

New Covenant Prosperity

Prosperity for New Covenant believers is:

- based totally on God's undeserved grace and is not a fully merited reward.
- is received because of their faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.
- is never earned or merited by faith.
- sometimes is conditioned on turning from our known sins and/or on obeying certain instructions by God (see 1 Peter 3:9-12 and Matthew 6:33).
- sometimes is sovereignly given without any specific faith request or obedience response in relation to it (see Philippians 4:19, Matthew 5:45 and Acts 14:15-17).

The prosperity promised to New Covenant believers is linked to the Abrahamic Covenant (see Galatians 3:7-9 and 13-14).

A marvellous promise for New Covenant believers

Paul wrote some more inspiring words in Romans 8:32: ***“He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things.”*** Here Paul relates Jesus' death to the fact God will *freely* give us *all* things.

In Greek, the words ***“shall be freely given”*** in Romans 8:32 are a form of the word “charizomai”. In the context of this verse, “charizomai” means “give freely or graciously as a favor”¹ or “to show favor or kindness...to give freely, bestow graciously”.² The word “charizomai” is derived from the word “charis” which is the Greek New Testament word for ***“grace”***. So in Romans 8:32, Paul is stressing God gives all things to New Covenant believers *by grace* or as *free gifts*.

Our needs provided by His abundant New Covenant grace

In Philippians 4:19, Paul said it is God's will for Him to supply *all* our real needs according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus: ***“And my God shall supply all your need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus.”*** The expression ***“riches in glory by Christ Jesus”*** refers to *God's totally undeserved grace by Jesus Christ*. Paul uses the same word ***“riches”*** in relation to God's grace through Christ in Ephesians 1:7 and 2:7. Ephesians 1:7 refers to ***“the riches of His grace”***. Ephesians 2:7 mentions ***“the exceeding riches in His kindness towards us in Christ Jesus.”***

The Mosaic Covenant contained many references to God's mercy and grace (see Exodus 20:6, 22:27, 25:17-22, 33:19, 34:6-7, 37:6-9, Numbers 6:25, Deuteronomy 4:31, 5:10, 7:9, 7:12 and 13:17). But the New Covenant is a greater manifestation of God's unmerited grace

¹ Bauer, page 876.

² Vine, page 265.

than the Mosaic Covenant. The New Covenant refers to “*abundance of grace*” (see Romans 5:17), “*grace abounded*” (see Romans 5:20, “*exceeding grace of God in you*” (see 2 Corinthians 9:14) and “*the grace of our Lord was exceedingly abundant*” (see 1 Timothy 1:14).

John 1:16-17 shows the more gracious nature of the New Covenant compared to the more merit-based Mosaic Covenant: “*And of His fullness we have all received, and grace for grace. For the law was given through Moses, but grace and truth came through Jesus Christ.*” Hebrews 8:6-7 shows the New Covenant is a better covenant and based on better promises: “*But now He has obtained a more excellent ministry, inasmuch as He is also Mediator of a better covenant, which was established on better promises. For if that first covenant had been faultless, then no place would have been sought for a second.*” Hebrews 7:22 also calls the New Covenant “*a better covenant*”.

Note that when Philippians 4:19 refers to God supplying our needs, what He defines as our needs may vary from person to person. Only He knows what each individual believer really needs. Whatever God defines as our real needs is how He defines prosperity for us.

James 4:2-4 shows God does not regard some of the selfish desires of His people as being real needs which are a part of His definition of prosperity for them: “*You lust and do not have. You murder and covet and cannot obtain. You fight and war. Yet you do not have because you do not ask. You ask and do not receive, because you ask amiss, that you may spend it on your pleasures. Adulterers and adulteresses! Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Whoever therefore wants to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God.*” The above verses must be balanced out by Philippians 4:19 which promises God will definitely supply our real needs by God’s grace.

A New Covenant superlative grace promise

Another marvellous New Covenant superlative grace promise is found in 1 Timothy 6:17: “*Command those who are rich in this present age not to be haughty, nor to trust in uncertain riches but in the living God, who gives us richly all things to enjoy.*” In Greek, the word “*gives*” is a form of the word ‘parecho’ and carries no concept of merit or deserving.

The word “*gives*” in 1 Timothy 6:17 in Greek is present tense. Usually in Greek, the present tense indicates the continuous or repetitive nature of an action. So in this case, the present tense reveals the continuous or repetitive nature of God giving to New Covenant believers.

