

WHAT DOES GOD THINK OF WEALTH?

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We were talking last week about being ready for difficult times. When economies may collapse ... even law and order may be under pressure. Troublesome times are coming our way.

In such times ... we need to know where to look for our protection and support. The answer is God ... and it is good to establish a good relationship with Him before such difficult times come.

God can bless us ... provide for us ... in many ways ... we shouldn't limit Him ... but it's good to have an understanding of His nature towards us ... His attitude to our well-being. For example ... does God prefer us to be healthy ... or to be sick? To prosper ... or to experience poverty? To thrive ... or to suffer? What does God have towards us in His heart.

As always ... the scriptures show us God's mind. We don't have to guess. We don't have to rely on tradition ... the views and opinions of various religious gurus ... or churches even ... unless it agrees with God's Word.

It's some years since I last talked about the subject of money and prosperity ... it's always a key topic ... so I thought it would be worth reviewing again.

Money is a key to life ... for people ... businesses ... governments.

If you're broke ... have no money ... you'll be pretty restricted in the things you can do. Where you can live ... what can you eat ... clothes ... car ... social life ... etc. If you've got plenty of money ... you are probably free to make many different choices ... and can also support others who are more needy. Money makes a difference. Though ... as we'll see ... money can have a dark side.

Unless they're trying to be "religious" or "spiritual" ... most people would agree that being prosperous is better than being poor. A few people don't ... "poverty is next to Godliness".

People say things like: “money makes the world go around”.

Oscar Wilde said: “When I was young I thought money was the most important thing in life; now that I am old, I know it is”.

Some: “Money can’t buy happiness ... but I’d rather cry in a BMW than on a bicycle”.

Mark Twain or George Bernard Shaw said: “Lack of money is the root of all evil”. There’s truth in that mis-quotation.

Well ... there’s lots of opinions about money and lots of churches have it high on their agenda ... messages on tithing and offerings and special funds.

So ... before we start. What is God’s attitude? What does the Bible say?

Is it holy to be poor ... and wicked to be wealthy?

Psalms 145:8-9 (NKJV)

8 **The Lord is gracious** (*disposed to show favour*) **and full of compassion.**

Slow to anger and great in mercy.

9 **The Lord is good to all,**

And His tender mercies are over all His works.

God’s disposition is to show favour.

God is a good God. He’s not a heavenly miser. God isn’t poor ... and He doesn’t have a poverty mentality.

Psalms 145:14-16 (NKJV)

14 The Lord upholds all who fall,
And raises up all who are bowed down.

15 The eyes of all look expectantly to You,
And You give them their food in due season.

16 **You open Your hand**

And satisfy the desire of every living thing.

God satisfies our desires. That’s a good God.

It's not that God lives in beautiful splendour ... but wants us to live in poverty and lack! Does God want to put us down so that he can exalt His glory?

Psalms 112:1-3 (NKJV)

1 **Praise the Lord!**

**Blessed is the man who fears the Lord,
Who delights greatly in His commandments.**

2 His descendants will be mighty on earth;

The generation of the upright will be blessed.

3 **Wealth and riches will be in his house,** *(in the home of the enthusiastic devotee of God)*

And his righteousness endures forever.

Psalms 112:4-10 (NKJV)

4 Unto the upright there arises light in the darkness;

He is gracious, and full of compassion, and righteous.

5 **A good man deals graciously and lends;**

He will guide his affairs with discretion.

6 Surely he will never be shaken;

The righteous will be in everlasting remembrance.

7 He will not be afraid of evil tidings;

His heart is steadfast, trusting in the Lord. *(Not moved in difficult times ... not trusting in their wealth and riches)*

8 His heart is established;

He will not be afraid,

Until he sees his desire upon his enemies.

9 **He has dispersed abroad,**

He has given to the poor; *(generous ... gracious ... disposed to show favour)*

His righteousness endures forever;

His horn will be exalted with honour.

10 The wicked will see it and be grieved;

He will gnash his teeth and melt away;

The desire of the wicked shall perish.

A generous heart. You can't be generous and lend and give to the poor if you don't have surplus. Some folk only want to "get by" ... "I don't need any more". Fair enough. Why don't you get more ... and help others? Just pray?

