

Lesson 3:

The Prosperity of His Servant

The previous lessons contain many warnings about the deceitfulness of riches. But the desire to prosper in life is by no means evil; it is a righteous desire.

Consider this prayer from the prophet Nehemiah:

Nehemiah 1:11a

¹¹ O Lord, I beseech thee,
let now thine ear be attentive to
the prayer of thy servant,
and to the prayer of thy servants,
who desire to fear thy name:
and prosper...



Numerous verses make it clear that the Lord is happy to see his people prosper in life.

3 John 1:2

² Beloved, I wish above all things that thou mayest prosper and be in health, even as thy soul prospereth.

Psalm 35:27

²⁷ Let them shout for joy, and be glad, that favour my righteous cause: yea, let them say continually, Let the LORD be magnified, which hath pleasure in the prosperity of his servant.



Sadly, these same verses are often used by advocates of the *prosperity gospel*, a perversion of biblical truth that uses “the abundance of the things which he possesseth” as a measuring stick for a successful Christian life.

Luke 12:15

¹⁵ And he said unto them,
Take heed, and beware of
covetousness:
for a man’s life consisteth not
in the abundance of the
things which he possesseth.



What some people call prosperity, God calls covetousness! The LORD came to give his people an abundant life – not an abundance of things!

Luke 12:15

¹⁵ And he said unto them,
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So what does it truly mean to prosper?
To learn this truth we must put aside our
worldly definitions of prosperity and
discover the mind of the Lord.

Luke 12:15

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Three examples of biblical prosperity:

1. Abraham's servant

After the death of his wife Sarah (recorded in Genesis 23) Abraham sent his servant to the land of his forefathers to find a wife for his son Isaac.

Genesis 24:1-4

- ¹ And Abraham was old, *and* well stricken in age: and the LORD had blessed Abraham in all things.
- ² And Abraham said unto his eldest servant of his house, that ruled over all that he had, Put, I pray thee, thy hand under my thigh:
³ And I will make thee swear by the LORD, the God of heaven, and the God of the earth, that thou shalt not take a wife unto my son of the daughters of the Canaanites, among whom I dwell:
- ⁴ But thou shalt go unto my country, and to my kindred, and take a wife unto my son Isaac.

Abraham insisted that Isaac should not go with him on this journey, and the girl should not be forced into the marriage.

Genesis 24:5-8

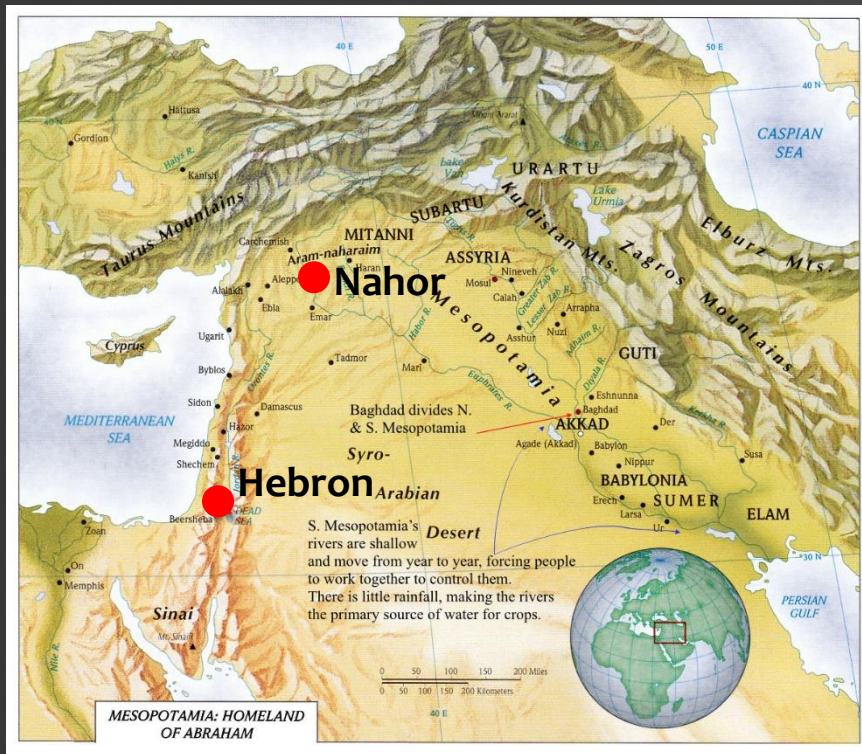
- 5 And the servant said unto him,
Peradventure the woman will not be willing to follow me
unto this land: must I needs bring thy son again unto the
land from whence thou camest?
- 6 And Abraham said unto him, **Beware thou that thou bring
not my son thither again.**
- 7 The LORD God of heaven, which took me from my father's
house, and from the land of my kindred, and which spake
unto me, and that sware unto me, saying, Unto thy seed will
I give this land; he shall send his angel before thee, and thou
shalt take a wife unto my son from thence.
- 8 And if the woman will not be willing to follow thee,
then thou shalt be clear from this my oath:
only bring not my son thither again.