In Greek, the word “*richly*” in 1 Timothy 6:17 is “*plousios*” which means in this context “*rich, wealthy*”³ or “*pertaining to that which exists in a large amount, with the implication of its being valuable*”.⁴ In 1 Timothy 6:17, the word “*enjoyment*” is a form of the word “*apolausis*” in Greek. “*Apolausis*” means “*enjoyment based on the satisfaction of one’s desires*”⁵ or “*the advantage or pleasure to be obtained from a thing*”.⁶

So the expression “*God who gives us richly all things to enjoy*” refers to Him giving us earthly blessings as unmerited gifts and not merited rewards, in a continuous or repetitive sense, so we can obtain benefit, satisfaction, pleasure and/or enjoyment from these.

³ Bauer, page 673.

⁴ Louw and Nida, page 601.

⁵ Ibid, page 302.

⁶ Vine, page 201.

Note that in 1 Timothy 6:18-19, Paul then states that believers who are rich in this present age, should be ready to give, willing to share and do abundant good works: ***“Let them do good, that they be rich in good works, ready to give, willing to share, storing up for themselves a good foundation for the time to come, that they may lay hold on eternal life.”*** Paul is not here teaching we merit eternal life by good works. Instead, Paul is saying that the *unmerited grace result* of faith and the fruit of such faith – good works – is laying hold on eternal life. The faith implied in 1 Timothy 6:17-19 is mentioned in surrounding verses 12 and 21.

The unmerited grace results of seeking first God’s Kingdom by faith

In Matthew 6:33, Christ teaches the Kingdom of *grace* principle of ***“But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you.”*** Luke 12:31 contains similar words. Verses such as Matthew 6:33 and Luke 12:31 refer to the undeserved *grace results* or *consequences* of believers fulfilling various God-stated conditions. Verses such as these do not relate to fully merited rewards or payments for good works. The expression ***“these things”*** in Matthew 6:33 and Luke 12:31 refer to food, drink, clothes and other things that God knows we need.

In Matthew 6:25-33 and Luke 12:22-31, Jesus declares God will give food, clothes and drink to New Covenant believers in the *same way He feeds the birds*. God feeds birds as a *free unmerited gift*. He does not feed them as a fully merited reward. God does not insist that they do good works which make Him indebted to feed them.

Luke 12:32 refers to God giving us His Kingdom as a free *gift* of His good pleasure. God does not give us His Kingdom as a merited reward. Also note ***“His righteousness”*** referred to in Matthew 6:33 is a free gift (see Romans 5:17) and not a merited reward.

New Covenant verses promising earthly prosperity

In 3 John 2, the Apostle John wrote to his fellow believer Gaius, saying: ***“Beloved, I pray that you may prosper in all things and be in health, just as your soul prospers.”*** In Greek, the two usages of the word ***“prosper”*** above are two forms of the word “euodoo” which means “get along well, prosper, succeed”.⁷

The two forms of the word “euodoo” in the above verse are both in the passive voice in Greek. This means John was praying that another – in this case God – will do the action of prospering Gaius in all other ways just as He was already prospering Gaius’ soul. The passive voice means another will do this action to Gaius.

Many Evangelicals argue 3 John 2 is merely a pleasant wish given in a greeting. They argue this verse does not reveal God’s will. In Greek, the word ***“pray”*** in this verse is “euchomai” which in some contexts can mean “wish”.⁸ “Euchomai” seems to be used in this sense by Paul in Romans 9:3. But note in James 5:16, a form of the word “euchomai” is

⁷ Bauer, page 323.

⁸ Ibid, page 329.

translated “*pray*” and is used in the sense of praying according to God’s will.⁹ Forms of “*euchomai*” are translated “*I pray*” in 2 Corinthians 13:7 and “*we pray*” in 2 Corinthians 13:9.

If John was referring only to a wish, he could have used the optative mood of the word “*prosper*” in Greek. But he did not. In Greek, the optative mood has two functions – to express a wish or what might be a possibility but not a certainty.

The greeting which John gave in this verse is similar to the ones Paul gave at the beginning of his Letters. In Romans 1:7, Paul said: “*To all who are in Rome, beloved of God, called to be saints: Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.*” Paul’s words here were not merely Paul’s pleasant wish for the Roman believers. When Paul said the above, he was speaking God’s will for them. The same applies to his greetings in Romans 16:3-13, 1 Corinthians 1:3, 2 Timothy 1:2 and so on.

