

Prosperity Under The Mosaic Covenant

The Mosaic Covenant promises prosperity as:

1. a *totally deserved reward* for those who obeyed *all* its moral, civil and ceremonial laws (see Leviticus 26:3-13 and Deuteronomy 28:1-14). Jesus Christ is the *only human* who has merited this type of prosperity. This is because only He has perfectly obeyed the Mosaic Law and God's two love commands every moment of every day (see Matthew 5:17, John 15:13, Philippians 2:8 and Revelation 5:9). The Holy Spirit's resurrection of Christ proves the latter was perfectly righteous by nature and in His daily living. 1 Timothy 3:16 says that that Holy Spirit vindicated Christ.
2. a *slightly deserved reward undergirded* by *God's grace and mercy* for those people with saving faith who have turned back from their sins to Him and are now obeying the Mosaic commands (see Deuteronomy 30:1-10).
The Old Testament also records that God prospered some wicked unbelieving Israelites who were under the Mosaic Covenant and Law.

Prosperity as a totally deserved reward through the Mosaic Law

Let us first look at prosperity as a totally deserved reward through the Mosaic Covenant. Deuteronomy 28:1-8 says: ***“Now it shall come to pass, if you diligently obey the voice of the Lord your God, to observe carefully all His commandments which I command you today, that the Lord your God will set you high above all nations of the earth. And all these blessings shall come upon you and overtake you, because you obey the voice of the Lord your God: blessed shall you be in the city, and blessed shall you be in the country. Blessed shall be the fruit of your body, the produce of your ground and the increase of your herds, the increase of your cattle and the offspring of your flocks. Blessed shall be your basket and your kneading bowl. Blessed shall you be when you come in, and blessed shall you be when you go out. The Lord will cause your enemies who rise against you to be defeated before your face; they shall come out against you one way and flee before you seven ways. The Lord will command the blessing on you in your storehouses and in all to which you set your hand, and He will bless you in the land which the Lord your God is giving you.”***

Deuteronomy 29:9 declares: ***“Therefore keep the words of this covenant, and do them, that you may prosper in all that you do.”*** Leviticus 26:3-12 speaks similarly: ***“If you walk in My statutes and keep My commandments, and perform them, then I will give you rain in its season, the land shall yield its produce, and the trees of the field shall yield their fruit. Your threshing shall last till the time of vintage, and the vintage shall last till the time of sowing; you shall eat your bread to the full, and dwell in your land safely. I will give peace in the land, and you shall lie down, and none will make you afraid; I will rid the land of evil beasts, and the sword will not go through your land. You will chase your enemies, and they shall fall by the sword before you. Five of you shall chase a hundred, and a hundred of you shall put ten thousand to flight; your enemies shall fall by the sword before you. For I will look on you favorably and make you fruitful, multiply you and confirm My covenant with you. You shall***

eat the old harvest, and clear out the old, because of the new. I will set My tabernacle among you, and My soul shall not abhor you. I will walk among you and be your God, and you shall be My people.

The earthly blessings of the Law are totally deserved for *perfect obedience* every day to its various commands. They are not the blessings of God's undeserved grace. These earthly rewards came by *God's direct intervention* into human affairs and were not as a result of some merely impersonal cause and effect principle.

In Deuteronomy 15:4-5, God promised that if the Israelites carefully obeyed *every* command in the Mosaic Law, there would be no poor people among them: ***“except when there may be no poor among you; for the Lord will greatly bless you in the land which the Lord your God is giving you to possess as an inheritance – only if you carefully obey the voice of the Lord your God, to observe with care all these commandments which I command you today.”***

God promised this totally merited reward while fully knowing the Israelites could not fulfil the condition. He did this to stress to them their need for His unmerited grace and mercy. Not many verses later in Deuteronomy 15:11, God said there would always be poor people among the Israelites. Jesus said the same in Matthew 26:11, Mark 14:7 and John 12:8. God knows everything. He knew the Israelites could never obey every one of the Law's commands every day and therefore could never fully deserve the fulfillment of God's promise in Deuteronomy 15:4-5.

