

Principles about Prosperity from Proverbs

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10:2 *Ill-gotten gains do not profit, but righteousness delivers from death.*

Prosperity is only valuable when it is obtained and used with righteousness. Solomon believes in a profit motive. So did Jesus (Luke 12:33) and the Apostle Paul (1 Corinthians 13:1). But, unlike Jesus and Paul, Solomon's profit motive was for earthly prosperity. What they share, however, is the concept that profit must be connected to the righteousness of God. Any other prosperity is not profitable.

10:15 *The rich man's wealth is his fortress; the ruin of the poor is their poverty.*

Prosperity serves as a person's material foundation and protection. Financial prosperity is called a man's fortress, a ransom for his life, a cause for many to love him, and a crown of his wisdom. It is clear that Solomon sees material prosperity as a valuable thing. It protects him, bails him out of many problems, makes his social life easier, and is a reward for his wisdom.

11:4 *Riches do not profit in the day of wrath, but righteousness delivers from death.*

Prosperity will be of no value in dealing with the judgment of God. Solomon is not here thinking about eternal judgment. The point he is making is: if God is angry with you, He will not be impressed by, or appeased by, your material prosperity. He may not take your wealth; He may take your life while you are still wealthy. Your earthly prosperity will not help you when you face God in judgment. So do not pursue riches without righteousness. It will not be profitable *in the day of wrath*.

11:28 *He who trusts in his riches will fall, but the righteous will flourish like the green leaf.*

Prosperity should not be trusted as a person's foundation or protection. Along with an encouragement to seek material prosperity, Solomon warns his son not to trust in his riches. Material prosperity should not lead to materialism. In Proverbs prosperity is good as far as it goes. It can be very helpful in daily life, but it is no replacement for righteousness, and it is of no value without righteousness. Solomon recognizes the value of prosperity, but discourages the pursuit of wealth.

18:11 *A rich man's wealth is his strong city, and like a high wall in his own imagination.*

Prosperity tends to give us a false sense of pride. One of the dangers of material prosperity is, it tends to make us think more of ourselves than we should. Prosperity lets our imagination tell us that *like a high wall* we are better and more capable than we actually are.

22:7 *The rich rules over the poor, and the borrower becomes the lender's slave.*

Prosperity obtained by borrowing will always make you a slave of the lender. Lending money in the Scripture was only approved in the context of helping the poor. The borrower was supposed to consider himself responsible to pay it back, but the lender was to consider it a gift (Exodus 22:25; Deuteronomy 15:8; Luke 6:34-35). Borrowing and lending were never approved of in the context of trying to gain in wealth. Whenever you borrow to gain wealth, you will fill your life with tension because you become a slave of the lender.

23:4 *Do not weary yourself to gain wealth, cease from your consideration of it.*

Prosperity should not be pursued. We should pursue work, not wealth. Solomon stresses diligence, wisdom, and responsibility in the context of holiness as the means of a stable life situation. When we pursue wealth as a goal, we tend to neglect virtues and think "The end justifies the means." We will have a tendency to ignore, or justify, sin when it helps us reach our goals to obtain wealth.

25:16 *Have you found honey? Eat only what you need, that you not have it in excess and vomit it.*

Prosperity should not result in luxury. Solomon says if you have somehow (through your work, chance events, or an inheritance) become prosperous, live modestly. Live in such a way that your family and those for whom you are responsible have their daily needs met. Pay attention to your wealth, but don't live in luxury.