

# Prosperity, Success, and Ethiopia

*"The poor will never cease from the land;  
therefore I command you, saying, 'You shall  
open your hand wide to your brother, to your poor  
and your needy, in your land.' "*

Deuteronomy 15:11

Does God want us live in poverty so that we won't ever have enough food to eat, clothes for our children, or shelter for our family? A thousand times over the answer would be "no!". God longs to bless His children. In Deuteronomy 8:18 He says that He is the God who gives power to become wealthy. We see that He blessed certain men of God so that they indeed were wealthy by any standard. Abraham was extremely wealthy. So was Job, David and Solomon (who had an annual salary of approximately \$20 million!). Jeremiah had a private secretary. Elisha had a fulltime butler, and Jesus had a treasurer. Men of God were often times men of wealth.

## What is Prosperity?

Biblical prosperity is having enough to comfortably meet your needs, and enough to be generous with.

1. What is the general condition of a person's heart and life that usually bring God's blessing of prosperity? (Ps. 1:1-3: Joshua 1:7)

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2. What is the reason given for Joseph's early success in Egypt? (Gen. 39:2-3)

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3. How does Deuteronomy 29:9 and 1Kings 2:3 prescribe prosperity?

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In our last study we saw that Israel became so prosperous that they forgot about God and only sought His blessings. The point to prosperity, God's blessing and success, is that we might be comfortable and generous at the same time.

4. Why was Abraham blessed according to Genesis 12:1-3? What was he to be because of God's blessing?

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Have you ever looked at your T.V. screen as it portrayed thousands of starving Africans? Has this ever caused you to question why you have so much while they have so little? How can we justify eating a Big Mac while every second over hundred Africans die of starvation? As we receive the blessing of God upon our lives, how are we to equate this with such adverse poverty in Ethiopia?

Many Christians justify their superior position of wealth to that of Ethiopia by citing how Ethiopia is a God-forsaken country caused by their idolatry, Islamic or Communist philosophies, or even poor government. This may well be the case.

5. What warnings does the Bible give to nations about forsaking Him? (Dt.28:15-24)

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6. What brings the blessing of God upon a nation? (Proverbs 14:34)

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As much as it might be the fault of a nation that it is in trouble financially due to its forsaking of the LORD, we do have obligations toward them.

7. What action does the LORD command to be done to the poor? (Dt. 15:11)

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The LORD certainly does bless His people financially when they have learned the keys to true Biblical prosperity. But the wealth He gives isn't meant to become the basis of our relationship with Him. God can also choose to remove our wealth if it becomes an obstacle in our relationship with Him.

8. How is this point illustrated in Matthew 19:16-22?

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Our attitude must be put on alert when we find God blessing us and giving us success. It is often at this time in our life when the temptation to lose our desperation for God becomes greatest. We must never forget why God has given us this prosperity- to live contently and be generous. At times this may require faith.

9. What does the Bible promise for those who are generous? (Proverbs 11:25; 2Cor. 9:6)

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God gives wealth, even to the ungodly, that it might be used to bless others after its provided for their needs. Imagine what would happen if the extremely wealthy became generous toward the poor. Malcolm Fraser recently said on an ABC radio interview that 1% of the population of Australia owned about 20% of the nation's wealth. As much as God has given them wealth that they might use it to bless others, God has also given to each of us varying degrees of wealth that we too might remember the poor. Our hearts should not be hard to the plight of those in desperate need, either in Ethiopia or in our own city. God does and will bless His people. We have an obligation with that wealth.

10. What was the desire of the ruling elders in Jerusalem toward Paul's ministry? (Gal. 2:10)

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*Amen.*