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BARNs AND VATS

Not long ago, I came across a familiar statement made by Solomon in Proverbs 3:9-10 that I had read many times before. I must admit that I had never really plumbed the depths of this statement until recently; I had only read it and moved on. When I decided to study it more deeply, I uncovered something very exciting! Solomon said, *Honor the Lord from your wealth and from the first of all your produce; so your barns will be filled with plenty and your vats will overflow with new wine* (NASB).

Pastors often quote these verses, urging people with limited or ordinary means to give liberally so that they will, as a result, become people with extraordinary means. Their “pitch” is that the more you give, the richer you will personally become. This is the cornerstone of the prosperity gospel message. However, this half-truth is not limited to just those who promote this flawed theology. I have seen many forms of it in evangelical sermons and teachings as well. I will say that after studying this passage in much greater depth, this common interpretation of these verses misses the mark by a mile. Allow me to drill down a bit deeper and share with you what I have discovered about these two short verses.

A Command

Solomon is well known for making astute life observations and then using his supernatural wisdom to coin simple yet profound proverbs about how life works. These proverbs, many of them insightful one-liners, form a treasure of life counsel that is pointed and practical. They provide us with wise observations on life outcomes resulting from certain decisions and life choices.

But Solomon in this passage shifts from merely observing how life works to giving a specific command. He uses the opening word “honor” in the imperative, making his statement a command. Solomon is ordering the reader to “honor the Lord” with a specific kind of giving. He is not trying to simply entice us to give by dangling the promise of greater material prosperity before us. He is telling us that giving is serious business. But the more important question we must ask is, “Who is he talking to here?”

Your Wealth

Solomon’s command here is not directed to the poor or to people of modest means. This command is rather directed to individuals who are rich. Notice this giving is to come from the person’s “wealth.” Poor people of Solomon’s day would not have any wealth with which to obey this command. This command is also not being directed to a group of middle-class people who collectively may own among themselves more than one barn or vat. In all three places where the pronoun “your” is used (before “wealth,” “barns,” and “vats”) they are all in the singular, meaning Solomon is talking to one wealthy person who personally possesses multiple barns and multiple wine vats—the wealthiest of the wealthy. There would have been no disagreement that anyone who

owned multiple barns and vats in Solomon's day was wealthy. So this command from Solomon is specifically for those who are already wealthy, not those who want to become wealthy.

The Law of Resupply

One of the most common fears of giving is this, "If I get really radical in my giving, what I currently have in my barns and vats could be greatly diminished. Consequently, I may find them being only half-full or worse yet, entirely empty because I gave too much away."

This is the exact concern that Solomon is addressing in this passage. He tells the wealthy that their liberal giving from their barns and vats will not reduce what their barns and vats hold. Contrary to what you fear, your first fruits giving will not diminish what you have. Instead, it will ensure that your "barns will (remain) filled" and "your vats will (continue to) overflow" with excess—even after your giving. This is what I call the Law of Resupply.

This is not the only place where we see this Law of Resupply demonstrated. Do you remember the story of the widow of Zarephath (1 Kings 17:7-16)? She used her last bit of flour and oil to make Elijah a small loaf of bread and as a result, her *jar of flour was not spent, neither did the jug of oil become empty* (1 Kings 17:16, ESV). She obediently gave as she was directed by Elijah, and the Law of Resupply kicked in. She never ran out of flour and oil.

The story of the five loaves and two fishes is another example of the Law of Resupply (Matthew 14:13-21). As the disciples distributed the loaves and fish to the hungry crowd, they were miraculously resupplied until everyone ate, and they were full. When the feeding was over, they had twelve baskets left over—more than they had when they started!

This Law of Resupply is also taught in II Corinthians 9:8, 10. Paul encourages us, *And God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that having all sufficiency in all things at all times, you may abound in every good work. ...He who supplies seed to the sower and bread for food will supply and multiply your seed for sowing and increase the harvest of your righteousness. You will be enriched in every way to be generous in every way.*

Paul tells us what we give will be resupplied to us. Why? So we can do even more giving. When we demonstrate a life of commitment to doing good and helping others with the material possessions He entrusts to us, the Law of Resupply will operate in our lives, and we will have *all sufficiency in all things at all times, [so we] may abound in every good work. And you will be enriched in every way to be generous in every way.* What an incredible assurance! We can never become poor by giving too much away. God will always give givers more to give!

The Surplus

The practical question that seems to emerge from Solomon's teaching on this Law of Resupply is this: Because my existing barns continue to be over-filled and my vats overflowing even after my giving, what should I do with the surplus that exceeds my current capacity and need? The natural response would be to do the same as the rich farmer: *I will tear down my barns and build larger ones and there I will store all my grains and goods* (Luke 12:18). That would be a tragic mistake! Read the verses that follow. God calls him a "fool."

On the other hand, the supernatural response to our surplus would be to give it all away. You don't have room for it, and you don't need it anyway. You can use your surplus to help other believers in the world who have a shortfall. In so deploying your surplus, you simply keep the Law of Resupply operating. Your abundant generosity produces even more generous abundance, allowing you to practice more abundant generosity...and on and on the resupply cycle goes. What an exhilarating way to live and give!

The Motivation

Let us all be mindful that without a proper check of our motivation, this Law of Resupply can easily be reduced to nothing more than a self-serving gimmick to get richer, using "giving" as the methodology to achieve it. Solomon dismantles this self-serving motivation with his opening words, *honor the Lord*... Our singular motivation for giving is to bring honor to the Lord.

Do you remember what Jesus said in Matthew 5:16 (NASB)? *Let your light shine before men in such a way that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in Heaven.* As we focus on giving honor to Him, He gives us repeated opportunities to honor Him by enacting His Law of Resupply. Our goal then is not to increase prosperity for us, but to increase honor for Him.

Conclusion

Do you want to experience the Law of Resupply? You must follow these steps. (1.) Begin by believing this law exists. (2.) Find a way to give that honors the Lord. (3.) Give to the point that what you hold in your "barns" and your "vats" are at new lows. (4.) Repeat this giving process until you run out of money and possessions.

Wait...what? Give until I run out of money and possessions? Relax. You will discover you will never arrive at (4.)! The Law of Resupply promises that supernaturally *you will be enriched in every way to be generous in every way.* Like the widow of Zarephath, you will discover that you will never run out of flour and oil. Solomon isn't making a suggestion here; he is giving us a command. Are you ready to obey his command and experience the supernatural Law of Resupply?

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E. G. "Jay" Link has a unique combination of being an ordained minister with a Master Divinity degree in Biblical Theology and a professional Stewardship planning coach who for over 40 years has been working with very affluent Christian families to enable them to optimize their Kingdom impact with all that the Lord has entrusted to them to manage. After retiring from his personal practice, he then served for five years as Director of Taylor University's Stewardship Planning Ministry, which he launched for them. Most recently, Jay founded the Stewardship Resource Group to serve Christian ministries, colleges, and churches to better minister to their highest capacity families. He has written six books, hundreds of articles and has provided extensive training curriculum for hundreds of professional financial and legal advisors in how to provide stewardship planning services for their clients.