

Faith Walk! - Sermon Discussion

Date : 6 Feb 2022

Sermon Title : Success or Standstill

Speaker : Rev Reuben Ng

Text : 3 John 1:2, Psalm 1:1-3

INTRODUCTION

During this Chinese/Lunar New Year period, many celebrate with feasting which include tossing the “Yu Sheng” while wishing for prosperity and success in the lunar year to come. Prosperity and success is always taken to mean having financial wealth, career success, and for the younger family members, doing well in their studies. According to God’s Word in 3 John 1:2, it is also God’s desire for us believers to enjoy prosperity or success in our lives according to God’s definition of prosperity.

God’s will for us to prosper (3 John 1:2)

3 John is a letter by the apostle John to his dear friend Gaius whom he greets by praying that Gaius “may prosper in all things and be in health, just as his soul prospers”. It may seem like a normal greeting expressed when writing letters in those days but coming from Scripture which is Holy Spirit inspired, this greeting and prayer reflects God’s will and desire for His followers. Just as John wished for Gaius to prosper, be in good health and for his soul to prosper, God too wishes likewise for us. The common notion however, is that prosperity refers to financial wealth and material possessions. Although it is not wrong, it is incomplete.

- Even when we are not prosperous in wealth and material possessions, we can be prosperous in the way we live and our inner being. God’s view of prosperity is beyond the superficial material possessions.
- The word “prosperous” in Greek simply means “a good journey” holistically, where every aspect and facet of our life is complete with no lack. It is like the concept of ‘*Shalom*’ which is not just peace alone, but wholeness, completeness, health, safety and prosperity in every facet of life, with no lack.

Success in secular terms is about achievements in career, studies, awards, adorations and status while success in biblical terms is living ‘a good journey’ in our life with wholeness in relationships (family and friends), health and living with a distinctive mark of Christian character.

For we walk by faith, not by sight. 2 Corinthians 5:7

Faith Walk! - Sermon Discussion

Can the wicked be prosperous? (Jeremiah 12:1)

While God defines success as that completeness and wholeness in Jesus, believers have observed that the wicked or bad also taste success in financial wealth and often ask why God allows them to be rich and successful while some believers experience hardship. This question comes when we view prosperity in terms of material wealth and worldly success.

- While the world sees success and prosperity as gains centered on money and secular measures of success (titles, possessions, status), we should never have this same view.
- Believers who are guided by Scripture should view prosperity as wholeness of life with meaningful relationships, a disciplined lifestyle, *shalom* peace with no lack.

How should Christians live in the prosperity and success from God? (Psalm 1:1-3)

Christians who are financially successful should not flaunt their wealth or believe that they have been duly rewarded by God because they have been faithful or righteous before God. On the other hand, Christians should not see money as evil and thus try to hide their wealth. When we have been blessed financially, we should in turn use that blessing to bless others.

- Let us seek to prosper our souls by keeping to our faith and hope, so that we can prosper by His grace and then seek to use our wealth and means to bless others for His glory.
- Christians can gain success and prosperity in Jesus by abiding in His Word – being aware, accepting/believing and walking in the Word of God (John 8:31-32, see Faithwalk! 30 Jan).
- Psalm 1 tells us not to do acts that displease God such as walking with the ungodly, standing with the sinners and sitting with mockers (v.1) but to delight and meditate on God's law/Word (v.2). By abiding in, staying close to and allowing God to affect us day and night through His Word, a Christian can be like "a tree planted by a stream, yielding fruit in season with leaves that do not wither" (v.3). In season here means that even if we do not seem to see results from abiding in God's Word, we need to understand it takes times, God's perfect time, so as not to be discouraged.

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Faith Walk! - Sermon Discussion

The Word of God is very important

For our understanding of biblical prosperity to be aligned with God's definition of prosperity we need to get it from the Word of God:

- 1) God's Word helps us to understand and grow into God's definition of prosperity, by renewing our mind to not just look at prosperity as material wealth but all things including health and our soul – to watch how our inner person prospers and grows.
- 2) God's Word gives us the tools to walk on the path that leads to God's definition of prosperity.

