

Honor The Lord with Thy Substance

Proverbs 3:9, 10

“Honor the Lord with thy substance, and with the first fruits of all thine increase: so shall thy barns be filled with plenty, and thy presses shall burst out with new wine.” - Proverbs 3:9, 10.

It seems that the vast majority of people in these days of greatly concerned with the keeping and/or gaining of wealth. If we could put our finger on someone from the Biblical era who was absolutely well suited in regard to the matter of finances and wealth, it would surely be one like Solomon (though there are quite a number of others that would at least be in the running for consideration. The first 10 content of this chapter develop what we could call the “Precepts of Wisdom”. In verses 1-10 he speaks of what makes for physical and spiritual well-being. Verse 11-12 claims that adversity is shaped by God into what can be seen to be the discipline of the a loving father. Verses 13-18 adds to this by tell us that it inculcates a genuinely true sense of values. Verses 19-20 seeks to give us a spiritual understanding of God’s creation; and is followed, in a large section (21-35) that teaches concerning what could be called “practical righteousness.

We’re giving our attention, in verse 9-10 to think a bit about a Biblical view of possessions. It does so by demanding that they be used in order to and in a way that honors God. Solomon has already touched upon this by telling us that we must trust God (v5); which was done by giving our first-fruits, our first and best to God. He will later (v27,28) instruct us to be fair in the use of it and by giving generously (v25); as well as by obeying the Pentateuch (Dt. 6:9-11) and giving thanks for all He gives to us. He tells us that the result of this will be prosperity and satisfaction. It is interesting that what is earlier referred to as the “fear of the Lord” often affects one’s body vigor and their finances with prosperity.

“Honor the Lord with thy substance, and with the first fruits of all thine increase...” (9)

As in many cases the verb form for “Honor” is in the imperative which, as we have noted before, when applied to me speaks of some form of command or instruction. This is not just a word of advice or even urging on Solomon’s part. He is telling his listeners what is completely necessary if the benefits of verse 10 are to be realized.

We must also note (perhaps unnecessarily, though a good thing to observe) that it is the Lord Whom we are to be honoring here. We must take some note of it here due to the imperative in the prior verb. The idea put forth here is not merely that He is our object, but that we MUST see that we are actually do what Solomon tells us we MUST have as a priority.

Some versions translate the ending word in the first phrase as “substance” and other give it as “substance”. The idea is get us to think of what we have or possess. It is not (yet) speaking of income or money (again, not yet). Rather Solomon is telling us to be sure that we see that God is due to be honored by what we already have in its’ usage. We might consider that the reference to the “first fruits of your increase” is, indeed speaking or what is consider “income” or that we would think of as money or other income. It is speaking of having a biblical view of possessions and understanding that this demands using them for honoring God.

1. This is accomplished by trusting God (v. 5);
2. Also by giving the first and best to God (“firstfruits”; cf. Ex. 22:29; 23:19; Deut. 18:4);
3. Additionally, by being fair (vv. 27, 28);
4. Likewise, by being willing to give generously (11:25) when needed of what we already have; and
5. By properly expressing gratitude for all He gives (Deut. 6:9–11).

The result of such faithfulness to honor Him is that God rewards us (v10) with what Solomon calls prosperity and satisfaction.

*¹⁰ So your barns will be filled with plenty,
And your vats will overflow with new wine. (Proverbs 3:10)*

And so this is speaking of the fact that this requires giving proper weight to **your wealth** by using it only for righteous, just, and equitable purposes (“in all your ways acknowledge him,” v. 6), which begins with offering the **firstfruits** of everything to the Lord (see Deut. 18:1–5). To give the firstfruits is to imply that the whole belongs to God, indeed the whole worshiper. The prosperity described in Prov. 3:10 is the blessing of the covenant (Deut. 28:1–14), a kind of restored Eden.

Your barns will be filled with plenty is a generalization concerning the effect of honoring the Lord with all that one has and is. It is not, however, more than a generalization (as Job’s comforters held), for to view this as a mechanical formula dishonors God and his inscrutable sovereign purposes.

Just to rethink our Interpretation here, we see the reference to “*Substance and increase*” are equivalent to capital and profit. God is honored when both are employed to His glory. The first-fruits were *literally* required by God of the Jews in acknowledgment of their redemption from Egypt (Exod. 13:12, 13; Deut. 26:1–3). Here the expression may be used more generally, of a fair proportion. Temporal prosperity, full barns, and vats overflowing with new wine, was a promise in harmony with a dispensation which dealt with men as with children.

As always, there are a number of illustrations we can use to support the ideas here:

- Abraham who honored God in paying tithes to Melchizedek, and

- Jacob who dedicated to God a tenth of his substance, were markedly blessed and prospered in return.
- The widow who gave her all to the service of the Temple, and the woman who anointed our Lord for His burying,
 - had each a rich reward in the notice He took of them.
- A plenteous spiritual harvest flowed in to Cornelius and to the Philippian converts from the alms of the one to God's poor, and the contributions of the other to God's minister (Acts 10:2, 4; Phil. 4:15–19).

By way of application we can think about the fact that it is clear that God is *not* honored when the attempt is made to extort from capital undue profit, to reap more increase than the substance will fairly bear. Still less, when the capital is only employed for its owner's own benefit, and the profit returns into his own coffers again.

"The silver is Mine, and the gold is Mine, says the Lord of hosts"
(Hag. 2:8).

From time to time this truth is impressed upon man by the sudden withdrawal of all he fondly deemed his own. He recognizes in this the finger of God; but why not equally in the bestowal of his wealth? To keep us in mind of this, a proportion of our goods is claimed by the divine law. It may not be, as with the Jews, a tenth in every case. The Gospel treats *us* as men, and leaves it to principle and conscience to determine in every case what is due to charitable and religious objects. But, surely, I cannot think that as a Christian I am less bound than was the Jew to this duty. The redemption I acknowledge has "bought" me "with a price," all that I am, all that I have. The reward is God's blessing for evermore. Therefore, one 17th century writer said:

*O blessed Jesus, teach Thou me to regard all mine as Thine, and so
 to honor Thee therewith that Thou mayest be mine in life, in death,
 and in eternity!*
