

# THE DANGERS OF PROSPERITY



# Introduction

## ◎ Prov. 30:8-9

- Give me neither *poverty* nor *riches*--Feed me with the food allotted to me; 9 Lest I be full and deny [You], And say, "Who [is] the LORD?" Or lest I be poor and steal, And profane the name of my God.

## ◎ Easier to see problems with *poverty*

- Prov. 6:30-31 People do not despise a thief if he steals to satisfy himself when he is starving. ...





# Introduction

- ⦿ Harder to see problems with **riches**
  - ⦿ Especially in American culture as land of freedom, opportunity, upward social mobility, etc.



# Introduction

- ◎ Gaining insight from God's Word
  - Old Testament examples
  - New Testament examples
  - Modern examples
  - Temptations with prosperity
  - The need for spiritual perspective



# Eve – Gen. 2-3

## ⦿ Gen. 2:8-14

- “... God planted a garden ... And out of the ground the LORD God made *every* tree grow that is *pleasant to the sight and good for food.*”

## ⦿ Gen. 1:27-30

- “...have dominion over ... every living thing ... given every green herb for food...” → no predators

## ⦿ Gen. 1:31

- “... it was very good”

## ⦿ Gen. 2:25

- “And they were both naked...” → mild climate

# Eve – Gen. 2-3

- ◎ Very richly blessed in idyllic existence
  - No struggle for food, no “sweat of the brow”, no “thorns and thistles”
  - No mortgage/rent, bills, taxes to pay
  - No concerns over predators



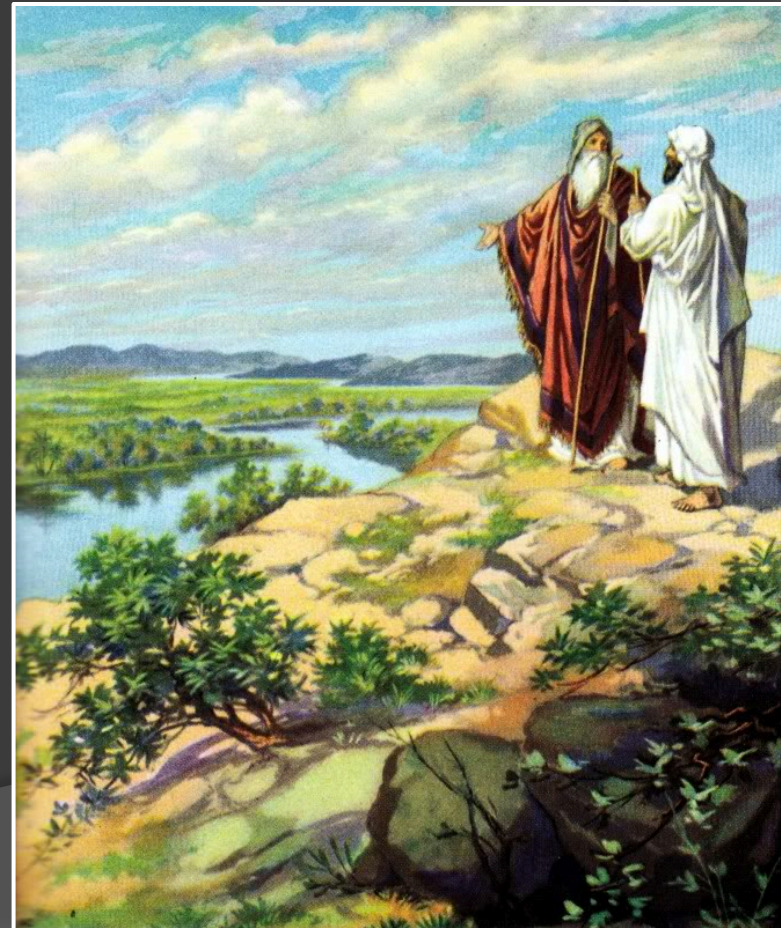
# Eve – Gen. 2-3

- ⊙ But it wasn't enough
  - *“the serpent deceived Eve by his craftiness”* (2 Cor. 11:3)
  - *“So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree desirable to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate.”* (Gen. 3:6)
- ⊙ The first, but not the last with a warning for us
  - *“For all that is in the world—the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life—is not of the Father but is of the world.”* (1 John 2:16)
- ⊙ **Wealth → Forgot God → Served self**



# Lot – Gen 13

- Had riches with large number of flocks, herds, tents
- But it wasn't enough
  - Choose the well-watered plain of the Jordan  
Gen. 13:10 “like the garden”
- And pitched his tent toward the infamous city of Sodom Gen. 13:12
  - And eventually lost it all



