

Is it in God's will for us Christians to materially prosper? Or is this a false teaching from mega church pastors?

When asked about a civil dispute, Jesus replied to the inquirer with a spiritual message. Luke wrote:

Then one from the crowd said to Him, "Teacher, tell my brother to divide the inheritance with me."

But He [Jesus] said to him, "Man, who made Me a judge or an arbitrator over you?" Lk 12:13-14

Jesus did not resolve the financial matter between the two men.

Then He [Jesus] said to them, "Beware, and be on your guard against every form of greed; for not even when one has an abundance does his life consist of his possessions." Lk 12:15, NASB

Jesus went on to tell the parable of the rich fool. Many in the crowd may have been impressed with the life of the rich man but Jesus' parable described a man who had invested in himself while forgetting God and others (Mt 22:37-40).

Jesus was a man of sorrows acquainted with grief (Is 53:3). His followers will suffer (1 Cor 12:26; Phil 1:29) be it: financially, socially or physically. Christians should not be overly concerned with material comforts (1 Cor 15:30-34) or riches (Pr 30:8, Ps 62:10). Jesus is their treasure (Ge 15:1). Christian work is important (Mt 5:16) and of short duration (Jn 9:4).

Though wealth can do some good things like provide a source of security (Pr 18:11) or add to one's friends (Pr 19:4), the disadvantages may include: causing one to become self-sufficient (Deut 8:17) or leading one to conceit (Jb 31:25) or laziness (Pr 6:6-11). Earthly riches can be choking. In the parable of the soils, Jesus said:

Some seed fell among thorns, and the thorns sprang up with it and choked it (Lk 8:7)...As for what fell among the thorns, they are those who hear, but as they go on their way they are choked by the cares and riches and pleasures of life, and their fruit does not mature (Lk 8:14).

The seed (a picture of the word of God) can be choked out by one's concern for riches or worldly pleasures in life. Because of this some produce no fruit (2 Tim. 2:4). Demas abandoned the apostle Paul because he was a worldly man (2 Ti 4:10, Mk 11:20).

There is nothing inherently wrong with money and wealth. There is something wrong with the *love* of money and a preoccupation with wealth (1 Ti 6:10). One must learn to be content whether rich or poor (Heb 13:5, Jas 3:16). Being content with one's lot in life is an act of love toward God. It shows trust in his care (Ps 145:7-21), provision (1 Ti 6:6-8) and promises (Heb 13:5).

God is *for* not against the believer (Jer 29:11, Ro 8:28). Satan would like believers to become discouraged (Mk 4:15) but knowing God's word (Col 1:25-27) and living by his promises (Josh 23:5-15; 1 Kin 8:56) enables the Christian to thrive for richer or for poorer. His love never fails (1 Co 13:8). He will never leave or forsake the believer (Deut 31:8).

A Christian naked, starving and dying in ditch is wealthier than one who may have gained the whole world but who has lost his soul (Mt 16:26, Lk 16:19-31). Those who are wealthy by heaven's standards are not seen as such by the world.

Jesus said: For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also (Mt 6:21). It is wise for one to invest his: time, treasure and talent into kingdom work where neither moth nor rust can destroy, where thieves cannot break in and steal (Mt 6:19-21). This world is passing away and as John MacArthur puts it: "I've never seen a Hurst pulling a U-Haul trailer behind it." Believers have their names written in the Book of Life (Re 20:15). They are rich indeed. Short-sighted men gain riches in this life but have few rewards in the life to come (Pr 11:18, Re 22:12). Management of riches reflects one's spiritual attitude (Lk 16:10-12).

Worldly riches are not always a blessing for an individual. Jesus said:

It is easier for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of heaven (Mt 19:24).

Men can become prideful and self-sufficient never learning to rely on God and they may miss eternal life altogether (Lk 1:78).

Health and wealth prosperity preachers promise church goers many things but their teachings are not biblical (2 Ti 4:3). Christians are not guaranteed wealth; in fact, some may become poorer due to persecution (Jn 15:20-23, Mt 19:29). Jesus said that disciples must count the cost before following him (Lk 14:28).

Jesus said: Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay his head (Mt 8:20). He was not well off by the world's standards yet he would own the entire world (Re 4-5).

Believers who pass tests of faith are seen by God as more precious than gold (1 Pe 1:7). God is not as concerned about his children's health and wealth as he is about their growing into Christlikeness daily. Believers are in training in this life to prepare for the life to come (Lk 19:17).

The apostle John wrote: Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him (1 Jn 2:15). John was speaking of a world system which is opposed to God and his purposes.

Christians are bought with the precious blood of Jesus Christ. They are so valuable to God that sends his Holy Spirit to live inside of them (2 Co 1:22). He promises (Phil 4:6-7) to protect (Ps 37:5-11) and provide (Mt 6:25-34) for his own.¹

¹ Thomas Nelson Publishers. (1996). Nelson's quick reference topical Bible index (p. 124). Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson Publishers.