God's attitude is evident:

Deuteronomy 28:1-6 (NKJV)

1 **"Now it shall come to pass, if you diligently obey the voice of the Lord your God, to observe carefully all His commandments which I command you today, that the Lord your God will set you high above all nations of the earth. (Prime position)**

2 And **all these blessings shall come upon you and overtake you**, because you obey the voice of the Lord your God:

3 **"Blessed shall you be in the city, and blessed shall you be in the country.**

4 **"Blessed shall be the fruit of your body, the produce of your ground and the increase of your herds, the increase of your cattle and the offspring of your flocks.**

5 **"Blessed shall be your basket and your kneading bowl.**

6 **"Blessed shall you be when you come in, and blessed shall you be when you go out.**

ABUNDANCE IS A BLESSING! That is God's desire.

Deuteronomy 28:15-19 (NKJV)

Curses on Disobedience

15 **"But it shall come to pass, if you do not obey the voice of the Lord your God, to observe carefully all His commandments and His statutes which I command you today, that all these curses will come upon you and overtake you:**

16 **"Cursed shall you be in the city, and cursed shall you be in the country.**

17 **"Cursed shall be your basket and your kneading bowl.**

18 **"Cursed shall be the fruit of your body and the produce of your land, the increase of your cattle and the offspring of your flocks.**

19 **"Cursed shall you be when you come in, and cursed shall you be when you go out.**

LACK IS A CURSE! This is not God's desire.

Deuteronomy 28:38-45 (NKJV)

38 **"You shall carry much seed out to the field but gather little in, for the locust shall consume it.**

39 You shall plant vineyards and tend them, but you shall neither drink of the wine nor gather the grapes; for the worms shall eat them.

40 You shall have olive trees throughout all your territory, but you shall not anoint yourself with the oil; for your olives shall drop off.

41 You shall beget sons and daughters, but they shall not be yours; for they shall go into captivity.

42 Locusts shall consume all your trees and the produce of your land.

43 "The alien who is among you shall rise higher and higher above you, and you shall come down lower and lower.

44 He shall lend to you, but you shall not lend to him; he shall be the head, and you shall be the tail.

45 "Moreover all these curses shall come upon you and pursue and overtake you, until you are destroyed, because you did not obey the voice of the Lord your God, to keep His commandments and His statutes which He commanded you.

Poverty ... lack struggling to get by ... not having sufficient ... IS A CURSE! Not what God wants. GOD WANTS TO BLESS AND PROSPER AND TO ADD TO HIS PEOPLE.

Deuteronomy 8:6-19 (NKJV)

6 "Therefore you shall keep the commandments of the Lord your God, to walk in His ways and to fear Him.

7 For the Lord your God is bringing you into a good land, a land of brooks of water, of fountains and springs, that flow out of valleys and hills;

8 a land of wheat and barley, of vines and fig trees and pomegranates, a land of olive oil and honey;

9 a land in which you will eat bread without scarcity, in which you will lack nothing; a land whose stones are iron and out of whose hills you can dig copper.

10 When you have eaten and are full, then you shall bless the Lord your God for the good land which He has given you. *(This has been God's desire for a long time)*

11 "Beware that you do not forget the Lord your God by not keeping His commandments, His judgments, and His statutes which I command you today,

12 lest—when you have eaten and are full, and have built beautiful houses and dwell in them;

13 and when your herds and your flocks multiply, and your silver and your gold are multiplied, and all that you have is multiplied;

14 **when your heart is lifted up, and you forget the Lord your God who brought you out of the land of Egypt, from the house of bondage;**

15 **who led you through that great and terrible wilderness,** in which were fiery serpents and scorpions and thirsty land where there was no water; **who brought water for you out of the flinty rock;**

16 **who fed you in the wilderness with manna,** which your fathers did not know, that He might humble you and that He might test you, to do you good in the end—

17 **then you say in your heart, 'My power and the might of my hand have gained me this wealth.'** (Here's a danger!)

18 **"And you shall remember the Lord your God, for it is He who gives you power to get wealth, that He may establish His covenant which He swore to your fathers, as it is this day.**

19 Then it shall be, **if you by any means forget the Lord your God, and follow other gods, and serve them and worship them, I testify against you this day that you shall surely perish.**

This is what God wanted. It would delight Him to pour out abundance on His people ... to see them succeed ... enjoying full lives.

But there is a dark side to money. So there's a warning: Don't forget where your wealth comes from. Don't become proud and self-sufficient.

Apart from the nation as a whole ... we can see how God blessed some of His individual saints.

