

Dangers, Temptations & Warnings of Prosperity and Poverty

April 26, 2015

I. The dangers of wealth (and prosperity)

1 Tim 6:9-10 But those who want to get rich fall into temptation and a snare and many foolish and harmful desires which plunge men into ruin and destruction. 10 For the love of money is a root of all sorts of evil, and some by longing for it have wandered away from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs.

1. Prosperity can be deceitful

Mat 13:22 "And the one on whom seed was sown among the thorns, this is the man who hears the word, and the worry of the world and the deceitfulness of wealth choke the word, and it becomes unfruitful. (Mk 4:19 - the deceitfulness of riches)

Examples:

Lot chose Sodom & Gomorrah (Gen 13:10-13).

Balaam loved the wages of unrighteousness (2Pt 2:15-16).

Cain & Balaam, sought wealth and embraced error, deception (Jude 11).

Seeking after a reward, Gehazi (Elisa's servant) became a leper (2Ki 5:20-27).

2. Prosperity can be difficult

Mk 10:23 And Jesus, looking around, said to His disciples, "How hard it will be for those who are wealthy to enter the kingdom of God!" (Mat 19:23-24)

3. Warnings against Pride:

a. Pride can make you forget the Lord

Deut 8:14 then your heart will become proud and you will forget the LORD your God who brought you out from the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery. (Deut 8:11-14)

Psa 30:6 Now as for me, I said in my prosperity, "I will never be moved."

Example of Uzziah

2 Chr 26:5 ... as long as he sought the LORD, God prospered him.

2 Chr 26:16 But when he became strong, his heart was so proud that he acted corruptly, and he was unfaithful to the LORD his God, for he entered the temple of the LORD to burn incense on the altar of incense. (2 Chr 26:3, 5, 15-16)

b. Pride will lead you to forsake the Lord and be rebellious

Deut 32:13-15 "He made him ride on the high places of the earth, And he ate the produce of the field; And He made him suck honey from the rock, And oil from the flinty rock, 14 Curds of cows, and milk of the flock, With fat of lambs, And rams, the breed of Bashan, and goats, With the finest of the wheat— And of the blood of grapes you drank wine. 15 "But Jeshurun grew fat and kicked— You are grown fat, thick, and sleek— Then he forsook God who made him, And scorned the Rock of his salvation.

c. Pride makes you stop listening and trusting in God

Jer 22:21 "I spoke to you in your prosperity; But you said, 'I will not listen!' This has been your practice from your youth, That you have not obeyed My voice.

Psa 52:7 "Behold, the man who would not make God his refuge, But trusted in the abundance of his riches And was strong in his evil desire."

d. Antidote to pride is ... Hope fixed on God!

1 Tim 6:17-19 Instruct those who are rich in this present world not to be conceited or to fix their hope on the uncertainty of riches, but on God, who richly supplies us with all things to enjoy. 18

Instruct them to do good, to be rich in good works, to be generous and ready to share, 19 storing up for themselves the treasure of a good foundation for the future, so that they may take hold of that which is life indeed.

4. Warnings against Covetousness:

The 10th and last commandment is to not covet (Ex 20:17).

We are to seek the Kingdom of God and not material things (Mat 6:33).

We cannot serve God and (money) Mammon (Mat 6:24).

The cares of this life and the deceitfulness of riches chokes the Word (Mat 3:22).

We are not to desire wealth for riches' sake (1Tim 6:9).

The love of money is the root of all sorts of evil (1Tim 6:10).

Wealthy believers are admonished to give liberally (1Tim 6:17-18).

We are not to show partiality to people on the basis of their economic status (Jas 2:1-9).

We are not to be entangled with the affairs of this life (2Tim 2:4).

We are not to be lazy and covet (Prov 21:25-26).

Our life does not consist in what we possess (Lk 12:15).

We are not to let covetousness be named among us (Eph 5:3).

We are to put to death covetousness (Col 3:5).

Our lifestyle is to be without covetousness (Heb 13:5).

We are not to associate with Christians who are greedy (1Cor 5:11).

The greedy and covetous will not inherit the Kingdom of God (Eph 5:3).

We must have a balanced view of prosperity (1Tim 6:17-19; Lk 12:15; Phil 4:11-13).

5. Don't set your heart on riches

Psa 62:10 Do not trust in oppression And do not vainly hope in robbery; If riches increase, do not set your heart upon them. (Prov 23:4; 28:20; Eccl 5:10-16;

6. Warnings against loving the world

1 Jn 2:15-17 Do not love the world nor the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. 16 For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the boastful pride of life, is not from the Father, but is from the world. 17 The world is passing away, and also its lusts; but the one who does the will of God lives forever.

7. Pray for balance

Prov 30:8-9 Keep deception and lies far from me, Give me neither poverty nor riches; Feed me with the food that is my portion, 9 That I not be full and deny You and say, "Who is the LORD?" Or that I not be in want and steal, And profane the name of my God.

