

**Increasing Prosperity:  
Is More Prosperity a Good Thing?  
Chapter 36**

Work is good (Ch. 35), producing goods is good. But what happens to the goods produced?

- Some are consumed
- Some will last a long time and be saved (buildings, cars, etc)

Therefore, people who work hard, are good stewards of their money and wealth will likely have an increase in what they own. IS IT A MORALLY GOOD THING TO CONTINUALLY INCREASE PEOPLE'S MATERIAL PROSPERITY?

**Prosperity** = the accumulation and enjoyment of significantly more material than wealth than previous generations. What is morally right or wrong?

I. Is poverty more pleasing to God than prosperity?

The world as a whole is far more prosperous than any other time in history. Back in 1970's through the Nixon administration and through scientific "advances"—GMO's we literally have the ability to feed the world, and much of the world has been fed... much of the world is now overweight!

See pg. 941 Economist Bradford DeLong if the University at Berkley chart:

- By 2000, human beings were producing on average, a level of economic prosperity that was about 60 times greater per person than what was produced at the time of Christ-- \$109 to \$6539
- Even though just about every nation has seen unprecedented economic growth, there is more "inequity".

Is this prosperity that has gone on a good thing? What about the inequity? Is prosperity Satan's work? Is it God's work?

II. Material prosperity is a matter of secondary importance and it carries dangers.

A. What are the risks?

1. Money and wealth can become more important than God.
  - a. Luke 16:13

**13 No [a]servant can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and [b]wealth."**

- b. 1 Timothy 6:17-19

**17 Instruct those who are rich in this present world not to be conceited or to set their hope on the uncertainty of riches, but on God, who richly supplies us with all things to enjoy. 18 Instruct them to do good, to be rich in good [a]works, to be generous and ready to share, 19 storing up for themselves the treasure of a good foundation for the future, so that they may take hold of that which is truly life.**

2. Even though prosperity is seen as generally a good thing, God prioritizes other things as more important: relationships, family, church, etc.
3. The good and the bad:
  - a. The good—prosperity increases the ability to improve other people’s lives, situations and condition.
  - b. The bad—Prosperity can become a person’s obsession to be the ultimate good”

III. The Bible presents a positive view of increasing economic prosperity.

- A. (As explained in chapter 34) God intends man to be “fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it.
- B. God gave each the ability to create and produce.

The idea of loving others as you love yourself implies products and services are involved. How? As I love to get a new shirt, so would others who can’t afford one.

IV. God gave human beings an innate desire to create more and better economic goods.

- A. God has created us with very limited needs for our physical survival.
- B. We are also created with unlimited wants for new and improved products.

Cell phones—a new invention. Now we can’t live without them. They have truly become a “need”.

Light bulbs, cars, computers.

V. Warnings about the temptation of materialism.

- A. Must be taken seriously but not cause us to abandon the blessings if increased prosperity.
  1. Ecclesiastes 5:10

**10 One who loves money will not be satisfied with money, nor one who loves abundance with its income. This too is futility.**

- a. Does this mean the opposite could be true?

One who is not in love with money will be satisfied with money?

## 2. Deuteronomy 8:11-18

God did not tell Israel they should go back to poverty... He told them they need to guard their hearts.

**11 “Be careful that you do not forget the Lord your God by failing to keep His commandments, His ordinances, and His statutes which I am commanding you today; 12 otherwise, when you eat and are satisfied, and you build good houses and live in them, 13 and when your herds and your flocks increase, and your silver and gold increase, and everything that you have increases, 14 then your heart will [a]become proud and you will forget the Lord your God who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of [b]slavery; 15 He who led you through the great and terrible wilderness, with its fiery serpents and scorpions, and its thirsty ground where there was no water; He who brought water for you out of the rock of flint. 16 In the wilderness it was He who fed you manna which your fathers did not know, in order to humble you and in order to put you to the test, to do good for you [c]in the end. 17 Otherwise, you may say in your heart, ‘My power and the strength of my hand made me this wealth.’ 18 But you are to remember the Lord your God, for it is He who is giving you power to make wealth, in order to confirm His covenant which He swore to your fathers, as it is this day.**

How does increased wealth and prosperity show us God’s glory?

VI. Poverty can only be solved by increasing prosperity, not by attempting to compel equality.

A. The fallacy of “equity”.

Observations—In wealthy nations (USA), the disparity between the poor and the wealthy is a different set of problems than a third world country where most of the country is poor with a minority that is extremely wealthy.