Genesis 13:1-11 (NKJV)

1 Then Abram went up from Egypt, he and his wife and all that he had, and Lot with him, to the South.

2 **Abram was very rich in livestock, in silver, and in gold.** (Real ... *proper ... material wealth*)

3 And he went on his journey from the South as far as Bethel, to the place where his tent had been at the beginning, between Bethel and Ai,

4 to the place of the altar which he had made there at first. And there Abram called on the name of the Lord.

5 **Lot also, who went with Abram, had flocks and herds and tents.**

6 **Now the land was not able to support them, that they might dwell together, for *their possessions were so great that they could not dwell together.***

7 And there was strife between the herdsmen of Abram's livestock and the herdsmen of Lot's livestock. The Canaanites and the Perizzites then dwelt in the land.

8 So Abram said to Lot, "Please let there be no strife between you and me, and between my herdsmen and your herdsmen; for we are brethren.

9 Is not the whole land before you? Please separate from me. If you take the left, then I will go to the right; or, if you go to the right, then I will go to the left."

10 And Lot lifted his eyes and saw all the plain of Jordan, that it was well watered everywhere (before the Lord destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah) like the garden of the Lord, like the land of Egypt as you go toward Zoar.

11 Then Lot chose for himself all the plain of Jordan, and Lot journeyed east. And they separated from each other.

Even Abraham's nephew Lot was blessed ... probably because of his association with Abraham.

Abraham was very wealthy ... materially. Well-known in the land. He had his own personal army.

Does a saint of God have to be broke? No. It's clear ... the money and wealth never went to Abraham's head. Even today ... he's called the "Father of the Faithful" and a "Friend of God".

Look at Isaac too.

Genesis 26:12-14 (NKJV)

12 **Then Isaac sowed in that land, and *reaped in the same year a hundredfold*; and the Lord blessed him.**

13 ***The man began to prosper, and continued prospering until he became very prosperous*;**

14 **for he had possessions of flocks and possessions of herds and a great number of servants. So the Philistines envied him. (*You don't envy poor people*)**

Isaac didn't just "get by". He was envied throughout the land. The equivalent of a millionaire.

God was happy to bless and prosper Isaac. The wealth and prosperity never spoiled him. Jesus confirmed later that Abraham ... Isaac and Jacob would be in the Kingdom of God.

So. It is not accurate to say that prosperity is evil ... will always harm and corrupt a believer. That God wants us poor and struggling. God's disposition is to bless.

Another saint of God ... Job.

Job 1:1-3 (NKJV)

1 There was a man in the land of Uz, whose name was Job; and that man was blameless and upright, and one who feared God and shunned evil.

2 And seven sons and three daughters were born to him.

3 Also, **his possessions were seven thousand sheep, three thousand camels, five hundred yoke of oxen, five hundred female donkeys, and a very large household, so that this man was the greatest of all the people of the East.**

Job was the greatest in the East ... a man who was an upright and blameless.

Then we know the rest of the story. Satan attacked and brought Job to sickness and poverty. Then we have the story of Job and his friends who were confused. But once things got sorted out ... and God stepped in. What happened then? What does it show us about God's nature.

Job 42:12-17 (NKJV)

12 Now the Lord blessed the latter days of Job more than his beginning; for he had fourteen thousand sheep, six thousand camels, one thousand yoke of oxen, and one thousand female donkeys.

13 He also had seven sons and three daughters.

14 And he called the name of the first Jemimah, the name of the second Keziah, and the name of the third Keren-Happuch.

15 In all the land were found no women so beautiful as the daughters of Job; and their father gave them an inheritance among their brothers.
16 After this Job lived one hundred and forty years, and saw his children and grandchildren for four generations.
17 So Job died, old and full of days.

God doubled Job's wealth. Does that tell us something about God's nature?

God is not a poverty minded individual. He's always wanted to bless.

Consider King David.

1 Chronicles 29:1-5 (NKJV)

1 Furthermore King David said to all the assembly: "My son Solomon, whom alone God has chosen, is young and inexperienced; and the work is great, because the temple is not for man but for the Lord God.

2 **Now for the house of my God I have prepared with all my might: gold for things to be made of gold, silver for things of silver, bronze for things of bronze, iron for things of iron, wood for things of wood, onyx stones, stones to be set, glistening stones of various colours, all kinds of precious stones, and marble slabs in abundance.**

3 **Moreover, because I have set my affection on the house of my God, I have given to the house of my God, over and above all that I have prepared for the holy house, my own special treasure of gold and silver:**

4 **three thousand talents of gold, of the gold of Ophir, and seven thousand talents of refined silver, to overlay the walls of the houses;**

5 **the gold for things of gold and the silver for things of silver,** and for all kinds of work to be done by the hands of craftsmen. Who then is willing to consecrate himself this day to the Lord?" (*who's going to join me?*)

David was able to contribute (by today's standards) about \$20 billion to the Temple Fund ... from his personal wealth.

