

Is Wealth Essentially Good?



God's Abundance (Part 8)
by Derek Prince

It's good to be with you again as we continue to study our theme for this week, God's Abundance. In my two previous talks this week, we've been examining the relationship between the abundance of God and the promises of God. Yesterday we looked at two specific promises that relate to abundance—both of them found in the book of Psalms. The first, Psalm 34, verses 9 and 10.

> "O fear the Lord, you His saints; For to those who fear Him, there is no want. The young lions do lack and suffer hunger; But they who seek the Lord shall not be in want of any good thing." (NASB)

And Psalm 84:11

> "For the Lord God is a sun and shield; The Lord gives grace and glory; No good thing does He withhold from those who walk uprightly." (NASB)

First, we looked at the conditions and we saw that there are three simple conditions stated in those two promises from Psalms. The three conditions we have to fulfill are these: first, fear the Lord; second, seek the Lord and third, walk uprightly.

Then we looked at the promises and we saw the same promises stated really in two different ways: "those who seek the Lord shall not be in want of any good thing" and "God will not withhold any good thing from those who walk uprightly." We shall not lack any good thing. However, I pointed out that it's necessary to distinguish two way in which a thing may be good. Is the thing good in itself, essentially good. But the second way and one that really concerns us practically: Is the thing good for us in our situation now? That's what I call relatively good. This brings out the point that a thing may be essentially good and yet, in a certain situation, may be relatively not good. I gave the example of the teenage boy who asks for a powerful, expensive sports car. The sports car in our example is essentially good but, because of that boy's characterand lack of maturity and irresponsibility, if he received it at that time, it might cause his death. So relatively, for him, it not good - although, in itself, it is essentially good.

And I think that applies to many situations in our lives. We ask God for things which are good and we say, the thing is good, it's essentially good and God, if we could only hear Him, says, "Yes, it's good. My Word says it's good. But in your situation, it's relatively not good because you would take the good and in some way or another it would become an instrument of harm and destruction."

All right. So we summed that up by saying it this way: In His love and wisdom, God may withhold from us something that is essentially good because it is not relatively good for us in our situation. I believe if you could lay hold of that principle and apply it, it would explain a good many of the frustrations and disappointments in your Christian life. Now, we need to apply this distinction of relatively good and essentially good to the various concepts associated with abundance and I listed those earlier, as follows: riches, wealth, prosperity, and abundance. Now the question we're asking is this: Are these essentially good? We're not discussing now whether they might be relatively not good in a certain situation, but we're focusing on them in their essential nature—Are they essentially good? Riches, wealth, prosperity and abundance. We're not going to go to human wisdom or to religious organizations or to libraries for our answer, but we're going to the Word of God. Are these things essentially good? What does the Word of God answer? It answers clearly, "Yes. All these things are essentially good." Very important to understand that. Because a lot of us have grown up with the impression that somehow wealth is wicked.

I know as a young boy growing up in Britain in the Anglican Church, I got the impression that if you ever were to be successful or wealthy, you could be sure you were wicked. And that's an impression that is deeply ingrained in many religious people. But I want to say it is not in line with the Scripture. Riches, wealth, prosperity and abundance, according to the standards of Scripture, are in themselves essentially good.

I'll give you three different passages of Scripture which support what I've said. The first is in Revelation 5, verses 11 and 12:

> "Then I looked and heard the voice of many angels, numbering thousands upon thousands, and ten thousand times ten thousand. They encircled the throne and the living creatures and the elders. [This is a vision of heaven.] In a loud voice they sang: 'Worthy is the Lamb [capital 'l', that's the Lamb of God, the Lord Jesus Christ] worthy is the Lamb, who was slain, to receive power and wealth and wisdom and strength and honor and glory and praise!'" (NIV)

This group of heavenly beings, in an aspired song ascribe to the Lord Jesus Christ seven things: power, wealth, wisdom, strength, honor, glory and praise. Every one of those things is good. In a certain sense we can say of Jesus nothing but the best is good enough for Him. And heaven ascribes to Him these seven things. And notice, the second is wealth. And this is put together with wisdom, with strength, with honor, with glory with praise with power.

All those seven things are essentially good. But, we have to face the fact that though they are essentially good, many times they are abused. They are used in a bad way. That does not mean that they are not essentially good, it means that relatively they are not good in that situation. For instance, strength is good but there are many people who abuse strength to bully, to harm others, to impose their will unjustly and unrighteously. That doesn't mean that strength is not good. It means that something good can be abused. The same is true of wisdom. Wisdom is essentially good and yet there are people who use wisdom for their own ungodly ends—to cheat, to deceive and to get things for themselves that they're not entitled to. That doesn't mean that wisdom is not good. It only means that even a good thing—something essentially good—can be abused and thus become relatively not good.

