

Prosperity, Riches and God's Blessings

The question has been asked: "Does God bless His children with riches when they obey? Likewise, does He curse those who are sinning against His light with poverty?" The short answer is "No" to both questions. Riches are sometimes the result of God's blessing, but not for most people in most cases; and conversely, **God does not punish or curse us** with poverty, but we suffer the consequences of our own actions when we sin and disobey Him. Now for the long answer. There are a number of "issues" included in this question, so let's look at them individually: **1.)** What is our incentive for obeying God and living a holy life? If God does not promise riches, what do the Scripture verses promising us prosperity mean?; **2.)** Why is there poverty in the world?; and **3.)** Are there times when obedient Christians suffer poverty?

1.) What is our incentive for obeying God and living a holy life? If God does not promise riches, what do the Scripture verses promising us prosperity mean?

Our incentive for OBEYING GOD and living a HOLY LIFE is: **a) To please the Lord. It pleases God** when we live in holiness and obedience; **b) To be blessed.** The blessings of God will not and cannot come into our lives if we are disobedient - all the wonderful promises of God's word are **CONDITIONAL to our OBEDIENCE to His commandments;** **c) To have our prayers answered** - our prayers are hindered by our disobedience or by unconfessed sin in our lives; **d) To experience joy and fulfillment in life** - we will never be truly happy or have real joy if we continue in a sinful lifestyle; and **e) To avoid the negative consequences of sin and disobedience** - It would be foolish of us to fail to mention that sin has negative consequences. It doesn't mean punishment from God, but just that the word of God says we will reap what we sow. The term used most often in the Old Testament for being obedient to God and having **a realistic knowledge of sin's painful consequences** is "the fear of the Lord."

- **Psalm 33:8 & 18** "Let all the earth FEAR the LORD; let all the inhabitants of the world **STAND in AWE of HIM.** Behold, **the EYE of the LORD is upon them that FEAR HIM,** upon them that HOPE IN HIS MERCY, to deliver their soul from death, and to keep them alive in famine."
- **II Corinthians 7:1** "Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, **perfecting HOLINESS in the FEAR of GOD.**"
- **Galatians 6:7-8** "Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man **sows,** that will he also reap. For **he who sows to his flesh** will of the flesh reap corruption (sickness, poverty, death, etc.); but he who sows to the Spirit shall from the Spirit reap everlasting life (the blessings of God)."
- **Proverbs 13:14-15** "The law of the wise (God's word) is a fountain of life, to turn one away from the snares of death. Good understanding gains favor, but **the way of the transgressors is HARD.**"

Definition: "The Fear of the Lord" - Reverential AWE and RESPECT for God, especially as EVIDENCED by OBEDIENCE to His commands and DOING His will, with the "flip side" of having a realistic knowledge of sin's painful consequences. God tells us that certain things are "sin" because He knows their destructive consequences. The New Testament equivalent is holy living and doing "good works" and being FILLED with the SPIRIT. It is also the AWARENESS that God SEES and KNOWS everything that we do, think or say, and that NOTHING can be HIDDEN from Him.

- **Proverbs 3:7-8** "Be not wise in your own eyes; **FEAR the LORD and depart from evil**; it will be HEALTH TO YOUR BODY, and refreshment to your bones."
- **Psalms 145:19** "He will FULFILL the DESIRE of them that FEAR HIM; He also will HEAR THEIR CRY and will save (deliver) them."
- **Ephesians 2:10** "For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus **for (for the purpose of) good works**, which God has prepared beforehand that we should walk in them."
- **Titus 2:7-8** "In all things **showing yourself to be a pattern of GOOD WORKS**; in doctrine showing integrity, reverence, incorruptibility, sound speech that cannot be condemned, that the one who is an opponent may be ashamed, **having NOTHING EVIL to say about you.**"
- **Colossians 1:10** "That you may have a walk WORTHY of the Lord, fully **PLEASING Him**, being fruitful in every GOOD WORK."
- **Matthew 5:16** "Let your light so shine before men, that they may **see your GOOD WORKS** and glorify your Father in heaven."
- **I Timothy 4:8** "...but **GODLINESS** (living for God) is profitable unto all things, having promise of the LIFE THAT NOW IS, and of that which is to come."
- **Psalms 66:18** "If I regard iniquity (hold onto SIN) in my heart, the Lord will not hear. But certainly God has heard me; He has attended to the voice of my prayer."
- **Psalms 34:15** "The **EYES of the Lord** are on the RIGHTEOUS, and **His EARS are OPEN to their cry (prayers).**"

We see that disobedience ties God's hands, so to speak, and blocks Him from blessing us as He wants to bless us. But if God's blessing does not mean riches, what do the Scripture verses promising us prosperity mean? When God promises us success or that He will prosper us, it usually does not mean **the WORLDLY idea of prosperity, which is riches, wealth, material possessions, money, and power.** God's success and prosperity for our lives is wholeness and healing in every area where we have been damaged, emotionally, mentally, spiritually, and many times physically. **God's prosperity** is peace, wisdom, contentment and enjoyment of life - the "abundant life" that Jesus promises us (John 10:10). God promises that if we put Him first in our lives, all our needs will be met, and we will be free to serve Him and carry out the work of His kingdom without having to worry about what we will eat, what clothing we will have to wear, and so forth (Matthew 6:33). True "riches" is having all your needs met, and an abundance over and above your needs, so that you can give to others in need.