1 Chronicles 29:6-9 (NKJV)

6 **Then the leaders of the fathers' houses, leaders of the tribes of Israel, the captains of thousands and of hundreds, with the officers over the king's work, offered willingly.**

7 **They gave for the work of the house of God five thousand talents and ten thousand darics of gold, ten thousand talents of silver, eighteen thousand talents of bronze, and one hundred thousand talents of iron.**

8 **And whoever had precious stones gave them to the treasury of the house of the Lord,** into the hand of Jehiel the Gershonite.

9 **Then the people rejoiced, for they had offered willingly, because with a loyal heart they had offered willingly to the Lord;** and King David also rejoiced greatly.

The people gave \$3.8 trillion in value ... bearing in mind that the population of Israel was about 5 million? So ... a very wealthy nation ... as God had promised them.

1 Chronicles 29:10-12 (NKJV)

10 **Therefore David blessed the Lord** before all the assembly; and David said:

“Blessed are You, Lord God of Israel, our Father, forever and ever.

11 Yours, O Lord, is the greatness,
The power and the glory,
The victory and the majesty;
For all that is in heaven and in earth is Yours;
Yours is the kingdom, O Lord,
And You are exalted as head over all.

12 **Both riches and honour come from You,**
And You reign over all.
In Your hand is power and might;
In Your hand it is to make great
And to give strength to all.

David remembered that riches and honour come from God.

2 Chronicles 1:7-12 (NKJV)

7 **On that night God appeared to Solomon, and said to him, “Ask! What shall I give you?”** (God’s nature ... to give ... to share ... to prosper)

8 And Solomon said to God: “You have shown great mercy to David my father, and have made me king in his place.

9 Now, O Lord God, let Your promise to David my father be established, for You have made me king over a people like the dust of the earth in multitude.

10 **Now give me wisdom and knowledge**, that I may go out and come in before this people; for who can judge this great people of Yours?"

11 **Then God said to Solomon**: "Because this was in your heart, and you have not asked riches or wealth or honour or the life of your enemies, nor have you asked long life—but have asked wisdom and knowledge for yourself, that you may judge My people over whom I have made you king—

12 **wisdom and knowledge are granted to you; and I will give you riches and wealth and honour, such as none of the kings have had who were before you, nor shall any after you have the like.**"

God's disposition is to bless. Here's an opportunity! God gave tremendous riches and wealth and honour to Solomon. No one has ever been close.

Solomon didn't ask for long life ... and God didn't give it to him. Solomon went sadly wrong. It wasn't primarily wealth ... mainly women and idolatry ... perhaps vanity ... though money ... wealth and fame ... would have accentuated the problem perhaps.

There's a saying: "Money never changes anyone ... it just magnifies who they are". Another version: "Money does not change people. It merely unmasks them" ... reveals what is in their heart.

Money itself is neutral ... neither good or bad. God prefers to bless ... to prosper ... to allow His creation to enjoy an abundant life. We can see that even in Jesus' words:

John 10:10 (NKJV)

10 **The thief does not come except to steal, and to kill, and to destroy.** *(That doesn't sound like blessings. When these things happen in our lives ... they don't come from God)* **I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly.** *(Because this is God's nature)*

(AMP) "I came that they may have and enjoy life, and have it in abundance (to the full, till it overflows)"

This is much wider than “just money” ... but certainly money usually helps?! The idea that God wants people to live in poverty ... struggling ... probably goes back to Ancient Greek philosophy ... popularised within Christianity by the Roman Catholic Church. Look at Roman Catholic monks and nuns ... who leave society ... take vows of poverty ... have a simple life of bread and water ... take vows of silence ... because it was seen as more spiritual ... as more Holy. This is corrupting what true religion truly is.

Even today ... many equate poverty with Holiness. Many causes of poverty ... where you're born ... sometimes down to physical health ... down to education ... lack of opportunities ... attitude ... character ... environment ... families. But being poor does not equate to Holiness.

There are poor people who are good people ... and people who are bad. There are wealthy people who are good ... and those who are bad. It's not the money ... it's the person.

God has no problems with wealth and prosperity. Do we think the World Tomorrow will be characterised by abject poverty on planet earth? Or abundance? It should be fairly obvious.

