

The Word of God Prospers Us Psalm 1:1-6; Joshua 1:8

Flourishing, succeeding, thriving, and growing in a vigorous way are words used to define what it means to prosper. Prosperity means good fortune, wealth and success. But people view what it means to prosper in different ways.

One article I read stated that to become prosperous you need to make money. Money affords you what you want in life. One person may want to earn money in order to travel extensively. Others view prosperity as having enough to live comfortably so they can spend more time with family.

The world puts a dollar figure on prosperity. If you consider the above definition, would you think of yourself as prosperous? You may not, but someone may look at you and say you are especially if you are, from a very poor nation. If the measurement is based on net worth, then my grandmother was never prosperous by a long shot. She once said that she never knew how poor she was till the government told her. But prosperity to her wasn't measured in dollars or possessions. It was measured in the depth of her character and spiritual life.

So what does the Bible have to say about prosperity and specifically, what does our passage have to say about it?

We will be looking at both **Joshua 1** and **Psalm 1**.
Joshua 1:1-9 (v. 8)

This is the beginning of the fulfillment of the covenant God made with Abraham that an inheritance of land would be given to his descendants who would be as numerous as the sand. Several passages in Genesis lay out the five parts of the covenant God made with him.

God promised to make Abraham into a great nation (**Genesis 12:2**).

God promised to increase his descendants to be like the sands of the sea (**Genesis 22:17**).

God promised to bless those who blessed his descendants and curse those who cursed them (**Genesis 12:3**).

God promised to give his descendants the land of Palestine as an inheritance.

God promised that the whole world would be blessed through his seed, referring to Christ, (**Galatians 3:16**) and that Christ would rule over all His enemies (**Genesis 22:17-18**).

The guarantee that this covenant would happen was in God Himself. His oath was secure because of His name and character alone.

Genesis 22:16 “I swear by Myself, declares the Lord.”

Hebrews 6:13-18

The guarantee that God would do what He promised was solely based on His name, His character, His reputation. The condition of this covenant was Abraham's willingness to obey God.

Genesis 17:1 “I am the Almighty God; walk before Me, and be perfect.”

Genesis 22:16ff “By Myself have I sworn...because you have done this thing, and have not withheld your son, your only son: that in blessing I will bless you...because you have obeyed my voice.”

He was to walk before God.

He was to obey God's voice.

He was to keep God's commands and he would prosper.

Obedience was required.

God passed on the covenant to Isaac and then to Jacob. At times all three demonstrated a lack of faith and trusted in self rather than in God, and we see the results of their wrong choices, but in the end and here in **Joshua 1** we see the beginning of God keeping His promise to His covenant people.

The nation of Israel stood on the banks of the Jordan River. They were waiting for their marching orders from God. Moses had died, but earlier Joshua had been commissioned by Moses in the sight of all the nation that he would be their new leader. God expected the same obedience from Joshua as He did from Moses.

Joshua was to walk before God as Moses did.

Joshua was to obey God's voice as Moses did.

Joshua was to keep God's commands as Moses did and he would prosper.

God told Joshua that He **determined** to give them their inheritance.

God **defined** the territory that would belong to them.

God **dispelled** any fear Joshua may have had by telling him that He would be with him as He was with Moses. He would never leave him or forsake him, so be strong and take courage.

Do you ever wonder if that last part is true? Do you ever wonder if some how God has forsaken you?

When we come to **verse 8**, God gives three conditions by which Joshua and Israel would prosper and be successful when they entered the land. The Book of the Law was not to depart from them, they were never to forget it – not in their talking about it, in their thinking about it or in their doing it. The Law of God was a reference to the first five books – Genesis through Deuteronomy which contained the Law God gave Moses for Israel to follow. They were told not to let the book of the Law depart from them.

The word **“depart”** means to divide, go away, leave or turn aside. It was first used in **Exodus 13:22** which tells us that the pillar of cloud and pillar of fire did not depart or leave them day or night.

It was used next in **Exodus 33:11** where it says that after Moses left the tent of meeting and returned to the camp following a discussion with God that Joshua did not leave the Tabernacle.

God told Joshua that the Law, the Word of God, was not to depart from him. He was to meditate on it day and night and then do what it said. If he did that, they would prosper. They would be successful in achieving what God had promised.

Let me remind you that the word meditate literally means to mutter or moan. It was a low sound, the kind of mourning sound a dove makes. It was customary in reading Scripture, to read it out loud in a low tone, under your breath. As you did that you read it with thoughtfulness. Meditation has the idea

of lingering over God's Word.