When in 3 John 2, John said that Gaius’ soul was prospering, this prosperity was by God’s undeserved grace. It was not a *deserved reward* for obedience and/or faith. John said he wanted Gaius to prosper in all other ways in *the same way* Gaius’ soul was prospering. This means by *undeserved grace*.

The prosperity John was praying to see in Gaius’ life in all areas was according to *God’s definition* of it. God’s definition of prosperity does not equate with all believers being multi-millionaires according to “the American Dream”.

In 1 Corinthians 16:2, Paul uses another form of the word “*euodoo*” found in 3 John 2. 1 Corinthians 16:2-3 says: “*On the first day of the week let each one of you lay something aside, storing up as he may prosper, that there be no collections when I come. And when I come, whomever you approve by your letters I will send to bear your gift to Jerusalem.*” Here Paul reveals that the Corinthians may prosper by *different amounts* on *different weeks*. As a result, they would have different contributions each week to help the poor at the Jerusalem church.

In Greek, the expression “*he may prosper*” is in the present tense, passive voice and subjunctive mood. The context relates to week by week. So the present tense refers to being prospered in an *ongoing* sense. The passive voice means another, in this case *God*, does the action of prospering the believer. In Greek, the subjective mood refers to *possibility*. In other words, Paul is saying there is *no definite nature* about the *measure* or *degree* God will prosper believers from week to week. The measure of prosperity will possibly change each week.

Vine says that “*as he may prosper*” means “in material things; the continuous tense suggests the successive circumstances of *varying* prosperity as week follows week”.¹⁰

The possibly varying degrees of prosperity from week to week are also evidenced in the usage by Paul of the Greek expression “*o ti ean*” which is just before the expression “*he may prosper*”. “*Ean*” means “*if*”.¹¹ “*Ti*” is an *indefinite* pronoun which can mean “anyone, anything, someone, something, many a one or thing”.¹² In his “Intermediate New Testament Greek”, Richard Young says that when used with relative pronouns like “*o*”, the word “*ean*” can mean

⁹ The Nestle-Atland Greek text uses a form of “*proseuchomai*” instead of “*euchomai*” in James 5:16, whereas the Textus Receptus Greek text uses “*euchomai*”.

¹⁰ Vine, page 495.

¹¹ Bauer, page 211.

¹² Ibid, page 819.

“whatever, whoever or whenever”.¹³ In his Interlinear Greek New Testament, Marshall translates “o ti ean” as “*whatever*”.¹⁴ The New King James translates it as “*as*”. The more accurate translation of the Greek of “*as he may prosper*” is instead “whatever he may be prospered”.

Paul used the subjective mood of the Greek verb “*he may prosper*” with the word “ean” meaning “if” combined with “o” and with the indefinite pronoun “ti”, to emphasise the prosperity of New Covenant believers may vary greatly week to week from a smaller to a much larger amount.¹⁵ This is *God’s promise* in 1 Corinthians 16:2. This verse does not promise to make all believers multi-millionaires.

Paul used a similar expression in 1 Corinthians 16:6. He said “*whenever I may go*” (N.A.S.B.). In Greek, the word “*whenever*” is “ou ean” and the expression “*I may go*” is in the present tense and subjective mood just like the phrase “*he may prosper*” in 1 Corinthians 16:2. Remember the subjective mood refers to *possibility*. In 1 Corinthians 16:6, Paul said: “*and perhaps I shall stay with you, or even spend the winter, that you may send me on my way wherever I may go.*” (N.A.S.B.)

Paul’s comments in 1 Corinthians 16:2 explain why he said in Philippians 4:11-12 that sometimes he had an *abundance* and at other times he had a *lack*. Later we will look at Paul’s comments in more detail.

God prospered the Antioch believers to varying degrees

Acts 11:27-29 relates also to prosperous believers helping other believers who were in financial need: “*And in these days prophets came from Jerusalem to Antioch. Then one of them, named Agabus, stood up and showed by the Spirit that there was going to be a great famine throughout all the world, which also happened in the days of Claudius Caesar. Then the disciples, each according to his ability, determined to send relief to the brethren dwelling in Judea.*” In Greek, the expression “*his ability*” is a non-literal translation of a form of the verb “euporeo”. The specific form of the word “euporeo” used in Acts 11:29 literally means “was prospered”.¹⁶ “Euporeo” itself means “to be well provided for, to prosper”¹⁷ or “have plenty, be well off”.¹⁸

Acts 11:27-29 teaches that when compared with each other, the believers at Antioch had experienced *varying levels of prosperity* from God and according to their “*ability*” or varying

¹³ Richard Young, “Intermediate New Testament Greek”, Broadman and Holman Publishers, Nashville, Tennessee, 1994, page 184.

