

Are You Blessed or Just Prosperous?

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Are You Blessed or Just Prosperous?

By Dr. Henderson Ward



We are apt to confuse things that seem similar when in truth the similarities are superficial and the substance and character of those things are entirely different and at times diametrically opposite. How many people had in the past confused lust with love, infatuation with sincere passion, acquaintanceship with friendship, phony warmth with genuine affection and (for believers mostly) lying wonders with authentic miracles. Everywhere we look people are perceiving things wrongly and the misperceptions are causing them real harm and in some cases are spiritually debilitating.

Too many believers are confusing being blessed with being prosperous, and currently there are those so called "prosperity preachers" who are stoking the flames of this unfortunate obsession with prosperity and leading many along the pathway of perdition.

God through providence, that is merciful to all, does permit an evil person if he has bought a parcel of fertile land, and he correctly fertilises it, irrigates it and manages it in accordance with good husbandry will reap abundant crops and become prosperous. Is this evil person blessed? No, he is not.

In some societies people who pursue a life of criminality; prostitution, drug dealing, assassinations and protection racketeering, slave labour and people trafficking and such like are the most prosperous around. Are these prosperous criminals blessed? Absolutely not.

Many white-collar crooks, including some bankers and lawyers, are living well, ensconced in their grand mansions with a plethora of servants and surrounded by fawning acolytes, and corrupt, clueless politicians eager to serve them, and expensive yachts and private aircraft awaiting their pleasure, and an abundance of food and drink at their call, and at times have more influence than elected governments. Are these crooks blessed? Never, at no time.

But prosperity, however gained, is a powerful magnet, it pulls the eye towards it and influences the heart in its direction, and at times the uttermost emotional response is pure envy. Even

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David when he was a king and not a poor, deprived person nearly fell into this trap when he acknowledged, "But as for me, my feet were almost gone; my steps had well nigh slipped. For I was envious at the foolish, when I saw the prosperity of the wicked." (Psalm 73:2-3)

Yes, wicked people can be, and many are, very prosperous but none of them are blessed, none of them have the divine anointing on their heads, none of them have the face of God shining on their life and his grace invigorating their souls and giving them inward, lasting peace. No, these people are prosperous but they are not blessed.

What matters greatly in life is not material prosperity but God's blessing, and even though God's blessing may be accompanied with much prosperity, and often it is, it is nevertheless true that one can be poor (not miserable) and be very blessed.

The primary meaning of the blessed, from a biblical standpoint, is that state of being when one has taken God as his portion, lives in accordance with the precepts, traditions and ordinances as taught in the Bible, finds nothing objectionable or unbearable in the faith and delights in all that glorifies Almighty God. When one is truly blessed then it is God who bestows through grace all that person is and possesses, and guides them both along godly paths without regret, agony and sorrow, "The blessing of the LORD, it maketh rich, and he addeth no sorrow with it." (Proverbs 10:22)

The New John Gill Exposition of the Entire Bible commenting on this verse puts it well:

"...no sorrow goes along with the blessing,...for as the good man comes by them easily, without any anxious care and sinful solicitude, he seeking the kingdom of God and his righteousness, all these things are added to him, over and above, without much thought about them, or expectation of them...so it is with great delight, pleasure, and cheerfulness, he enjoys them, and readily communicates them to others; while the wicked man is full of anxiety, distress, and sorrow..."

It should be clear by now that when the Bible calls one blessed, it is not because of what that person owns, not his prosperity or accomplishments, but rather who that person knows from above, the relationship above all that matters - with Almighty God - and the Bible states it simply like this for individuals as well as nations, "Blessed is the nation whose God is the LORD" (PSALM 33:12)

In truth all believers are blessed and there is nowhere in the Bible where material abundance is the measure of God's blessing, and Jesus Christ the most blessed of the sanctified described who the blessed are like this:

"Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted. Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth. Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled. Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy. Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God. Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God. Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake: for theirs is the kingdom of

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heaven. Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake. Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you." (Matthew 5:3-12)

Many people still do not get it that material prosperity and being blessed are not the same thing and this is because material things can, and do, make people happy. While it is true that material things are enjoyable, and can bring some happiness, it is the kind of happiness that is transitory and fleeting and can be accompanied by worry, stress, and sorrow that are clearly not in keeping with the circumstance of being blessed.

King David spoke many times about people who are blessed, in the King James Version of the Bible he used the word blessed over 30 times, and he identified them in a number of ways that we may recognize them. Here is how he described the blessed in the first Psalm, "Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful. But his delight is in the law of the LORD; and in his law doth he meditate day and night. And he shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season; his leaf also shall not wither; and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper." (Psalm 1:1-3)

David was quite clear about the positive descriptors applicable to the blessed, and he was not alone in this for throughout the Bible many positive descriptors are used of the blessed; but David is almost unique in telling us that they are some things that are incompatible with being blessed and he spells them out clearly for our benefit.

David states in the Psalm that there are three things blessed persons do not do.

1. The blessed does not walk in the counsel of the ungodly
2. The blessed does not stand in the way of sinners
3. The blessed does not sit in the seat of the scornful

The ungodly here are people who are chronically unjust, live without regards to God and has no place for religion, cares little for people other than those who they can fleece and is always on the lookout to take advantage. People like these are everywhere and in all professions and are the ones who counsels how to rig contracts, how to avoid paying taxes, how to scam the public with detestable adverts, how to lie without being found out and how to do many other things to conceal immorality and wrong doing. The blessed do not consult with them nor follow their advice ever.

Sinners are everywhere and we know what sinning is, in truth we are all sinners (for some we can add "saved by grace"), but in the context of this Psalm David means this. Sinners here are those whose righteousness falls short of the mark, who transgresses God's laws and does whatever evil pleases them, who are unconverted and therefore has no time for spiritual pursuits and who love sinning and those indulging in sin. The blessed is not of that ilk, does not accompany sinners in their indulgences, does not congregate with them in their depravities and shenanigans and being mindful of what Isaiah cautioned, "Let the wicked forsake his way" (Isaiah 55:7)

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) the blessed does not stand in such a person's way.

The scornful are at the bottom of the heap, the worst of the lot as the progression of evil goes for they are the ones who poke fun at God, they mock God, has no religion and derides those who do, may admit there is a God but shows him nothing but contempt and defiance, and seek to destroy that which is good, moral and uplifting in civil society. The blessed does not identify with, give assistance to nor sit in the seat of the scornful.

So are you blessed or just plain prosperous?

The truth is that others can look on from the outside and guess but you, as you search your heart and know your conscience is in the best position to judge. The rich young ruler that came to Jesus in Luke chapter 18 would regard himself as blessed but his response to Jesus showed otherwise, "And when he heard this, he was very sorrowful: for he was very rich." ([Luke 18:23](#))

) One is truly blessed when one is willing to listen carefully to God, learn, surrender, change and be all God wants one to be.

Enough said.

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