There is a musical notation in some of the Psalms. It's the word *Selah*. It means to pause a moment, rest and reflect on what was just sung. That's what we are to do in meditation as we read Scripture – pause for a moment and think about it.

It was used to describe a cow chewing its cud. As a cow would bring up again and chew on what it had just eaten to get more nourishment from it, so the believer is to bring to mind again the things from God's Word he has read and chew on it for more spiritual nourishment, reflecting on it for the purpose of gleaning what there is from the passage.

If Joshua meditated on and then obeyed God's Word, he and the nation of Israel would prosper in the task that was before them, namely the conquest of the land. God was very clear: obey and great things would happen, disobey and there would be consequences.

This passage isn't telling us that when we meditate on and obey God's Word that everything we set our minds and hands to do will prosper. This is not saying that for obedience we can expect health, wealth, and happiness. In fact, God's desire for us to prosper may not include material wealth at all. Remember that Paul warned Timothy **“Those who want to get rich fall into temptation and a trap and into many foolish and harmful desires that plunge them into ruin and destruction.”** (**I Timothy 6:9**)

Prosperity can become a substitute for what God really wants to do in the believer's life when we pursue Him and His righteousness (**Matthew 6:33**). The aim of obedience should be eternal rather than material and temporal. In the **Hebrews 11** list of God's faithful, many were poor and destitute. Many suffered physical ailments that weren't miraculously healed. Others were persecuted and maligned. They lived in caves and on mountains. They were far from the world's standard of what would be considered prosperous. Their prosperity was not in material goods, but rather in a richer sense the prosperity of generosity, love, kindness,

the fruit of the Spirit, and in fellowship with Christ and one another. Let's never forget that any material prosperity we may have was given by the grace of God. Yes, we may work hard for it, but it is His to give just as much as it is His to take away.

The principle in **Joshua 1:8** is that when we are meditating on and obeying God's Word, the tasks He gives us to do will prosper. Notice the difference. It's doing what He wants in His way vs. what we want in our own way. Again, I'm not suggesting that God won't or can't bless if you are obedient to His Word and will. Prosperity is more than material possessions from God's perspective.

Abraham and Job were both obedient and God richly blessed them. On the other hand, Paul was obedient but lived day by day. He suffered an unknown ailment that even after earnestly praying, God would not remove. John was obedient and he was sentenced to live out his remaining days as a prisoner on the island of Patmos.

For Joshua to be successful in the conquest of the land, there were three requirements.

First, the law was not to depart from his mouth. That meant he was supposed to talk about it.

Deuteronomy 6:7 "Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up."

I was talking with someone last Sunday who has regular devotions with his kids. Don't let the Word of God depart from your mouth. Talk about it. Pass it on from one generation to the next. Part of the reason we are seeing a moral dilemma in our nation with these recent shootings, part of the reason younger generations are leaving church and many churches are dangerously flirting with liberal theology and the acceptance of cultural norms is that we have not been diligent to take seriously the admonition of **Deuteronomy 6** to teach our children the truth of God's Word. Use every opportunity to talk about and apply its truth in everyday life.

But it's not just to be talked about it. The **second** requirement was to think about it, meditate on it.

Psalm 119:97 "Oh, how I love Your law! I meditate on it all day long."

Joshua was to meditate on it day and night. That simply means to have God's Word in front of you all the time. **Psalm 63:6** "On my bed I remember You; I think of You through the watches of the night." When King David couldn't sleep, he thought about God and His Word in the night.

We may read God's Word, but how much time do we roll it over in our mind, chew on it to glean new spiritual nourishment?

But while it's one thing to talk about it and then to think about it, the **third** requirement is to do it.

James 1:22 says we are to be doers of the Word and not just hearers only, otherwise we deceive ourselves. Joshua was told to do it carefully. That means to keep or guard or attend to, to pay careful attention to every detail.

Proverbs 4:20-23

In **v. 7** Joshua was told to be careful not to turn to the left or the right. In other words, when it comes to obeying God's Word, don't deviate from it in the slightest. Keep a steady, straight-ahead course.

In the news last week they were interviewing a pediatrician and mother talk about the baby formula shortage. She cautioned against diluting the formula mix with more water because that decreases the balance in nutrition and electrolytes that are necessary for healthy development of the baby.

When we deviate from the ingredients of God's Word by not doing all it says, we decrease the overall impact God's Word can have in our lives. If we want to prosper in the thing God has sent us out to accomplish, if we want to succeed in the Christian life, we must not let the Word of God depart from our mouth. We must meditate on it throughout the day and then we must then do it.

We see the same message in **Psalm 1** except in **Psalm 1** there is a contrast between two men and the result of their choices. Let's talk first about the way of the godly.

