**The Challenge of Prosperity**

**Introduction:** The word “challenge” is appropriate! Prosperity is NOT a sin, in and of itself. It MAY or MAY NOT be beneficial to us, depending upon how WE decide to use it and pursue it. However, it CAN present challenges! Thus, tonight we are discussing “The Challenge of Prosperity.”

Let’s understand what the Bible DOES give us as the challenges relating to “prosperity” because there will be, and already are, many challenges related to it in this well-to-do country of ours.

1. **A Challenge to Our Contentment**
	1. One of the “human” traits” is to always want to be wherever you aren’t!
	2. Prov. 30:7-9 Agur (see vs. 1) asked to be fed with the food allotted to him and did not want to be either rich or poor! Either way was going to be a challenge!
		1. He said he would be tempted to deny the Lord if he was rich.
		2. He said he would be tempted to steal and profane God’s name if he was poor.
	3. I Kings 21:1-3 Ahab was king and had the run of the country, power, rank, and honor. Yet. . . he wanted Naboth’s vineyard. He wasn’t content with being king.
		1. When denied the vineyard, he went and sulked like a child. (I Ki. 21:4-6)
	4. Contentment WILL be a challenge to the prosperous if they are not aware of the danger!
		1. Phil. 4:11-13 Paul said, “I have learned in whatever state I am, to be content.”
			1. As such, he was able to withstand the harsh treatments of prison.
			2. As such, he was able to appreciate what brethren did for him!
				* Phil. 4:14-15 Brethren shared with him in his distress.
				* Phil. 4:18 The gifts from Epaphroditus were a “sweet-smelling aroma.”
		2. It sometimes involves growth and maturity over time to appreciate what we have!
			1. Gen. 27:41-42 Esau was angry with Jacob and planned to kill him later. He found this to “comfort” him according to Rebekah. (Gen. 27:42)
				* He later told Jacob, “I have enough, my brother” (Gen. 33:11).
				* Those words, “I have enough” are often very hard to hear from folks!!!
			2. Paul -- I Tim. 6:8 “And having food and clothing, with these we shall be content.”
2. **A Challenge to Our Priorities**
	1. Prosperity can bring a challenge to those “rich in this present age” (I Tim. 6:17-19).
		1. They must decide who to trust!
			1. Will they trust in uncertain riches or the living God?
			2. Will they store up a good foundation for the time to come or store up money?
		2. They must decide what is going to entangle them! (II Tim. 2:4. See II Tim. 3:1-4)
			1. As the “soldier” of II Tim. 2:4, we can only stand so much of the “good life” before we get wrapped up in a highly social life with “connections” to others as we hook together.
		3. Paul noted “Demas has forsaken me, having loved this present world” (II Tim. 4:10).
	2. The Jews lost their priority and intensity for God during the “Restoration Period” of the Old Testament and caused great harm to the revival and rebuilding of Jerusalem.
		1. Nehemiah 5:1-5. Jews had borrowed money from other Jews and had mortgaged their lands and homes. Their sons and daughters had been taken into slavery!
			1. Nehemiah was furious! (Neh. 5:6)
				* He rebuked them and ordered them to restore the land. (Neh. 5:11-13)
		2. Nehemiah 13:15-22. Others started playing “cat and mouse” with Nehemiah as he tried to get them to attend to Sabbath activities instead of buying and selling.
	3. The Bible does give us examples of faithful people who were well-to-do, or comfortable!
		1. Abraham, Nicodemus, Cornelius, Zacchaeus, the Christians of Acts 4:32-37
3. **A Challenge with Many Dangers and Warnings from God**
	1. Jesus warned, “Take heed and beware of covetousness” (Luke 12:15)
		1. Why? Someone from the crowd had asked Jesus to tell his brother to divide the inheritance with him. (Luke 12:13)
			1. The man wasn’t listening to the message of Jesus. He was fuming over inheritance.
	2. Solomon warned us about perspectives of wealth in Prov. 28:19-20.
		1. The one who works will have plenty of bread. (vs. 19)
		2. The one who plays around and doesn’t work will be very poor. (vs. 19)
		3. The one who us faithful to his work will have many blessings. (vs. 20)
		4. The one who plans and schemes to be rich will have many “punishments.” (vs. 20)
	3. Paul had to warn the early church about people who sought after wealth.
		1. Titus 1:7 Paul said a bishop must not be greedy for money!
		2. Titus 1:10-13 Paul had to warn Titus about deceivers.
			1. They taught error “for the sake of dishonest gain.”
			2. Paul quoted one of their prophets who referred to them as “gluttons.”
4. **A Challenge with Some “Reality Checks” from God**
	1. It does us no good to store up wealth for “the next world.” Our money is no good!
		1. Job 1:21 “Naked I came from my mother’s womb, and naked shall I return there.”
		2. Luke 12:20 “This night your soul will be required of you; then whose will these things be which you have provided?”
	2. It is too late to make grand plans for good use of our prosperity after we die.
		1. Matt. 16:26-27. “For what profit is it to a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul?”
			1. The “currency” just changed from dollars to my works when I went into eternity!!!
	3. Withdraw yourselves from folks who teach godliness is a means of gain! (I Tim. 6:5)
	4. Godliness with contentment is great gain! (I Tim. 6:6)
		1. Know when you are ahead. If you have great blessings, thank God!

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