

# Prosperity Gospel or Poverty Gospel?

Study Notes Prepared by Dr. Ian A. H. Bond

## I. PROSPERITY IS GOD'S WILL

A. 3 John 2-4, 11—the truth of God's Word is that God desires that believers be prosperous.

1. **εὐδοκῶ**, *euodoo*, means “to help on the road; succeed in reaching.”
2. Divine prosperity is not a momentary, passing phenomenon, but rather it is an **ongoing, progressing state of success and blessing**.

B. Defining Prosperity.

1. “The world's definition of prosperity is financial, political and military power. It is based on a scale of dollars and cents. But true prosperity is the ability to use God's ability and power to meet the needs of mankind: spirit, soul, body, financially and socially.” (Kenneth Copeland).
2. Biblical prosperity includes:
  - a) **Spiritual prosperity** (see John 3:3-7).
  - b) **Mental prosperity** (see Philippians 4:6, 7).
  - c) **Physical prosperity** (see 3 John 2 in the KJV)

## II. BIBLICAL PROMISES OF PROSPERITY

A. Old Testament

1. Before the Fall: Genesis 2:12
2. Consider Abraham: Isaiah 51:1, 2; Genesis 13:2; 24:1
3. Isaac: Genesis 26:12, 13
4. Moses, the Lawgiver, came out with all the gold of Egypt: Deuteronomy 8:18
5. The Prophets: Isaiah 60:5

B. New Testament

1. Jesus: Luke 6:38; Mark 10:17-30; Matthew 8:20; Luke 8:1-3; John 13:29.
2. Paul: 2 Corinthians 9:8; Philippians 4:19

## III. AVOID EXTREME “PROSPERITY TEACHING”

A. The “**Prosperity Gospel**” emphasizes the **KJV translation of 3 John 2**.

1. A person may be well in body and financially, but **sick in soul**.

B. The KJV translate **εὐδοκῶ** “to prosper.”

1. It means “to be led in a good way, to have a prosperous journey; figuratively, to make prosperous, give success to.”
  - a) See its use in Romans 1:10 (compare Acts 27:1-28:10 and 1

Corinthians 16:2).

2. Biblical prosperity is “successfully accomplishing the task committed to us by God” (Dr. Derek Prince).

C. Other truths from 3 John 2

1. Health and finance are physical, but you need to **pray** for them; not for yourself, but for others.
2. “Be in health” is **ὑγιαίνω**, *hygiaino*, to enjoy good health.
  - a) Used by Luke the physician to describe those who are “fit and well” or “safe and sound” (see Luke 5:31; 7:10; 15:27).

D. A wise note of balance from Dr. John Stott:

1. There is biblical warrant here for desiring the physical as well as the spiritual welfare of our Christian friends. At the same time, those who have recently developed the so-called ‘prosperity gospel’ (*viz.* That God means all his children to enjoy health and wealth in abundance) can find in this text only the flimsiest foundation for their position. Consider these points:
  - a) They depend almost entirely on Old Testament promises of prosperity.
  - b) They are insensitive to the poverty and hunger of many believers in developing nations.
  - c) They overlook the New Testament emphasis on adversity rather than prosperity as the chief mark of the followers of the Suffering Servant.

#### IV. BREAKING THE CURSE OF POVERTY

A. Poverty is a curse.

1. Definition of **true poverty** is the opposite of the definition of **true prosperity** (see Revelation 2:9).

B. Some deliberately turn away from the **material wealth** of this world, making themselves **poor**, while in the **spiritual** realm they have great **riches**.

1. Proverbs 13:7: “There is one who makes himself rich, yet has nothing; And one who makes himself poor, yet has great riches.” (NKJV)
2. Paul was one of these. (2 Corinthians 6:4-5, 10)
3. There are some Christians who practice **voluntary poverty**... and I respect their convictions.

C. Origin of the curse of poverty.

1. Man was created to live in **total prosperity**: spirit, soul and body.
2. Through sin **death reigned**, which produced a marring of man's fundamental role as laborer/provider (see Genesis 3:17-19).