

The Abundance

by

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I know how to get along with humble means, and I also know how to live in prosperity; in any and every circumstance I have learned the secret of being filled and going hungry, both of having abundance and suffering need. I can do all things through Him who strengthens me. Philippians 4:12-13 (NASB)

Based on your personal experience, how would you define *abundance*? How would you define *prosperity*? This next question might be difficult for you, for you must be very honest with how you would answer it to see if there is a contrast. The question now is: “*How would a typical world view define these words?*” If you said they would be the same definition and have the same values, you might need to also answer the most important question, which is, “*How would Jesus define these words?*” I believe you will realize by His life and teachings that He would see things differently from the world.

Today I thought about the concept of *prosperity*. I went back into my past to see the different ways I’ve viewed it differently from today. I considered examples such as an abundance of food, or an abundance of knowledge, or an abundance of financial resources requirements for prosperity. I understand that I’ve had those things most of my life in some degree, and it is true that most people in this world must scrape out an existence to get by. So it is easy to think that only the wealthy are prosperous. But do these typical abundances automatically become the prerequisite for prosperity? Certainly they would help but if they were absent, could a person still be prosperous? Now the world’s values system would say absolutely no, for financial wealth represents prosperity. But the Bible doesn’t limit the definition to those things, and we need to see the contrast to understand what true prosperity is, for there are a lot of people who do not have the financial means that most of us have, and yet they feel that their life is richer than any other people in the world. Why is this? I think it is found in the definitions of *prosperity*. For instance:

Merriam – Webster defines prosperity as: “*the state of being successful usually by making a lot of money*”

The Bible defines *prosper*: (Greek) *euodoo* which means: “*to have a successful journey through life.*” (Hebrew) *shalom* which means: “*completeness, safety, health, soundness, and contentment.*”

Merriam – Webster gives an accurate definition based on the common non-biblical view about prosperity. But the Bible, God’s written word, says something entirely different. If you will look carefully you will see that Webster doesn’t give a definition but rather a method for achieving what they think is prosperity, which is to make a lot of money. The Bible gives a definition based on a lifestyle and a state of being, which is prosperity from God’s point of view. The contrast is obvious and the question begs to be asked: If one loses his marriage, his family, his life and his soul in the process, has he really prospered just because he made a lot of money? But, if he has completeness and contentment in life even when he and his family barely get

by, is he prosperous? Even better, could a love and pursuit of money for the sake of having money also create an incompleteness and lack of contentment in life? I believe it can. The Bible says it can, for it says the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil. Therefore, we need to understand if our definition of prosperity is what the world tells us it is, as Christians, we have a conflict of belief. Therefore, since we are given a skewed idea of wealth and prosperity, we must rethink it and revalue what true prosperity it.

Am I preaching a prosperity gospel here? No indeed. I'm only saying that God's definition of prosperity is different from the way the world, and many "prosperity gospel" ministers are presenting it. God does want His family to prosper and be blessed with that which is best ... a life that is fulfilled, complete and purposeful. But we need to understand that it is about what he thinks is best to achieve this life, and not what the world declares as necessary.

How does knowing and believing this different view of God's abundance which is all around us change our pursuit of prosperity? Well just look closely and you will likely see the incredible things that God has freely given to you, and you have very well overlooked. They are treasures and they are free. For example consider a beautiful fall day with trees are awash with so many colors that when you look at them from a hilltop, they look like a fruit loop bowl? How much did that cost you to look? Have you taken the time from your pursuit of money to look at it? How about the sound of water cascading over rocks, seagulls singing to each other, or a sunset so beautiful that no artist could ever capture its beauty on canvas? You can make money and buy an artist's depiction of it, but it will not come close to matching the real thing. Is it really necessary to buy that which a poor man can see for free? Look at the night time sky with no competing street lights, and you will see shimmering stars and planets that the most beautiful diamond necklace would pale in comparison. And yet, is your pursuit of money to buy that diamond necklace keeping you from seeing God's beauty because you do not take the time? How about watching your child sleep and noticing closely the distinct features that he or she have? The way they sleep is nothing short of beautiful and miraculous to me. The way they will grip your finger when you put it in their hand? Those little things are often overlooked when we are too busy to notice them, and our busyness is likely because we are trying to make more money and be "prosperous" for their sake, we think. Got news for you. If you listen to the world and pursue prosperity from its view point you will miss the best that is offered to you by God, and those opportunities will be gone. But, if you will consider that God is at work in these hidden things to bless you and to prosper you, then you will begin to see His abundance all around you. But you have to look. You have to get some new eyes to see and consider what is really important, and start pursuing those things with all your might.

If you will begin your pursuit of the real treasures God wants to give you, one day you will be a very rich man in the ways that count the most. Settle for nothing less than the abundance and prosperity that God wants to give you. That is real prosperity.