



Suffering During Prosperity Testing

Prosperity is the easily most subtle distraction to continued spiritual growth. Prosperity testing challenges the top priority of the daily intake and application of Bible doctrine. Will you keep Bible doctrine your number one priority or not? Every believer must pass the prosperity test before they can reach spiritual maturity.

Passing this test confirms the believer's scale of values and proves that they are in line with God's plan for their life as revealed in the Word of God. Passing this test results in a more stabilized spiritual life and a greater capacity for love and for life. Passing this test means that the believer receives God's greatest prosperity - His blessings conveyed in time and in eternity.

The world offers opportunity for many types of prosperity such as success, wealth, fame, promotion, social and professional prosperity. But without maintaining Bible doctrine and function in the spiritual life as your priority, such prosperity will bring only self-induced misery and divine discipline.

When you have the same inner happiness in adversity as well as prosperity, it means you have passed the test. If you are unhappy in the midst of prosperity, it means that you have failed the test.

There are many aspects of prosperity and with each comes testing in the spiritual life. Material, social, physical, and family prosperity are all based on your mental attitude. The relaxed mental attitude determines the believer's spiritual condition as they grow spiritually from being a babe to a spiritual adult.

Material Prosperity

In Matthew 6:25-33 and Proverbs 3:9-10 are God's blessings of material prosperity for the spiritually growing believer.

"For this reason I say to you, do not be worried about your life, as to what you will eat or what you will drink; nor for your body, as to what you will put on. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothing?" (Matthew 6:25, NASB)

"For the Gentiles eagerly seek all these things; for your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things. But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be added to you." (Matthew 6:32-33, NASB)

"Honor the LORD from your wealth And from the first of all your produce; So your barns will be filled with plenty And your vats will overflow with new wine." (Proverbs 3:9-10, NASB)

In Proverbs 1:19, some pursue material prosperity by violent means. Material prosperity accelerates the need for a relaxed mental attitude.

"So are the ways of everyone who gains by violence; It takes away the life of its possessors." (Proverbs 1:19, NASB)

Social Prosperity

Social prosperity is another aspect of God's blessings in life. An example of handling well His social prosperity was in our Lord's early years of growing up in Luke 2:40 and Luke 2:52. Another example was David who even had his enemies at peace with him.

"The Child continued to grow and become strong, increasing in wisdom; and the grace of God was



upon Him.” (Luke 2:40, NASB)

“And Jesus kept increasing in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and men.” (Luke 2:52, NASB)

Gedaliah really enjoyed his social prosperity, but he couldn’t stand the high office. He enjoyed having the “beautiful people” in. When you enjoy your many new “friends” in academic circles, athletic circles, etc. make sure you do not get fatheaded. Jer. 40:12.

“Then all the Jews returned from all the places to which they had been driven away and came to the land of Judah, to Gedaliah at Mizpah, and gathered in wine and summer fruit in great abundance.” (Jeremiah 40:12, NASB)

You may have many “friends” because you have some money. You may have friends because you are smart, popular, and desirable to be around. You may get a scholarship or two or an award for something you have accomplished. People tell you that you are really something and you become stupid enough to believe it all. Prov. 19:4.

“Wealth adds many friends, But a poor man is separated from his friend.” (Proverbs 19:4, NASB)

Physical Prosperity

In 3 John 1:2, we are to pray for physical prosperity or good health as we grow spiritually.

“Beloved, I pray that in all respects you may prosper and be in good health, just as your soul prospers.” (3 John 1:2, NASB)

Proverbs 3:7-8 tells us to keep our focus on the Lord and our spiritual life and it will benefit our health.

“Do not be wise in your own eyes; Fear the LORD and turn away from evil. It will be healing to your body And refreshment to your bones.” (Proverbs 3:7-8, NASB)

1 Timothy 4:8 tells us that keeping our bodies in good shape is a benefit, but keeping our soul in good shape is far better with eternal implications.

“for bodily discipline is only of little profit, but godliness is profitable for all things, since it holds promise for the present life and also for the life to come.” (1 Timothy 4:8, NASB)

Family Prosperity

Family prosperity resulting from childhood respect for their parents provides a longer life. Exodus 20:12.

“Honor your father and your mother, that your days may be prolonged in the land which the LORD your God gives you.” (Exodus 20:12, NASB)

Watch out for prosperity of the wicked. It will not last. Psalms 73:3-7, Psalms 73:17-18.

“For I was envious of the arrogant As I saw the prosperity of the wicked. For there are no pains in their death, And their body is fat. They are not in trouble as other men, Nor are they plagued like mankind. Therefore pride is their necklace; The garment of violence covers them. Their eye bulges from fatness; The imaginations of their heart run riot.” (Psalms 73:3-7, NASB)

“Until I came into the sanctuary of God; Then I perceived their end. Surely You set them in slippery places; You cast them down to destruction.” (Psalms 73:17-18, NASB)



Doctrinal Prosperity

Doctrinal prosperity or spiritual growth is a prelude to other aspects of prosperity and requires a strong doctrinal mental attitude. Matt 6:33, Mark 8:34-38, 2 Cor 4:16. See the illustration of Gedaliah below.