There are numerous other verses in the Old Testament which relate prosperity to obedience to the Mosaic Law. Joshua 1:7-8 is one example: ***“Only be strong and very courageous, that you may observe to do according to all the law which Moses My servant commanded you; do not turn from it to the right hand or to the left, that you may prosper wherever you go. This Book of the Law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate in it day and night, that you may observe to do according to all that is written in it. For then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have good success.”*** Note these verses condition prosperity on obedience to *all* the commands of the Mosaic Covenant and Mosaic Law and not just most or some of them.

Deuteronomy 28:15-68 records the poverty and other curses every person deserves who disobeys any of God's laws listed in the Mosaic Covenant. Deuteronomy 28:15 and 29 declares: ***“But it shall come to pass, if you do not obey the voice of the Lord your God, to observe carefully all His commandments and His statutes which I command you today, that all these curses will come upon you and overtake you...you shall not prosper in your ways; you shall be only oppressed and plundered continually, and no one shall save you.”***

Other verses in the Mosaic Law which show poverty is one of the punishments due for any disobedience to its various commands are Leviticus 26:16, 19-20, 26; Deuteronomy 11:17, 28:17-18, 23-24, 40 and 42.

A common error these days is the idea that just being a generous giver and obeying a number of other New Testament commands can take the place of obeying all the commands of the Mosaic Law in order to merit the rewards promised in the following Mosaic Law passages: Deuteronomy 15:4-5, 28:1-8, 29:9 and Leviticus 26:3-13. This serious error involves trying to twist the New Covenant of superlative grace into a mixture of the New and Mosaic Covenants.

To merit the rewards of the Mosaic Law promised in the above passages, we would have to obey all its commands including those which say:

- if we are men, we could not cut our hair at the sides and we could not clip our beards (see Leviticus 19:27).
- we could not wear clothes with mixed fabrics such as cotton and nylon (see Deuteronomy 22:11).
- we would have to stone to death our rebellious sons (see Leviticus 21:18-23).
- we would have to slay all unbelievers and false prophets in our midst (see Deuteronomy 13:1-8).
- we would have to burn to death sexually immoral daughters of church leaders (see Leviticus 21:9).
- we must cancel all debts owed to us every seven years (see Deuteronomy 15:1). These could be business or other debts.

Prosperity as a reward undergirded by grace under the Mosaic Law

The Mosaic Covenant also refers to God prospering the Israelites as a slightly deserved reward undergirded by His grace and mercy. He did this for those Israelites who had previously disobeyed many of His commandments in the Mosaic Law but who then turned from their sins to Him.

Deuteronomy 29:24-28 refers to their wicked ways prior to returning to Him and His resulting punishment of them with all the curses recorded in the Book of Deuteronomy. Then Deuteronomy 30:1-10 says: *“Now it shall come to pass, when all these things come upon you, the blessing and the curse which I have set before you, and you call them to mind among all the nations where the Lord your God drives you, and you return to the Lord your God and obey His voice, according to all that I command you today, you and your children, with all your heart and with all your soul, that the Lord your God will bring you back from captivity, and have compassion on you, and gather you again from all the nations where the Lord your God has scattered you. If any of you are driven out to the farthest parts under heaven, from there the Lord your God will gather you, and from there He will bring you. Then the Lord your God will bring you to the land which your fathers possessed, and you shall possess it. He will prosper you and multiply you more than your fathers. And the Lord your God will circumcise your heart and the heart of your descendants, to love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul, that you may live. Also the Lord your God will put all these curses on your enemies and on those who hate you, who persecuted you. And you will again obey the voice of the Lord and do all His commandments which I command you today. The Lord your God will make you abound in all the work of your hand, in the fruit of your body, in the increase of your livestock, and in the produce of your land for good. For the Lord will again rejoice over you for good as He rejoiced over your fathers, if you obey the voice of the Lord your God, to keep His commandments and His statutes which are written in this Book of the Law, and if you turn to the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul.”*

In Hebrew, the word *“compassion”* in verse 3 above is the action word *“raham”* which means *“to have compassion, be merciful, pity”* (Vine, page 43). In Hebrew, the words *“turn”* in verse 2 and *“turn”* in verse 10 are *“shub”*. The word *“shub”* is used often in the Old Testament in relation to wicked sinners turning or returning from sin to God. In Hebrew, Deuteronomy 30:8 also uses the word *“shub”*, but the New King James Version translates it as *“again”*.

