

Chapter 1

God's Heart on Prosperity

Jesus Was Slain to Receive Riches!

“Saying with a loud voice, Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, *and riches*, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing.”
(Rev. 5:12)

If our Lord and Savior went to the cross in order to receive power, riches, and blessing, should we not endeavor to understand and receive these things that He has bought for us at such a cost?

Sometimes it seems to me that the fear of riches and greed, accompanied with short-sighted self-righteousness, prevent us from having the blessings Jesus so painfully bought for us.

“Woe to you lawyers! For you have taken away the key of knowledge. You did not enter in yourselves, and those who were entering in you hindered.” (Luke 11:52 NKJV)

What is God's heart with regard to prosperity? Does He want us to prosper, or does He want us to live a life of poverty?

“Let them shout for joy, and be glad, that favour my righteous cause: yea, let them say continually, Let the LORD be magnified, *which hath pleasure* in the prosperity of his servant.” (Ps. 35:27)

It says quite clearly here that the Lord has pleasure in the prosperity of His servant. In fact He has asked us to say this continually! Why would we bother to say something continually? We would do so because sometimes we must say a truth many times before we will actually believe it.

God’s Thoughts about Prosperity

Let’s take a look at the New Testament. Have God’s thoughts regarding prosperity changed?

The Greek word that is translated as “prosper” in the English New Testament is Εὐοδόω, pronounced *euodoo*. There are at least two meanings for this word: “to help on the road” and “to succeed in business affairs.”

This Greek word is used in only three verses in the New Testament:

“For God is my witness, whom I serve with my spirit in the gospel of his Son, that without ceasing I make mention of you always in my prayers; Making request, if by any means now at length I might have *a prosperous* journey by the will of God to come unto you” (Rom. 1:9).

“Upon the first day of the week let every one of you lay by him in store, as God hath *prospered* him, that there be no gatherings when I come” (1 Cor. 16:1-2).

“Beloved, I wish above all things that thou mayest prosper and be in health, even as thy soul prospereth” (3 John 1:2).

This last verse was written by God through John to the well-beloved Gaius. We can certainly believe that the contents of this verse are speaking to us, as well.

“All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness” (2 Tim. 3:16).

Therefore, we see that John was inspired of God to write this Scripture (3 John 1:2). Realizing this, we can digest its contents to see what our Father is saying to us.

“I wish above all things that thou mayest prosper.” This is a very strong statement. Does God want us to prosper above all things? The simple answer to this question is, “No.” The Scripture goes on to say, “. . . even as thy soul prospereth.” This word *even* is the word καθώς, pronounced *kathos* in the Greek, and it means “according to, inasmuch, in proportion to.”

Here we see that God is like any other father. He wants His children to prosper physically in proportion to the prosperity of their souls. God does not give prosperity to spiritual babies, but He does so as they mature spiritually. You would not give a car to a three-year-old, and you would not give a child everything it said it wanted. God has set it in order that our souls must prosper first, and then we prosper physically in proportion to the prosperity that is experienced by our souls. The Father does not want spoiled children.

“Now I say, That the heir, as long as he is a child, differeth nothing from a servant, though he be lord of all; But is under tutors and governors until the time appointed of the father.” (Gal. 4:1)

Was Jesus Rich or Poor?

When Jesus came into the world, how did His Father provide for Him?

“And when they were come into the house, they saw the young child with Mary his mother, and fell down, and worshipped him: and when they had opened their treasures, they presented unto him gifts; gold, and frankincense, and myrrh.” (Matt. 2:11)

As we read the above Scripture, we learn that Jesus was well provided for. The Wise Men gave Him gifts from their treasures. In January 2011, gold was worth \$1,416 per ounce, the weight of a typical gold coin. How many gold coins (though the gold may not have been in the form of coins) do you think they brought for Jesus? Did they simply “flip one to Him” between them all? No, they were very generous in their gifts to the King of kings.

It is easy to see, therefore, that the Father provided well for Joseph and Mary in looking after Jesus.

So why do people say that Jesus was poor?

“For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might be rich.” (2 Cor. 8:9)

Here it says quite clearly that the Lord Jesus Christ was rich. This word “rich” in the Greek is πλούσιος, *plousios*, which means: “wealthy, abounding with.”

In *Strong’s Exhaustive Concordance* we find reference 4145, which reads as follows: “plousios; wealthy; fig. abounding with—rich.”

Yes, it was for our sake that Jesus became poor. Why did He do this? He became poor, that we could become rich!

Becoming poor was *a choice* that Jesus made for us. He sacrificed His wealth so that we might become wealthy. What a transaction! He surrendered His riches and became poor so that we could get out of our poverty and become rich.

So when did He become poor? We said earlier that He had many people providing for His needs.

“And many women were there beholding afar off, which followed Jesus from Galilee, ministering unto him: Among which was Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James and Joses, and the mother of Zebedee’s children.” (Matt. 27:54-56)

Jesus led a ministry team that had a treasurer, and they had enough money to always give to the poor. This abundance that the Father gave to Jesus even took into account that the treasurer of the team was a thief!