I. THE WAY OF THE GODLY – vv. 1-3

If you want your way to prosper, **verse 1** says there are things the godly man avoids.

A. What the Godly Man Avoids – v. 1

First of all we notice that this person is blessed. While the word can mean holy, sacred or consecrated, it also means enjoying great happiness, or to be blissful. That's the intent here. The person who chooses the right path to take will have an air of joy and contentment and peace because he has made right choices, wise choices in where he goes, what he does and with whom he does them.

Culture says if you want to have fun, you need to let your hair down and live it up, be wild and free. The philosophy is to eat, drink and be merry, because tomorrow you die. It's the story of the prodigal son who got his inheritance early. **Luke 15** tells us he squandered his wealth on wild living.

When my brother was in the service, he talked about all the guys who went out and got drunk only to have to deal with the hangover the next day. They thought it was fun, but in the end only misery.

Psalm 1:1 tells us that the happy man, the contented man, the blissful man avoids a certain path and he avoids a certain partnership.

1. Where the godly does not stroll – v. 1a

To walk means to go after or to follow. It means to order your life by what they say or how they advise. That doesn't mean you can't have friends with someone who is unsaved. It doesn't mean you can't hang out with them. After all, if you don't spend some time with them, how else will they see you live out or speak about the gospel. What David is saying here is that we don't follow them by doing what they are doing that is wicked or evil.

Proverbs 1:8-16

Proverbs 2:12-22

Much of Proverbs teaches us what path to avoid and what path we should take to be blessed, to walk in integrity and wisdom, to be godly in character and

lifestyle. We see that in **Proverbs 1:9** where it says that when we follow right teaching, it will be a garland of grace around our head and a chain to adorn our neck, meaning that those who follow godly wisdom will add beauty and honor to their lives instead of disgrace.

David says that this person doesn't follow after the counsel of the wicked or ungodly. There are some things that are okay to get advice from someone who isn't a Christian.

You might ask advice about buying a tool or a car. You might ask advice about a recipe or a certain vacation spot.

You might ask advice about who the best plumber or mechanic is in town.

But there are some things you should never seek their advice about because it will take you down a wrong path. When you walk with them down that path, they will lead you astray. They are people who have left God out. They have no compelling interest in pursuing God. They have no fear of God.

In Proverbs, 80 times the wicked or ungodly person is contrasted with the godly or righteous person.

Looking at their character outlined in Proverbs, are they the kind of people you want to get advice from? The blessed person avoids their counsel.

The godly not only avoids strolling after the counsel of the wicked or ungodly, he avoids standing in the way of sinners.

2. Where the godly does not stand – v. 1b

To stand means to station oneself. Jesus gives us a valuable lesson. We read that He was a friend of sinners, that He ate with sinners. Because of that, the Pharisees thought Jesus was a sinner too just by association. But while He may have hung out with them, He never aligned or positioned Himself with them. He didn't do what they were doing. When they made suggestive comments or told course jokes, He didn't chime in with them. He didn't use their offensive talk to gain acceptance by them. He may have been around them, but He didn't join in with them. He may have been with them but didn't stand with them. He came to seek and save sinners.

Because the lifestyle of the ungodly person is habitually sinful, that his wickedness is a way of life for him, the godly person does not station himself with the ungodly by looking like them.

My aunt is not from the south but grew up in upstate New York. After she was married, they moved to Virginia. Over time she developed a southern accent.

A friend of mine, who was a Christian, told me of times when sales reps would come into town. They would go out for dinner and then afterward they would want to go to a strip club, and she said that's where they parted company.

How are you when you are with those who are not saved? Are you like them to try and blend in, not feel so out of place? Or can they tell a difference because you don't act like them, join in with them?

The happy man does not stand in the way of sinners. We are not to be Christian chameleons.

David tells us where the godly man does not stroll, where the godly man does not stand, and then where the godly man does not sit.

3. Where the godly man does not sit – v. 1c

To sit means to settle oneself or be at home. This verse makes me think of Lot. After he and Abraham separated, it says he looked and saw land that was well watered. That's where he decided to settle and it says he pitched his tent toward Sodom. Next, we see him living in Sodom, and finally we see him sitting at the gate in Sodom. That was a position of influence, a place of authority. Townsfolk gathered there to discuss legal matters. But when I read about the angels coming to Sodom to retrieve Lot and his family from the pending destruction, I see someone who settled in and got comfortable because when the men of Sodom came to get Lot's guests to have sexual relations with them, Lot had no influence on them. He was mocked by them.

