

The PROMISE & PERIL of PRO\$PERITY

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Stories of Four Rich Men from the Gospel of Luke

2

WARNING: THE FOLLOWING
CONTENT MAY BE DISTURBING
TO SOME VIEWERS.

VIEWER DISCRETION IS ADVISED.

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The Promise of Prosperity: Rich Man #1

Luke 12:13 – 21

The Parable of the Rich Fool

¹³ Someone in the crowd said to him, “Teacher, tell my brother to divide the inheritance with me.”

¹⁴ But he said to him, “Man, who made me a judge or arbitrator over you?” ¹⁵ And he said to them,

“Take care, and be on your guard against all covetousness, for one’s life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions.”

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¹⁶ And Jesus told them a parable, saying, “The land of a rich man produced plentifully, ¹⁷ and he thought to himself, ‘What shall I do, for I have nowhere to store my crops?’ ¹⁸ And he said, ‘I will do this: I will tear down my barns and build larger ones, and there I will store all my grain and my goods. ¹⁹ And I will say to my soul, “Soul, you have ample goods laid up for many years; relax, eat, drink, be merry.”’

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²⁰ But God said to him, ‘You fool! This very night your soul is required of you, and the things you have prepared, whose will they be?’ ²¹ So is the one who lays up treasure for himself and is not rich toward God.”

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Why does God call this man a fool?

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Instead of being like the rich fool who trusted in his wealth, Jesus goes on to teach what we should do instead:

Luke 12:22 - 34

²² And He said to his disciples, “Therefore I tell you, do not be anxious about your life, what you will eat, nor about your body, what you will put on. ²³ For life is more than food, and the body more than clothing.

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²⁴ Consider the ravens: they neither sow nor reap, they have neither storehouse nor barn, and yet God feeds them. Of how much more value are you than the birds! ²⁵ And which of you by being anxious can add a single hour to his span of life? ²⁶ If then you are not able to do as small a thing as that, why are you anxious about the rest?

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²⁷ Consider the lilies, how they grow: they neither toil nor spin, yet I tell you, even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. ²⁸ But if God so clothes the grass, which is alive in the field today, and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, how much more will He clothe you, O you of little faith!

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²⁹ And do not seek what you are to eat and what you are to drink, nor be worried. ³⁰ For all the nations of the world seek after these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them. ³¹ Instead, seek first His kingdom, and all these things will be added to you as well.

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³² “Fear not, little flock, for it is your Father’s good pleasure to give you the kingdom. ³³ Sell your possessions, and give to the needy. Provide yourselves with moneybags that do not grow old, with a treasure in the heavens that does not fail, where no thief approaches and no moth destroys. ³⁴ For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.

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Matthew 10:42

"And whoever in the name of a disciple gives to one of these little ones even a cup of cold water to drink, truly I say to you, he shall not lose his reward."

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The Peril of Prosperity: Rich Man #2**Luke 16:19–25: The Rich Man and Lazarus**

¹⁹ "There was a rich man who was clothed in purple and fine linen and who feasted sumptuously every day. ²⁰ And at his gate was laid a poor man named Lazarus, covered with sores, ²¹ who desired to be fed with what fell from the rich man's table. Moreover, even the dogs came and licked his sores. ²² The poor man died and was carried by the angels to Abraham's side."

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The Peril of Prosperity: Rich Man #2

"The rich man also died and was buried, ²³ and in Hades, being in torment, he lifted up his eyes and saw Abraham far off and Lazarus at his side. ²⁴ And he called out, 'Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus to dip the end of his finger in water and cool my tongue, for I am in agony in this flame.' ²⁵ But Abraham said, 'Child, remember that you in your lifetime received your good things, and Lazarus in like manner bad things; but now he is comforted here, and you are in agony...'"

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Why is the poor beggar given a name (Lazarus), while the rich man remains anonymous?

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Luke 16:11 – 15:

"¹¹ If then you have not been faithful in the unrighteous wealth, who will entrust to you the true riches? ¹² And if you have not been faithful in that which is another's, who will give you that which is your own?"

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¹³ No servant can serve two masters, for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and money.

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¹⁴ The Pharisees, who were lovers of money, heard all these things, and they ridiculed him. ¹⁵ And He said to them, “You are those who justify yourselves before men, but God knows your hearts. **For what is exalted among men is an abomination in the sight of God.**”

19

Man's vs God's View of Money: The Widow's Mite

Mark 12:41-44

“And He sat down opposite the treasury, and began observing how the people were putting money into the treasury; and many rich people were putting in large sums. A poor widow came and put in two small copper coins, which amount to a cent. Calling His disciples to Him, He said to them, “Truly I say to you, this poor widow put in more than all the contributors to the treasury; for they all put in out of their surplus, but she, out of her poverty, put in all she owned, all she had to live on.”