Abraham was fully persuaded that God had already picked a bride for Isaac, and that his angel would lead his servant to find her.

Genesis 24:5-8

- 5 And the servant said unto him,
Peradventure the woman will not be willing to follow me
unto this land: must I needs bring thy son again unto the
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- 6 And Abraham said unto him, Beware thou that thou bring
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shalt take a wife unto my son from thence.**
- 8 And if the woman will not be willing to follow thee,
then thou shalt be clear from this my oath:
only bring not my son thither again.

With his instructions clear, Abraham's servant set off on his journey.



Genesis 24:10

¹⁰ And the servant took ten camels of the camels of his master, and departed; for all the goods of his master were in his hand: and he arose, and went to Mesopotamia, unto the city of Nahor.



On the edge of the city, he stopped at a well to pray.



Genesis 24:11-12

- ¹¹ And he made his camels to kneel down without the city by a well of water at the time of the evening, even the time that women go out to draw water.
- ¹² And he said,
O LORD God of my master Abraham, I pray thee, send me good speed this day, and shew kindness unto my master Abraham.

On the edge of the city, he stopped at a well to pray.



Genesis 24:11-12

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O LORD God of my master Abraham, I pray thee, send me good speed this day, and shew kindness unto my master Abraham.

Is this where we get the story of the wishing well?

He made a very specific request.



Genesis 24:13-14

- ¹³ Behold, I stand *here* by the well of water; and the daughters of the men of the city come out to draw water:
- ¹⁴ And let it come to pass, that the damsel to whom I shall say, Let down thy pitcher, I pray thee, that I may drink; and she shall say, Drink, and I will give thy camels drink also: *let the same be she that thou hast appointed for thy servant Isaac;* and thereby shall I know that thou hast shewed kindness unto my master.

His prayer was answered before he said Amen!



Genesis 24:15-16

- ¹⁵ And it came to pass, before he had done speaking, that, behold, Rebekah came out, who was born to Bethuel, son of Milcah, the wife of Nahor, Abraham's brother, with her pitcher upon her shoulder.
- ¹⁶ And the damsel was very fair to look upon, a virgin, neither had any man known her: and she went down to the well, and filled her pitcher, and came up.

Every sign he asked
for was fulfilled!

Genesis 24:17-21

- ¹⁷ And the servant ran to meet her, and said,
Let me, I pray thee, drink a little water of thy pitcher.
- ¹⁸ And she said, **Drink, my lord:**
and she hasted, and let down her pitcher upon her hand,
and gave him drink.
- ¹⁹ And when she had done giving him drink, she said,
**I will draw water for thy camels also, until they have done
drinking.**
- ²⁰ And she hasted, and emptied her pitcher into the trough,
and ran again unto the well to draw water, and drew for all
his camels.
- ²¹ And the man wondering at her held his peace,
to wit whether the LORD had made his journey prosperous
or not.

We see that to prosper *biblically* is to have everything you need to fulfill your mission and accomplish the Lord's will.

Genesis 24:17-21

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- ¹⁸ And she said, Drink, my lord:
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Abraham's servant went with the girl to meet her family. After recounting to them all that had come to pass, he received their blessing upon this union.

Genesis 24:55

⁵⁵ And her brother and her mother said,
Let the damsel abide with us
a few days, at the least ten;
after that she shall go.



He was now so convinced that God's hand was guiding his mission that he pressed the family to forego any delay in allowing him to bring Rebekah to Isaac.

Genesis 24:56

⁵⁶ And he said unto them,
**Hinder me not, seeing the
LORD hath prospered my way;**
send me away that I may go to
my master.



The family decided to let Rebekah choose for herself.