David describes these men as scornful. They openly mock God. It's not just that they have ignored or left God out, they outright despise Him, ridicule

Him, and reject His Word. They hate God and are antagonistic toward Him. The godly man chooses not to settle in with them. Scripture tells us to come out from among them and be separate.

Proverbs 14:12 “There is a way that seems right to a man, but in the end it leads to death.”

I Corinthians 15:33-34a “Do not be misled: ‘Bad company corrupts good character (morals).’ Come back to your senses as you ought, and stop sinning.”

Contrast that with **Psalm 37:23** “The steps of a good man are ordered by the Lord, and he delights in His ways.”

Are you avoiding a stroll with the wicked, standing with sinners, and sitting with mockers?

David then tells us what the godly man aspires.

B. What the Godly Man Aspires – v. 2

First the Word of God is this man's delight.

1. The Word of God is this man's delight – v. 2a

Jeremiah 15:16 “When Your words came, I ate them; they were my joy and my heart's delight, for I bear Your name, O Lord God Almighty.”

Job 23:11-12 “My feet have closely followed His steps; I have kept to His way without turning aside. I have not departed from the commands of His lips; I have treasured the words of His mouth more than my daily bread.”

When Francis Schaffer was asked about what the Bible meant to him, he clutched it to his chest and said it was the most precious thing he owned.

Of what significance is the Bible to you? How important is it in your daily life? Do you read it with delight? Do you delight in God's Word? Do you delight in God's ways?

The blessed man delights in God's Word.

David then points out that the Word of God is this man's determination.

2. The Word of God is this man's determination

– v. 2b

“on His law he meditates day and night.”

We'll not spend time on this thought because we looked at it last week and from **Joshua 1:8**, except to remind you of the importance in the life of the believer to spend time with God's Word in serious study and thought. Be like the Bereans in **Acts 17:11** and search Scripture to see if what you are being taught lines up with what the Bible says.

Thomas a Kempis once said **“I have no rest, but in a nook, with the Book”** referring to the Bible.

Again, meditation not only includes careful contemplation in what it says, but also careful obedience to it as well.

Is God's Word your delight?

Is God's Word your determination?

The godly man aspires after the Word of God. **Verse 3** then tells us what the godly man achieves.

C. What the Godly Man Achieves – v. 3

We touched on this in **Joshua 1:8**. Walvoord and Zuck in their commentary sum it up nicely. **“If a person meditates on God's Word, his actions will be godly, and his God-centered activities will prosper, that is, [they – his activities] will come to their divinely directed fulfillment.”**

This is a planted tree not a wild tree. It was purposefully planted along streams of water. Streams in Scripture refer to abundance. Sometimes farmers would plant their crops or trees along a river in rows and then dig tributaries between the rows so that the stream could naturally water them. He didn't leave it up to chance or the weather. He did everything possible for what was planted to prosper. That's what God's Word does when we delight in it and meditate on it. It helps us prosper in what God has sent us to do. Just as the tree yields the fruit expected, so God yields the expected fruit in the life and through the life of the person who delights in His Word and who determines to live by it through careful meditation and application

because he is in conformity to the Word of God.

The Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament says: **“Real prosperity results from the work of God in the life of one who seeks God with all his heart.”**

Let me close with a thought about **verses 4-6** because they speak to the way of the ungodly. Jeremiah asks the question that is on our minds when he wonders why the wicked seem to prosper and the righteous don't (**Jeremiah 12:1**). Don't worry if the wicked seem to prosper while you seem to struggle. Don't envy them. A day of judgment is coming for them.

Psalm 37:7-11

Psalm 73:12-20

From **Psalm 1**, here is what I would say about the way of the ungodly.

II. THE WAY OF THE UNGODLY – vv. 4-6

A. His Defilement Is Evident – v. 4

It says he is like chaff which the wind blows away. **Verse 1** gave us a synopsis of his character. He is wicked and a mocker. Chaff is the refuse that's left after the harvest has been gleaned. It's worthless.

B. His Demise Is Established – v. 5

This verse doesn't mean he won't stand judgment, but that when he is judged, he will be found guilty. He will have no defense for his actions and will be punished. They will not stand with the righteous.

C. His Destiny Is Eternal – v. 6

They will perish. It's the same word used in **John 3:16** about the person who does not believe in Jesus as Savior. This isn't annihilation or a ceasing to exist, but destruction, or ruin. It is eternal punishment. God's wrath will be poured out on them, and it will be forever.

So how about you? If your desire is to prosper in the work God gives you, if your desire is to succeed in the Christian life, growing in Christlikeness, then these passages give some guidance. Don't let God's Word depart from you, meditate on and then do it. Be careful where you walk and who you walk with. Delight in God's Word and you will bear fruit.