¹⁴ Alfred Marshall (Translator), “The Interlinear NASB-NIV Parallel New Testament in Greek and English”, Zondervan, Grand Rapids, Michigan, 1993, page 516.

¹⁵ As we will see later, 2 Corinthians 8:14 reveals the Corinthian Christians were generally being blessed with abundant prosperity at the time Paul was writing. But note in the same verse, he stated that the Corinthians may in future suffer lack: “*but by an equality, that now at this time your abundance may supply their lack, that their abundance also may supply your lack – that there may be equality.*” In Greek, the second usage of the word “*lack*” is “husterema”. In this context, “husterema” means “want, need, poverty” (Perschbacher, page 423) or “need, want, deficiency in contrast to abundance” (Bauer, page 849).

¹⁶ Marshall, page 379 and Jay Green, “The Interlinear Bible, Hebrew-Greek-English”, Sovereign Grace Publishers, Lafayette, Indiana, 1986, page 853.

¹⁷ Vine, page 670.

¹⁸ Bauer, page 324.

prosperity they helped poor believers in Jerusalem. This is similar to what Paul teaches in 1 Corinthians 16:2.

Read the whole counsel of God's Word!

Note 3 John 2, 1 Corinthians 16:2 and Acts 11:27-29 must be interpreted in relation to verses like Hebrews 10:32-34 and 11:37-39 which show people of strong faith at times can experience the loss of possessions in persecution, sufferings and a lack of material blessings.¹⁹ We must read the *whole counsel* of God, not just single verses which suit our liking.

God wills to prosper New Covenant believers by His undeserved grace and not as a totally deserved reward. He wants to prosper us by His definition of prosperity. This prosperity may vary from week to week and can include times of testing and lack. The prosperity which we as New Covenant believers receive in this earthly life is only the *firstfruits* of their promised inheritance. The fullness of this inheritance and associated prosperity will be received after we go to be with the Lord.

Believers sometimes in need of help from other believers

1 John 3:17 refers to believers who are financially prosperous helping brothers in Christ who are in need: ***“But whoever has this world’s goods, and sees his brother in need, and shuts up his heart from him, how does the love of God abide in him?”*** In Greek, the word ***“need”*** here is a form of the word ***“chreia”*** which means ***“that which is lacking and particularly needed”***²⁰ or ***“need, lack, want, difficulty”***.²¹

A form of the word ***“chreia”*** is also used in Philippians 4:19 when God promises to supply all our needs through the grace of Jesus Christ: ***“And my God shall supply all your need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus.”*** There are many ways God can fulfill this promise. He can do it through our job or business or investments or family inheritance and so on. Or He can do it through fellow believers giving to us (see Galatians 2:10, James 2:15-16 and 1 John 3:17).

But sometimes, some believers suffer periods of great lack because of *persecution* (see Hebrews 10:34 and 11:37), a *God-sent famine* on a nation (see Acts 11:28-30), wealthy believers refusing to obey God’s commands in 1 John 3:17 and James 2:15-16 and other reasons. James 2:15-16 says: ***“If a brother or sister is naked and destitute of daily food, and one of you says to them, ‘Depart in peace, be warmed and filled,’ but you do not give them the things which are needed for the body, what does it profit.”***

¹⁹ Hebrews 10:32-34 says: ***“But recall the former days in which, after you were illuminated, you endured a great struggle with sufferings: partly while you were made a spectacle both by reproaches and tribulations, and partly while you became companions of those who were so treated; for you had compassion on me in my chains, and joyfully accepted the plundering of your goods, knowing that you have a better and an enduring possession for yourselves in heaven.”*** Hebrews 11:37-39 states: ***“They were stoned, they were sawn in two, were tempted, were slain with the sword. They wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins, being destitute, afflicted, tormented – of whom the world was not worthy. They wandered in deserts and mountains, in dens and caves of the earth. And all these having obtained a good testimony through faith, did not receive the promise.”***

²⁰ Louw and Nida, page 563.

²¹ Bauer, page 885.

New Covenant believers and the Mosaic Law's earthly curses and rewards

Galatians 3:13 shows that New Covenant believers are *freed* from the *curse* they deserve which is listed in the Mosaic Law: ***“Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law, having become a curse for us (for it is written, ‘Cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree’).”*** The curse of the Law is death.