II. Comparison of the battle between prosperity and poverty

People with prosperity and those in poverty have a battle to fight. Below is a comparison of their battles.

People with Prosperity

1. Greed & selfishness
2. Wastefulness
3. Aimlessness
4. Forgetting (forgetfulness) God
5. Immorality
6. Pride & arrogance
7. Independence
8. Natural reasoning
9. Materialism & worldliness
10. Intoxication – to ease pressures
11. Slothfulness – life of ease

People with Poverty

1. People pleasing
2. Hoarding
3. Survival (street) mentality; crime
4. No time for God
5. Prostitution (etc.)
6. Humiliation & shame
7. Dependency
8. Anxiety & fear
9. Worldly mindedness
10. Intoxication – to ease pain
11. Idleness – don't try

Now let's look more closely at these 11 comparisons; the top line is for those with prosperity and the bottom line for those with poverty:

1. Prosperity can start out as a pipeline the blessing but become an excuse for greed (Lk 12:15-21).

People who don't have enough can become people pleasing, rather than God fearing. In trying to make ends meet one can forget about God in their pursuits of having enough (Pro 29:25; Isa 57:11; Mat 15:12).

2. Abundance can inspire wastefulness. When we are blessed we can get sloppy, lax, and irresponsible. Stewardship can suffer at the hands of plenty (Psa 62:10; Lk 12:42-43).

When people don't have enough, they have the tendency to take the Lord's provision and hide it (hoard) for themselves (2Ki 7:1-9; Lk 12:21).

3. We are called to fulfill God's purpose and plan for life as His redeemed children. Excessive wealth can lead to a life of pleasure seeking, void of purpose (Ac 13:36; Rom 8:28).

When we don't have enough, we can become consumed with how to make ends meet. Purpose in life is reduced to simply meeting these needs at any cost (Prov 30:9; Psa 125:3)

4. The temptation of having abundance is forgetting God our Savior, serving false gods, and primarily living for temporal comfort and blessing (Deut 8:11-14; Psa 106:21).

Jesus said that the seed sown in the weeds and thorns, was the man who was consumed with the cares of this life and getting ahead; consequently the word become unfruitful (Mat 3:22; Mk 4:19).

5. When that one is full of the abundance of things, the word can be choked out, and a person becomes unfruitful for the kingdom of God. Fullness of food and idleness was part of the sins of Sodom (Ezek 16:49; 1 Jn 2:15-17).

Selling yourself to meet financial obligations (along with many other sins and violations of morality) can be the plight of the poor (Prov 29:3; Mic 1:7; Lk 15:30).

6. When blessing comes pride sometimes follows as if we were the ones who brought success to our own lives. (Isa 51:1-2; Jas 4:6; 1Pt 5:5)

A byproduct of poverty is shame and humiliation (Prov 13:18; Isa 20:4; 47:3).

7. A wealthy person can buy anything he wants and do almost anything he wants. Such independence can lead a wealthy person to live in isolation needing nothing or no one. (Jer 9:23-24; Rev 3:17)

Poverty makes people over dependent on society etc., consequently they seek to please people, so that their needs are met (Rom 14:22; Jn 12:43).

8. Because they have succeeded in business, a person can feel that their reason, logic and intelligence has caused them to succeed. In doing so, they can place their trust in their intellect rather than in God. They can begin to trust in their rationale rather than depend on the supernatural power and provision of Jehovah-Jireh. (Prov 3:5, 7; 23:4; 28:26; Jer 9:23)

Poverty can cause a person to live in anxiety and worry, as one constantly thinks about their daily needs (Mt 6:25-34; Lk 12:22-34).

9. A subtle temptation for those who gain riches is to become overly focused on this world instead of the next. They alter their priorities to focus on earthly possessions and the things of this life. (Mat 6:19-20; 2Tim 2:4)

The poor can also be worldly minded, focused on their needs, and thus void of the mind of God (Rom 8:6-8; 12:2; Eph 2:3; 4:17, 22-23; Col 3:2)

10. Intoxication

The ability to buy anything you want can lead you to try things you never could afford before. Some begin to drink socially or experiment with drugs, consequently leading to a life of addiction of pleasure seeking (Eph 5:11-18).

The poor seek intoxication to ease their pain and sorrow (Prov 20:1; 31:6-7; Psa 69:12)

11. Achievement and success brings a measure of satisfaction that can result in a unique form of slothfulness. Success can lead one to begin to cruise through life and let down their guard, thinking they deserve a bit of reprieve from all their labor (Lk 12:16-21)

Poverty can make one passive, lazy and have a fear of failure; consequently they do nothing (Prov 13:4; 19:24; 21:25; 22:13; 26:13-15).

Concluding thought:

If all we ever teach people is to beware of covetousness, we will never have people who are blessed financially.

If all we ever teach is prosperity, we may have people who err in covetousness or materialism.