

The Peril of Prosperity

The children of Israel were about to enter the Promised Land.

Moses didn't give them a pep talk to cheer them on to victory.

Instead he gave them a warning:

“Only give heed to yourself and keep your soul diligently, lest you forget the things which your eyes have seen, and lest they depart from your heart all the days of your life; but make them known to your sons and your grandsons.” (Deut. 4:9)

When things get better people tend to forget the lessons of the past.

Yuppie Prayer (YOUNG UPWARDLY PROGRESSIVE PROFESSIONALS)

NOW I LAY ME DOWN TO SLEEP.

I PRAY MY CUISINART TO KEEP.

I PRAY MY STOCKS ARE ON THE RISE,

AND THAT MY ANALYST IS WISE,

THAT ALL THE WINE I SIP IS WHITE

AND THAT MY HOT TUB'S WATERTIGHT,

THAT RACQUETBALL WON'T GET TOO TOUGH,

THAT ALL MY SUSHI'S FRESH ENOUGH.

I PRAY MY CORDLESS PHONE STILL WORKS,

THAT MY CAREER WON'T LOSE ITS PERKS,

MY MICROWAVE WON'T RADIATE,

MY CONDO WON'T DEPRECIATE.

I PRAY MY HEALTH CLUB DOESN'T CLOSE AND THAT MY MONEY MARKET GROWS.

IF I GO BROKE BEFORE I WAKE,

I PRAY MY VOLVO THEY WON'T TAKE.

Two women met at a cocktail party after a separation of many years. After the initial delighted exchange of greetings, the first woman noticed that her friend was wearing an extraordinary diamond. She couldn't help commenting,

"That's the most beautiful and enormous diamond I've ever seen!"

"YES, IT'S AN UNUSUAL DIAMOND," was the reply.

"IT'S THE CALAHAN DIAMOND.

AND IT COMES COMPLETE WITH THE CALAHAN CURSE."

"What's the Calahan curse?"

"MR. CALAHAN!" she said.

WHOEVER SAID MONEY COULDN'T BUY HAPPINESS DIDN'T KNOW WHERE TO SHOP.

I remember going into Harrah's in London.

It was a rich-guy's fun store where high-end toys and goods could be bought for a price. I saw some speakers that were shaped like a football that wiggled with the music. Capable of extreme volume these wireless, smart-speakers contained both sub-woofer and all frequencies. The speaker literally wiggled in rhythm to the songs played through them. Designed to go in odd places and in many rooms of a house, if two were in the same room they would become stereophonic and work together to balance themselves in their setting.

The low-powered ones [very loud] sold for 1,200 L; and the louder for 1,800 L. The sales lady commented that customers often purchased five or six at a time.

I was fascinated by the technology until I learned of the price tag.

HOW MANY THINGS IN LIFE HAVE A PRICE TAG WE ARE NOT BE WILLING TO PAY?

The children of Israel were about to enter the Promised Land.

Moses wanted to give them some final instructions before they entered which included a warning about the peril of prosperity.

- 10 “Then it shall come about when the LORD your God brings you into the land which He swore to your fathers, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, to give you, great and splendid cities which you did not build,
- 11 and houses full of all good things which you did not fill, and hewn cisterns which you did not dig, vineyards and olive trees which you did not plant, and you eat and are satisfied,
- 12 **then watch yourself, that you do not forget the LORD** who brought you from the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery.
- 13 “You shall fear *only* the LORD your God; and you shall worship Him and swear by His name.
- 14 “You shall not follow other gods, any of the gods of the peoples who surround you,
- 15 for the LORD your God in the midst of you is a jealous God; otherwise the anger of the LORD your God will be kindled against you, and He will wipe you off the face of the earth. Deut. 6:10-15

I. The peril of prosperity is forgetting God.

When people have what they want, they tend to focus on the gifts and forget the God who gave them.

JESUS SPOKE THIS TO THE CHURCH AT LAODICEA,

“Because you say, ‘I am rich and have become wealthy, and have need of nothing.’ And you do not know that you are wretched and miserable and poor and blind and naked...” (Rev. 3:17)

Paul wrote to Timothy,

“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. Instruct them to do good, to be rich in good works, to be generous and ready to share, 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.” (1 Tim. 6:17-19)

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G. K. Chesterton said,

“To be clever enough to get a great deal of money,
one must be stupid enough to want it.”