One view suggests that as our *representative*, Jesus Christ obtained for New Covenant believers the earthly blessings promised in the Law for those who obey its commands and statutes. Christ perfectly obeyed the Mosaic Law (see Matthew 5:17). Because we are *in Christ*, God by *unmerited grace* credits to us the earthly blessings promised in the Mosaic Law in passages like Leviticus 26:3-13 and Deuteronomy 28:1-14. These earthly blessings are then given to us in God's decided measure, time and way as *totally undeserved gifts* and *not as totally deserved* rewards.

Passages like Philippians 4:19 and 1 Timothy 6:17 reveal that God gives us earthly blessings under the New Covenant as *free gifts* through Jesus Christ.

A wonderful promise but linked partly to turning from known sin

1 Peter 3:9-12 contains a New Testament promise about life and good days: ***“not returning evil for evil or reviling, but on the contrary blessing, knowing that you were called to this, that you may inherit a blessing. For he who would love life and see good days, let him refrain his tongue from evil, and his lips from speaking guile; let him turn away from evil and do good; let him seek peace and pursue it. For the eyes of the Lord are on the righteous, and his ears are open to their prayers; but the face of the Lord is against those who do evil.”***

Peter here refers to the righteous receiving the fulfilment of this promise. The New Testament teaches that all humans are unrighteous in themselves (see Romans 3:10) and can only be righteous by God's undeserved grace through Christ (see Romans 3:10-24). Romans 4:1-4 teaches we are declared righteous by God because of His grace and not as deserved reward or wage for works of service.

In 1 Peter 3:9-12, Peter reveals it is only those justified believers, who fulfil the conditions of blessing those who do evil to them, preventing their tongue from speaking evil and deceit, turning from all their known sins continually, doing good and seeking peace, who will receive the fulfilment of the promises made in these verses.

1 Peter 3:9-12 is a quote from Psalm 34:12-16. Psalm 34:12-16 relates to those who *trust* God (see Psalm 34:8) and through *faith* are not condemned by Him (see Psalm 34:22).

In the original Greek of 1 Peter 3:10, the word ***“life”*** is a form of the word ***“zoe”***. In the New Testament, the word ***“zoe”*** usually refers to eternal life but sometimes it can refer to life in a natural sense (see Luke 16:25).

The expression ***“good days”*** seems to refer to the *quality* of believers' days here on Earth. In Greek, the word ***“good”*** in 1 Peter 3:10 is a form of the word ***“agathos”*** which does not relate to a large number but instead refers to the quality of being good.

In context, 1 Peter 3:10 cannot be promising no suffering, troubles or tribulation. This is because most of the following verses in 1 Peter 3:13-4:19 refer to godly believers suffering persecution and trials. Therefore, 1 Peter 3:9-12 promises good days in the middle of trials and

sufferings for those believers who do what 1 Peter 3:9-12 instructs. The phrase “*good days*” in verse 10 refers to a form of spiritual, emotional, mental, bodily and material prosperity occurring in times of suffering, persecution and trials.

If the word “zoe” in 1 Peter 3:10 refers to eternal life, the refraining from speaking evil and deceit, ceasing committing our known sins, doing good and seeking and pursuing peace mentioned in verses 10 to 12 are the *post-conversion fruits* of conversion and therefore apply to *all* believers. We do not receive eternal life or broader salvation on the basis of the above types of things, but the above things are the normal post-conversion fruits of conversion.

Note that in Greek, the expression “*let him turn away*” is a form of the word “ekklino” which in the context of this verse means “to cease doing something, with the implication of engaging in some alternative”²² or “to decline or turn away from, avoid”.²³ “Ekkolino” is used in 1 Peter 3:11 in relation to our post-conversion actions of *ceasing* or *stopping* doing various known sins.

But if “zoe” refers to natural life, then 1 Peter 3:10-12 is speaking about a *result*, which is based on *God’s unmerited grace*, of our fulfilling His *conditions* stated in these verses. It would relate to God giving us natural blessings as an unmerited grace consequence of our fulfilling the condition of living blameless before Him through faith. The mention of “*Let him turn away from evil and do good*” relates to living lives of integrity or being blameless.