# Sodom, etc. – Gen. 18

- Gen. 13:13; 18:20 “... *exceeding wicked and sinful*”, “...*very grievous*” (heavy, grave)
  - Gen. 19:4-5 homosexuality and gang rape
  - Jude 7 “... *having given themselves over to sexual immorality (fornication) and gone after strange flesh...*”
- But note Ezek. 16:48-50
  - “...*Sodom ...had pride, fullness of food, and abundance of idleness; neither did she strengthen the hand of the poor and needy. And they were haughty and committed abomination...*”
- **Wealth → Pride → Forgot God → Served self & sexual pleasure**

# Israelites – Prosperity in Canaan

## ⦿ Warnings of Deut. 8:6-20

- Vs. 6 “*keep commandments...walk in His ways*”
- Vs. 7-10 Coming prosperity “*...bless the Lord*”
- Vs. 11 “*Beware that you do not forget the LORD your God...*”
- Vs. 12-13 Abundant food, beautiful houses, multiplied riches
- Vs. 14,17-18 “*when your heart is lifted up, and you forget the LORD your God ...*”, “*My power and the might of my hand have gained me this wealth.’ ... it is He who gives you power to get wealth*”
- Vs. 19 “*..forget the Lord your God and follow other gods...*”

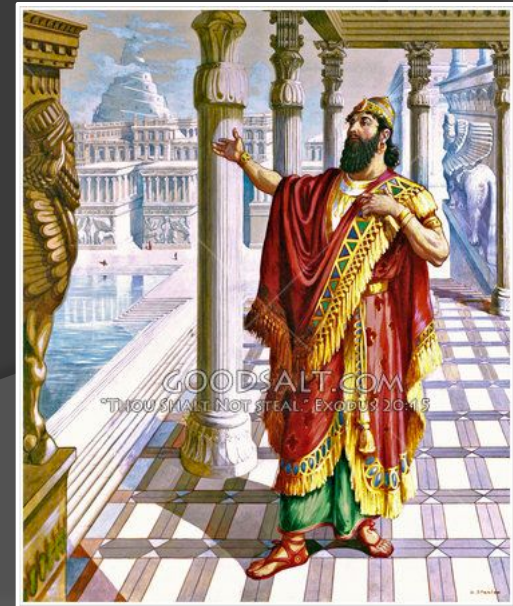


# Israelites – Prosperity in Canaan

- ⦿ Happened in Judges 2:10-12; Judges 3:7
  - *“When all that generation had been gathered to their fathers, another generation arose after them who did not know the LORD nor the work which He had done for Israel.”*
- ⦿ Judges 17:6
  - *“In those days there was no king in Israel; everyone did what was right in his own eyes.”*
- ⦿ Ezek. 16:10-20
  - Offered riches and murdered children in sacrifice to their gods
- ⦿ **Wealth → Pride → Forgot God → Served gods**

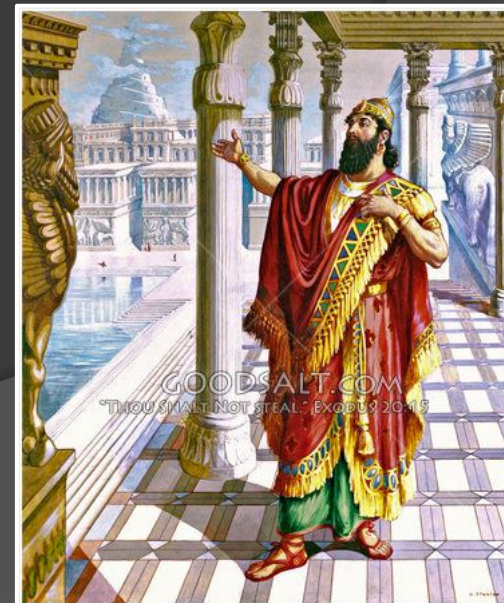
# Nebuchadnezzar – Daniel 4

- Vs. 4 “... at rest in my house, and flourishing”
- Vs. 22 Ruler of regional super-power
- Vs. 30 “The king spoke, saying, “Is not this great Babylon, that I have built for a royal dwelling by my mighty power and for the honor of my majesty?””