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POOR MAN / RICH MAN:

The Beatitudes (Luke 6):

²⁰ And Jesus lifted up his eyes on His disciples, and said:

“Blessed are you who are poor, for yours is the kingdom of God.

²¹ “Blessed are you who are hungry now, for you shall be satisfied.

“Blessed are you who weep now, for you shall laugh.

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POOR MAN / RICH MAN:

Jesus Pronounces Woes:

²⁴ “But woe to you who are rich, for you have received your consolation.

²⁵ “Woe to you who are full now, for you shall be hungry.

“Woe to you who laugh now, for you shall mourn and weep.”

WHOA!!!

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More verses to cheer you up...

James' Warning to the Rich (James 5:1-3):

“⁵ Come now, you rich, weep and howl for the miseries that are coming upon you. ² Your riches have rotted and your garments are moth-eaten. ³ Your gold and silver have corroded, and their corrosion will be evidence against you and will eat your flesh like fire. You have laid up treasure in the last days...”

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God forbids favoring the rich: James 2:1-6

2 My brothers, show no partiality as you hold the faith in our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory. **2** For if a man wearing a gold ring and fine clothing comes into your assembly, and a poor man in shabby clothing also comes in, **3** and if you pay attention to the one who wears the fine clothing and say, “You sit here in a good place,” while you say to the poor man, “You stand over there,” or, “Sit down at my feet,”

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We must be very careful of our attitude towards the poor: James 2:1-6

⁴ have you not then made distinctions among yourselves and become judges with evil thoughts? ⁵ Listen, my beloved brothers, **has not God chosen those who are poor in the world to be rich in faith and heirs of the kingdom, which he has promised to those who love him?** ⁶ But you have dishonored the poor man...

25

Colossians 3:5:

"Put to death, therefore, whatever belongs to your earthly nature: sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil desires and greed, which is idolatry."

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Ephesians 5:5:

"For of this you can be sure: No immoral, impure or **greedy person — such a person is an idolater** — has any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God."

27

Greed = covetousness =

pleonexia

"A selfish desire to have more of something — such as money, food, power, or possessions — than a person actually needs"

28

What is idolatry?

29



30

Paul's personal testimony**Romans 7:7-8**

"I would not have come to know sin except through the Law; for I would not have known about coveting if the Law had not said, "You shall not covet." But sin, taking opportunity through the commandment, produced in me coveting of every kind..."

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The Peril of Prosperity:
Can make us forget God...

Deuteronomy 8:11-18

¹¹ "Beware that you do not forget the LORD your God....¹² lest, when you have eaten and are full and have built good houses and lived in them, ¹³ and when your herds and flocks multiply and your silver and gold is multiplied and all that you have is multiplied,

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The Peril of Prosperity:
Can make us forget God...

Deuteronomy 8:11-18

¹⁴ then your heart will become proud, and you will forget the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery.... ¹⁷ Beware lest you say in your heart, 'My power and the strength of my hand have made me this wealth.' ¹⁸ You shall remember the LORD your God, for it is He who gives you power to make wealth...."

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The Peril of Prosperity:
Can make us self-reliant...**To the Church in Laodicea: Revelation 3:15-19**

Laodicea's Background:

- A wealthy ancient Hellenistic and Roman city in Asia Minor (modern-day Turkey)
- Built a robust economy on banking, glossy black wool, and eye ointments
- Relied on an aqueduct system that carried water from distant springs => lukewarm water
- Recipient of Paul's letter to the Colossians

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The Peril of Prosperity:
Can make us self-reliant...

To the Church in Laodicea: Revelation 3:15-19

¹⁵ "I know your works: you are neither cold nor hot. Would that you were either cold or hot! ¹⁶ So, because you are lukewarm, and neither hot nor cold, I will spit you out of my mouth. ¹⁷ For you say, "I am rich, I have prospered, and I need nothing," not realizing that you are wretched, pitiable, poor, blind, and naked..."

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The Peril of Prosperity:
Can make us self-reliant...

To the Church in Laodicea: Revelation 3:15-19

¹⁸ I counsel you to buy from me gold refined by fire, so that you may be rich, and white garments so that you may clothe yourself and the shame of your nakedness may not be seen, and salve to anoint your eyes, so that you may see. ¹⁹ Those whom I love, I reprove and discipline, so be zealous and repent."

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The sin of self-reliance

Jeremiah 2:13

¹³ “For My people have committed two evils:
They have forsaken Me,
The fountain of living waters,
To hew for themselves cisterns,
Broken cisterns
That can hold no water.”

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The sin of self-reliance

Isaiah 50:10-11

¹⁰ Who among you fears the LORD
and obeys the voice of His servant?
Let him who walks in darkness
and has no light
trust in the name of the LORD
and rely on his God.
¹¹ Behold, all you who kindle a fire,
who equip yourselves with burning torches!
Walk by the light of your fire,
and by the torches that you have kindled!
This you have from my hand:
you shall lie down in torment.