The problem with money is that it can become the focus of our hearts instead of God. When that happens it can lead to great problems.

Jesus said, "Where your treasure is there will your heart be also."

If we don't gain contentment, we may be conquered by covetousness.

But godliness actually is a means of great gain, when accompanied by contentment. For we have brought nothing into the world, so we cannot take anything out of it either. And if we have food and covering, with these we shall be content. 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. 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 a pang. But flee from these things, you man of God; and pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, perseverance and gentleness."

(1 Tim. 6:6-11).

We cannot allow prosperity to crowd out God.

On the one hand prosperity is richly given by God to enjoy.

On the other hand we are responsible to use prosperity wisely.

Money is a means, not an end – a tool to provide people with opportunities to hear and accept the gospel of Christ. CHARLES STANLEY

II. The Responsibility of those God prospers is to focus on God.

1. God, the source of all blessings, is to be feared and worshiped.

13 "You shall fear *only* the LORD your God;
and you shall worship Him and swear by His name.

14 "You shall not follow other gods,
any of the gods of the peoples who surround you,

He brought the children of Israel out of Egypt and was about to bring them into their Promised Land. After God's promised victory it would become a place of peace and prosperity.

It's natural for us to depend on God just before a war.

Prosperity makes it easy to forget about God.

2. God desired to prosper them for generations to come.

Deut. 6:1-3

- 1 “Now this is the commandment, the statutes and the judgments which the LORD your God has commanded *me* to teach you, that you might do *them* in the land where you are going over to possess it,
- 2 so that you and your son and your grandson might fear the LORD your God, to keep all His statutes and His commandments which I command you, all the days of your life, and that your days may be prolonged.
- 3 “O Israel, you should listen and be careful to do *it*, that it may be well with you and that you may multiply greatly, just as the LORD, the God of your fathers, has promised you, *in* a land flowing with milk and honey.

❖ Command:

- Pay attention and obey
- Teach children and grandchildren so that they do the same.

❖ Promise:

- Possess the land.
- Prolonged life.
- Posterity – multiplied greatly

III. Ultimate prosperity is to know and love God

- 4 “Hear, O Israel! The LORD is our God, the LORD is one!
- 5 “You shall love the LORD your God
with all your heart
and with all your soul
and with all your might. (Deut. 6:4)

Hearing is synonymous with obeying

To hear God without putting into effect the command is not to hear him at all. ¹

Hearing is followed by loving Him - inside and outside.

¹ Merrill, E. H. (1994). *Deuteronomy* (Vol. 4, p. 162). Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers.

Obedience comes from a heart of love.

v. 6 “These words, which I am commanding you today,
shall be on your heart.

IV. Prosperity is connected with Passion for God.

Why should we obey God?

-- Because of love.

How shall we pass our faith in God on to the next generations?

-- By being in relationship to them. (Instructive lifestyle)

v. 7 “You shall teach them diligently to your sons
and shall talk of them when you sit in your house
and when you walk by the way
and when you lie down and when you rise up.

With each passing generation the danger of forgetting God increases.

After Moses died Joshua led Israel into the Promised Land and conquered the inhabitants. What happened when Joshua died?

- 6 When Joshua had dismissed the people, the sons of Israel went each to his inheritance to possess the land.
- 7 The people served the LORD all the days of Joshua, and all the days of the elders who survived Joshua, who had seen all the great work of the LORD which He had done for Israel.
- 8 Then Joshua the son of Nun, the servant of the LORD, died at the age of one hundred and ten.
- 10 All that generation also were gathered to their fathers; and there arose another generation after them who did not know the LORD, nor yet the work which He had done for Israel. (Judges 2:6-8, 10)

Instead of following the ways of the Lord, Judges ends with these sad words,
“In those days there was no king in Israel;
everyone did what was right in his own eyes.” (Judges 21:25)

Loving God and obeying His Laws has always been the way to prosperity.