1 Peter 3:9-12 does not refer to totally merited rewards. This is because:

- in Greek, it does not use any of the words for rewards or earned wages or merited payments.
- in verse 9, it uses the word “*blessing*” which in Greek is a form of the word “eulogia”. Forms of the word “eulogia” are used in Galatians 3:9 in relation to the *totally unmerited* blessings of the *Abrahamic Covenant* and in Ephesians 1:3 for the *undeserved spiritual blessings* of the *New Covenant*. A form of “eulogia” is found in Hebrews 6:7 to mean God’s unmerited gifts to the ground and in 2 Corinthians 9:5 in relation to the *free gift* that the believers at Corinth and Achaia were giving to the needy believers in Judea. The word “eulogia” is used in James 3:10 to mean “the act of blessing by which men call down upon other men the *grace* of God”.²⁴ “Eugolia” relates to undeserved grace blessings and not to totally merited rewards.

A key but often neglected condition

Note Peter emphasises here that one of the conditions for experiencing life and seeing good days is to *stop doing our known sins*. This key condition is left out of the messages of many preachers. They say earthly prosperity comes from merely believing, visualising and confessing God will give it to us. We can believe, visualise and confess prosperity and peace all day long for years and be involved in a form of *dead religiosity* if we do not also turn from our known sins in practice.

The false prophets in Jeremiah and Ezekiel’s time repeatedly believed and confessed peace and associated prosperity *without ceasing doing their known sins and without encouraging their listeners to stop doing these also*. Jeremiah 6:13-15 and 8:8-12 reveal that false prophets who were greedy for money deceived God’s people. Jeremiah 8:8 says these Jews

²² Louw and Nida, page 660.

²³ Perschbacher, page 127.

²⁴ Bauer, page 322.

said they were wise and had the Law of the Lord with them. This is even though they were misinterpreting it. Jeremiah 8:8 states: ***“How can you say, ‘We are wise, and the law of the Lord is with us’? Look, the false pen of the scribe certainly works falsehood.”*** This is similar to now. Some say, “I am wise because I have the Word of God” even though they misinterpret it to suit their own lusts.

I believe in positive confession of God’s Word and in prophecies from the Holy Spirit which are not contrary to the Word. But I am grieved in my spirit greatly when I hear people trying to manipulate God by believing and confessing various things while living like the Devil and without them wanting to stop doing their known sins.

Let us set our hearts to obey 1 Peter 3:9-12 and experience its promised wonderful blessings.

Obedience is still important

Under the New Covenant of grace, we cannot fully merit prosperity from God through our obedience to Him. But this does not mean obedience to Him is unimportant. In some situations, God conditions prospering us in a particular way on whether we obey one or more of His instructions. For example, He may guide us by His Holy Spirit to change jobs but we refuse to obey. He may have intended to bless us financially more through the new job than through the old. So through disobedience, we miss out on God’s intended extra blessing.

But note even if we obeyed His Holy Spirit about matters related to our financial state, this would not fully merit or earn God’s material blessings. Under the New Covenant, God blesses believers on the foundation of undeserved grace.

Work

To some extent under the New Covenant, God prospers believers purely out of His sovereignty or supreme rule regardless of their obedience responses. But generally, His prosperity by grace is conditioned on whether believers are willing to obey His instructions about working. 2 Thessalonians 3:10-12 commands believers: ***“For even when we were with you, we commanded you this: If anyone will not work, neither shall he eat. For we hear that there are some who walk among you in a disorderly manner, not working at all, but are busybodies. Now those who are such we command and exhort through our Lord Jesus Christ that they work in quietness and eat their own bread.”*** Remember when I am referring to prosperity here, I mean according to God’s definition of prosperity for us as individuals and not just according to that defined by mere humans.

Ecclesiastes 5:18-19 reveals riches, wealth and the good results of our work are *gifts* of God: ***“Here is what I have seen: It is good and fitting for one to eat and drink, and to enjoy the good of all his labor in which he toils under the sun all the days of his life which God gives him; for it is his heritage. As for every man to whom God has given riches and wealth, and given him power to eat of it, to receive his heritage and rejoice in his labor – this is the gift of God.”*** When we receive pay for our work, we must remember it is God who gives us the ability to produce wealth (see Deuteronomy 8:7-18).

The Bible instructs all Christians to be hard workers. Proverbs 10:4 states the following general principle: ***“He who deals with a slack hand becomes poor, but the hand of the diligent***

makes one rich.” Refer also to Proverbs 14:23. Ephesians 4:28 commands us to work hard: *“Let him who stole steal no longer, but rather let him labor, working with his hands what is good. That he may have something to give him who has need.”* Here we see God also prospers us through our work so we can help others in real need.

The New Testament commands believers to be generous givers to needy believers (see James 2:14-17). But note 2 Thessalonians 3:6-15 reveals we should not give to believers who have a real opportunity to work and earn a living but refuse this.