# Nebuchadnezzar – Daniel 4

- And then He got some “perspective”
- Vs. 37 *“Now I, Nebuchadnezzar, praise and extol and honor the King of heaven, all of whose works are truth, and His ways justice. And those who walk in pride He is able to put down.”*
- Wealth → Pride → Forgot God





# Rich Farmer – Luke 12

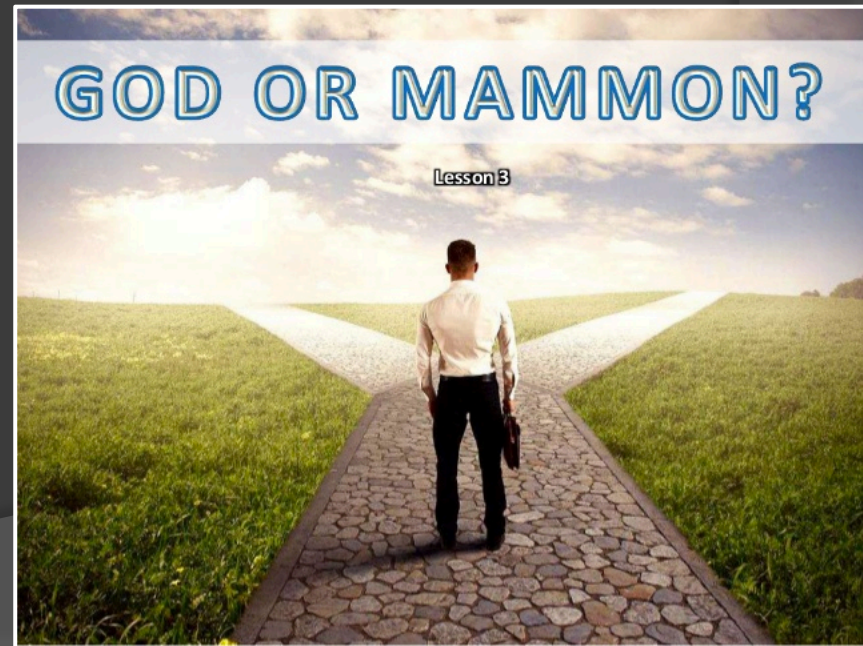
## ◎ Luke 12:15-21

- Vs. 15 *“And He said to them, ”... beware of covetousness, for one's life does not consist in the abundance of the things he possesses.”*
- Vs. 16 *“...The ground of a certain rich man yielded plentifully.”*
- Vs. 19-21 *“Soul, you have many goods laid up for many years; take your ease; eat, drink, [and] be merry.” But God said to him, 'Fool! This night your soul will be required of you...So [is] he who lays up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God.”*

◎ Wealth → Forgot God → Served self

# Rich Young Ruler – Matt. 19

- Matt. 19:16-24
- Luke 18:24 *“And when Jesus saw that he became very sorrowful, He said, “How hard it is for those who have riches to enter the kingdom of God!”*”
- Luke 16:13 *“You cannot serve God and mammon.”* (riches)
- **Wealth → Still remembered God, but loved riches more**



# Good examples – Prosperity not sinful

- Job Job 1:3
- Abram Gen. 13:2
- Solomon 1 Kings 10
- Joseph of Arimathea Matt. 27:57
- Zacchaeus Luke 19:2
- Barnabas Acts 4:37



# Modern Examples

- ◎ 1930's Poverty
  - Doing without, making do from Great Depression – character building to “the Greatest Generation”
- ◎ 1940's-1950's Boom/prosperity
  - With returning GIs and an undamaged manufacturing capacity
- ◎ 1960's Forgetting God and serving self
  - Sexual revolution, campus riots against the Vietnam war and the Government, divorce liberalization, school-sponsored prayer and Bible readings declared unconstitutional

# Modern Examples

- ◎ 1970's More self, including homosexuality
  - Legalization of abortion, women's liberation movement, gay liberation movement
- ◎ 1990's
  - "Hate" crimes
- ◎ 2000's
  - Homosexual conduct decriminalized by Supreme Court; homosexual marriage equality movement
- ◎ 2010's
  - Transgender (males entering women's sports, using women's restrooms) and gender fluid movement

# Modern Examples

## ◎ 2020's Lawlessness

- Recent riots, arson, looting, injuring/killing police officers, illegally occupying city property in Seattle “Capitol Hill Autonomous Zone” (CHAZ).

