

PARK HEIGHTS CHURCH OF CHRIST

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Thus Saith the Lord

PROSPERITY

By Jeff Sweeten

During the waning history of Israel's kings, Hezekiah stands out as one of the more capable among the leaders of God's people. Many positive things about this king are recorded in 2 Kings 18 and 2 Chronicles 31. For all his gleaming character traits, one stands out above all the others. In 2 Chronicles 31:21 we read, *"And in every work that he began in the service of the house of God, in the law and in the commandment, to seek his God, he did it with all his heart. So he prospered."*

Prosperity in America is often measured with a warped ruler (and I suppose "warped" is an understatement if we were to believe some of the statements made by our "rulers" concerning our economic well being). The standard by which prosperity is usually metered is by the accumulation of stocks and bonds, retirement funds, or such banal braggadocio as the latest and greatest from BMW or Mercedes Benz. It is difficult to redirect one's focus from these shallow and temporary reflections of financial wealth that pale by compared to *"the unsearchable riches of Christ"* (Ephesians 3:8). Yet, we pursue the almighty dollar with the vim and vigor of a blue-tick hound after a treed raccoon. A rich rancher once drove through his ranch with a gospel preacher, gloating and bragging about all he possessed, and finally asked the minister, "What do you think?" The preacher replied, "It'll all burn up" (cf. 2 Peter 3:10).

Prosperity needs to be redefined. Who was really rich: Lazarus or the "rich man" (Luke 16:20ff)? Who actually prospered: Peter, the Apostle, or Simon, the magician (Acts 8:18ff)? Whereas the abundant life promised by Jesus (John 10:10) *may* include material wealth, it is not the standard for prosperity. Hezekiah's prosperity went far beyond earthly gain. He understood that the secret to success was not in the accumulation of things destined for destruction but in his total service to God. Those saints who find the abundant life will, like Hezekiah, prosper greatly.

"Command those who are rich in this present age not to be haughty, nor to trust in uncertain riches but in the living God, who gives us richly all things to enjoy" (1 Timothy 6:17). "And my God shall supply all your need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus" (Philippians 4:9).

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