- **Ephesians 4:28** "Let him who stole steal no longer, but rather **let him labor**, working with his hands what is good, that **he may have something to GIVE him who is IN NEED.**"
- **Matthew 6:33** "But SEEK FIRST the kingdom of God, and His righteousness; and ALL THESE THINGS shall be added unto you."
- **Philippians 4:19** "But my **God shall SUPPLY ALL your NEEDS** according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus."
- **Malachi 3:10** "Bring all the tithes (offerings) into the storehouse, so that there will be provision in My house; and prove (test) Me now in this, says the Lord, whether I will open the windows of heaven, and pour you out a BLESSING until there is MORE than ENOUGH."
- **Psalms 1:1-3** "Blessed is the man who does not walk in the counsel of the ungodly, nor stands in the way of sinners, nor sits in the seat of the scornful. But his delight is in the law of the Lord, and in His law he meditates day and night. **And he shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that brings forth his fruit in his season, his leaf also shall not wither, and WHATSOEVER he does SHALL PROSPER.**"
- **Joshua 1:7-9** "Only be strong and very courageous, that you may observe to do according to all the law, which Moses my servant commanded you: turn not from it to the right hand or to the left, that you may PROSPER wherever you go. This book of the law shall not depart out of your mouth, but you shall meditate therein day and night,

- that you may observe to do according to all that is written therein: for then **you shall make your way PROSPEROUS, and then you shall have good SUCCESS.** Have not I commanded you? "Be strong and of a good courage; BE NOT AFRAID, neither be dismayed, for the Lord your God is with you wherever you go."
- **Psalm 34:8-10** "O taste and see that the Lord is good: BLESSED is the man that trusts in Him. O fear the Lord, you His saints; for there IS NO WANT (LACK) to them that fear (reverence) Him. The young lions do lack, and suffer hunger, but they that SEEK the LORD shall NOT LACK ANY GOOD THING."
 - **Psalm 84:11** "For the Lord God is a sun and shield, the Lord will give grace and glory: NO GOOD THING will He WITHHOLD from them that walk uprightly."
 - **II Corinthians 9:7-8** "Every man according as he purposes in his heart, so let him give; not grudgingly, or of necessity, for God loves a cheerful giver. And God is able to make ALL GRACE ABOUND toward you; **that you, ALWAYS having all SUFFICIENCY in ALL THINGS, may abound to every good work.**"
 - **III John 2** "Beloved, I wish above all things that you may PROSPER and be in HEALTH, even as your SOUL PROSPERS."
 - **II Thessalonians 3:7-12** "For you yourselves know how you ought to follow our example; because we did not act in an undisciplined manner among you, nor did we eat anyone's bread without paying for it, but **with labor and hardship we kept working night and day** so that we might not be a burden to any of you; not because we do not have the right to this (to be supported by them), but in order to offer ourselves as **a model for you, that you might follow our example.** For even when we were with you, we used to give you this order: If anyone will not work, neither let him eat. For we hear that some among you are leading an undisciplined life, doing no work at all, but acting like BUSYBODIES. Now such persons we command and exhort in the Lord Jesus Christ to work in quiet fashion and eat their own bread."

2.) Why is there poverty in the world?

Poverty is not a punishment from God to individuals, but it is definitely a result of **the curse of sin upon the earth**, and both Christians and non-Christians, obedient children and sinners, often **suffer under the general curse of sin that is upon the earth**, and which will not be lifted and done away with until Jesus returns (Genesis 3:16-19, Romans 8:18-23). Because the ground is cursed, it doesn't always produce enough food for people to eat, and because of the curse of sin upon the rest of creation, there is bad weather, lack of rain, famines and disasters, and all kinds of things that keep people in poverty. Because sin came into the world and "All have sinned and come short of the glory of God" (Romans 3:23), there are evil people who steal from others, leaving them in poverty, and they become rich themselves. David, when writing some of the Psalms, asked God the question of "Why do the wicked prosper?" Only as David came to see the ultimate spiritual end of the wicked, that they were on their way to hell and eternal destruction (Psalm 73:1-20), did he come to an understanding of why they should prosper in this world. Everything is not fair and just in this world of sin, but it will all be straightened out when Jesus returns, and then at the Great White Throne Judgment.

