

WHICH IS MORE CHRISTIAN — POVERTY OR PROSPERITY?

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Talking of money ... wealth ... prosperity — can be quite divisive! There are some strong views!

Some believe that money is inherently evil ... and believers should be “poor and humble”. After all ... Jesus said “Blessed are the poor”. So — look with suspicion on wealthy people.

Others believe money is fine — and the more ... the merrier. It is a sign of God’s blessings.

“Does God loves the poor ... and hate the rich” as some might phrase it.

Thankfully ... we don’t need to guess. **Scripture shows us God’s will — His attitude.**

Most would agree that **money is a key to a good life** — whether as individuals ... companies or governments.

If you have little or no money you are very restricted where you can live ... what type of house you can buy or rent ... or car you can buy ... or social life you have ... or what food you can buy.

If you have plenty of money ... you can do a lot more — you are freer — and even support others who are needy.

Unless they’re trying to be “religious” ... pious ... sanctimonious — most would agree that prosperity is better than poverty.

Oscar Wilde: “When I was young I thought money was the most important thing in life; now that I am old, **I know it is**”!

Mark Twain: “Lack of money is the root of all evil”.

Some: “Maybe money can’t buy happiness ... but I’d rather be sad in a new BMW than on old rusty bicycle”.

Or: “People who say that money can’t buy happiness — don’t know where to shop”.

There are lots of opinions! Lots of churches — TV evangelists — have money high on the agenda ... with frequent messages on tithes and generous offerings.

**What does the Bible say? What is God’s attitude to money?
Poor is holy? Rich is sin?**

Psalms 145:8-9

8 **The LORD is gracious and full of compassion,
Slow to anger and great in mercy.**

9 **The LORD is good to all,
And His tender mercies are over all His works.**

**This is God’s disposition — disposed to show us favour and
grace and goodness.**

Psalms 145:14-16

14 The LORD upholds all who fall,
And raises up all who are bowed down.

15 The eyes of all look expectantly to You,
And **You give them their food in due season.**

16 You open Your hand
And satisfy the desire of every living thing.

God satisfies the desires.

God is good. Not a heavenly miser. **He doesn’t have a poverty
mentality.**

Psalms 112:1-3

1 Praise the LORD!
Blessed is the man who fears the LORD,
Who delights greatly in His commandments.

2 His descendants will be mighty on earth;
The generation of the upright will be blessed.

3 **Wealth and riches will be in his house,**
And his righteousness endures forever.

In the upright person's house WILL BE WEALTH AND RICHES.

Psalms 112:4-10

4 Unto the upright there arises light in the darkness;
He is gracious, and full of compassion, and righteous.

5 **A good man deals graciously and lends;**
He will guide his affairs with discretion.

6 Surely he will never be shaken;
The righteous will be in everlasting remembrance.

7 He will not be afraid of evil tidings;
His heart is steadfast, trusting in the LORD.

8 **His heart is established;**
He will not be afraid,
Until he sees his desire upon his enemies.

9 **He has dispersed abroad,**
He has given to the poor; (*Sharing. He can do that because he is wealthy*)

His righteousness endures forever;
His horn will be exalted with honor.
10 The wicked will see it and be grieved;
He will gnash his teeth and melt away;
The desire of the wicked shall perish.

The Man of God has a generous heart.

You can't be generous if you're broke? Some folk only want enough to "get by". **But ... what about helping others? If you had more ... couldn't you help others?**

We can see God's attitude:

Deuteronomy 28:1-6

1 "Now it shall come to pass, **if you diligently obey the voice of the LORD your God, to observe carefully all His commandments which I**

command you today, that the LORD your God will set you high above all nations of the earth. *(Conditional)*

2 And **all these blessings shall come upon you and overtake you**, because you obey the voice of the LORD your God:

3 “**Blessed** shall you be in the city, and **blessed** shall you be in the country.

4 “**Blessed** shall be the fruit of your body, the produce of your ground and the increase of your herds, the increase of your cattle and the offspring of your flocks.

5 “**Blessed** shall be your basket and your kneading bowl.

6 “**Blessed** shall you be when you come in, and **blessed** shall you be when you go out.

ABUNDANCE IS A BLESSING!

God knows it is better than lack and poverty!

What if you don't walk with God? (Remember — it is your choice!)

Deuteronomy 28:15-19

15 “But it shall come to pass, **if you do not obey the voice of the LORD your God, to observe carefully all His commandments and His statutes which I command you today**, that **all these curses will come upon you and overtake you**:

16 “**Cursed** shall you be in the city, and **cursed** shall you be in the country.

