

Money honey

God is our loving Father and takes care of all our needs (Psalm 23, Matthew 6:25-34). Most of us will agree on this without hesitation. Still, it is another thing to put this faith in God's provision into practice. It's so tempting and easy to select passages from God's Word and use them for our own good to claim that "*they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly*" (John 10:10b) means that we are entitled to be prosperous. But the facts of life and the Bible show us the other side of the medal: it isn't going to be summer every day and for some it might never be.

Thinking about this raises the question: How could we realize the value of the Gospel if we as Christians would never lack anything and were prosperous all of our days? Today we will look at a couple of things:

- The sovereign will of God to give to every man as He wants to.
- His goal in allowing inequality to exist.
- How wealth and poverty can affect our behaviour and how we cope with the stewardship in the area of money/assets.
- Motivation to give from a cheerful heart.

In the story of Job we can read he was seriously tested. Look at what he says in Job 1:20-22:

20 Then Job arose, tore his robe, and shaved his head; and he fell to the ground and worshiped. 21 And he said:

“ Naked I came from my mother’s womb,

And naked shall I return there.

The LORD gave, and the LORD has taken away;

Blessed be the name of the LORD.”

22 In all this Job did not sin nor charge God with wrong.

And in 2:9-10:

9 Then his wife said to him, “Do you still hold fast to your integrity? Curse God and die!”

10 But he said to her, “You speak as one of the foolish women speaks. Shall we indeed accept good from God, and shall we not accept adversity?” In all this Job did not sin with his lips.

Let’s look at the words of Habakkuk in Habakkuk 3:17-19:

17 Though the fig tree may not blossom,

Nor fruit be on the vines;

Though the labor of the olive may fail,

And the fields yield no food;

Though the flock may be cut off from the fold,

And there be no herd in the stalls—

18 Yet I will rejoice in the LORD,

I will joy in the God of my salvation.

19 The LORD God is my strength;

He will make my feet like deer’s feet,

And He will make me walk on my high hills.

Q1. To what extent do you realize/experience God’s sovereignty and you own relativity (in what you own in particular)?

Q2. Why does God allow some to be wealthy and some to be poor (both Christian and non-Christian)?

“Poverty is no virtue; wealth is no sin. On the other hand, wealth is not morally good, and poverty is not morally evil. A man may be a good man and a rich man; it is quite certain that very frequently good men are poor men. Virtue is a plant which depends not upon the atmosphere which surrounds it, but upon the hand which waters it, and upon the grace which sustains it. We draw no support for grace from our circumstances whether they be good or evil.”

C. Spurgeon

God bestows His mercies upon us the way He decides. What we have springs forth from the well His goodness: we are merely stewards.

Q3. In what sense does the abundance of possession affect us?

Jesus spoke about assets: how to handle property and money.

Matthew 6

1 "Take heed that you do not do your charitable deeds before men, to be seen by them. Otherwise you have no reward from your Father in heaven. 2 Therefore, when you do a charitable deed, do not sound a trumpet before you as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may have glory from men. Assuredly, I say to you, they have their reward. 3 But when you do a charitable deed, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, 4 that your charitable deed may be in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will Himself reward you openly.

(...)

19 "Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal; 20 but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. 21 For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

(...)

24 "No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will be loyal to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon.

Note that Jesus uses this particular sequence: "Where your treasure is, there your heart will be also."

Q4. Where is your treasure?

Q5. If you look at the way you spend your time (free time too), who is your master?

Luke 12

13 Then one from the crowd said to Him, "Teacher, tell my brother to divide the inheritance with me."

14 But He said to him, "Man, who made Me a judge or an arbitrator over you?" 15 And He said to them, "Take heed and beware of covetousness, for one's life does not consist in the abundance of the things he possesses."

16 Then He spoke a parable to them, saying: "The ground of a certain rich man yielded plentifully. 17 And he thought within himself, saying, 'What shall I do, since I have no room to store my crops?' 18 So he said, 'I will do this: I will pull down my barns and build greater, and there I will store all my crops and my goods. 19 And I will say to my soul, "Soul, you have many goods laid up for many years; take your ease; eat, drink, and be merry.'" 20 But God said to him, 'Fool! This night your soul will be required of you; then whose will those things be which you have provided?'

21 "So is he who lays up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God."

Q6. How do you prevent your heart from becoming greedy?

How shall we approach this “money thing”?

Not by law(s), but by grace. There have been many teachings about giving that were just focused on setting rules for people to give. Teachings based on the old covenant to keep them under control. But that’s not the way I see things. Just a little poem I wrote (a while ago) to emphasize it is not out obligation.

Saint shop pro

Money honey.
Spend it our way.
Give it sonny.
And we’ll pray.
Buy a creed today.

“Give your account.
Or credit card.”
Faith on discount?
Where is the heart?

Another building bought.
The newest project.
But we never sought.
The outcast and the reject.

Conscience eased.
“We’ve paid our dues.”
There it ceased...
No deeds, no use.

Saint shop pro...
It’s not for sale.
We need to go.
Heed God’s will.

The new covenant is not about obligation, it teaches us a new approach.

“From a cheerful heart.”

2 Corinthians 9

5 Therefore I thought it necessary to exhort the brethren to go to you ahead of time, and prepare your generous gift beforehand, which you had previously promised, that it may be ready as a matter of generosity and not as a grudging obligation. 6 But this I say: He who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and he who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully. 7 So let each one give as he purposes in his heart, not grudgingly or of necessity; for God loves a cheerful giver. 8 And God is able to make all grace abound toward you, that you, always having all sufficiency in all things, may have an abundance for every good work. 9 As it is written:

*“ He has dispersed abroad,
He has given to the poor;
His righteousness endures forever.”*

Q7. What is your approach in giving?