



Prosperity

Types of Prosperity

The major forms of prosperity include doctrinal prosperity, material prosperity, social prosperity, physical prosperity, and family prosperity. Each are discussed briefly below.

Doctrinal Prosperity

As you mature spiritually, your biggest occupational hazard will be blind spots where you are not applying doctrine. The more a believer advances spiritually, the more the potential they have of falling flat on their face because of an increased number of blind spots. Matt. 6:33; 2 Cor. 4:16; Mark 8:34-38; Eph. 4:11-13.

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

"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)

"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; until we all attain to the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a mature man, to the measure of the stature which belongs to the fullness of Christ." (Ephesians 4:11-13, NASB)

It is imperative to keep application of Bible doctrine up with the intake of Bible doctrine. If not, then you get lazy and you become naive. Then, you let your guard down and begin to trust in your human abilities only. Beware of the people who come up on your spiritual blind side. Someone you meet may appear to be sweet, nice, lovely, and personable. They may be very persuasive in what they say. Many will mistakenly assume that sweetness is spirituality and bluntness is carnality and thus we become naive.

An Old Testament example is Gedaliah who could not handle prosperity. They had had many days of happiness with no trials or troubles. This was a case of having everybody being nice can wipe you out. There will be more on Gedaliah below. Jer. 40:9; Jer. 40:14.

"Then Gedaliah the son of Ahikam, the son of Shaphan, swore to them and to their men, saying, 'Do not be afraid of serving the Chaldeans; stay in the land and serve the king of Babylon, that it may go well with you.'" (Jeremiah 40:9, NASB)

"and said to him, 'Are you well aware that Baalis the king of the sons of Ammon has sent Ishmael the son of Nethaniah to take your life?' But Gedaliah the son of Ahikam did not believe them." (Jeremiah 40:14, NASB)



Another Old Testament example is David who passed the prosperity test and passed the spiritual maturity test. David wanted some water while in the cave at Adullam, so three of his men went out behind enemy lines to get some for him. Upon their return at great risk, David poured the water on the ground because when he saw that they loved him so much they would risk their lives to get him a drink of water, he knew that if he drank the water, he would not order these men into battle or give them dangerous assignments. Drinking the water would weaken David as a military leader and render him unfair and unfit as a field commander. 2 Sam. 23:15-17.

"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 23:15-17, NASB)

In his maturity, David poured the water on the ground so he could rotate his men objectively and without bias into the tough assignments. He knew that in the future, he may have to send some of these men to their death at one time or another.

If he had drank the water, in future days he would likely cater to the ones who brought the water to him and he would be unfair and preferential. It is terrible to have emotional leadership in any area especially in an age of apostasy. Decisions must be made constantly and accurately and then move on.

Material Prosperity

Material prosperity is the ruination of many. Good material prosperity is handled within the believer's spiritual life. Matt. 6:33; Prov. 3:9-10; Eccl. 5:19.

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

"Furthermore, as for every man to whom God has given riches and wealth, He has also empowered him to eat from them and to receive his reward and rejoice in his labor; this is the gift of God." (Ecclesiastes 5:19, NASB)

Material prosperity can lead some to join others who have evil intent and plans as described by Solomon to his son in Proverbs 1. The warning is to not let prosperity and fame entice you into running with evil types. It will not end well for you. Prov. 1:10-11; Prov. 1:15-16; Prov. 1:18.

"My son, if sinners entice you, Do not consent. If they say, 'Come with us, Let us lie in wait for blood, Let us ambush the innocent without cause;" (Proverbs 1:10-11, NASB)

"My son, do not walk in the way with them. Keep your feet from their path, For their feet run to evil And they hasten to shed blood." (Proverbs 1:15-16, NASB)

"But they lie in wait for their own blood; They ambush their own lives." (Proverbs 1:18, NASB)

When you depend on the material details of life for your security, this is a false security. You have failed the prosperity test. Eccl. 5:10.

"He who loves money will not be satisfied with money, nor he who loves abundance with its income."



This too is vanity.” (Ecclesiastes 5:10, NASB)

Working for a living is a good thing. Living without working is no good. Eccl. 5:12; Prov. 13:4.

“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.” (Ecclesiastes 5:12, NASB)

“The soul of the sluggard craves and gets nothing, But the soul of the diligent is made fat.” (Proverbs 13:4, NASB)

Social Prosperity

We can see many examples of those who have gained social prosperity in academic circles, athletic circles, in the local society, and even where you work. An example of handling social prosperity very well is our Lord Jesus Christ as He was growing up. Luke 2:40; Luke 2:51-52.