What are these differences?

Why does “redistribution of wealth” fail? In both situations?

VII. The influence of the Bible has historically brought increasing prosperity to nations.

See chart on pg. 951

Why the big disparity? Why would the Bible have such implied results?

See list on pg. 952

Squint your eyes to see this. But look at the difference between Israel and the Palestinian Hamas. Israel is very prosperous, Hamas very poor. Biblical values? The value of life? The value of morals?

The more a culture breaks down its moral and ethical standards, the more it risks poverty.

## Al Mohler 'This Is an Act of Sheer Evil': Evaluating the Moral Language of President Biden's Statement on the Hamas Attacks on Israel

The news coming from Israel yesterday was even worse than the news that had come already after the Saturday morning attack by Hamas had begun. That is because yesterday the depth, at least at this point of the atrocities committed against Israel and against human dignity and human life, they're only now becoming well-documented and in moral terms, it is becoming impossible not to know what took place.

For example, in one village, approximately 40 babies found dead, some of them decapitated. It's almost impossible to say this without deep emotional involvement. You ask the question, "How could this happen? How could any human being do this?" This is an atrocity, which is on the level of the kind of behavior we've seen recently from groups like the Islamic State.

It appears to be bloodthirsty, simply for the sake of being bloodthirsty. But then again, we remember that this is not without precedent, because we have also read the Old Testament and we understand the murderousness, even the genocidal nature of hatred in the human heart. But then we turn to the statement made by the president of the United States yesterday, and in this case, I'm drawing attention to the statement made by President Biden, not because of disagreement, but because of agreement, but then asking some deeper questions.

Here's what the president said. Here's the most important line. Speaking of the kinds of atrocities, the murderous atrocities that we have just discussed, including those babies in one village, The president went on to say, "**this was an act of sheer evil.**"

Now, in making that statement, the president of the United States was not wrong. He is emphatically right. The question nonetheless is engaged. In what sense is that right? What kind of worldview is required for that sentence to make sense? What kind of definition of evil is necessary in order for that sentence to have teeth? This is where Christians come in and understand, that if you try to use this kind of statement, this kind of language, you try to make a statement, "This was an act of sheer evil." That statement and this is something we need to note, that statement is essentially theological.

One of the things we need to recognize, and this is a prime moment for us to recognize this fact, is that that kind of language, which is self-evidently true, is only true if evil is something that is real and thus is something that must be overcome. The question is of course, what or who can overcome evil on this scale?

So let's get to the word evil and try to understand it. The word evil in this case is just indispensable. What else could the president say? Well, quite frankly, political leaders sometimes try to avoid using this kind of language because this kind of language, at least to many modern people, appears to be out of date. There once was a time when we could talk about good and evil, as if those were fixed objective categories, some would say, but in the modern age, they have become unfixed and a fixed definition has often been denied.

We're in an age of plastic truth. We're in an age of elasticity when it comes to language. We are in an age that involves many people, particularly in the academic elites who deny what we would

have to describe as the reality of evil. Evil is a word that is a descriptor, that might be something better expressed as evil-ish.

But the president had said that this was an act, something like evil or what people in the past might've called evil that wouldn't have worked. The only moral sense in the universe was that the president of the United States would say, without equivocation a short sentence with simple punctuation. "This was an act of sheer evil."

So just to repeat here, my purpose in pointing to that sentence is to say that sentence is profoundly right, but that sentence invokes an entire worldview, and many people will try to use that kind of sentence while not accepting or affirming the comprehensiveness of the worldview.

So let's ask the question. **If those acts were sheer evil, is that a relative statement?** Is that a comparative statement? In other words, is evil in this case just meaning that it's more evil than something else? You can look at a span or a spectrum and say, "Well, telling a white lie that's a little bit evil. But when you're talking about killing babies, that's a lot of evil. It's deeply evil." Or are you saying that there's something that's objectively wrong here, such as it is just wrong to tell a lie, but in this case, it is just absolutely wrong to kill and in particular to kill a baby, who by definition cannot be a combatant. You're talking about innocent babies here, slain in an act of outright hatred, in this case, homicidal hatred.

