God’s Plan

Part 1

The Purpose of Prosperity

Jeremiah 29:11

Jeremiah 29:11: “For I know the plans I have for you,” declares the LORD, “plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.”

There’s an anti-prosperity teaching attitude in the church today, and yet most of the people with that attitude want to prosper. There are many reasons this attitude is so prevalent.

* People don’t know the Scriptures.
* People have heard extreme teaching that’s caused them to react.
* People have been raised on traditions of men and not the Word of God.

Romans 10:17 says that faith comes by hearing God’s Word, and faith for prosperity comes by hearing teaching on prosperity. We need to know what Scripture says about it.

What is prosperity?

Every year, the “Forbes 400” lists the richest people in the US. Currently topping the list is Bill Gates, net worth $89 billion. In fact, the top 100 richest people are all multi-billionaires. When we think of prosperity, we typically think of money and material abundance. But is this God’s idea of prosperity?

The Greek word for prosperity actually means “to be led along a good road.” I love this definition because it doesn’t emphasize the accumulation of money or things, but a way of living. Money isn’t prosperity; money is the byproduct of prosperity. Many Christians fall into the trap of measuring prosperity by the amount of things they have.

Being prosperous is relying on God as your source.

Remember: You can’t rely on both God and mammon (Matthew 6:24). Mammon is more than money. It’s the voice behind money. Money is amoral. It doesn’t have any guiding principles of its own. Having money or not having money doesn’t change who you already are. When you earn more money, it just makes you more of who you are. If you’re a generous person and you get wealthy, you become a generous, wealthy person. If you’re a stingy person, and you get wealthy, you become a stingy, wealthy person. It’s all about whose hands the money is in. Think about a brick for a second. In the hands of the right person, a brick can be used to skillfully build a home for a family. But in the wrong hands, a brick can be used to break your car window and steal your wallet. It’s all about whose hands it’s in. The brick doesn’t care!

Isaiah 48:17: “This is what the LORD says—your Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel: ‘I am the LORD your God, who teaches you what is best for you, who directs you in the way you should go.’”

God’s plan is to lead us along a good road that will prosper us in every area of our lives – spiritually, emotionally, physically and materially.

Consider three prosperity promises mentioned in these verses:

* Psalm 36:7-9: “How precious is your unfailing love, O God! All humanity finds shelter in the shadow of your wings. You feed them from the abundance of your own house, letting them drink from your river of delights. For you are the fountain of life, the light by which we see.”

Do you think the abundance of God’s house is limited to just spiritual prosperity? Think again and remember that the streets in heaven are paved with gold!

That’s not the only type of prosperity we’re promised.

* Psalm 92:12-15: “The righteous will flourish like a palm tree, they will grow like a cedar of Lebanon; planted in the house of the Lord, they will flourish in the courts of our God. They will still bear fruit in old age, they will stay fresh and green, proclaiming, ‘The Lord is upright; he is my Rock, and there is no wickedness in him.’”

Here we have an abundance of health promised to us that will last us even into our old age.

* Jeremiah 33:6: “Nevertheless, I will bring health and healing to it; I will heal my people and will let them enjoy abundant peace and security.”

Here we see that physical health is combined with emotional wellbeing, a joint promise of abundance in both of these areas.

Probably the best way to answer the question “What is prosperity?” is to go back to the beginning, Genesis 1, and look at God’s purpose in creating us and at His original commission to us. We were created in the image of God, so prosperity is anything and everything contained within that image. I think God’s commission to us describes it beautifully. In verse 28 of Genesis 1 He told us to prosper and have abundance, be in health and increase in number, have authority and dominion on the earth and power over all our adversaries. That’s complete prosperity!

While God looks at prosperity in an all-encompassing way, we don’t. All too often we look at prosperity promises and interpret them as relating to only the spiritual area. We’ve lived so long with a distorted image of ourselves, in this subnormal world under the curse of sin, that we accept its limitations and constraints as the norm. We accept fragments of prosperity when we could have total abundance in every area. We need to remember that God’s original intention and purpose for us haven’t changed. In His gift of redemption to us through Christ, He’s offering us the restoration of all the prosperity we lost in our disobedience. This means prosperity in every area of life.