“The Child continued to grow and become strong, increasing in wisdom; and the grace of God was upon Him.” (Luke 2:40, NASB)

“And He went down with them and came to Nazareth, and He continued in subjection to them; and His mother treasured all these things in her heart. And Jesus kept increasing in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and men.” (Luke 2:51-52, NASB)

Many believers do not handle social prosperity very well or are naïve and do not yet have the spiritual discernment regarding those with whom they associate. If you have many friends only because you have a lot of money, then they may not really your friends. If you have many friends simply because you seem to be smart, popular and desirable to be around, they may not really your friends. Another example of not handling social prosperity very well is telling everyone that when you get a scholarship or an award for some accomplishment, you are the first to tell everyone about it. Then people tell you that you are really something and you are stupid enough to believe it all. The desire to be told that you are great (approbation lust) is as addicting as liquor.

Physical Prosperity

Physical prosperity or good health for the believer is one of God's blessings in the spiritual life. In contrast is the perpetually carnal believer or the reversionistic believer where they may eventually have a loss of health or even ultimately the sin unto death as the most severe divine discipline possible. 3 John 1:2; Prov. 3:8; 1 Cor. 11:30.

“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)

“It will be healing to your body And refreshment to your bones.” (Proverbs 3:8, NASB)

“For this reason many among you are weak and sick, and a number sleep.” (1 Corinthians 11:30, NASB)

Family Prosperity

Family prosperity is living a long life as part of God's grace blessing in the spiritual life. This is attributed to growing spiritually, the function of your spiritual gift, your grace orientation to God's plan for your life, and honoring your father and mother. Exodus 20:6; Exodus 20:12.

“but showing lovingkindness to thousands, to those who love Me and keep My commandments.” (Exodus 20:6, NASB)



"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. Psalms 73:3-7 contains a general warning to be careful in the prosperity testing and not lose focus on God's provision of grace resources and blessings for you.

"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)

The Naivete of Gedeliah

Gedeliah was a man in whom there was no guile, like Nathaniel. His honesty and forthrightness in responding to Jeremiah's ministry reveals something of his character. Ishmael was going to assassinate Gedeliah. Gedeliah made the mistake of assuming that everyone was like himself, open, and above board. People often make this mistake. All people are different and different in many ways. You cannot judge people by your own life. Jer. 39 - 40.

Those who have no guile find it very difficult to assume guile in others. It never occurred to Gedeliah that Jews would return to the Land for any but the highest motives of patriotism. The only protection that Gedeliah had was in the knowledge that everyone has an old sin nature. It is very easy to understand that your enemies have one, but you must understand that everyone has an old sin nature. Jer. 17:5.

"Thus says the LORD, "Cursed is the man who trusts in mankind And makes flesh his strength, And whose heart turns away from the LORD." (Jeremiah 17:5, NASB)

Furthermore, the happiness interlude had deceived Gedeliah into a position of watering down Bible doctrine. Gedeliah felt that Bible doctrine wasn't needed anymore because he had already learned enough doctrine. There was no pressure and all was well in his prosperity, so he invariably made other things in life a higher priority. Getting away from the consistent intake of Bible doctrine means that you are in some form of emotional revolt. You have become negative and your emotions and your old sin nature are controlling your soul.

Inevitably, prosperity can leave you feeling that you can be close friends with everyone regardless of who they are and trust everyone regardless of the danger they pose. Gedeliah fell into that trap. Gedeliah had forgotten that those who had returned from Ammon, Moab, and Edom were not the Bible class crowd and some were not even believers. Some were apostates.

Leadership demands discernment. No one can stay in leadership without being discerning. The way to start being discerning is to assume the worst in everyone and let their behavior and integrity cause your estimation of them to improve. Leadership demands that you must assume the worst about everyone. This is not only protection for the leader but for the ones they lead. This is so true in the military.

Everyone has an old sin nature: nice people, nasty people, fat people, slim people, red heads, blue heads, knot heads and what have you. Gedeliah had lost his sharpness. Leadership must depend upon doctrine in the soul. Gedeliah's naivete resulted in his own tragic death and civil war in the Land. He had a mild emotional revolt contrasted with a strong emotional revolt. A mild emotional revolt loves all the brethren, is altruistic, sentimental, and does not react to anything but responds to everything. With arms wide open, he welcomed Ishmael who killed him. People must respond to a leader, but the leader cannot respond back.



Why Do the Wicked Prosper?