17 “**Cursed** shall be your basket and your kneading bowl.

18 “**Cursed** shall be the fruit of your body and the produce of your land, the increase of your cattle and the offspring of your flocks.

19 “**Cursed** shall you be when you come in, and **cursed** shall you be when you go out.

POVERTY IS A CURSE! LACK IS A CURSE! Not a blessing!

Deuteronomy 28:38-45

38 “**You shall carry much seed out to the field but gather little in**, for the locust shall consume it. *(lack ... shortage)*

39 **You shall plant vineyards and tend them, but you shall neither drink of the wine nor gather the grapes;** for the worms shall eat them. *(lack is a CURSE)*

40 **You shall have olive trees throughout all your territory, but you shall not anoint yourself with the oil;** for your olives shall drop off.

41 **You shall beget sons and daughters, but they shall not be yours;** for they shall go into captivity.

42 **Locusts shall consume all your trees and the produce of your land.**

43 “The alien who is among you shall rise higher and higher above you, and you shall come down lower and lower.

44 **He shall lend to you, but you shall not lend to him;** he shall be the head, and you shall be the tail.

45 “Moreover **all these curses shall come upon you and pursue and overtake you, until you are destroyed, because you did not obey the voice of the LORD your God, to keep His commandments and His statutes which He commanded you.**

Struggling to get by — not having sufficient — is not what God wants. **He wants His people to prosper.**

Deuteronomy 8:6-18

6 “**Therefore you shall keep the commandments of the LORD your God, to walk in His ways and to fear Him.**

7 **For the LORD your God is bringing you into a good land,** a land of brooks of water, of fountains and springs, that flow out of valleys and hills;

8 a land of wheat and barley, of vines and fig trees and pomegranates, a land of olive oil and honey;

9 a land in which you will eat bread without scarcity, **in which you will lack nothing;** a land whose stones are iron and out of whose hills you can dig copper.

10 **When you have eaten and are full,** then you shall bless the LORD your God for the good land which He has given you. *(be grateful!)*

11 “**Beware that you do not forget the LORD your God by not keeping His commandments, His judgments, and His statutes which I command you today,**

12 lest—when you have eaten and are full, and have built beautiful houses and dwell in them;

13 and when your herds and your flocks multiply, and your silver and your gold are multiplied, and all that you have is multiplied;
14 when your heart is lifted up, and you forget the LORD your God who brought you out of the land of Egypt, from the house of bondage;
15 who led you through that great and terrible wilderness, in which were fiery serpents and scorpions and thirsty land where there was no water; who brought water for you out of the flinty rock;
16 who fed you in the wilderness with manna, which your fathers did not know, that He might humble you and that He might test you, to do you good in the end—
17 **then you say in your heart, ‘My power and the might of my hand have gained me this wealth.’ (stupid statement)**
18 “**And you shall remember the LORD your God, for it is He who gives you power to get wealth, that He may establish His covenant which He swore to your fathers,** as it is this day.

Prosperous nation and lifestyles. This is what God wanted! An abundant life for His people.

But a warning is introduced! There’s a darker side to prosperity! **Don’t forget where your wealth comes from — God gives you the power to get wealth.**

We won’t turn there ... but:

Genesis 13: Abraham was very rich in silver ... and gold ... and livestock — in material blessings.

Genesis 26: Isaac was very prosperous.

It doesn’t seem that prosperity of itself is evil. Two of the patriarchs were among the wealthiest of their land. It didn’t spoil them. It is what God offers.

Or — consider Job.

Job 1:1-3

1 There was a man in the land of Uz, whose name was Job; and that man was blameless and upright, and one who feared God and shunned evil.

2 And seven sons and three daughters were born to him.

3 Also, his possessions were seven thousand sheep, three thousand camels, five hundred yoke of oxen, five hundred female donkeys, and a very large household, so that **this man was the greatest of all the people of the East.**

Job was very wealthy. The greatest — the most prosperous man in the East.

He lost his family and possessions. But once he repented and was reconciled to God:

Job 42:12-17

12 **Now the LORD blessed the latter days of Job more than his beginning;** for he had fourteen thousand sheep, six thousand camels, one thousand yoke of oxen, and one thousand female donkeys.

13 He also had seven sons and three daughters.

14 And he called the name of the first Jemimah, the name of the second Keziah, and the name of the third Keren-Happuch.

15 In all the land were found no women so beautiful as the daughters of Job; and their father gave them an inheritance among their brothers.