During this teaching series, I’ll be focusing on financial and material prosperity, not because it’s the most important, but because it’s the least accepted and most misunderstood area of prosperity.

Why God’s Plan? Because God has a plan for your money and if you don’t know that plan then a major part of your everyday living isn’t under His control.

Financial stress can affect your marriage, your family, and even your health. Stress and lack aren’t God’s plan for you. His plan is for you to prosper. If you aren’t handling your finances in line with God’s plan, then your whole life will be out of joint.

We need to stop grieving the Father’s heart and start receiving everything He desires to bestow upon us. For this to happen we need two things:

a) A shift in our prosperity paradigm.

b) A revelation of God’s plan for prosperity in our lives.

Let’s quickly look at these two things.

* A shift in our prosperity paradigm:

God really wants us—He wants you—to prosper materially. Do you believe it? He really does! In order for you to start prospering, you must let go of your distorted self-image by gaining a clearer insight into who you truly are in Christ.

Ephesians 1:18-19: “I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know the hope to which he has called you, the riches of his glorious inheritance in his holy people, and his incomparably great power for us who believe.”

Jesus was opening the eyes of our heart when He said,

Matthew 4:17: “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven has come near.”

He was saying we could have heaven here on earth. Since there are no financial shortages in heaven, there don’t need to be any for us here; but in order to experience this, we first must repent. Does that surprise you? When most people think of repentance, they think about turning from their sins; but the Greek word for repentance is metanoeo, which means “to change your thinking.” Today we’d say, “You need a paradigm change.”

Why do we need a shift in our prosperity paradigm? Because many in the church have a hard time believing that God is a good God who loves them and that He wants them to prosper financially. There are various reasons for this, but a major one is that many people have an orphan spirit or mentality that makes it difficult for them to receive good things from God. They need a deep inner transformation that can only occur as their heart changes and they become more aware of their identity as God’s children.

The good news Jesus revealed and Paul preached proclaims – you aren’t alone and your heavenly father cares about every detail of your life. The bad news of the orphaned life says – you’re on your own and nobody cares.

Consider the contrast of these two identities this way:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Children of God/The Spirit of Sonship | Orphans/The Orphan Spirit |
| Secure | Insecure |
| Trusting | Mistrustful |
| Relationship-oriented | Performance-oriented |
|  |  |
| Transparent | Ashamed |
|  |  |
| Self-accepting | Self-rejecting |
| God-centered | Self-centered |
| Practices dominion | Practices manipulation |
| Faith-based | Fear-based |
| Work creatively | Toil in bondage |
| Live with purpose & destiny | Live with conflicting passions |
| Have a sense of belonging | Have a sense of alienation |
| Are blessed-conscious | Are cursed-conscious |
| Contributors/Givers | Consumers/Takers |

Really think about it! Which category do you fall into?

The first step in true repentance, or a paradigm change, is to hear God’s truth. Remember, God’s words are true, expressing His unchanging intention, and they contain no hidden agenda. The power of His words always accomplish His purpose. So let’s look at a few verses on financial prosperity and see what God’s saying to us. Keep in mind that these are only a few of the many verses on the subject contained in Scripture. Let’s start with our theme verse,

* Jeremiah 29:11: “For I know the plans I have for you,” declares the LORD, “plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.”

God loves us so much that His heart’s desire is to prosper us and give us hope for our future. Hope is the confident anticipation of good in every area of life. God told this to the nation of Israel, when they were in captivity by the Babylonians, due to their disobedience. Even in the middle of discipline, God offered them hope and communicated His heart to prosper and not harm them. Since God never changes, the same is true for us. God is so good!

* Deuteronomy 28:11: “The LORD will grant you abundant prosperity--in the fruit of your womb, the young of your livestock and the crops of your ground--in the land he swore to your ancestors to give you.”