So we're talking about evil that reveals itself with clarity, but here's where Christians need to ponder something. If you're talking about something as evil, that means it's evil in a sense that wouldn't make sense, if this world is simply some kind of materialist accident. If there is no God and there is no creator, if there is no holy judge, if there is no divine source of our knowledge of good and evil, then this is nothing more than saying, "This in the grand scheme of cosmic events is something that is not to be celebrated."

If you deny the larger existence of meaning and truth and you suggest that all truth is just socially constructed, if you go back and deny creation and you say that the entire cosmos is just an accident, then moral actions are robbed of their moral importance or moral significance. Human beings are no longer just moral agents, we're just atoms and molecules.

So what's really important to recognize here is that in the face of this kind of evil, the only sentence that makes sense spoken by a president of the United States is just what President Biden said, "This was an act of sheer evil." He's absolutely right, but evil as a category doesn't make sense. It doesn't make any moral sense. It doesn't make any logical sense, if there is not an absolute reality of good and an absolute reality of evil, and those categories are impossible if we just live in the midst of a materialist world, which is nothing more than a cosmic accident.

But if there is no God, here's the bad news for you. There is no meaningful category of evil. Evil is just something you don't like because in a cosmic universe, in which there is no right or wrong, then the language you use of right and wrong is nothing more than a matter of ephemeral perception, personal judgment. You like blue, I like red. There is nothing objectively true about that. It's a statement of taste.

But what the president was saying here, and it only makes sense if he knew what he was saying here, is not a statement of aesthetics or taste. It's not a statement of comparative judgment. It is a statement of moral truth, and in so doing, we have to say, "That's absolutely right. This was a statement of moral truth." But you know what? If there is a moral truth on this issue, then there's also a moral truth on other issues as well.

The creator makes very clear in his righteousness, that this kind of homicide is simply sheer evil and sin, and the creator does say that. Then at the same time, the creator has the right to say, "Oh, what does it mean to be male and female?" In other words, we're looking here at the incongruity of a post-Christian morality. We're looking here at the incongruity of people making moral judgments when they've undercut the very foundation for making those moral judgments.

When you hear someone who argues on the one hand that there is no God and the universe is a cosmic accident, but that something is sheer evil, well, in an evolutionary worldview lived out to its logical consistency, there is no such thing as evil and there is no such thing as good.

But here's where we understand that we are indeed made in God's image and as creatures made in God's image, we have a moral sense, a moral knowledge that cannot be denied. It is something that is so real that in conversation, someone looking at the massacre of these innocent babies simply has to say, "That's horrifyingly evil." No other word fits. It's not just evil-ish. It's not just evil-like, it's evil and one who would do such things is evil.

But there's another aspect to this, and by affirming the reality of evil, I'm going to use a theological category. It's a big word that is used by philosophers and theologians. It is the word ontological, which means it deals with being with reality. This is to say, it's not just a matter of perception. It is a matter of reality. It's a matter of the structure of the universe. It is a matter of the very fabric of creation of the entire cosmos. It doesn't make sense that this wasn't evil. If this wasn't evil, then there is no good and there is no evil, but it points to something else, as well.

It points to the fact that there is a moral knowledge common to us that also can't be explained unless there is a creator. In other words, we would go so far as to say, that any person who could look at the site of massacred babies and say, "That's not aesthetically pleasing." That person is not normal, not a normal functioning human being. There is instead a necessary response of moral revulsion, and that moral revulsion is coming from a moral knowledge. You also have to ask that question, where does that moral knowledge come from?

## Poverty and Wealth

### Chapter 37

Prosperity is good, but it doesn't often come equally in both nations and individuals. Most of this is due to the fallen world: the greed of man, the lack of morals and ethics, etc. Poverty is a major concern in Scripture.

- I. Some inequality is inevitable
  - A. Inequality is modeled by God Himself!
    - 1. The reward system in heaven.
      - a. 2 Corinthians 5:10

**10 For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may receive compensation for [a]his deeds done through the body, in accordance with what he has done, whether good or bad.**

- 2. The distribution of spiritual gifts.
- 3. Responsibility of individuals.
  - a. Luke 19:17,19

**17 And he said to him, 'Well done, good slave; since you have been faithful in a very little thing, you are to have authority over ten cities.' 18 The second one came, saying, 'Your [i]mina, [j]master, has made five minas.' 19 And he said to him also, 'And you are to be over five cities.'**