When Deuteronomy 30:2, 8 and 10 refer to converted persons obeying the Mosaic Law, these verses are not saying the persons then totally deserve prosperity as a reward. Instead, they received prosperity as a *slightly deserved reward* on the basis of them fulfilling the conditions of turning from sin to faith in God and of, a result of this, then obeying the Mosaic Law by His power. Their obedience was a *sign* or *fruit* of their having turned or returned to the Lord in their hearts.

Deuteronomy 4:25-31 says similar things to Deuteronomy 30:1-10. Deuteronomy 4:25-31 states: ***“When you beget children and grandchildren and have grown old in the land, act corruptly and make a carved image in the form of anything, and do evil in the sight of the Lord your God to provoke Him to anger, I call heaven and earth to witness against you this day, that you will soon utterly perish from the land which you cross over the Jordan to possess; you will not prolong your days in it, but will be utterly destroyed. And the Lord will scatter you among the peoples, and you will be left few in number among the nations where the Lord will drive you. And there you will serve gods, the work of men’s hands, wood and stone, which neither see nor hear nor eat nor smell. But from there you will seek the Lord your God, and you will find Him if you seek Him with all your heart and with all your soul. When you are in distress, and all these things come upon you in the latter days, when you turn to the Lord your God and obey His voice (for the Lord your God is a merciful God), He will not forsake you nor destroy you, nor forget the covenant of your fathers which He swore to them.”*** In Hebrew, the word ***“merciful”*** above is the describing word ***“raham”*** which means ***“compassionate, merciful”***.¹

Note Leviticus 26:40-45 is a part of the Mosaic Law, but refers to God removing His earthly punishments from previously Law-breaking but now repentant sinners on the basis of His grace promised in the Abrahamic Covenant. This removal of all earthly punishments obviously implies a return to prosperity. For example, if sickness is removed, health is restored. If drought and judgments on the productivity of the land are removed, prosperity in food production and so on is restored. If war and slavery to foreign armies ends, peace and freedom results. Leviticus 26:40-45 says: ***“But if they confess their iniquity and the iniquity of their fathers, with their unfaithfulness in which they were unfaithful to Me, and that they also have walked contrary to Me, and that I also have walked contrary to them and have brought them into the land of their enemies; if their uncircumcised hearts are humbled, and they accept their guilt – then I will remember My covenant with Jacob, and My covenant with Isaac and My covenant with Abraham I will remember; I will remember the land. The land also shall be left empty by them, and will enjoy its sabbaths while it lies desolate without them; they will accept their guilt, because they despised My judgments and because their soul abhorred My statutes. Yet for all that, when they are in the land of their enemies, I will not cast them away, nor shall I abhor them, to utterly destroy them and break My covenant with them; for I am the Lord their God. But for their sake I will remember the covenant of their ancestors, whom I brought out of the land of Egypt in the sight of the nations, that I might be their God: I am the Lord.”***

Even though Leviticus 26:40-45 is based on the Abrahamic Covenant to a large degree, it also in its context implies that one of the signs of true repentance for Israelites under the Mosaic Covenant is to start obeying the Mosaic Law again.

¹ Vine, page 44.

God's other similar wonderful promises

2 Chronicles 7:13-14 refers to God's same promise of grace and mercy to those who turn from their sins to Him during Mosaic Covenant times: ***“When I shut up heaven and there is no rain, or command the locusts to devour the land, or send pestilence among My people, if My people who are called by My name will humble themselves, and pray and seek My face, and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin and heal their land.”***

In Hebrew, the word **“turn”** above is “shub” – the same word used in Deuteronomy 30:2 and 30:10. In 2 Chronicles 7:14 quoted above, the expression **“heal their land”** basically means restore to prosperity. The grace and mercy of God associated with this is evidenced in the fact such prosperity is linked to forgiveness of sin. Forgiveness releases the sinners from their guilt and from the curses promised in the Mosaic Law for disobedience.