16 After this Job lived one hundred and forty years, and saw his children and grandchildren for four generations.

17 **So Job died, old and full of days.**

God doubled Job's wealth.

God is not poverty minded. Wealth itself is not a problem.

King David ... a man after God's own heart. Was he wealthy?

1 Chronicles 29:1-5

1 Furthermore **King David** said to all the assembly: "My son Solomon, whom alone God has chosen, is young and inexperienced; and the work is great, because the temple is not for man but for the LORD God.

2 **Now for the house of my God I have prepared with all my might: gold** for things to be made of gold, **silver** for things of silver, **bronze** for things of bronze, **iron** for things of iron, **wood** for things of wood, **onyx stones**, stones to be set, **glistening stones of various colours**, all kinds of **precious stones**, and **marble slabs in abundance.**

3 Moreover, because I have set my affection on the house of my God, **I have given to the house of my God, over and above all that I have prepared for the holy house, my own special treasure of gold and silver:**

4 **three thousand talents of gold**, of **the gold of Ophir**, and **seven thousand talents of refined silver**, to overlay the walls of the houses;
5 the gold for things of gold and the silver for things of silver, and for all kinds of work to be done by the hands of craftsmen. Who then is willing to consecrate himself this day to the LORD?" (*Who else is willing to join me?*)

David contributed about \$20 billion to the Temple funds.

1 Chronicles 29:6-9

6 Then the leaders of the fathers' houses, leaders of the tribes of Israel, the captains of thousands and of hundreds, with the officers over the king's work, **offered willingly.**

7 They gave for the work of the house of God **five thousand talents and ten thousand darics of gold**, **ten thousand talents of silver**, **eighteen thousand talents of bronze**, and **one hundred thousand talents of iron.**

8 And **whoever had precious stones** gave them to the treasury of the house of the Lord, into the hand of Jehiel the Gershonite.

9 Then **the people rejoiced, for they had offered willingly**, because with a loyal heart they had offered willingly to the Lord; and King David also rejoiced greatly.

The people gave somewhere in the region of \$3.8 trillion!! (According to the editors of the NKJV Bible that I am using ... from way back in the 1980's). That was out of a population of 5 million — so ... they were a wealthy nation?!

1 Chronicles 29:10-12, 16

10 Therefore David blessed the Lord before all the assembly; and David said:

"Blessed are You, Lord God of Israel, our Father, forever and ever.

11 Yours, O Lord, is the greatness,
The power and the glory,
The victory and the majesty;
For all that is in heaven and in earth is Yours;
Yours is the kingdom, O Lord,

And You are exalted as head over all.

12 **Both riches and honor come from You,**

And You reign over all.

In Your hand is power and might;

In Your hand it is to make great

And to give strength to all.

16 **“O Lord our God, all this abundance that we have prepared to build You a house for Your holy name is from Your hand, and is all Your own.”**

David remembered where the money had come from. The prosperity was from God.

2 Chronicles 1:7-12

7 On that night God appeared to Solomon, and said to him, **“Ask! What shall I give you?”**

8 And Solomon said to God: “You have shown great mercy to David my father, and have made me king in his place.

9 Now, O LORD God, let Your promise to David my father be established, for You have made me king over a people like the dust of the earth in multitude.

10 Now give me wisdom and knowledge, that I may go out and come in before this people; for who can judge this great people of Yours?”

11 **Then God said to Solomon:** “Because this was in your heart, and you have not asked riches or wealth or honor or the life of your enemies, nor have you asked long life—but have asked wisdom and knowledge for yourself, that you may judge My people over whom I have made you king—

12 **wisdom and knowledge are granted to you; and I will give you riches and wealth and honor, such as none of the kings have had who were before you, nor shall any after you have the like.”**

Here’s an opportunity for God to bless — as is His disposition.

Solomon went badly wrong. Why? Largely through women and idolatry. Perhaps vanity? But money probably accentuated the problem?

There is a saying:

“Money never changes anyone — it just magnifies who they are”.
Or: “Money does not change people. It merely unmasks them”.

Money is neutral. **God prefers to bless His creation to have an abundant life. That is His default!**

John 10:10

10 **The thief does not come except to steal, and to kill, and to destroy. I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly.**

John 10:10 (AMP)

10 **I came that they may have and enjoy life, and have it in abundance (to the full, till it over flows).**

John 10:10 (TPT)

10 I have come **to give you everything in abundance, more than you expect — life in its fullness until you overflow!**

This is much wider than “just money” — but money would generally help.