Would she leave her home and family, with a person she didn't know, to a place she'd never been, to marry a man she'd never met?

Genesis 24:57-58

⁵⁷ And they said,
We will call the damsel,
and enquire at her mouth.

⁵⁸ And they called Rebekah,
and said unto her,
Wilt thou go with this man?
And she said, I will go.



This query has been adopted into traditional wedding vows.

Genesis 24:57-58

⁵⁷ And they said,
We will call the damsel,
and enquire at her mouth.

⁵⁸ And they called Rebekah,
and said unto her,
Wilt thou go with this man?
And she said, I will go.



There was one more component to a successful mission:

Would Isaac accept her and love her?

Genesis 24:67

⁶⁷ And Isaac brought her into his mother Sarah's tent, and took Rebekah, and she became his wife; and he loved her: and Isaac was comforted after his mother's *death*.



Abraham's servant had been sent on a mission to find not just any girl but the right girl, the girl picked by God to marry his master's son. Without the LORD's help, this would be an impossible task. But his mission was a success because the Lord had prospered his journey.

Genesis 24:67

⁶⁷ And Isaac brought her into his mother Sarah's tent, and took Rebekah, and she became his wife; and he loved her:
and Isaac was comforted after his mother's *death*.



Three examples of biblical prosperity:

1. Abraham's servant
2. Joseph in prison

When the Lord is with you, and your heart is set on fulfilling his desire, the obstacles you face along the way are nothing more than added drama.

Consider the story of Joseph in Egypt. His jealous brothers had sold him into slavery and he became a house slave to Potiphar. Nevertheless, the Lord prospered Joseph.

Genesis 39:2-3

- ² And the LORD was with Joseph, **and he was a prosperous man;** and he was in the house of his master the Egyptian.
- ³ And his master saw that the LORD *was* with him, and that the LORD made all that he did to prosper in his hand.



It's not that Potiphar shared his profits with his slave. Joseph found success in the management of his master's affairs. Why? The Lord was with him!

Genesis 39:2-3

- ² And the LORD was with Joseph, **and he was a prosperous man;** and he was in the house of his master the Egyptian.
- ³ And his master saw that the LORD *was* with him, and that the LORD made all that he did to prosper in his hand.



On a day that started out like any other day, Joseph was falsely accused and condemned to die in prison.

Still, the Lord's plan for him remained on track.

Genesis 39:21-23

- ²¹ But the LORD was with Joseph, and shewed him mercy, and gave him favour in the sight of the keeper of the prison.
- ²² And the keeper of the prison committed to Joseph's hand all the prisoners that were in the prison; and whatsoever they did there, he was the doer *of it*.
- ²³ The keeper of the prison looked not to any thing *that was* under his hand; because the LORD was with him, and *that* which he did, **the LORD made it to prosper.**

God prospered Joseph – he led him through and gave him everything he needed to fulfill his will – even though he kept the fullness of his mission hidden from him up to the very end.

Genesis 45:6-8

- ⁶ For these two years *hath* the famine *been* in the land: and yet *there are* five years, in the which *there shall* neither *be* earing nor harvest.
- ⁷ And God sent me before you to preserve you a posterity in the earth, and to save your lives by a great deliverance.
- ⁸ **So now it was not you that sent me hither, but God:**
and he hath made me a father to Pharaoh, and lord of all his house, and a ruler throughout all the land of Egypt.

All of Joseph's good deeds seemed to be causing him nothing but trouble. But instead of giving up, he kept his faith. What an amazing moment it must have been for him when he realized that all these things were necessary parts of God's plan.

Genesis 45:6-8

- ⁶ For these two years *hath* the famine *been* in the land: and yet *there are* five years, in the which *there shall* neither *be* earing nor harvest.
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and he hath made me a father to Pharaoh, and lord of all his house, and a ruler throughout all the land of Egypt.

If Joseph had not been sold into slavery and unjustly imprisoned; or if the chief butler had successfully petitioned for his release, Joseph would not have been where the Pharaoh could call on him to interpret his own dreams. That is what led to Joseph being able to bring his family to the sanctuary of Egypt during the famine.