- **Genesis 3:17-19** "Then to Adam He said, 'Because you have heeded (listened to) the voice of your wife, and have eaten from the tree of which I commanded you saying. 'You shall NOT eat of it': **'CURSED is the ground** for your sake (because of what you have done); in toil you shall eat of it all the days of your life. **Both thorns and thistles (weeds) it shall bring forth for you, and you shall eat the herb of the field. In the sweat of your face you shall eat bread** (work hard for a living) till you return to the ground, for out of it you were taken; for dust you are, and to dust you shall return."
- **Psalm 73:3, 12-13, 16-18** "For I was envious of the arrogant, as **I saw the prosperity of the wicked.**" "Behold, these are the wicked; and always at ease, they have increased in wealth. Surely in vain I have kept my heart pure, and washed my hands in innocence; for I have been stricken all day long, and chastened every

morning." "When I pondered to understand this, it was troublesome in my sight, until I came into the sanctuary of God; **then I perceived their end**. Surely You set them in slippery places; You cast them down to destruction."

3.) Are there times when obedient Believers suffer poverty?

Yes, God may allow poverty in a time of testing. Job was a righteous man who loved and served God. God allowed Satan to challenge Him over the integrity of His servant, Job. Satan had to ask permission, and God put limits on what he could and could not do. Satan basically accused Job of only obeying God because of the many blessings, including wealth, that God had given him. The test was **to PROVE whether Job would remain faithful to God**, no matter what happened to him. When the time of testing was over, God restored Job's possessions. The Apostle Paul was also an example of an obedient Christian who sometimes suffered poverty, but Jesus had already told Paul that he would have to "suffer many things for My name's sake" (Acts 9:16).

- **Job 1:1, 8-12 & 22; 2:3** "There was a man in the land of Uz, whose name was Job, and **that man was blameless, upright, fearing God, and turning away from evil.**" "And the Lord said to Satan, 'Have you considered my servant Job? For there is no one like him on the earth, a blameless and upright man, fearing God and turning away from evil.' Then Satan answered the Lord, 'Does Job fear God for nothing? Have You not made a hedge about him and his house and all that he has, on every side? You have blessed the work of his hands, and his possessions have increased in the land. But put forth Your hand now and touch all that he has; **he will surely curse You to Your face.**' Then the Lord said to Satan, 'Behold, all that he has is in your power, only do not put forth your hand on him (on his body).' So Satan departed from the presence of the Lord." (Verse 22) "Through all this Job did NOT sin **nor did he blame God.**" Job 2:3 "And the Lord said to Satan, 'Have you considered my servant Job? For there is no one like him on the earth, a blameless and upright man, fearing God and turning away from evil. And he still holds fast his integrity, although you incited Me against him, to ruin him without cause.'"
- **Job 42:10** "And the Lord turned the captivity of Job, when he prayed for his friends; also, the Lord GAVE JOB TWICE AS MUCH AS HE HAD BEFORE."
- **Philippians 4:11-14** "Not that I speak in regard to need, for I (Paul) have learned in whatever state I am, to be content: I know how to be abased, and how to abound. Everywhere and in all things I have learned both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need. I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me. Nevertheless you have done well that you shared in my distress."

Another reason for God not allowing His people to become **rich by worldly standards** is because He knows when it may be too much of a temptation to someone. God's word says that the love of money causes all kinds of evil, even causing some Believers to go astray from their faith in Jesus Christ. God's ultimate purpose for our lives is not to make us comfortable, but **to conform us to the image of His Son Jesus Christ**. If God knows that you will develop the character qualities of Jesus better in poverty or in "just having enough", He will keep you in that situation. There are a few of His children that God can trust with great riches, knowing that they will use it for His kingdom, and not for selfish reasons. More often, God knows that great wealth would be destructive in our lives, and so He gives us only as much as we need. He is more concerned with spiritual riches.

- **I Timothy 6:6-10** "But **godliness with CONTENTMENT** is great gain. For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out. And having food and raiment let us be content with that. But **those who want to be RICH fall into TEMPTATION and a SNARE, and into many FOOLISH and HURTFUL lusts, which drown men in DESTRUCTION and perdition**. For the LOVE of money is the root of all evil; which while some COVETED after, **they have gone astray from the faith**, and pierced THEMSELVES through with MANY SORROWS."

- **I Timothy 6:17-19** "Command **those who are rich in this present world** not to be haughty (proud), not to trust in uncertain riches but in the living God, who gives us richly all things to enjoy. Let them do good, that they **be rich in good works, ready to give, willing to share**, storing up for themselves a good foundation for the time to come, that they may lay hold on eternal life."
- **Matthew 6:20-21** "But **lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven**, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through and steal: for where your treasure is, there will your heart be also."
- **II Peter 1:3-4** "According as **His divine power has given unto us ALL THINGS that pertain to LIFE and GODLINESS**, through the knowledge of Him Who has called us to glory and virtue: whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious PROMISES (in God's word): that by these you might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust."

Please also read [Why Is There Evil in the World?, Testing & Trials, Choose to Walk in the Fear of the Lord, and The Law of Sowing and Reaping.](#)