- 4. There are different roles for individuals (husband and wife, etc.)
- B. Inequality is necessary for the world to work.
  - 1. Not everyone can be a manager, an owner, some have to be trash collectors.
- C. God never intended things to be unequal.
  - 1. In God's economy, a trash collector is just as valuable as the President.
  - 2. God was concerned about "fairness" not equity.
    - a. 2 Corinthians 8:13-14

**13 For this is not for the relief of others and for your hardship, but by way of equality— 14 at this present time your abundance will serve as assistance for their need, so that their abundance also may [a]serve as assistance for your need, so that there may be equality;**

Equality here is fairness—*sotes* = fairness

- D. God does not instruct the wealthy to give up their wealth but to be generous and set their hearts upon God.

1. 1 Timothy 6:17-19

**17 Instruct those who are rich in this present world not to be conceited or to set their hope on the uncertainty of riches, but on God, who richly supplies us with all things to enjoy. 18 Instruct them to do good, to be rich in good [a]works, to be generous and ready to share, 19 storing up for themselves the treasure of a good foundation for the future, so that they may take hold of that which is truly life.**

- II. Poverty: How best to help the poor?

The answer for most of modern history has been to pour money into the problem.

The United States has dramatically increased federal spending fighting poverty over the last 55 years. Total welfare costs have risen from \$1,612 per person in poverty in 1967 to \$32,031 per person in 2022. That totals \$128,122 for a family of four, even though the Poverty Threshold for such a family is \$29,950.

- A. The question of “Social Justice”

1. Social justice is not society acting “just”
2. Social justice does not suggest supporting justice.
3. Social justice usually does not support what is socially good, moral and ethical.

Social justice is often a term used to promote a political or social agenda, usually opposed by the Bible such as homosexuality issues, feminist issues, trans issues, etc.

4. The term “social justice” is not found anywhere in the Bible.
5. The term “social justice” usually assumes a “victim” and encourages a “victim mentality”.
6. Social justice does not hold individuals responsible for “just acts” but rather groups or society as a whole.

### Critical Race Theory and Intersectionality

7. The term is basically undefinable.

- B. We should help the poor.

1. The general commands of Scripture:
  - a. Matthew 22:39

**39 The second is like it, ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’** If we love someone who is poor, there will be “legs” on our love. [some of the “poor” are hard to love, right?]



b. Matthew 5:16

**16 Your light must shine before people in such a way that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven.**

c. 1 John 3:17

**17 But whoever has worldly goods and sees his brother or sister in need, and closes his [a]heart [b]against him, how does the love of God remain in him?**

d. Deuteronomy 15:7-8

**7 “If there is a poor person among you, one of your brothers, in any of your [a]towns in your land which the Lord your God is giving you, you shall not harden your heart, nor close your hand from your poor brother; 8 but you shall fully open your hand to him, and generously lend him enough for his need in whatever he lacks.**

e. Deuteronomy 15:11

**11 For the poor will not cease [a]to exist in the land; therefore I am commanding you, saying, ‘You shall fully open your hand to your brother, to your needy and poor in your land.’**

C. What makes it difficult for the poor to rise out of poverty?

1. The structure of power
2. Heart condition in the controlling class.
3. The cycle of oppression, depression and inebriation.

D. Immediate short term relief:

1. Individuals and Christian organizations.

a. James 2:15-17

**15 If a brother or sister is without clothing and in need of daily food, 16 and one of you says to them, “Go in peace, [a]be warmed and be filled,” yet you do not give them what is necessary for their body, what use is that? 17 In the same way, faith also, if it has no works, is [b]dead, being by itself.**

2. Infrastructure programs: clean water, sanitization, agriculture assistance.
3. Providing true education and opportunities for work experience.

E. Nowhere in the Bible is “permanent aid for the poor” advocated.

1. Exceptions: the disabled or unable (widows and orphans, etc)

F. Earned success gives more human dignity and fulfillment than gifts of money.

1. Arthur Brooks—“*The secret to human flourishing is not money but earned*

*success in life.*

- G. Private businesses, not the government must be the primary means of providing individual poor people with productive jobs....Why?

The government does now what a productive job is.

- H. Biblical support for human freedom in economic systems.
  - 1. The value of promoting a free market system—Biblically supported.

See pg 970 1-5

- I. Governments that seek to help the poor should encourage and not punish businesses.