Three examples of biblical prosperity:

1. Abraham's servant
2. Joseph in prison
3. Two kings, and Paul

Whenever God's people believe his word and follow his lead, he will prosper them. Consider these words to the people of Judah from their king:

2 Chronicles 20:20b

²⁰ And they rose early in the morning, and went forth into the wilderness of Tekoa:
and as they went forth,
Jehoshaphat stood and said,
Hear me, O Judah,
and ye inhabitants of Jerusalem;
**Believe in the LORD your God,
so shall ye be established;
believe his prophets,
so shall ye prosper.**

But when people harden themselves against God and his commandments, they *cannot* prosper. These are the words of the prophet Zechariah:

2 Chronicles 24:20b

²⁰ ... Thus saith God,
Why transgress ye the
commandments of the LORD,
that ye cannot prosper?
because ye have forsaken the
LORD, he hath also forsaken you.



This truth is echoed by Job:

Job 9:1-4

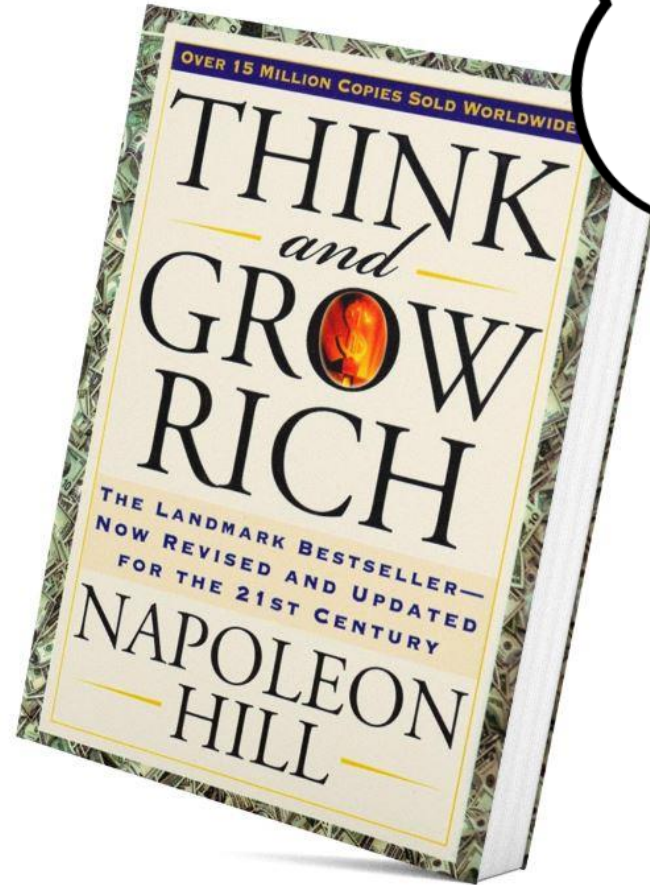
- 1 Then Job answered and said,
- 2 I know *it is* so of a truth: but how should man be just with God?
- 3 If he will contend with him, he cannot answer him one of a thousand.
- 4 He is wise in heart, and mighty in strength:
who hath hardened himself against him, and hath prospered?

Uzziah was only sixteen years old when he inherited the throne of Judah. Imagine being so young and bearing such a great responsibility! But as long as he sought the Lord, God made him to prosper.

2 Chronicles 26:3-5

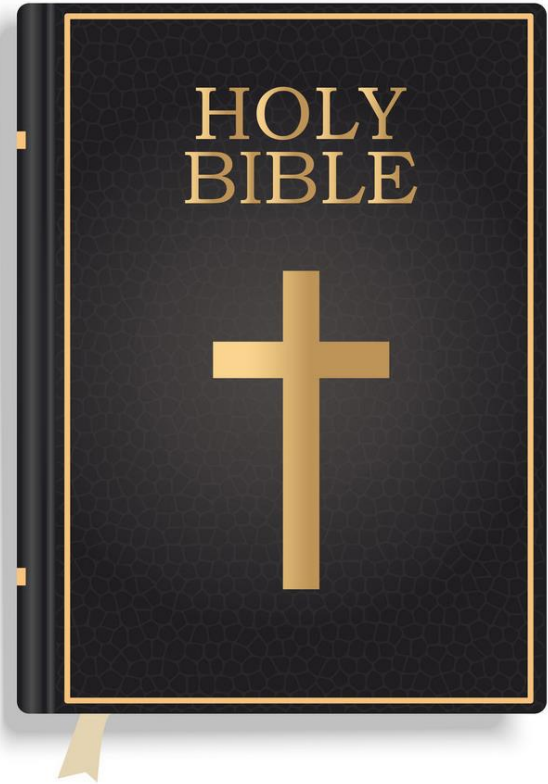
- 3 Sixteen years old was Uzziah when he began to reign, and he reigned fifty and two years in Jerusalem. His mother's name also was Jecoliah of Jerusalem.
- 4 And he did *that which* was right in the sight of the LORD, according to all that his father Amaziah did.
- 5 And he sought God in the days of Zechariah, who had understanding in the visions of God:
and as long as he sought the LORD, God made him to prosper.