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The Peril of Prosperity: *Can make us unfruitful...*

The Parable of the Sower (Matthew 13)

“⁷ Other seeds fell among thorns, and the thorns
grew up and choked them...”

²² As for what was sown among thorns, this is the
one who hears the word, but the cares of the
world and the deceitfulness of riches choke the
word, and it proves unfruitful.

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The Peril of Prosperity: RICH MAN #3 *Can hinder us from following Jesus...*

The Story of the Rich Young Ruler

Luke 18:18-27

And a ruler asked him, “Good Teacher, what must I
do to inherit eternal life?” And Jesus said to him,
“Why do you call me good? No one is good except
God alone. You know the commandments: ‘Do not
commit adultery, Do not murder, Do not steal, Do not
bear false witness, Honor your father and mother.’”
And he said, “All these I have kept from my youth.”

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The Peril of Prosperity: RICH MAN #3 *Can hinder us from following Jesus...*

The Story of the Rich Young Ruler

When Jesus heard this, he said to him,
“One thing you still lack. Sell all that you
have and distribute to the poor, and you
will have treasure in heaven; and come,
follow me.” But when he heard these
things, he became very sad, for he was
extremely rich.”

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The Peril of Prosperity: RICH MAN #3 *Can hinder us from following Jesus...*

The Story of the Rich Young Ruler

Jesus, seeing that he had become sad, said, “How
difficult it is for those who have wealth to enter
the kingdom of God! For it is easier for a camel to
go through the eye of a needle than for a rich
person to enter the kingdom of God.” Those who
heard it said, “Then who can be saved?” But he
said, “What is impossible with man is possible
with God.”

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Parting with Prosperity: RICH MAN #4 Jesus and Zacchaeus

Luke 19:1-10

¹ 19 He entered Jericho and was passing through. ² And behold, there was a man named Zacchaeus. He was a chief tax collector and was rich. ³ And he was seeking to see who Jesus was, but on account of the crowd he could not, because he was small in stature. ⁴ So he ran on ahead and climbed up into a sycamore tree to see him, for he was about to pass that way. ⁵ And when Jesus came to the place, he looked up and said to him, "Zacchaeus, hurry and come down, for I must stay at your house today."

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Parting with Prosperity: RICH MAN #4

⁶ So he hurried and came down and received him joyfully. ⁷ And when they saw it, they all grumbled, "He has gone in to be the guest of a man who is a sinner." ⁸ And Zacchaeus stood and said to the Lord, "Behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor. And if I have defrauded anyone of anything, I restore it fourfold." ⁹ And Jesus said to him, "Today salvation has come to this house, since he also is a son of Abraham. ¹⁰ For the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost."

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Q/A:

1) Why do you think Jesus asked the rich young ruler to sell all his possessions, whereas he didn't ask Zacchaeus to do the same?

2) Why do you think Zacchaeus decided to follow the Lord, while the rich young ruler didn't?

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- We must remember that we are but stewards of the resources that God has entrusted to us -
- Parable of the ten minas (that immediately follows the story of Zacchaeus), and the very similar parable of the talents in Matthew 25.
- The gist: God doesn't want us to just stash away our resources and use them selfishly for our own pleasure and contentment, but rather wants us to invest them in the work of His kingdom and in helping the needy.

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Matthew 16:26

²⁶ For what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world and forfeits his soul? Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul?

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Hebrews 13:5

⁵ Keep your life free from the love of money, and be content with what you have, for He has said, "I will never leave you nor forsake you."

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Paul's Preaching on Prosperity: 1 Timothy 6

⁶But godliness with contentment is great gain, ⁷for we brought nothing into the world, and we cannot take anything out of the world. ⁸But if we have food and clothing, with these we will be content. ⁹But those who desire to be rich fall into temptation, into a snare, into many senseless and harmful desires that plunge people into ruin and destruction. ¹⁰**For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evils. It is through this craving that some have wandered away from the faith and pierced themselves with many pangs.**

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Paul's Preaching on Prosperity: 1 Timothy 6

¹⁷As for the rich in this present age, charge them not to be haughty, nor to set their hopes on the uncertainty of riches, but on God, who richly provides us with everything to enjoy. ¹⁸They are to do good, to be rich in good works, to be generous and ready to share, ¹⁹thus storing up treasure for themselves as a good foundation for the future, so that they may take hold of that which is truly life." AMEN!!

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So How Do We Escape the Perils of Prosperity?

- ▶ 1) Rely upon God to meet our needs, not ourselves
- ▶ 2) Walk in the Spirit (Romans 8)
 - ▶ Practice the presence of God (continual prayer)
 - ▶ Meditate on His Word
 - ▶ Fellowship with other believers
- ▶ 3) Give generously to Christian charities
 - ▶ World Vision
 - ▶ Compassion International
 - ▶ Mercy Ships

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