

Biblical Prosperity #4: Godly Prosperity vs. the Desire to be Rich

Review definition: *Prosperity is to live in such a way that we have what is necessary to live where God sets us, to serve him effectively in whatever calling and responsibilities he gives us, and to have sufficient to give to the church and others generously. It involves not merely consumption, but stewardship, thankfulness, and faith. Whatever abundance we enjoy should be seen as a gift, or even a loan, by God, knowing that we will ultimately be called to account for how we have used the things of this world. Physical goods and even social and familial relationships must never come before our love and allegiance to God.*

Warnings About the Desire for Wealth

1 Tim. 6:9-10 – “But they that will be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition. For the love of money is the root of all evil: which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows.”

When it says “they that will be rich”, it doesn’t mean possible riches sometime in the future. It means that it is an exercise of their will – they have determined to be rich as the goal of life. The result is great danger to the soul. Also notice that it doesn’t say money is the root of all evil, but the love of money. To covet money (or the things it can provide) is to err from the faith, and will result in grief.

Warnings About the Means for Attaining Wealth

See Prov. 28:19, 22, and 13:11 from the last lesson. Real work is a valid and honorable means of attaining wealth, but “hasting to be rich” through empty and vain means and worthless pursuits will eventually result in poverty.

Warnings About the Effects of Wealth, and Its Unreliability

Ps. 62:10 – “... if riches increase, set not your heart upon them.” God does prosper us (Dt. 8:18 says he “gives us power to get wealth”), but the warning is to mind our priorities, not allowing our hearts to be centered on wealth.

The proper response to wealth should be thankfulness, an acknowledgement of God as its source, a deepened sense of dependence on his providence, faith that he will continue to provide, and the desire for wisdom in using that wealth properly.

Mt. 6:19-24 – “Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal: But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal: for where your treasure is, there will your heart be also. ... No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon.”

Pr. 23:5 – “Wilt thou set thine eyes upon that which is not? for riches certainly make themselves wings; they fly away as an eagle toward heaven.”

Warnings About the Spiritual Dangers of Wealth

Mt. 19:23 – “And again I say unto you, It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God.”

Mk. 4:18-19 – “And these are they which are sown among thorns; such as hear the word. And the cares of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches, and the lusts of other things entering in, choke the word, and it becometh unfruitful.”

Why do people want wealth? (What motivates men to this pursuit?)

1. So they can have whatever they want, whenever they want it. This is the evil idolatry of covetousness, and a self-centered life. Such people seek personal gratification over a life of holiness.
2. As a protection or buffer against hardship and want. Saving for the future is prudent, but it can also indicate a heart of unbelief, thinking God will not take care of you and bring you faithfully even through hard times.
3. Because of the sin of pride – they want to be seen as successful and “above” other people. It may be an arbitrary goal, like “I want to be a millionaire by the age of ...”. They measure their self-worth by dollars, not by character.
4. Some people have “money-love” – they want more and more, but won’t even spend it. They value money as an end in itself, not just as a means of obtaining goods or services. They can never have “enough”.

Eccl. 4:8 – “There is one alone, and there is not a second; yea, he hath neither child nor brother: yet is there no end of all his labour; neither is his eye satisfied with riches; neither saith he, For whom do I labour, and bereave my soul of good? This is also vanity, yea, it is a sore travail.”

Eccl. 5:10-11 – “He that loveth silver shall not be satisfied with silver; nor he that loveth abundance with increase: this is also vanity. When goods increase, they are increased that eat them: and what good is there to the owners thereof, saving the beholding of them with their eyes?”

5. Some may think that having money is a sign of God’s approval.

1 Tim. 6:5 – “... corrupt minds, and destitute of the truth, supposing that gain is godliness: from such withdraw thyself.

The godly mind is seen in 1 Tim. 6:5-11: Godliness with contentment (6:6); knowing that all the wealth of this world cannot go with us (6:7); satisfaction with the basics (food and raiment, 6:8); and to flee from covetousness, money love, and the desire for riches, 6:9-11).

While we can and should enjoy whatever bounty God bestows upon us (see Ecclesiastes), we should rather be seeking the **non-monetary, spiritual riches**:

1. Treasures in heaven

Mt. 6:20 – “But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven ...”

Lk. 12:33 – “Sell that ye have, and give alms: provide yourselves bags which wax not old, a treasure in the heavens that faileth not, where no thief approacheth, neither moth corrupteth. For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.”

1 P. 1:3-4 – “... hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, To an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you”

Rev. 3:18 – “I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich ...”

2. Wife and children

Prov. 19:14 – “House and riches *are* the inheritance of fathers: and a prudent wife *is* from the LORD.”

Ps. 127:3-5 – “Lo, children are an heritage of the LORD; and the fruit of the womb is his reward. As arrows are in the hand of a mighty man; so are children of the youth. Happy is the man that hath his quiver full of them: they shall not be ashamed, but they shall speak with the enemies in the gate.”

3. Wisdom

Prov. 8:18-19 – (Wisdom speaking) “Riches and honour are with me; yea, durable riches and righteousness. My fruit is better than gold, yea, than fine gold; and my revenue than choice silver.”

4. Faith

Jas. 2:5 – “... Hath not God chosen the poor of this world rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom which he hath promised to them that love him?”

5. Trials of our faith, with the reproaches of unbelievers, rejection, and persecution by the world

Heb. 11:26 – “Esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt: for he had respect unto the recompense of the reward.”

1 P. 1:7 – “That the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ:”

6. An eternal inheritance

Eph. 1:18 – “The eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that ye may know what is the hope of his calling, and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints.”

1 Jn. 2:15-17 – “Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever.”