We do not *believe* to prosper.
We prosper when we *believe*!



NO!

The focus of true faith is not temporal enrichment.
It is to knowing and obeying the will of God.



God makes your way prosperous by leading you in the way you should go.

Isaiah 48:15 and 17

- ¹⁵ I, even I, have spoken;
yea, I have called him:
I have brought him, and he shall
make his way prosperous.
- ¹⁷ Thus saith the LORD, thy Redeemer,
the Holy One of Israel;
*I am the LORD thy God which
teacheth thee to profit,
which leadeth thee by the way
that thou shouldest go.*



No word truly inspired by God will ever fall to the ground.

Isaiah 55:10-11

- ¹⁰ For as the rain cometh down,
and the snow from heaven,
and returneth not thither,
but watereth the earth,
and maketh it bring forth and bud,
that it may give seed to the sower,
and bread to the eater:
- ¹¹ So shall my word be that goeth
forth out of my mouth:
it shall not return unto me void,
but it shall accomplish that which I
please, *and it shall prosper in the
thing whereto I sent it.*

A mission done in the will of God will not be wasted effort. It will accomplish what the Lord intends it to accomplish.

Romans 1:10

¹⁰ Making request, if by any means now at length I might have **a prosperous journey** by the will of God to come unto you.



A prosperous journey in the LORD is not measured by ease and comfort.

It is marked by the obstacles that are overcome along the way.

2 Corinthians 11:24-27

²⁴ Of the Jews five times received I forty *stripes* save one.

²⁵ Thrice was I beaten with rods,
once was I stoned, thrice I suffered shipwreck,
a night and a day I have been in the deep;

²⁶ *In* journeyings often,
in perils of waters, *in* perils of robbers,
in perils by *mine* own countrymen,
in perils by the heathen,
in perils in the city, *in* perils in the wilderness,
in perils in the sea,
in perils among false brethren;

²⁷ In weariness and painfulness, in watchings often,
in hunger and thirst, in fastings often,
in cold and nakedness.

To be prospered by God is to have
all you need to finish your course.

2 Timothy 4:6-7

- ⁶ For I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand.
- ⁷ I have fought a good fight, I have finished *my* course, I have kept the faith:



When we follow the Lord's lead, he will prosper our work.

Joshua 1:7

⁷ Only be thou strong and very courageous, that thou mayest observe to do according to all the law, which Moses my servant commanded thee:
turn not from it to the right hand or to the left,
that thou mayest prosper whithersoever thou goest.

No matter where you go, as long as you don't turn to the left or right, you will travel in a straight line. No matter where life takes you, so long as you don't wander out from under God's hand, he will prosper you. He will direct your steps. He will supply your needs. He will bless the words that come from your mouth. He will give you good success.

Joshua 1:7

⁷ Only be thou strong and very courageous, that thou mayest observe to do according to all the law, which Moses my servant commanded thee:
turn not from it to the right hand or to the left,
that thou mayest prosper whithersoever thou goest.

In Psalm 35, we read the prayer of a man who looked to God to prosper him despite the adversaries standing in his way.

Psalm 35:27-28

²⁷ Let them shout for joy, and be glad, that favour my righteous cause: yea, let them say continually,

Let the LORD be magnified, which hath pleasure in the prosperity of his servant.

²⁸ And my tongue shall speak of thy righteousness *and* of thy praise all the day long.

This is the prosperity that God desires for his servants. This is so much more than living in a mansion or owning a jet plane. This is about being used by God as an instrument of his goodwill to man. This is about triumphing over your enemies and circumstances.

Psalm 35:27-28

²⁷ Let them shout for joy, and be glad, that favour my righteous cause: yea, let them say continually,

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²⁸ And my tongue shall speak of thy righteousness *and* of thy praise all the day long.



This is the kind of prosperity Jesus came to bring, and this is why the Lord takes such pleasure in the prosperity of his servant.

Psalm 35:27-28

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