

Prosperity And God

Joe Slater

We are prosperous people living in a prosperous nation. By global standards, the poorest among us is wealthy. We might credit any number of things for this happy condition: good education, hard work, and favorable government economic policies, to name a few.

I fear, however, that most citizens have totally lost sight of the real source of our prosperity. *“Every good gift and every perfect gift comes down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation of shifting shadow”* (James 1:17). That doesn’t refer only to material wealth, but certainly includes it.

God warned His people Israel not to forget Him when they enjoyed the prosperity He would give them in the Promised Land (Deuteronomy 6:10-12 & 8:11-18). But forget Him they did! As early as Judges 3:7 they were straying, and it continued until the captivity.

Hosea the prophet, who lived in the late 700’s B.C., warned his brethren in the Northern Kingdom (Israel) of their impending doom. What had Israel done to offend the Lord? *“For she said, ‘I will go after my lovers, who give me my bread and my water, my wool and my linen, my oil and my drink’”* (Hosea 2:5). Yes, the people thought their prosperity came from alliances and trade deals with their pagan neighbors! God continued: *“For she did not know that I gave her grain, new wine, and oil, and multiplied her silver and gold – which they prepared for Baal”* (v. 8). Think of it! The very blessings the Lord graciously gave them, they used to worship their idols!

Not only during holiday season, but every day of the year, let us remember the source of our prosperity and humbly, thankfully honor the Lord with it!

What’s On Your Bucket List?

A relatively new term has entered our vocabulary. In 2004 the term “bucket list” was used – perhaps for the first time – in the context of things to do before one dies. It is connected with the English idiom “kick the bucket,” which is considered a euphemistic term meaning “to die.”

The Bible teaches that our time on earth is short and that we have an appointment with death (Hebrews 9:27). Even if we live to be 100 years old, it is nothing compared to eternity. “The days of our lives are seventy years; and if by reason of strength they are eighty years, yet their boast is only labor and sorrow; for it is soon cut off, and we fly away” (Psalm 90:10).

Let’s think about a man who lives 70 years on earth. The first 15 are spent in childhood. Twenty years are spent sleeping. In his final years, physical limitations may curtail activities. So, he’s got about 30 years left. And part of that time he’ll spend eating and working.

It’s easy to see that there is not a lot of time to fulfill our “bucket list.” James tells us that our life is like a vapor that appears for a little time and then vanishes away (4:14). No wonder we are instructed to *“redeem the time”* (Ephesians 5:16).

Jesus said, *“I must work the works of Him Who sent Me while it is day; the night is coming when no man can work”* (John 9:4). Think about what Jesus accomplished in just 33 years upon the earth.

Each of us has a life span. Every life span is short compared to eternity. Each has the same amount of time in every day – 1440 minutes.

One of the best ways to redeem the time that we have is to read the Bible every day. If we read only one chapter per day, five days a week, for one year, that’s enough to read the entire New Testament (260 chapters). If we read ten chapters every day, that’s enough to read the entire Bible, Old and New Testaments, in four months. Time spent in God’s word is not wasted! Why not make it the number-one priority on your bucket list?

--Danny Tunnell (Miami, OK) via Old Paths

How?

“How,” the man thought to himself, “how did I ever reach this lowest point in my life? And now it seems I have no strength to stop. The end is in sight, this path’s ignoble ruin. Must I observe my final steps to death?” He did not reach his present state at once, But inch by imperceptible inch was moved Away from ultimate good, by a velvet voice, His conscience squelched, his eternal soul convinced That one small step made no real difference.

--J. Randal Matheny (via *Walking With God*)

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Elementary School Rules

We gave our son three key rules to help him get through primary school without causing too many incidences. They worked, and he came close to admitting they continue to help make him successful now.

In light of all the misconduct and abuse being recently revealed about some powerful people, I thought I would share his three rules because there are some grown-ups that could really put these to good use.

Each morning before we dropped our son off at school, we asked, “What are your rules?”

The correct answer:

- Keep my mouth closed.
- Do what the teacher says.*
- Keep my hands to myself.

*Substitute babysitter, boss, grown-up, parents, etc., depending on the situation.

We occasionally reminded him that grown-ups also followed these rules if they wanted to stay out of trouble. I can’t think of very many things that I’ve done wrong that were not caused by breaking one of these foundational behaviors. I also believe that all self-help books are highly derivative of my findings.

Maybe I should figure out how to get the royalties.

--Butch Adams (Plano, TX) via brotherhoodnews.com