

What Are the Dangers of Prosperity?

[Hosea 12](#)

Hosea, Day 22

*The Lord has an indictment against Judah
and will punish Jacob according to his ways;
he will repay him according to his deeds.
In the womb he took his brother by the heel,
and in his manhood he strove with God.
He strove with the angel and prevailed;
he wept and sought his favor.
He met God at Bethel,
and there God spoke with us—
the LORD the God of hosts,
the LORD is his memorial name:
“So you, by the help of your God, return,
hold fast to love and justice,
and wait continually for your God.”*

*A merchant, in whose hands are false balances,
he loves to oppress.
Ephraim has said, “Ah, but I am rich;
I have found wealth for myself;
in all my labors they cannot find in me iniquity or sin.”
I am the LORD your God
from the land of Egypt;
I will again make you dwell in tents,
as in the days of the appointed feast. - Hosea 12:2-9, ESV*

In 1990, during my junior year in high school, Calloway had a mega-hit song with "I Wanna Be Rich." It's kind of embarrassing now, but I remember being 16 years old and singing along -

*You see I want money,
lots and lots of money.
I want the pie in the sky,
I want lots and lots of money,
so don't be asking my why.
I wanna be rich*

Some people might say, "What's wrong with that?" Well, plenty, of course! 1 Timothy 6:9-10 says, "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. For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evils."

So, wanting to be rich and loving money cause a whole host of problems for people, but does that mean it's wrong to have wealth? No. Some of the God's people in the Bible were very wealthy - the Patriarchs, Joseph, David, Solomon, Daniel, and others. Yet prosperity often caused snares for God's people, too. Solomon married foreign wives, who led him into idolatry. Esau and Jacob fought over their father's wealth.

Here in Hosea 12, we can see three clear problems related to Israel's prosperity:

1. Indifference: Israel's wealth made them indifferent to the words of the prophets. As God was pleading with Israel to repent, Israel's response was callous: "*Ah, but I am rich! I have found wealth for myself.*" They simply didn't care about the prophets' words.

2. Idolatry: Israel's prosperity also led them to practice and tolerate idolatry. Their wealth had led them to make a covenant with Assyria and to establish trade with Egypt (see v. 1). These kinds of alliances and trade relationships usually involved worship of the gods of the other lands, and this may have been how the gods of Assyria and Egypt made their way into Israel.

3. Injustice: In addition to indifference and idolatry, Israel's prosperity also led them to cheat the poor. God calls Israel "*a merchant, in whose hands are false balances*" and who "*loves to oppress.*" The quickest way for the wealthy to get wealthier is to cheat the poor out of what little wealth they have.

Most of us are prosperous and wealthy, by the standards of the broader world and of history. We may not feel wealthy, but we really are. So, we should ask ourselves: Am I falling into any of these patterns? Am I growing indifferent to the conviction of God's Word and Spirit? Am I tending toward idol-worship in my pursuit of wealth? Am I unconcerned for the dignity and humanity of the poor? As we examine our hearts before the Lord, may He grant us repentance, so that we may use His blessings for His kingdom and glory and not our own!