keep a great many inconveniences from us, they can keep a great many cares and pains and sorrows from us. I was going to say, to carry out the metaphor, they can keep the rifle-bullets from us. But, ah! when the big siege-guns get into position and begin to play; when the great trials that every life must have, sooner or later, come to open fire at us, then the defence that anything in this outer world can give comes rattling about our ears very quickly. It is like the pasteboard helmet which looked as good as if it had been steel, and did admirably as long as no sword struck it.

There is only one thing that will keep us peaceful and unharmed, and that is to trust our poor shelterless lives and sinful souls to the Saviour who has died for us. In Him we find the hiding-place, in which secure, as beneath the shadow of a great rock, dreaded evils will pass us by, as impotent to hurt as savages before a castle fortified by modern skill. All the bitterness of outward calamities will be taken from them before they reach us.

Their arrows will still wound, but He will have wiped the poison off before He lets them be shot at us.

The force of temptation will be weakened, for if we live near Him we shall have other tastes and desires.

The bony fingers of the skeleton Death, who drags men from all other homes, will not dislodge us from our fortress- dwelling.

Hid in Him we shall neither fear going down to the grave, nor coming up from it, nor judgment, nor eternity. Then, I beseech you, make no delay. Escape! flee for your life! A growing host of evil marches swift against you. Take Christ for your defence and cry to Him,

‘Lo! from sin and grief and shame,
Hide me, Jesus! in Thy name.’
(**Proverbs 18:10-11 Two Fortresses**)