The idea that God wants us all to live in harsh poverty ... struggling from pay-check to pay-check and anxious — probably goes back to Greek philosophy (material things are evil).

Helped along by the Roman Catholic Church? The best example they would say are monks and nuns who leave society — take vows of poverty ... silence ... subsist on bread and water.

Even today ... many equate poverty with holiness.

There are many causes of poverty — where you were born ... parents ... health ... education ... opportunities ... attitude etc — **but just being poor does not equate to being holy.**

God has no problems with people prospering — Abraham ... Isaac ... Job ... David. The World Tomorrow — when Jesus returns — will be prosperous.

Psalms 1:1-3

1 Blessed is the man

Who walks not in the counsel of the ungodly,
Nor stands in the path of sinners,
Nor sits in the seat of the scornful;

2 But **his delight is in the law of the LORD,**
And in His law he meditates day and night.

3 He shall be like a tree
Planted by the rivers of water,
That brings forth its fruit in its season,
Whose leaf also shall not wither;
And **whatever he does shall prosper.**

Whatever he does shall prosper (or “succeed”). **It certainly suggests a believer will do well!**

Psalms 23:1-6

1 The LORD is my shepherd;

I shall not want. (*I will not lack*)

2 He makes me to lie down in green pastures;
He leads me beside the still waters.

3 He restores my soul;
He leads me in the paths of righteousness
For His name's sake.

4 Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death,
I will fear no evil;
For You are with me;
Your rod and Your staff, they comfort me.

5 You prepare a table (*banquet/feast*) before me in the presence of my
enemies;

You anoint my head with oil;

My cup runs over. (*Surplus ... pouring over the top of the cup*)

6 Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me

All the days of my life;

And I will dwell in the house of the LORD
Forever.

The Good Shepherd provides. Our cup runs over! Extra! A banquet — a feast before me = goodness.

Proverbs 3:13-18

13 **Happy is the man who finds wisdom,**

And the man who gains understanding;

14 **For her proceeds are better than the profits of silver,**

And **her gain than fine gold.**

15 She is **more precious than rubies,**

And all the things you may desire cannot compare with her.

16 **Length of days is in her right hand,**

In her left hand riches and honour.

17 Her ways are ways of pleasantness,

And all her paths are peace.

18 She is a tree of life to those who take hold of her,

And happy are all who retain her.

Wisdom and riches and honour.

If we can walk in God's wisdom — we should expect some riches and honour. **BE CAREFUL NOT TO SPIRITUALISE ALL OF THIS AWAY.**

Abraham ... Isaac ... Jacob ... David — had real material wealth ... silver ... gold ... livestock ... homes.

God's desire is to bless. He doesn't see poverty as inherently more holy or righteous than wealth. It's what's in the heart that matters.

You can be wealthy — and humble and holy. Or — poor and wicked.

Proverbs 10:22

22 **The blessing of the LORD makes one rich,**

And He adds no sorrow with it.

The Lord makes one rich (not poor!)

Some people become rich by dubious means — selfish ... exploit others ... driven by greed. This will bring grief in most cases.

Wealth acquired God's way is safe: no sting in the tail!

(It is unfortunate that some churches acquire wealth by exploiting their members).

Finally:

Matthew 6:19-21, 24-34

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.

25 “Therefore I say to you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink; nor about your body, what you will put on. Is not life more than food and the body more than clothing?

26 Look at the birds of the air, for they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they?

27 Which of you by worrying can add one cubit to his stature?

28 “So why do you worry about clothing? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow: they neither toil nor spin;

29 and yet I say to you that even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these.

30 Now if God so clothes the grass of the field, which today is, and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, **will He not much more** clothe you, O you of little faith?

31 “Therefore do not worry, saying, ‘What shall we eat?’ or ‘What shall we drink?’ or ‘What shall we wear?’

32 For after all these things the Gentiles seek. For your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things.

33 **But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you.**

34 Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about its own things. Sufficient for the day is its own trouble.

Keep your priorities straight!

Don't serve mammon. It's not the number 1 priority!

But: **WALK WITH GOD ... and He'll ADD all the things we really need (and even desire).**

We have a Heavenly Father — who fulfills His responsibilities. He looks after His kids!

Don't be misled by tradition that poverty is always good and holy — and wealth always wicked and immoral.

Money is neutral. The question is what we do for it and with it?? That is our choice. Money itself is not a problem. Money itself is not a sin.

GOD'S DEFAULT IS TO PROSPER US!