“But Judas Iscariot, said, ‘Why was this ointment not sold for three hundred denarii and given to the poor?’ He said this, not because he cared about the poor, but because he was a thief, and having charge of the mon-

eybag he used to help himself to what was put into it.”
(John 12:4-6 English Standard Version)

Let’s ask the question again: When did Jesus become poor?

It happened when He went to the cross, where He was stripped of everything. But let us remember, Jesus could have avoided the cross if He had wanted to.

“Thinkest thou that I cannot now pray to my Father,
and he shall presently give me more than twelve legions of angels?” (Matt. 26:53)

Jesus died so that we could have life. But do you think in going to death He stayed there? No, He was raised from the dead. Likewise, in becoming poor at the cross, Jesus received His wealth back, and He received even more when He was raised from the dead.

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(Rev. 5:12)

Jesus was Slain to Receive Riches!!

“And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth.”
(Matt. 28:18)

When we say that Jesus was poor as an example of suffering to us, we are denying the purpose of His death. Often, many seem to forget that Jesus is alive now. His death, which took place approximately 2,000 years ago, was only momentary. He truly is

alive now, and all power has been given to Him *on earth*. He has received the riches that He died for.

Let us also remember that like Joseph, Job, and Jesus, we may be called upon to temporarily suffer for the Kingdom's sake, but the end result for us will be the same as it was for them. A plant that has been pruned will always bear more fruit!

Why, then, does teaching on prosperity get knocked around so much in some Christian quarters? I believe the answer can be found in the Book of Zechariah:

“Thus saith the LORD of hosts; *My cities through prosperity shall yet be spread abroad;*” (Zech. 1:17).

Our enemy does not want Christians to have power and wealth. We must be careful to understand that prosperity does not mean greed! Prosperity and greed are two different words. Prosperity provides the means to spread the Gospel of Jesus Christ across the world. “*My cities through prosperity shall yet be spread abroad.*”

Every Bible, every mission field, every airplane ticket, and every hall that is booked requires money! Every preacher and every preacher's family needs money! Every church and hospital that must be built requires funding! Every radio and TV broadcast costs money!

We cannot buy souls, but we can give our money to help them hear the Word.

Let us, for goodness' sake, get our heads out of the sand and see that God has provided a way for us to spread the Gospel of Jesus Christ to every city in the world.

“But thou shalt remember the LORD thy God: for it is he that giveth thee power to get wealth, that he may establish his covenant which he sware unto thy fathers, as it is this day.” (Deut. 8:18)

What Does the Word “Prosperity” Mean?

In the King James Version of the Bible, there are nine words in Hebrew, one word in Aramaic, and one word in Greek that are used for “prosperity.”

The Greek word for “prosperity” defines the word in two ways: “to have a successful journey” and “to do well in business affairs.”

These definitions give us the two main understandings of prospering—prospering in finances and prospering in the affairs of life.

The Hebrew words for prosperity are related to the above two definitions, but with slightly different shades of meaning related to each one. Each of these words is listed with examples so that you can see each one in its context.

In the Scriptures we see the word “prospering” used in many different contexts. Sometimes it is used with regard to kingdoms, but most often it is used in a personal way: prospering in our way, prospering in everything we put our hand to, prospering in our souls, in creation, in spreading cities abroad, in how a war is going, in building walls, in the increase of riches, in sowing seed, in large flocks, in female and male servants, and in camels, donkeys, gold, silver, etc.

The definitions for “prosperity” that I am using here are summarized in *Strong’s Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible*, according to the King James Version.

When we look at Strong’s definition of the words, let us remember that we can’t just choose which word we prefer for the translation. The translators have carefully chosen the definition according to context and other criteria!

Listed below are two definitions—one from the Hebrew and one from the Greek. These definitions are then followed by sample scriptures that use the particular word defined.

(Please note: A complete list of the Hebrew, Aramaic and Greek definitions of “prosperity” can be found in the glossary at the end of the book.)

Strong’s Reference No. 6743 (Hebrew)

צָלַח - *tsalach*

- 1) to rush
- 2) to advance, prosper, make progress, succeed, be profitable
- 2a) to prosper
- 2b) to make prosperous, bring to successful issue, cause to prosper
- 2b2) to show or experience prosperity, prosper

Sample Scriptures using *tsalach*.

“The keeper of the prison looked not to any thing that was under his hand; because the LORD was with him,

and that which he did, the LORD made it to *prosper*.”
(Gen. 39:23)

“This book of the law shall not depart out of thy mouth; but thou shalt meditate therein day and night, that thou mayest observe to do according to all that is written therein: for then thou shalt make thy way *prosperous*, and then thou shalt have good success.”
(Josh. 1:8)

Strong’s Reference No. 2137 (Greek)

εὐοδῶ – *euodoo*

- 1) to grant a prosperous and expeditious journey, to lead by a direct and easy way
- 2) to grant a successful issue, to cause to prosper
- 3) to prosper, be successful

All the Scriptures using *euodoo*.

“Making request, if by any means now at length I might have a prosperous journey by the will of God to come unto you,” (Rom. 1:10)

“Upon the first day of the week let every one of you lay by him in store, as God hath prospered him, that there be no gatherings when I come.” (1 Cor. 16:2)

“Beloved, I wish above all things that thou mayest prosper and be in health, even as thy soul prospereth.”
(3 John 1:2)