Joshua 1:8a – In whatever we do, we can prosper when we read and meditate on God's Word continuously, renewing our minds which will enable us to walk in the path to prosperity and success

3 John 1:2 – God wants us to prosper, be in good health and for our souls to prosper. His desire for us will not return to Him void if we steadfastly hold onto Him, abide by His Word and keep our relationship with Him through Jesus.

Isaiah 55:11 – God proclaimed His will through His Word that goes out which will never return empty, but will be effective to accomplish what He desires to accomplish.

We who receive His Word are to abide in, believe and walk in His Word that comes out so we may prosper in all things, to have a good journey. There is so much good in God's Word as it has everything contained to help us succeed and be prosperous – in times when we are down, it lifts us up and gives us sustenance, when we are proud, it tells us to be humble.

CONCLUSION

Prosperity in Christian living is not solely about money and material wealth. Success is not about accumulating titles and status but seeking that completeness and wholeness of a Christian life. A life rooted in God's Word is also one with deeds of grace and love for others. We are already prosperous because Jesus has bought us with His redeeming blood and we are successful by our faith in the one true God. Since we are redeemed from the power of darkness and sin, we need to be certain what purpose we are redeemed for; how we are using our success and prosperity to glorify God. Let us not only be aware, but believe and hunger for God's Word as we abide and walk in it so we may grow in every aspect of life and be prosperous in all things including our souls.

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As a group, spend some time to share your success and struggle in fulfilling what you/your group had committed to do at the previous meeting.

A. Review Sermon Content

Purpose: Reflect on one key takeaway.

Appoint someone to read 3 John 1:2, Psalm 1:1-3 twice, slowly.

1. At the end of the reading, the reader will say, "This is the Word of the Lord."

All to respond, "Thanks be to God." Our response reminds us that this is the Word of the Lord. Just as God had spoken to His people in the past, He is still speaking to us even today, right now."

a. As God's Word was read, how did the verses in 3 John 1 and Psalm 1 speak to you?

b. (i) What is the key takeaway for you from the sermon "Success or Standstill"?

(ii) How will you align the way you live to your key takeaway?

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Faith Walk! - Sermon Discussion

B. Relate Sermon Content

Purpose: Relate with the Truth and Resolve for Transformation.

- 2a. (i) What was your idea of prosperity and success before this sermon?
- (i) How different is God's definition of success or prosperity from your idea of it?
- (ii) How has your mind been transformed by God's Word regarding prosperity?
- 2b. What are some challenges you will face in "walking in" this transformed understanding and belief in God's definition of prosperity?
- 3a. God's definition of prosperity is a good journey having completeness and wholeness in God, with no lack.
- (i) What is an area in your life that you are not enjoying this?
- (ii) What is an area in your SG life that you and your members are not enjoying this?
- 3b. Identify:
- (i) One thing you can do to enjoy the prosperity that God desires for your life.
- (ii) One area your SG members can focus and work on to move the group to be an SG that experiences completeness in God with no lack.
- 3c. How can your group members encourage each other to achieve 3b above, for the following week(s) till your next meeting?

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C. Testimonies and Prayer

Purpose: Give glory to God and seek Him.

4. Share your testimony on how you have experienced the grace of God when He granted you success or prosperity in any of your endeavours. How did you glorify God with that blessing you received?

OR

Thank God for His will to prosper you in all things, in good health and for your soul to prosper.

5. With a prayer partner, bring all the concerns shared in 3a, 3b and 3c to the Lord asking for the Holy Spirit to enable you to commit to helping one another overcome challenges in seeking prosperity according to God's definition.

As a group, pray that each of you will not be tempted by the world's notion of success but instead be focused on God's Word that will renew your minds and enable you to prosper and succeed in all things so you may enjoy a good journey, as an individual and as a group, having completeness in Christ, with no lack.

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