Jeremiah 12:1 involves the Anathoth conspiracy. There was a conspiracy where the plotters, the dupes, and the violent types were comprised of Jeremiah's friends, family and his wife. These conspirators were having a ball. They ate well, slept well, played well, and worked well. They were succeeding and there sat Jeremiah with Bible doctrine and was up to his eyeballs in trials. Jer. 11:21-23.

"Righteous are You, O LORD, that I would plead my case with You; Indeed I would discuss matters of justice with You: Why has the way of the wicked prospered? Why are all those who deal in treachery at ease?" (Jeremiah 12:1, NASB)

"Therefore thus says the LORD concerning the men of Anathoth, who seek your life, saying, "Do not prophesy in the name of the LORD, so that you will not die at our hand"; therefore, thus says the LORD of hosts, "Behold, I am about to punish them! The young men will die by the sword, their sons and daughters will die by famine; and a remnant will not be left to them, for I will bring disaster on the men of Anathoth—the year of their punishment." (Jeremiah 11:21-23, NASB)

The conspirators were having the best of it. They were happy. They were prospering. In Jeremiah 12:2-3, "You are near to their lips" means they talked about God and they were hustling to serve Him, but they were in emotional revolt and God was "far from their mind." Thus, Jeremiah was under great pressure and he was having a mild emotional revolt himself. He was mildly depressed. This was depression caused by people, pressure, details of life, physiological change, mental illness, loneliness, and boredom.

"You have planted them, they have also taken root; They grow, they have even produced fruit. You are near to their lips But far from their mind. But You know me, O LORD; You see me; And You examine my heart's attitude toward You. Drag them off like sheep for the slaughter And set them apart for a day of carnage!" (Jeremiah 12:2-3, NASB)

In Jeremiah 12:1, God's character is in view. "Righteous" is צַדִּיק (tsaddîq) and was used originally for an objective king who was very fair and defended right causes. This is exactly what Jeremiah was saying: "Look, God, you defend righteous causes, You are always fair, O Lord, so why do these jerks prosper, why are they allowed to plot against me and also to prosper at the same time?"

"Righteous are You, O LORD, that I would plead my case with You; Indeed I would discuss matters of justice with You: Why has the way of the wicked prospered? Why are all those who deal in treachery at ease?" (Jeremiah 12:1, NASB)

Jeremiah understood the essence of God and probably you do too. With all of these characteristics, how can God allow anybody who is wicked to be happy a minute? In Jeremiah 12:1, "plead my case" is רִיב (rîyb) and means; "I would (and I do) complain to you, You are fair Lord, but I'm complaining." Have you ever been in that place? This is typical of a person who is temporarily disoriented to grace.

You see, the wicked person apparently is having a ball. Therefore, you think; "Lord, why don't you clobber this person, instead, I'm the one getting clobbered?" Of course, the answer is simple. They are using their prosperity for their own ends instead of getting Bible doctrine. However, they will be clobbered without remedy when the fifth cycle of discipline hits them.

In Jeremiah 12:1, "indeed" is אַךְ ('ak) and is like our English word "yuk." "I would discuss matters of justice with You" is the piel imperfect of דָּבַר (dābar) and means "I will talk intensively with you of justice." Justice is מִשְׁפָּט (mishpât) and means a verdict (favorable or unfavorable) pronounced



judicially, especially a sentence or formal decree of divine law.

Jeremiah was upset and wanted to convince God of his preferred approach (human viewpoint) to justice. Jeremiah was saying, “God, You are fair, but we need to talk about justice because God, even though You are always perfectly fair, You aren’t handling this right and You need me.”

Notice that Jeremiah had doctrine. He understood the essence of God, but he wasn’t applying it because he was in emotional revolt. Jeremiah was bucking the tiger. He was complaining to God. What was Jeremiah’s true motive? He was actually trying to twist doctrine to somehow justify his plan of revenge. Revenge is never justified. God was never going to bend His perfect and absolute character to satisfy Jeremiah’s thirst for revenge.

Remember that God is not your servant. He never bends His character to do you a favor. So, Jeremiah is actually saying, “God, you are always fair, but you are unfair here.” He is looking at the conspirators rather than at the Lord. “God, you are not doing it my way, they have been unkind to me Lord, so make them miserable.” Under temporary or permanent emotional revolt, no Bible doctrine can be correctly applied. He knew true doctrine, but applied it incorrectly.

The big question of Jeremiah. 12:1 is; “Why has the way of the wicked prospered?” This is an interrogative of confusion. “Wicked” is רשע (râshâ’) and refers to the conspirators in Anathoth. These conspirators include Jeremiah’s wife, his immediate family and kinsmen, and his friends. They are prospering. However, the prosperity of the wicked helps clarify the issue of God’s grace.