2 Chronicles 6:24-31 refers to the same principles of grace and mercy in the Mosaic Covenant era towards Israelites who turned from their sins to God: ***“Or if Your people Israel are defeated before an enemy because they have sinned against You, and return and confess Your name, and pray and make supplication before You in this temple, then hear from heaven and forgive the sin of Your people Israel, and bring back to the land which You gave to them and their fathers. When heaven is shut up and there is no rain because they have sinned against You, when they pray toward this place and confess Your name, and turn from their sin because You afflict them, then hear in heaven, and forgive the sin of Your servants, Your people Israel, that You may teach them the good way in which they should walk; and send rain on Your land which You have given to Your people as an inheritance. When there is famine in the land, pestilence or blight or mildew, locusts or grasshoppers; when their enemies besiege them in the land of their cities; whatever plague or whatever sickness there is; whatever prayer, whatever supplication is made by anyone, or by all Your people Israel, when each one knows his own burden and his own grief, and spreads out his hands to this house: then hear from heaven Your dwelling place, and forgive, and give to everyone according to all his ways, whose heart You know (for You alone know the hearts of the sons of men), that they may fear You, to walk in Your ways as long as they live in the land which You gave to our fathers.”***

Note the emphasis on returning from their sins to God in verses 24 and 26, and on the forgiveness of their sins in verses 27 and 30. Also, observe the expression **“to walk in Your ways”** is the same phrase used frequently in the *Mosaic Law* in relation to *obeying* the Mosaic Covenant's *commands* (see Deuteronomy 5:29-33, 8:6, 10:12-13, 11:22, 19:9, 26:17 and 30:16).

2 Chronicles 6:24-31 promises that the result of such turning from sins to God, forgiveness and new obedience to the Mosaic Law commands was the removal of famine, sickness, disease, plagues of locusts or grasshoppers, attacks by other nations and so on. In other words, God promised a restoration of prosperity on the basis of an undergirding of His grace and mercy.

Prosperity by grace through faith and associated forsaking of sin

Proverbs 28:13 states: ***“He who covers his sins will not prosper, but whoever confesses and forsakes them will have mercy.”*** This verse says God will prosper truly repentant believers

by His mercy and grace. Under the Mosaic Covenant, forsaking their sins meant the Israelites stopped doing these evils and began to obey the commands of the Mosaic Law. God prospered them as a slightly deserved reward undergirded by His grace.

Proverbs 28:25 refers to prosperity coming through *trusting in God*: “...**he who trusts in the Lord will be prospered.**” Faith receives the blessings of God’s undeserved grace. Without faith, it would have been impossible for people living in Mosaic Covenant times to receive the earthly blessings of the Law as slightly deserved rewards undergirded by God’s grace. King Jehoshaphat spoke of prosperity through faith in 2 Chronicles 20:20: “...**Jehoshaphat stood and said, ‘Hear me, O Judah and you inhabitants of Jerusalem: Believe in the Lord your God, and you shall be established: believe His prophets, and you shall prosper.’**”

David’s teachings

In parts of Psalm 23, David refers to prosperity by God’s mercy. Psalm 23:1 and 6 say: “**The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want...Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life...**” David here says God will make sure we do not lack what we really need. In Hebrew, the word “**want**” in verse 1 is “haser” which means “lack, have a need, be lacking”.² In verse 6, David concludes by relating his previous comments to God’s mercy. This verse says God’s mercy or lovingkindness will follow us *all* the days of our lives.