"But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be added to you."
(Matthew 6:33, NASB)

"And He summoned the crowd with His disciples, and said to them, 'If anyone wishes to come after Me, he must deny himself, and take up his cross and follow Me. 'For whoever wishes to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake and the gospel's will save it. 'For what does it profit a man to gain the whole world, and forfeit his soul? 'For what will a man give in exchange for his soul? 'For whoever is ashamed of Me and My words in this adulterous and sinful generation, the Son of Man will also be ashamed of him when He comes in the glory of His Father with the holy angels.'" (Mark 8:34-38, NASB)

"Therefore we do not lose heart, but though our outer man is decaying, yet our inner man is being renewed day by day." (2 Corinthians 4:16, NASB)

Doctrinal prosperity may require a crash program in Bible doctrine to grow in grace and knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ as soon as possible. Spiritual growth results in the accumulation of *epignosis* Bible doctrine in the right lobe of the soul whereby your edification complex of the soul is constructed. Eph. 4:11-12, Eph. 4:14-15.

"And He gave some as apostles, and some as prophets, and some as evangelists, and some as pastors and teachers, for the equipping of the saints for the work of service, to the building up of the body of Christ;" (Ephesians 4:11-12, NASB)

"As a result, we are no longer to be children, tossed here and there by waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, by craftiness in deceitful scheming; but speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in all aspects into Him who is the head, even Christ," (Ephesians 4:14-15, NASB)

Every advance in Bible doctrine brings an increased number of spiritual blind spots. A spiritual blind spot is assuming mistakenly (not enough Bible doctrine yet) that sweetness is spirituality and bluntness is carnality and thus we get naive, lazy, and let our guard down.

The challenge for the believer is how to handle tough situations. What about that obnoxious person who crosses you? What about that trying circumstance or that something that bugs you? What about all that pressure and frustration that upsets your plans? God will test you, prove you, and develop you. Isn't God's plan greater than an obnoxious person? Isn't God's plan greater than a trying circumstance?

Gedaliah's Failed Prosperity Test

Gedaliah, in Jeremiah 40-41, had a happiness interlude of 60 days. Sixty days of happiness with no trials or troubles. Having everyone behaving nice can wipe you out! Gedaliah was a man in whom there was no guile (like Nathaniel). His honesty and forthrightness in responding to Jeremiah's ministry revealed something of his character.

Gedaliah made the mistake of assuming that everyone was like him and was open and aboveboard. People often make this mistake. People are different in disposition, in energy, in tactfulness, in fairness, in soul kinks, in hang-ups, and in temperament.



Those who have no guile find it very difficult to assume guile in others. It never occurred to Gedaliah that Jews would return to the Land for any reason other than the highest motive of patriotism. The only protection that Gedaliah had was to understand that everyone has an old sin nature.

Furthermore, the happiness interlude deceived Gedaliah into a position of watering down Bible doctrine. He thought that Bible doctrine was not needed anymore because there was no pressure! When you get away from Bible doctrine and rely on emotions only, you may feel that you can love everyone and trust everyone. Gedaliah fell into that trap.

Gedaliah had forgotten that those who had returned from Ammon, Moab and Edom were not Word of God types. They were not the Bible class crowd. Some were not believers and some were. Some were apostates.

Leadership demands discernment. No one can stay in leadership without it. The way to start is to assume that everyone is a jackass. This isn't always true, but this is just where you should start. Leadership demands that you assume the worst about everyone!

This is not only protection for the leader, but the ones they lead. Everyone has an old sin nature, believers and unbelievers. This applies to nice people, nasty people, fat people, slim people, red heads, blue heads, knot heads, what have you.

Gedaliah lost his sharpness. Leadership must depend upon doctrine. Gedaliah's naivete resulted in his own tragic death and a civil war that took place. He had a mild emotional revolt as contrasted with a strong emotional revolt. Mild emotional revolt is loving the brethren, being altruistic, sentimental, and responding to everyone. His arms were open wide. He welcomed Ishmael who would kill him!

On the other hand, David passed his prosperity test. David poured the water on the ground because he saw that his soldiers loved him so much that they would risk their lives to get him a drink of water. He knew that if he drank that water he would not be able to order his men into dangerous field assignments. He would be unfair and unfit as a field commander! 2 Sam. 23:13-17.

"Then three of the thirty chief men went down and came to David in the harvest time to the cave of Adullam, while the troop of the Philistines was camping in the valley of Rephaim. David was then in the stronghold, while the garrison of the Philistines was then in Bethlehem. David had a craving and said, "Oh that someone would give me water to drink from the well of Bethlehem which is by the gate!" So the three mighty men broke through the camp of the Philistines, and drew water from the well of Bethlehem which was by the gate, and took it and brought it to David. Nevertheless he would not drink it, but poured it out to the LORD; and he said, "Be it far from me, O LORD, that I should do this. Shall I drink the blood of the men who went in jeopardy of their lives?" Therefore he would not drink it. These things the three mighty men did." (2 Samuel 23:13-17, NASB)

In his fantastic maturity, he poured the water on the ground (rejected it) so he could objectively rotate his men into the tough assignments. He would have to send some of these men to their death at one time or another. If he drank that water, he would have been weakened and would feel that he couldn't assign them to battle where they could die. In future days, he would cater to the one who brought him the water and he would be unfair and preferential.