Because of God’s laws and His gracious communication of them, the wicked conspirators of Anathoth were in a time of prosperity. Their prosperity is a reminder of the grace of God. By rejecting Bible doctrine, these wicked were rejecting the basis of their own prosperity. Therefore, they not only lost their prosperity, but their freedom, their privacy and the goose that laid the golden egg, i.e., private enterprise.

They went into soul slavery which is emotional revolt and then into physical slavery under the fifth cycle of discipline. Therefore, the prosperity of the wicked is the righteousness and justice of God in keeping His Word and abiding by principles of prosperity which were observed in the reign of King Josiah.

The wicked are free to abuse their freedom. They would do so in the practice of the phallic cult which would rob the nation of its spiritual heritage. Therefore, the next verse deals with God’s justice and God’s fairness.

In time, the stable unbeliever is better off than the unstable believer, but not in eternity. The unstable believer has rejected doctrine and suffers from scar tissue, emotional revolt and sublimation and then eventually the sin unto death. However, the stable unbeliever observed the Divine Institutions, has common sense, enjoys his right woman, functions under basic morality for establishing freedom. Therefore, the unbeliever often prospers in time, while the believer is miserable, like Jeremiah.

This principle applies to unbelievers who stay out of false doctrine. As long as the unbeliever retains their common sense, they are going to have a certain amount of happiness. 2 Peter 2:17-22; Eccl. 9:9.

“These are springs without water and mists driven by a storm, for whom the black darkness has been reserved. For speaking out arrogant words of vanity they entice by fleshly desires, by sensuality, those who barely escape from the ones who live in error, promising them freedom while they themselves are slaves of corruption; for by what a man is overcome, by this he is enslaved. For if, after they have escaped the defilements of the world by the knowledge of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, they are



again entangled in them and are overcome, the last state has become worse for them than the first. For it would be better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than having known it, to turn away from the holy commandment handed on to them. It has happened to them according to the true proverb, "A DOG RETURNS TO ITS OWN VOMIT," and, "A sow, after washing, returns to wallowing in the mire."'" (2 Peter 2:17-22, NASB)

"Enjoy life with the woman whom you love all the days of your fleeting life which He has given to you under the sun; for this is your reward in life and in your toil in which you have labored under the sun." (Ecclesiastes 9:9, NASB)

At this point in Jeremiah's ministry, he was suffering from temporary emotional revolt. At this time, we still see the repercussions of Josiah's policy. Under Josiah, the Mosaic Law was put into operation and observed. The prosperity of the nation came from that policy. The result was a temporary and superficial prosperity, which would soon be destroyed by national degeneracy. The wicked conspirators against Jeremiah were still enjoying the benefits of freedom and prosperity and they appeared to be happy.

A corrected translation of Jeremiah 12:1 is; "Righteous and only righteous, you O Lord. If I complain to you only this once, I will talk to you of judgments. Why, does the way of the wicked prosper? All who are treacherous prosper."

"Why are all those who deal in treachery at ease?" This means all who are treacherous, keep on being treacherous. This is very emphatic. They are treacherous in their actions. They are treacherous in their character. They simply follow through from character. "All who are treacherous in character and action enjoy (qal imperfect) prosperity." At this time, they are enjoying prosperity.

Conclusion

Certain, functions, principles, and concepts exist in a national entity because of the Laws of Divine Establishment that includes laws of free enterprise. These principles bring prosperity to believers and unbelievers, the good people, the bad people, the ones with their edification complex of the soul, and the apostates.

Morality and freedom taught by the ten commandments is the basic system for all human freedom. Where human freedom exists, free enterprise exists. Where free enterprise exists all kinds of people will prosper. The reason some of you are prosperous is because some of the worst wicked men in America are prosperous. That is free enterprise. God is fair. The rain falls on the just and the unjust.

Under Josiah, the Mosaic Law was discovered in the temple. The Josiah policy became the Mosaic Law. The result was freedom, privacy, and free enterprise. Under those conditions, the wicked as well as the righteous prospered. However, the prosperity of the wicked would disappear when freedom, privacy and free enterprise are destroyed. These conspirators actually destroyed the very thing that had made them great.

Jeremiah was disturbed about the prosperity of the wicked, however, their just due was coming. Apostacy would neutralize the Mosaic Law and the conditions described by Jeremiah would disappear in the reign of Zedekiah.

They rejected Bible doctrine, then they sawed off the limb that made them prosperous. Finally, they were hit. The wicked were free to abuse their freedom because of volition. This same freedom and prosperity would destroy them.