

AUTOPSY • Week 5: Probability or Promise?

Daily Briefing • Day 4 of 5 • The Wrong Measuring Stick

WEEKLY MEMORY VERSE

And let us not grow weary of doing good, for in due season we will reap, if we do not give up.

Galatians 6:9

Sunday's sermon walked through Psalm 73, where Asaph nearly stumbled in his faith. Today we look at one of the root causes of his crisis: he was measuring prosperity by a very narrow metric. You can watch or listen to the sermon at 1mso.church or on the One Missoula app.

OPENING PRAYER

Heavenly Father, I ask for Your help in assessing the world around me with more than limited and short-term metrics. When I see the wicked prosper and consequently struggle with envy, jealousy, and entitlement, which eventually drives me to doubt Your goodness, I pray that You would patiently give me a wider perspective and a higher vantage point. Help me to remember that there is more to life than money, and to be grateful for the many blessings I receive from Your gracious hand. I pray these things humbly in the name of Jesus. Amen.

TODAY'S TEACHING

When Asaph looked at the wicked in Psalm 73 and nearly lost his faith, the problem was not just that they were prospering. The problem was what he was using to measure their prosperity. He looked at fat bodies, absence of trouble, and increasing riches and concluded that God was blessing them. He was applying a single metric: wealth, ease, and physical comfort. Sunday's sermon identified this as using an incomplete measuring stick. Today we look at what the Bible actually uses when it measures a well-lived life, and its scope is much broader and more honest than the narrow metric most of us default to.

We do this constantly in the modern world. We scroll through social media and see the wins, the acquisitions, and the status markers. We see the house, the car, the vacation, and the professional accomplishment. Nobody posts about the relationship quietly falling apart, the anxiety that keeps them awake at three in the morning, or the deal that required compromising their integrity to close. The narrow metric sees what is visible and financially measurable and draws conclusions about who is blessed and who is not. Asaph was doing exactly this in a different cultural context three thousand years ago. The measuring stick was wrong then and it is wrong now.

The book of Proverbs is wisdom literature, practical instruction written to help people navigate life well. Throughout its thirty-one chapters, a specific rhetorical pattern appears repeatedly: the "better-is" comparison. Two scenarios are placed side by side and one is declared better than the other. What makes these comparisons striking is that the scenario declared "better" is almost never the wealthier one. Peace, integrity, love, and right relationship with God are consistently placed above financial prosperity. The cumulative weight of these passages tells us something important about what God considers a well-lived life.

READ & MEDITATE

Read the following passages as a bank. Do not rush through them. Let the cumulative pattern land.

Proverbs 15:16–17

"Better is a little with the fear of the LORD than great treasure and trouble with it. ¹⁷Better is a dinner of herbs where love is than a fattened ox and hatred with it."

Proverbs 16:8

"Better is a little with righteousness than great revenues with injustice."

Proverbs 17:1

"Better is a dry morsel with quiet than a house full of feasting with strife."

Proverbs 19:1

"Better is a poor person who walks in his integrity than one who is crooked in speech and is a fool."

Proverbs 28:6

"Better is a poor man who walks in his integrity than a rich man who is crooked in his ways."

After reading all five passages, notice the pattern. What does Proverbs consistently place above financial prosperity? What does it consistently place below it? What picture of a well-lived life emerges when you read these together? How would holding these judgments have affected Asaph's assessment and struggle in Psalm 73?

REFLECT

Proverbs returns to the "better-is" pattern repeatedly. The pattern itself is the point: genuine flourishing cannot be accurately measured by a single financial metric.

What does Proverbs consistently place above financial prosperity in these five passages? List what you find. Then ask: by this measure, what does a genuinely blessed life actually look like?

Asaph was using the narrow metric to assess others and nearly stumbled. The holistic metric produces a different conclusion, both about others and about your own life.

Apply the holistic metric to your own life right now. Where are you actually doing well by the biblical measuring stick, even if the financial or material picture is difficult? What does the fuller assessment reveal about what God has provided and protected in your life that the narrow metric has been causing you to overlook?

Proverbs 28:6 places integrity above wealth with specific directness. The variable that determines which scenario is better is not the size of the bank account.

Fill in the blanks from Proverbs 28:6:

*"Better is a poor man who walks in his _____ than a rich man who is _____ in his ways." (Proverbs 28:6)**

*These fill-in-the-blank questions use the ESV text. Your Bible may use different words for the same idea.

Think of someone you have been envying or watching with frustration because they appear to be prospering. Now run the holistic assessment. What does their life look like across peace of mind, integrity, quality of relationships, and right standing with God? What does the fuller picture tell you that the narrow metric was hiding?

PRAYER

Write your prayer or pray out loud. As we've read, God's ear is not dull. Talk to Him like He is listening and wants to hear from you.

MEMORY VERSE

Write or recite Galatians 6:9 from memory:
