

WHY DO SOME PEOPLE PROSPER MATERIALLY? (Part 3)

They Must Be Given the Power to Prosper

This unique gift from God is the least understood and possibly the most important for us to grasp. The Bible tells us that there are actually three powers God gives us regarding wealth accumulation. Unless He gives us all three, our lives will be unhappy, out of balance, and self-absorbed—no matter how prosperous we are.

Power #1: The Power to Make Wealth

Deuteronomy 8:18 is a verse that every financially successful Christian ought to have hanging somewhere on one of his walls. In this verse God says, “But you shall remember the LORD your God, for it is He who is giving you power to make wealth.”

Paul says it this way in 2 Thessalonians 1:11-12 NIV, “That our God may count you worthy of His calling, and that by His power He may fulfill every good purpose of yours and every act prompted by your faith.” God gives some the power to accumulate great amounts of wealth while fulfilling those good purposes.

If God gives you the power to make wealth, you will make it. It is that simple. For people who have this power, they are like Midas—whatever they set their hand to do turns into gold. If God does not give someone this power, no matter how hard that person might try, no matter what opportunities he may be presented, and no matter what abilities he has, he will not become rich.

Solomon clearly understood this. He tells us in Proverbs 23:4-5, “Do not weary yourself to gain wealth, cease from your consideration of it. When you set your eyes on it, it is gone. For wealth certainly makes itself wings like an eagle that flies toward the heavens.” For the person without this power, wealth will never become anything more than the illusive “pot of gold” at the end of the proverbial rainbow.

Wealthy families face a myriad of challenges, dangers to the family, ever-present stress, and grave responsibility that accompanies possessing wealth. As each of you knows all too well, having wealth is not all that it is imagined to be by those who do not have it. It is a huge responsibility entrusted to only a few. Jesus points this out in Luke 12:48 TLB, “Much is required from those to whom much is given, and much more is required from those to whom much more is given.” As The Message puts it, “Great gifts mean great responsibilities; greater gifts, greater responsibilities!”

Whenever I have talked with the builders of wealth, whether they are followers of Jesus or not, there is one common acknowledgment in almost every case among them. The follower of Jesus will use the term “blessed” to describe their success, while a non-Christian will use the words “lucky” or “fortunate.” Almost everyone who has achieved a significant level of wealth recognizes that the success they have achieved is really disproportionate to the personal genius and hard work that they have put into it.

And in all this, we must never forget Deuteronomy 8:17 which cautions, “You may say in your heart, ‘My power and the strength of my hand made me this wealth.’” This simply is not true. This is the ultimate in self-pride and God warns us in Proverbs 16:18 NIV, “Pride goes before destruction, a haughty spirit before a fall.” How is it that you have the power to make wealth? God tells us. It’s just a gift.

Power #2: The Power to Enjoy Wealth

This power is not commonly discussed, but Solomon makes a startling observation for us in Ecclesiastes 5:19, “Furthermore, as for every man to whom God has given riches and wealth, He has also empowered him to eat from them and to receive his reward and rejoice in his labor; this is the gift of God.” God also gives us the power to enjoy the wealth we have accumulated.

Solomon adds that not all those who have the power to make wealth have the power to enjoy it. In Ecclesiastes 6:1-2 Solomon observes, “There is an evil which I have seen under the sun and it is prevalent among men—a man to whom God has given riches and wealth and honor so that his soul lacks nothing of all that he desires; yet God has not empowered him to eat from them.” He has the wealth, but he cannot enjoy it.

Solomon is telling us that there are people that, no matter how rich they become, they still think and act like they are poor. I remember many years ago, an elderly gentleman needed a surgical procedure for his eyes which cost \$5,000. He would not have the surgery done, even though he had over \$1 million in his retirement plan. He just could not spend any of his accumulated wealth even for his own health. His wealth was no use to him. He might as well have been poor. He had the power to make wealth, but God had not given him the power to benefit from it.

Solomon gives us another sad example of someone who has the power to make wealth but not to enjoy it in Ecclesiastes 4:8. Here he observes,

There was a certain man without a dependent, having neither a son nor a brother, yet there was no end to all his labor. Indeed, his eyes were not satisfied with riches and he never asked, “And for whom am I laboring and depriving myself of pleasure?” This too is vanity and it is a grievous task.

You see the power to make wealth without the power to enjoy it neutralizes the blessing of wealth and instead turns it into a curse. This becomes the perfect contrast between the person who possesses wealth and the person whose wealth possesses him.

In Ecclesiastes 2:24-26 Solomon tells the fate of those with the power to make wealth, but not to enjoy it,

There is nothing better for a man than to eat and drink and tell himself that his labor is good. This also I have seen that it is from the hand of God. For who can eat and who can have enjoyment without Him? For to a person who is good in His sight He has given wisdom and knowledge and joy, while to the sinner He has given the task of gathering and collecting so that he may give to one who is good in God's sight. This too is vanity and striving after wind.

Solomon adds further in Ecclesiastes 5:18, "Here is what I have seen to be good and fitting: to eat, to drink and enjoy oneself in all one's labor in which he toils under the sun during the few years of his life which God has given him; for this is his reward."

By contrast, Solomon sees some who go so far as to even try to hide their accumulated wealth in Proverbs 13:7 NIV, "One man pretends to be rich, yet has nothing; another pretends to be poor, yet has great wealth."

Many affluent people have long refused to enjoy the wealth God has empowered them to accumulate because they falsely believe that there is something wrong with being wealthy or they are plagued with a nagging fear that something might happen and they could someday lose it all. You need to happily embrace the prosperity you have. However, you need be careful that you do not enjoy more of it than the Master intended. Because, you see, there is still one more power.

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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.