

October 25, 2009
"PROSPERITY AND NEED", *Daily Disciple*, page 307



Psalm 37:16-17

- ¹⁶ Better the little that the righteous have
than the wealth of many wicked;
- ¹⁷ for the power of the wicked will be broken,
but the LORD upholds the righteous.

MEDITATION

“How easy it is to take hold of the horns of the very altar of God and plead that God may help us because of his promises to us, and because we are in the line of duty. What if I plead in vain? But I do not; I may have to wait, but plead in vain, never! By waiting I renew my zeal, for my mind is, by the grace of God, made up, and my life is consecrated to his work, in prosperity or adversity, in life or in death. The act of persisting in my efforts under apparently unpromising circumstances is of itself strengthening to both faith and purpose. (Ashley S. Johnson, *The Life of Trust*, 159.)

SCRIPTURE

¹⁶ "Therefore, this is what the LORD says: 'I will return to Jerusalem with mercy, and there my house will be rebuilt. And the measuring line will be stretched out over Jerusalem,' declares the LORD Almighty.

¹⁷ "Proclaim further: This is what the LORD Almighty says: 'My towns will again overflow with prosperity, and the LORD will again comfort Zion and choose Jerusalem.' "

(Zechariah 1:16-17)

PRAYER

“My Father, may I be faithful to you in prosperity or adversity, in life or death. Increase my trust in you.”

Digging Deeper: Finding out, discussion and sharing

1. This devotional message is sort of a continuation of last week's emphasis on wealth and poverty. But we are going one step further and exploring the difference between what we need and what we don't need.
2. Read all of Psalm 37 and answer the following questions:
 - a. How does this Psalm begin?
 - b. What would you say is the theme of this Psalm?
 - c. Verse 16 of this Psalm almost sounds like a preserved proverb. Why is this pronouncement true?
 - d. What is the relationship between wealth and power?
 - e. Does the church fall into the cultural trap of thinking its available wealth is a measure of its spiritual power?
 - f. How do you think the Lord breaks the power of the wicked who trust in the power of their riches?
3. Ashley Johnson, in his meditation above, focuses on a couple of vital elements relative to our prayer life and our needs/wants.
 - a. I like the metaphor he employs of taking hold of the horns of the very altar of God. This depicts intensity in one's prayer life when asking for things. We find Jesus depicted in the garden of Gethsemane in prayerful agony and intensity. What image and what circumstance might describe our most intense pleading with God?
 - b. Having to wait for God to answer our prayers in not pleading in vain. What are some reasons that God might say "not now" for something I am praying intensely for?
 - c. What does James 4:1-3 add to this part of the discussion?
 - d. Do you think that we miss many blessing because we just do not ask for them?
 - e. What might be involved in our praying with wrong motives?
 - f. The act of persistence in prayer is a demonstration of faith. Jesus told two parables in the gospel of Luke that demonstrates this.
 - 1) Read the parable of the persistent neighbor in Luke 11:5-12. What do we learn from this?
 - 2) Read the parable of the persistent widow in Luke 18:1-8. What do we learn from this one?
4. Zechariah, like the other minor prophets, sought to encourage the Jews who were returning to their homeland following captivity. They needed to rebuild the temple and regain their sense of identity in God's plan for the kingdom.
 - a. In Zechariah 1:7-17 the prophet has a vision.
 - b. According to verse 14, what does the angel want him to proclaim?
 - c. Why is the Lord angry with the nations that feel secure?
 - d. As we studied last week, the word "goodness" is the Hebrew word for prosperity. What are the "good" things that God will give Israel when she is faithful? (Read through Zechariah and make a list)

