



Riches, Wealth and Prosperity

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As we develop our study of riches, wealth and prosperity, we will find that there are different levels of provisional increase. Hard work or being blessed by God can gain riches. However riches can also be had without having any relationship with God. Wealth can be obtained by having the understanding, resources and skill to increase. God empowers us to gain wealth, but does not directly intervene Himself. Prosperity comes when God intervenes on our behalf to thrust us forward or cause us to be thrust forward. Prosperity does not depend on our understanding of finances, but on our relationship with God, our honor of His word and our obedience to what He reveals to us.

Prosperity primarily depends on our walk with the Lord, and our honoring of His written and prophetic word. We do not often think of these as bringing increase, but the greatest increase comes through prosperity rather than riches or wealth.

There are two ways to spend the rest of our lives: in the wealth of Christ's provision or under the strongman of poverty. In this chapter we will make our case regarding the difference between riches, wealth and prosperity, and how God gives each into our hands.

Riches

Rich(es) is having a lot of money or possessions.¹ Riches can also mean valuable or abundance.² There are five Hebrew and two Greek words translated as *rich*.³ All of these mean to be numerous, to accumulate, to be very great, to be free, to be opulent, to abound with, to be increased with goods.

There are two primary ways to become rich. One avenue is hard work:

"He becometh poor that dealeth with a slack hand: but the hand of the diligent maketh rich." Prov. 10:4

The other means to becoming rich is through the blessing of the Lord:

"The blessing of the Lord, it maketh rich and He addeth no sorrow to it." Prov. 10:22

Scripture tells us that riches can be deceitful:

"He also that received seed among the thorns is he that heareth the word; and the cares of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches, choke the word, and he becometh unfruitful." Matthew 13:22

The rich young ruler could not let go of his riches to follow Jesus:

“And a certain ruler asked Him, saying, ‘Good Master, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?’ And Jesus said unto him ... ‘Yet lackest thou one thing: sell all that thou hast, and distribute unto the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come, follow Me.’ And when he heard this, he was very sorrowful: for he was very rich.” Luke 18:18-23

Riches can prevent you from entering the Kingdom of God:

“And when Jesus saw that he was very sorrowful, He said, ‘How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of God!’” Luke 18:24

There are also many warnings not to make riches your goal”

“Labour not to be rich: cease from thine own wisdom. Wilt thou set thine eyes upon that which is not? For riches certainly make themselves wings; they fly away as an eagle toward heaven.” Proverbs 23:4-5

“A faithful man shall abound with blessings: but he that maketh haste to be rich shall not be innocent.” Proverbs 28:20

To be rich means to have a lot of goods or possessions. You can become rich by hard work, diligence or being blessed by God. Riches can deceive you and riches can prevent you from following Jesus or entering the kingdom of God.

Wealth

Wealth is defined as abundant possessions or resources; profusion.⁴ There are seven main Hebrew words translated *wealth* or *wealthy*.⁵ The most frequently used meaning is a force of men, means or other resources; an army; virtue; valor; strength. The second most frequently used meaning is to be ready, to have enough. Other definitions include capacity or means to produce, to be firm, ability, power, substance, to be in good favor, to overflow, to be at ease, quietness, cheerful.

Deuteronomy 8:18 says that God gives us the power to gain wealth:

*“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. 8:18-19*

Wealth in this passage is the word for a force of men, an army. It is a power word. This wealth is a type of virtue or strength.

The following verse about substance carries the sense of being ready, prepared to honor the Lord. The primary word used for *substance* is the word that means wealth, enough, to be ready or prepared. This verse is one that carries a promise of increase when wealth is used properly:

*“Honour the LORD with thy **substance**, and with the firstfruits of all thine increase: So shall thy barns be filled with plenty, and thy presses shall burst out with new wine.”*
Proverbs 3:9-10

Wealth is also referenced in Proverbs 19:4:

“Wealth maketh many friends; but the poor is separated from his neighbour.”
This implies that you know how to use your resources to form good relationships.

To be wealthy has to do not only with possessing an abundance of material goods, but with the ability to produce more. This comes from strength, readiness, resources and favor to increase. Wealth carries with it some character traits such as valor and virtue, where as the only character trait associated with riches is diligence. In contrast to riches, a wealthy person knows how to increase and has the resources to multiply.

Prosperity

The dictionary defines definitions of prosper is to succeed, thrive, grow vigorously, to cause to prosper.⁶ The most frequently used Hebrew definition for *prosper* is to push forward; to break out; to come mightily upon; to cause to, make to, effect or send prosperity.⁷ The next most frequently used definition means to be tranquil, secure, successful; to be in safety. Another definition means to be, cause or make circumspect and intelligent, to deal prudently, to give skill, to have understanding or wisdom, to guide wittily.

Below we highlight several illustrations in Scripture where prosperity materialized in favor of God’s people. These eternal examples apply to us today as well.

- Prosperity comes through angelic intervention, as seen in Genesis 24:40 when Abraham sent his servant to find a wife for Isaac.
- Prosperity is a result of meditating on God’s law (*Ps. 1:3*) and from heeding the word of the prophets (*II Chron. 20:20*).
- Prosperity comes from seeking the Lord (*II Chron. 26:5; II Chron. 31:20-21*).
- When God sends His word, it prospers (*Isaiah 55:11*). In other words, it is sure to accomplish what He has sent it to do. Conversely, those who hide their sin cannot prosper (*Prov. 28:13*) and those who transgress the command of the Lord cannot prosper (*I Chron. 24:20*).

- Praying for the peace of Jerusalem will bring the peace and security of prosperity.
- As the elders of Israel rebuilt the temple under Ezra, they prospered through the prophesying of Haggai (*Ezra. 6:14*).
- Daniel and his friends prospered in Babylon by being promoted.

As we look at the above examples, we see the broadness of what it means to prosper, beyond financial gain. One of the clearest pictures of financial prosperity is found in Genesis 26. Isaac had traveled to the land of the Philistines to escape famine. When he sowed during a time of famine, he reaped 100-fold because the Lord prospered him.

Prosperity is most often presented as a result of the direct intervention of God, Who causes good to come. It carries with it the sense that something will act upon you to push you forward, thrust you forward, and break you through further than you could have gone on your own. This meaning is found three times more frequently than any of the other words. Along with this is the sense of wisdom and skill in knowing how to prosper. The result of prosperity is security, safety and tranquility. –*Diane Buker ©2008 Battle Axe Brigade. www.battleaxe.org.*

¹ Riches. *Webster's Ninth New Collegiate Dictionary.*

² Ibid.

³ Rich, riches H1952, 3513, 3581, 6223, 7771, G4145, 4147. *Strong's Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible.*

⁴ Wealth. *Webster's Ninth New Collegiate Dictionary.*

⁵ Wealth, wealthy H1952, 2428, 2896, 3581, 5233, 7910, 7961. *Strong's Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible.*

⁶ Prosper. *Webster's*

⁷ Prosper H6743,7965,7917. *Strong's Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible.*