Psalms 1:1-3 (NKJV)

1 Blessed is the man

Who walks not in the counsel of the ungodly,

Nor stands in the path of sinners,

Nor sits in the seat of the scornful; (don't hang about with “bad folk”)

2 But his delight is in the law of the Lord,

And in His law he meditates day and night.

3 He shall be like a tree

Planted by the rivers of water,

That brings forth its fruit in its season,

Whose leaf also shall not wither;

And whatever he does shall prosper.

That sounds pretty good. The good man prospers. Supplies never run out.

Psalms 23 (NKJV)

1 **The Lord is my shepherd;**

I shall not want. (I shall not lack)

2 **He makes me to lie down in green pastures;**

He leads me beside the still waters.

3 **He restores my soul;**

He leads me in the paths of righteousness

For His name's sake.

4 Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death,

I will fear no evil;

For **You are with me;**

Your rod and Your staff, they comfort me.

5 **You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies;**

(you prepare a table/Feast for me)

You anoint my head with oil;

My cup runs over.

6 **Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me**

All the days of my life;

And I will dwell in the house of the Lord

Forever.

The Lord is a GOOD SHEPHERD. He provides for His sheep.

My cup runs over! Extra! Not just getting by.

Goodness and mercy follows after me.

Proverbs 3:13-18 (NKJV)

13 **Happy is the man who finds wisdom,**

And the man who gains understanding;

14 For her proceeds are better than the profits of silver,

And her gain than fine gold.

15 **She (wisdom) is more precious than rubies,**

And all the things you may desire cannot compare with her.

16 **Length of days is in her right hand,**

In her left hand riches and honour.

17 **Her ways are ways of pleasantness,**

And all her paths are peace.

18 **She is a tree of life to those who take hold of her,**

And happy are all who retain her.

Wisdom and riches and honour.

If we use the wisdom of God ... it leads to riches and honour. Be careful not to spiritualise all this away. Think about Job ... Abraham ... Isaac ... Jacob ... Joseph ... David ... all had real wealth: silver ... gold ... herds ... flocks ... homes.

God wants to bless.

Proverbs 10:22 (NKJV)

22 ***The blessing of the Lord makes one rich, And He adds no sorrow with it.***

Some people make wealth their own way ... they are selfish ... they exploit others ... they are greedy ... which will often bring grief.

But wealth acquired God's way ... as a blessing ... is much safer ... no sting in the tail.

It is unfortunate that some churches acquire wealth by exploiting their members ... we'll look at that in a couple of weeks.

Finally for today ... let's look at

Matthew 6:19-21, 24-34 (NKJV)

19 ***Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal;***

20 ***but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal.***

21 ***For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.***

24 ***No one can serve two masters;*** for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will be loyal to the one and despise the other.

You cannot serve God and mammon.

25 "Therefore I say to you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink; nor about your body, what you will put on. Is not life more than food and the body more than clothing?"

26 Look at the birds of the air, for they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns; yet **your heavenly Father** feeds them. Are you not of more value than they?

27 Which of you by worrying can add one cubit to his stature?

28 “So why do you worry about clothing? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow: they neither toil nor spin;

29 and yet I say to you that even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these.

30 Now if God so clothes the grass of the field, which today is, and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, **will He not much more** clothe you, O you of little faith?

31 “Therefore do not worry, saying, ‘What shall we eat?’ or ‘What shall we drink?’ or ‘What shall we wear?’

32 For after all these things the Gentiles seek. *(They have nowhere else to go)* For **your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things.**

33 But **seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you.**

34 Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about its own things. Sufficient for the day is its own trouble.

We need to keep our priorities right.

All these things shall be added (God’s maths are always to ADD AND MULTIPLY ... satan divides and take away).

Seeking wealth ... purely for ourselves ... should not be our key priority. If our priorities are right ... then God can bless us and we can avoid the dark side of money.

But Jesus makes it clear: We have a Heavenly Father ... who desires to meet all of our needs and ... as we saw earlier ... meets them abundantly ... so our cup runneth over.

It’s God’s nature to bless ... and poverty is a curse ... definitely not a blessing in disguise.

Don’t be misled by traditional teaching that money is bad ... all wealthy people are evil ... and that poverty is spiritual. Money is neutral. The question is what do we do with it?

Next week: Dark side of money and the warnings the Bible gives. After that ... we may look at the con-artists in the religious world ... and churches ... who are out there after our money!