So, bear in mind that wealth is one of seven good things ascribed by divine right to the Lord Jesus Christ.

And then, for our second passage of Scripture, we'll turn to 1 Chronicles, chapter 29, verses 11 and 12. This is part of a prayer of worship and dedication that David prayed to the Lord at the time he was preparing for the building of the temple. This is what he says, these are some of the most glorious words in the Bible.

> "Yours, O Lord, is the greatness and the power and the glory and the majesty and the splendor, for everything in heaven and earth is yours. Yours, O Lord, is the kingdom; you are exalted as head over all. Wealth and honor come from you; you are the ruler of all things. In your hands are strength and power to exalt and give strength to all." (NIV)

Many beautiful and glorious things are ascribed there to the Lord: greatness, power, glory, majesty, splendor, strength. And then again, power. But in the middle of that beautiful prayer, David says to the Lord, "Wealth and honor come from you." Nothing evil comes from God. Wealth and honor are two excellent things that come from God. Wealth is essentially

good.

You may think that I'm overemphasizing but I can assure you that if you come from a certain kind of religious kind of background one of the greatest struggles you're going to have is to accept the fact that wealth is essentially good, it's not wicked, it's not sinful.

The third passage of Scripture that I want to cite is found in Deuteronomy, chapter 8, verse 18, where Moses speaks to Israel and he says the Lord is going to bring you into a abundant and plentiful land and when you get in there and have all that abundance, be careful you don't forget where the abundance came from. That's a really important lesson. This is what Moses says:

> "But remember the Lord your God, for it is he who gives you the ability to produce wealth, and so confirms his covenant, which he swore to your forefathers, as it is today." (NIV)

Notice, the ability to produce wealth comes from God. It's a gift from God. I've observed over the years the people who are able to make money and sometimes they don't appear to be too smart. Often they're not highly educated. Many times the smart and highly educated people can hardly make enough to get by with. And people who can't do arithmetic and don't understand computers make money. This really used to puzzle me. And then I found this Scripture and I understood that the ability to produce wealth is a gift from God. And God gives it to His people, not because we deserve it, but because its part of His covenant. He confirms His covenant. In His covenant He promised all blessings, all good things, to those who would make and keep a covenant with Him and so, in His eternal faithfulness, even though we may not be as wise and deserving as we ought to be, God gives the ability to produce wealth that He many confirm His covenant. This is part of His covenant commitment. He said to His people, "You be the head and not the tail. You'll be above and not beneath. You'll lend and not borrow." It's a covenant commitment of God. So, to fulfill His commitment, He gives to His people the ability to produce wealth. That comes from God. Even if it's abused as I'm afraid it sometimes is, it still comes from God. So, remember, that riches, wealth, prosperity and abundance are, in themselves, essentially good.

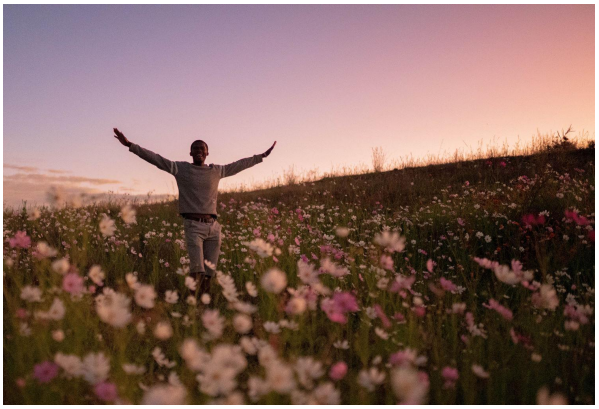
Our time is up for today. I'll be back with you again tomorrow at this time. I'll continue with this theme of God's abundance. Tomorrow, we'll be looking at God's covenant blessing.

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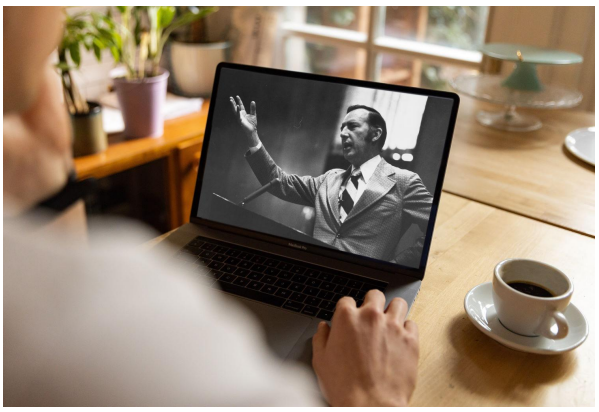
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