Psalm 34:8-10 refers to those who *trust* and *fear* the Lord not lacking what they really need: “**Oh, taste and see that the Lord is good; Blessed is the man who trusts in Him! Oh, fear the Lord, you His saints! There is no want to those who fear Him. The young lions lack and suffer hunger; but those who seek the Lord shall not lack any good thing.**”

The prosperity by God’s mercy which David refers to in Psalm 23:1, 23:6 and 34:8-10 related to *obeying the Mosaic Law* as a *fruit of faith*. As we see in 1 Kings 2:3, 1 Chronicles 22:12, Psalm 37:31 and 40:8, David emphasised the importance of Israelites obeying the Mosaic Law. Because David and other Israelites sinned, they could not receive the prosperity promised in the Mosaic Covenant as totally merited rewards. But they could receive this prosperity as slightly deserved rewards underpinned by God’s unmerited grace.

The example of David’s life

Those who lived under the Mosaic Covenant and received justification by God’s grace through faith, expressed this grace and faith in their daily lives by a high though imperfect level of obedience to His commands and statutes found in the Law of Moses and were rewarded by Him for this. David’s words in Psalm 18:20-24 and 2 Samuel 22:21-25 show this.

In Psalm 18:20-24, David states: “**The Lord rewarded me according to my righteousness; according to the cleanness of my hands He has recompensed me. For I have kept the ways of the Lord, and have not wickedly departed from my God. For all His judgments were before me, and I did not put away His statutes from me. I was also blameless before Him, and I kept myself from my iniquity. Therefore the Lord has recompensed me according to my righteousness, according to the cleanness of my hands in His sight.**”

² Harris, Archer and Waltke, page 309.

David was not here saying he was righteous, clean and blameless by his own self-efforts, character and nature. Also as we see in Chapter “Integrity in the Old Testament”, being blameless does not refer to permanent sinless perfection on Earth but instead means being a person of faith who cannot be blamed for wrongdoing or committing sin because:

- he has turned from his known sins,
- his specific known and unknown sins have been cleansed and forgiven by God’s grace
- and he is determined to obey God’s known will.

In 1 Kings 11:34, God also said that David obeyed His commandments and statutes. But by this, God was not saying David perfectly obeyed all of these Mosaic commandments and statutes every day of his life. 2 Samuel 11:1-27 records David committed adultery and murder. Also, in Psalm 51:3-5, David acknowledged his sins and the fact he was born with a sinful nature. In Psalm 25:6-11, David records how great was his iniquity and how sinful he had been in his youth. In Psalm 32:5 David also admitted his sins.

Also observe Romans 4:5-8 and Psalm 32:1-2 reveal David understood credited righteousness from God. Romans 4:5-8 records Paul’s words about David: ***“But to him who does not work but believes on Him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is accounted for righteousness, just as David also describes the blessedness of the man to whom God imputes righteousness apart from works: ‘Blessed are those whose lawless deeds are forgiven, and whose sins are covered; blessed is the man to whom the Lord shall not impute sin.’”***

David was not declared righteous by God on the basis of his mostly high level of obedience to God’s Mosaic commands and laws. In Romans 3:20 and Galatians 2:16, Paul says no one has ever been justified or declared righteous through their obedience to the Mosaic Law.

David was declared righteous by God’s grace through faith. In Psalm 37:5-6, David showed the link between faith or trust in God and being righteous. In Psalm 34:22, David revealed that those with real trust in God will not be condemned by Him: ***“The Lord redeems the soul of His servants, and none of those who trust in Him shall be condemned.”***

As we see in Psalm 51, David in humble faith and repentance asked for forgiveness and cleansing from his acts of adultery and murder. In Psalm 103:10-12, David said: ***“He has not dealt with us according to our sins, nor punished us according to our iniquities. For as the heavens are high above the earth, so great is His mercy toward those who fear Him; As far as the east is from the west, so far has He removed our transgressions from us.”***

David’s example shows us that the rewards promised under the Mosaic Covenant for fallen humans were *undergirded* or *underpinned* by *God’s undeserved grace*. David, like all other humans, was a sinner who really deserved all the curses of the Law. It was only because David had his sins forgiven and had righteousness credited to him by God’s grace through faith, that David was given the opportunity of obeying God’s moral, civil and ceremonial laws through which he received the blessings of prosperity and prolonged life promised in the Law.

