

# Do your ethics affect your prosperity? (13:21)

**Adversity pursues sinners, but the righteous will be rewarded with prosperity.**

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## THE TEXT (NASB)

**Adversity pursues sinners, but the righteous will be rewarded with prosperity.**

*Evil pursueth sinners: but to the righteous, good shall be repayed. Classic KJV - Proverbs 13:21*

## INTRODUCTION



Our personal ethics directly determine our ultimate success.

Prosperity comes to the righteous, because prosperity is more than wealth. True prosperity is the ability to enjoy life. Note that prosperity is contrasted with adversity and not with poverty.

Another word for adversity is trouble. Broadly speaking, all of us are sinners—proud and rebellious—so we all experience trouble. But typically, the more we sin, the more trouble we have.



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## COMMENTARY

A common wisecrack warns that, “Nice guys finish last,” but this proverb promises the opposite: The righteous will prosper, whether they finish first, last, or in the middle.

**Translation:** *prosperity, adversity*



The Hebrew word for “prosperity,” טוב (tôb, pronounced “tōv”), is translated as “welfare, contentment, good health,” and “benefits.” Prosperity does not necessarily imply great riches or luxurious possessions, but it does embrace security and happiness.

The Hebrew word for “adversity,” רעה (rā·āh, pronounced “rah-ah”) can also be translated as “evil” or “trouble.” This implies that those who deliberately engage in evil (sinners) have it come back to them, even if they try to run or hide. Hence, the expression, “What goes around, comes around.”

## Beyond This Life

Often those who reject God and His ways can live trouble-free, having few or no adversities in their lives. In fact, they often seem better off than those who love and adore God. Before his suicide, was Hitler ever justly punished for his horrendous crimes and cruelty, the enormous pain he inflicted upon millions of real people? No; of course not. Was Mother Theresa ever fully rewarded for all her compassion and care toward the poor and dying in the gutters of Calcutta? No; of course not. Yet our undeniable distress at all this earthly injustice is evidence that our final reckonings and rewards come not in this life, but await us “on the other side,” after the death of our bodies.

## Trouble Often Delayed

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Commonly, if people ignore right and wrong, mocking righteousness, then trouble inevitably comes their way. The proverb doesn't say that the righteous avoid all trouble, but it does assert that deliberate sinners are "plagued" by trouble. The text doesn't say that sinners never enjoy their pleasures, but their pleasures are "plagued." Do all the happy-go-lucky villains really know what awaits them? If we see the injustice in their malicious pleasures, do they see it? And are their guilty pleasures always haunted by their inevitable fate? We all seek "meaning" in our lives, and "meaning" sees the inescapable link between actions and consequences, even when the consequences are delayed. Our "now" generation hates delay of any kind, but the consequences of our actions aren't long delayed.

## Ethics Rebound

Your personal ethics—how you treat others—comes back to you like a boomerang. This Calvin and Hobbes cartoon makes the point: We can't simply exempt ourselves from our community of righteousness, at least not for long.



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## OUR CREATOR, REDEEMER, AND FRIEND

Jesus Christ is the only righteous one, the only human being who overcame the sin of the world by His own power, His own grace within Himself (Hebrews 4:15).

Jesus Christ “imputes righteousness” or gives His grace, His power to overcome sin, to all who submit to Him, who trust Him (John 1:12, 2 Corinthians 5:21).

Jesus’ power may or may not include financial rewards, yet He will give us whatever prosperity will help us grow in righteousness; *all* who trust His righteousness will be satisfied (Romans 9:33).

## APPLICATION

- Memorize the text in your favourite Bible translation and think about it often.
- List at least three differences between wealth and prosperity.
- Research the meaning of the word righteousness. How does one become righteous?
- Abandon any notion that, when it’s all over, good people will end up poor or in distress.

Which of these steps, if any, does Jesus want you to take now? Ask Him.



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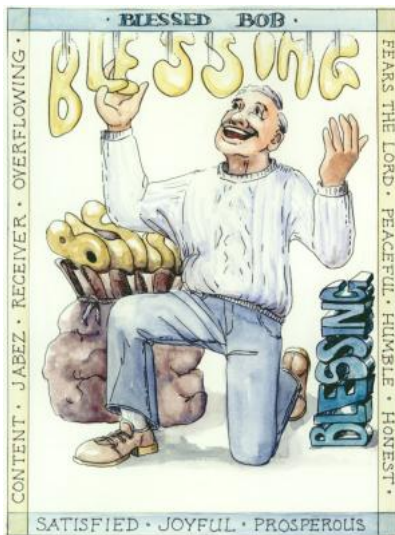
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## KEY WORDS

compensation, distress, ethics, justice, Mother Teresa, prosperity, reward, righteous, sin, suicide, trouble, worse life (quality)

## ILLUSTRATION

[Who is Blessed Bob?](#)



Blessed Bob is very fortunate. He recognizes that good things come from God! God is shunned by many, but not by Bob. Bob loves God. He wants to receive all the good things that God has for him. He's not too proud to ask God for help. In fact, Bob prays often. Some think that he prays without ceasing. But he is not without fault. Blessed Bob makes many mistakes, and when he does, he admits his errors. He corrects them and presses on.

Bob gets so many blessings he feels overwhelmed. His cup overflows. But he doesn't hoard his blessings. Like Generous Genevieve, Blessed Bob likes to give to others. He is truly prosperous, even though there are many who are financially richer than he is.

We see examples of Blessed Bob in the Bible in the lives of Job and Joseph. Job went through some very good times (Job 29:2-25) and some very bad times (Job 2:7-8). Joseph had similar financial cycles (Genesis 39:2,21). Both men kept their focus on God, not on their financial condition (Job 1:21, Genesis 50:19-21).

More recently we have examples of those who have lived with the same life focus. R. G. LeTourneau was the inventor of the largest earth moving machines in the 1930's and 1940's. He credited God for his tremendous success. He gave away much of his wealth while he was



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still living saying that, "When I shovel money out to God's interests, God shovels money back to me, but God's shovel is bigger than mine." He was called the mover of men and mountains because of his great work and influence. On his gravestone, R. G. LeTourneau left all visitors with these words, SEEK YE FIRST THE KINGDOM OF GOD AND HIS RIGHTEOUSNESS AND ALL THESE THINGS SHALL BE ADDED UNTO YOU MATTHEW 6:33.

Blessed Bob is full of joy. He is satisfied with life!

