

Worldly Misery and Destitution the Lot of the Godly

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Worldly Good and Prosperity Are the Lot of the Godly (Gen. 39:2; Job 42:12; Ps. 1:1, 3; 37:28, 32-33, 37; Prov. 12:21).

Worldly Misery and Destitution the Lot of the Godly (Lk. 21:17; 2Tim. 3:12; Heb. 11:37-38; Rev. 7:14).

Job had a humble and balanced approach to the difficulties associated with this short physical life when he said the following,

But he (Job) said to her (his wife), 'You speak as one of the foolish women speaks. **Shall we indeed accept good from God, and shall we not accept adversity?**' In all this Job did not sin with his lips (Job 2:10; Ed. notes in parentheses; emphasis added; NKJV used throughout unless otherwise stated).

Unfortunately those who use the scriptures in the heading of this study, as proof that God's contradicts His word, do not believe or understand what Job said. In other words, these people take the position that it has to be one condition or the other for those who are godly, and if this is not the case then God's word is contradictory. The truth is that God's people experience both good times and bad times as all human beings do,

Not that I (Paul) speak in regard to need, for I have learned in whatever state I am, to be content: ¹²I know how to be abased (live humbly), and I know how to abound (live in prosperity). Everywhere and in all things I have learned both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need (Phil. 3:11-12; Ed. notes in parentheses).

So God's people will experience different conditions throughout their lives, which all the scriptures in this heading confirm. It is somewhat amusing to see that the next scripture has been used in an attempt to take one side of the debate because it is dealing with Joseph after he had suffered a tremendous amount of hardship. By quoting only this section of scripture, it conveniently omits the fact that Joseph was betrayed by his brothers and sold into slavery. Instead of telling the whole story, it focuses on his life after these calamities had passed,

The Lord was with Joseph, and he was a successful man; and he was in the house of his master the Egyptian (Gen. 39:2).

Not only does this last scripture ignore the past trials in Joseph's life, it also conveniently leaves out his future imprisonment for a crime he did not commit (cf. Gen. 38:7-20). The next scriptural reference uses this same tactic of telling only part of a story in order to support a predetermined position. It comments on Job's life after he had experienced the loss of his children, possessions, and health,

Now the Lord blessed the latter days of Job more than his beginning; for he had fourteen thousand sheep, six thousand camels, one thousand yoke of oxen, and one thousand female donkeys (Job 42:12).

The next section of scripture in the book of Psalms is dealing with spiritual blessings and not worldly goods or physical forms of prosperity. Jesus Christ provided the key to a correct understanding of this truth in Matthew 7:17,

Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the ungodly (wicked), nor stands in the path of sinners, nor sits in the seat of the scornful; ²**But his delight is in the law of the Lord, and in His law he meditates** (ponders, reflects, thinks deeply about) **day and night.** ³He shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water (symbolic of God's Holy Spirit), that brings forth its fruit in its season, whose leaf also shall not wither; and whatever he does shall prosper (Ps. 1:1-3; Ed. notes in parentheses; emphasis added).

Because the person referred to in Psalms 1:1-3 delights in the law of the Lord, he is like a tree planted by the rivers of water that represent the action of God's Holy Spirit in his life. Therefore he will benefit, or prosper, from the fruit of this symbolic tree,

But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, ²³gentleness (meekness), self-control (cf. 2Tim. 1:7). Against such there is no law (Gal. 5:22-23; Ed. notes in parentheses).

These blessings of God's Holy Spirit far exceed any worldly good or physical prosperity, and that is the main lesson being taught in Psalms 1:1-3. The other scriptures in the book of Psalms are also commenting on this same truth (cf. Ps. 37:28, 32-33, 37). The final text that supposedly refers to God's people receiving worldly good and prosperity is actually a confirmation that the power of evil will not overcome those who trust and obey God (see study: Evil Does Happen to the Godly),

No grave trouble will overtake the righteous, but the wicked shall be filled with evil (Prov. 12:21).

The remaining scriptures that supposedly prove "worldly misery and destitution are the lot of the godly" are dealing with the fact that everyone has trials and upsets during their physical lifetime, but none of these texts claim that it is a permanent feature of their lives (see study: Endless Misery the Portion of All Mankind). Yes, some of God's servants have been martyred while doing His work, but this has not been the case with all of them (Lk. 21:17; 2Tim. 3:12; Heb. 11:37-38; Rev. 7:14).

In conclusion, God's people experience, and have to deal with, the same problems that all human beings face during their physical lifetime. Therefore, they live through good times and bad times. However, what is constant for them is the spiritual blessing of knowing the truth about Almighty God and his son Jesus Christ (cf. Jn. 17:3). Using the scriptures in the heading of this study to claim they contradict each other is unbalanced and untrue. Instead, they prove that God is not "a respecter of persons." As a consequence, prosperity as well as the lack thereof can be experienced by God's people at various points in their life.

This document is the collaborative work of individuals who believe God's truth should be given freely (Mt. 10:8; 1Cor. 2:12; 2Cor.11:7; Rom. 10:14-21) and the message of the one true God should be made available to all nations (Mt. 24:14) as a prerequisite to the return of Jesus Christ as King of kings (Mt. 17:10; 19:17; Mk. 9:11; Lk. 1:17; Rev. 19:11-16).

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