## ◎ Nothing new under the sun

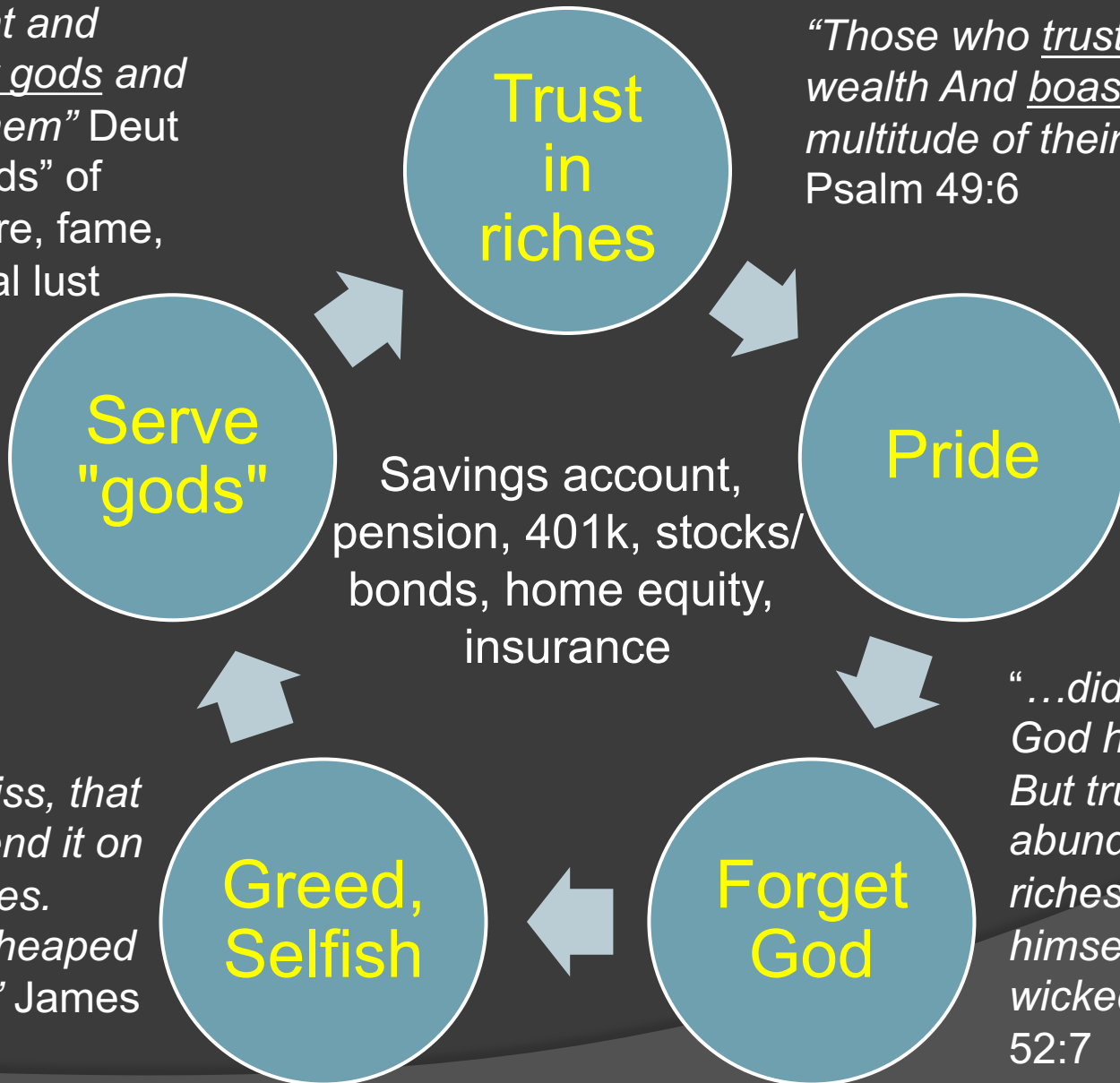
- *“There is a way that seems right to a man, but its end is the way of death”* Prov. 14:12
- *“everyone did what was right in his own eyes.”* Judges 21:25

## ◎ Wealth → Pride → Forgot God → Served self & sexual pleasure

# Temptations

*“for they went and served other gods and worshiped them” Deut 29:26 → “gods” of wealth, leisure, fame, power, sexual lust*

*“Those who trust in their wealth And boast in the multitude of their riches” Psalm 49:6*



*“you ask amiss, that you may spend it on your pleasures. ...You have heaped up treasure ” James 4:3; 5:3*

*“...did not make God his strength, But trusted in the abundance of his riches, strengthened himself in his wickedness.” Psalm 52:7*



# The Need for Perspective

- ⦿ Not inherently sinful, but dangerous
  - 1Tim. 6:9-10 “9 *But those who desire to be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and [into] many foolish and harmful lusts which drown men in destruction and perdition. 10 For the love of money is a root of all [kinds of] evil, for which some have strayed from the faith in their greediness, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows.*”



# The Need for Perspective

## ◎ Temporary

- Eccl. 5:15 *“As he came from his mother’s womb, naked shall he return, To go as he came; And he shall take nothing from his labor Which he may carry away in his hand.”*
- James 1:9-11 *“For no sooner has the sun risen with a burning heat than it withers the grass; its flower falls, and its beautiful appearance perishes. So the rich man also will fade away in his pursuits.”*



# The Need for Perspective

## Relative importance

- Luke 12:15-21 *“15 And He said to them, “Take heed and beware of covetousness, for one's life does not consist in the abundance of the things he possesses.”*
- Luke 16:13 *“You cannot serve God and mammon.”*