This verse is taken from one of the most powerful chapters on prosperity in the Old Testament. When God speaks of prospering “you livestock and the crops of your ground,” He’s talking about financial prosperity, because for the farmer these were valuable financial commodities.

* Proverbs 11:10: “When the righteous prosper, the city rejoices; when the wicked perish, there are shouts of joy.”

Why do people rejoice when the righteous prosper? Because the righteous, those who are right with God through faith in Christ, are generous and will share their prosperity with the poor and needy. They’re Christ-like givers who know that God’s blessed them to be a blessing to others. He’s healed them to help and saved them to serve.

* Psalm 35:27: “Let them shout for joy and be glad, who favor my righteous cause; and let them say continually, ‘Let the Lord be magnified, who has pleasure in the prosperity of His servant.’”

I love this passage because it reveals the heart of God, who takes pleasure when we prosper. Just like I want my two children, Kyla and Kade, to prosper, how much more God wants us to prosper.

In case you’re still struggling with the idea that God wants to bless you with financial prosperity, consider these two verses:

* Deuteronomy 8:18: “But remember the Lord your God, for it is he who gives you the ability [power] to produce wealth, and so confirms his covenant, which he swore to your ancestors, as it is today.”

The word “power” in the Hebrew is the same as the root word for the chameleon lizard. A chameleon changes the color of its skin with the environment to protect itself from predators. Here God’s saying we’ll have supernatural ability or power to change, adapt and prosper, no matter if we’re in recession or hyperinflation. We’re to prosper in every circumstance so that we can bring forth His covenant promises that He made to Abraham.

* Proverbs 10:22: “The blessing of the Lord brings wealth, without painful toil for it.

Again, being prosperous is relying on God as your source.

There are people who prosper without trusting God, but it usually destroys their lives (1 Tim. 6:9). They have hardship, stress, marital problems, and on and on (1 Tim. 6:10). They might be rich, but it cost them in other areas. This verse is saying if you prosper God’s way, the blessing of the Lord will bring wealth, without painful toil for it.

Just watch the news and you’ll realize that wealth frequently brings great difficulty to people. Every year we see more tragic deaths of celebrities who, despite their wealth, are desperately unhappy. God promises us that money will be a blessing instead of a curse, because we know that money is simply a tool, a means to achieve our God-given purpose.

Again, if we’re going to stop grieving the Father’s heart and start receiving everything He desires to bestow upon us, first, we need a shift in our prosperity paradigm. Second, we need…

* A revelation of God’s plan and purpose for prosperity in our lives:

When it comes to prosperity, we need God’s revelation for it in our lives. Prosperity isn’t a formula where we observe certain rules and obtain wealth; nor is it a reward system whereby we get rewarded for being obedient children. Prosperity is one aspect of the nature and character of God; as His royal children, it’s ours to walk in agreement and unity with the Father.

When, in faith, we receive God’s grace, we become Christ-like givers who prosper. Our prosperity has three major purposes.

1. Our prosperity glorifies Father God!

* John 10:10: “I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full [abundantly].”
* 1 Timothy 6:17: “Command those who are rich in this present world not to be arrogant nor to put their hope in wealth, which is so uncertain, but to put their hope in God, who richly provides us with everything for our enjoyment.”
* Ecclesiastes 5:19: “And it is a good thing to receive wealth from God and the good health to enjoy it. To enjoy your work and accept your lot in life—this is indeed a gift from God.”

2. Our prosperity builds character for reigning!

* 1 Timothy 5:8: “But those who won’t care for their relatives, especially those in their own household, have denied the true faith. Such people are worse than unbelievers.”
* Proverbs 13:22: “A good person leaves an inheritance for their children’s children, but a sinner’s wealth is stored up for the righteous.”

3. Our prosperity enables us to advance God’s Kingdom!

* John 18:36: “My kingdom is from another place.”
* Matthew 6:10: “Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.”