Kings Uzziah and Hezekiah

2 Chronicles 26:3-5 and 31:20-21 refer to the godly Kings Uzziah and Hezekiah, both of Judah, being prospered by God. But because 1 Kings 8:46 and Psalm 143:2 reveal that all fallen humans sin, God did not prosper Uzziah and Hezekiah as a totally merited reward. These

two kings had faith in God and genuinely though imperfectly obeyed His known will. So God rewarded them with prosperity on the basis of an underpinning of His unmerited grace and mercy.

Daniel prospered in difficult times

Daniel 6:28 records Daniel prospered in the reigns of King Darius and King Cyrus. God prospered Daniel, the man of faith and obedience to the Mosaic Law. Daniel's faith is recorded in Daniel 6:23 and his emphasis on obedience to the Mosaic Law in Daniel 9:4-13. God prospered him as a slightly deserved reward undergirded by His grace.

But note such prosperity occurred in the *context of difficult trials*. The governors and satraps of King Darius plotted to destroy Daniel. They were jealous of him and hated him. So they succeeded in tricking King Darius into putting Daniel in a lion's den. God saved Daniel from the lions, but he still had to experience the possibility of a cruel death (see Daniel 6:1-23).

Also, note Daniel was living in a foreign land under the rule of pagan kings. He had probably seen the killing of many of his fellow Judeans by the Babylonians years earlier. This does not mean Daniel experienced suffering every day of his life. But it does mean we must understand Daniel's God-given prosperity in its broader context.

Daniel 12:13 reveals God promised Daniel that he would receive the fullness of his part of God's inheritance at his death. This is similar to all believers. We will only receive the full measure of prosperity from God at our deaths.

During this earthly life, we will receive only the *first fruits* of this prosperity and inheritance. None of us can claim prosperity as a totally merited reward which God owes us immediately.

Earthly blessings by grace for the sinful Danites

In the times of the Israelite judges, a woman from the tribe of Ephraim made a carved image and a moulded image (see Judges 17:1-5). Her son Micah had his own religious shrine and made an ephod and some household idols for it. Also he made one of his sons his priest (see Judges 17:5).

Micah and his mother did all these things in disobedience to the Mosaic Law. His mother had some type of corrupted belief in the Lord. She spoke of the Lord blessing her son (verse 2) and of her totally dedicating her silver "*to the Lord*" so her son could make the pagan images (verse 3).

Later Micah appointed a Levite as his own personal priest at his shrine. Micah even foolishly imagined the Lord would bless him for having a Levite priest operate at his religious shrine containing the ephod and household idols. Judges 17:13 records: "*Then Micah said, 'Now I know that the Lord will be good to me, since I have a Levite as priest.'*"

Judges Chapter 18 reveals the Israelite tribe of Dan were seeking to conquer some territory in the land of Canaan. Judges 1:34 shows the Danites had been previously unsuccessful in conquering the territory God assigned to them.

The Danites went to Micah's Levite priest and tried to inquire of God through him (see Judges 18:2-5). If they had any sense, they would have known this Levite priest was not in a good relationship with God. The Levite was mixing the worship of God with the adoration of

pagan idols and images. But note Judges 18:5-6 records: “***So they said to him, ‘Please inquire of God, that we may know whether the journey on which we go will be prosperous.’ And the priest said to them, ‘Go in peace. May the presence of the Lord be with you on your way.’***”

Judges 18:27-31 shows the Danites were later successful in conquering Laish. Verses 27 and 31 mention the Danites also carried and set up Micah’s carved image for themselves.

On the basis of the Levite priest’s supposed guidance from the Lord recorded in Judges 18:5-6 and their carrying of the pagan image when they were successful in conquest, the Danites probably imagined God approved of their mixing of the worship of Him with pagan idols and images. They did not understand that God had helped them through His pure *undeserved grace* and *mercy*.

In the Abrahamic Covenant, God had promised to give Abraham’s descendants all the land of Canaan (see Genesis 13:14-17). So in helping the Danites, God was *not rewarding* their sinful behaviour. Here again, we see that under the Mosaic Covenant, God’s earthly blessings were not always rewards for works of obedience to the Mosaic Law.