



A BETTER WORD

FROM OLD TO NEW TO YOU

8 Themes That Run Through the Whole Bible | with Pastor Nick Gatzke

Blessing, Prosperity, and Rewards

Genesis 15:1; Psalm 37:4; Matthew 5:3–12; 2 Corinthians 8:9

THE BIG IDEA

God truly wants to bless you — but his blessings are far greater than health and wealth; the greatest rewards he promises are himself and the eternal prosperity that is coming for all who are faithful.

SERMON SUMMARY

Nearly 70% of American churchgoers believe God wants them to prosper financially. The prosperity gospel is not new — it's a recurring temptation that mistakes the Old Testament context of covenant blessing for a timeless guarantee. In the Old Testament, material prosperity was indeed part of God's covenant favor for Israel. But even there, the greatest reward was never the stuff. In Genesis 15:1, God says to Abraham: "I am your shield; your reward shall be very great." God himself was the reward.

In the New Testament, the picture shifts decisively. Jesus doesn't promise earthly prosperity to his followers — in fact, the Beatitudes flip the prosperity gospel entirely, declaring blessed the poor in spirit, the meek, and the persecuted. Jesus himself entered poverty so that we might inherit eternal riches (2 Corinthians 8:9). Rewards are coming for those who are faithful, but they are imperishable crowns, eternal rest, and the fullness of the kingdom. The center of all those rewards is God himself, the greatest treasure of all.

DIGGING DEEPER

1. In Genesis 15:1, God says to Abraham: "I am your shield; your reward shall be very great." What does it mean that God himself is the reward? How does framing it this way change the significance of everything else God promises?
2. The Old Testament connects material prosperity to covenant faithfulness (Psalm 1:1–3; 112:1–5). Why is it a mistake to apply these Old Testament covenant promises directly to people living under the new covenant? What is the appropriate way to read these texts today?
3. In the Beatitudes (Matthew 5:3–12), Jesus declares blessed those who are poor in spirit, mourning, meek, and persecuted. How does this directly challenge the prosperity gospel? What does Jesus say their reward actually is, and when does it come?
4. The New Testament describes eternal rewards: an imperishable wreath (1 Corinthians 9:25), a crown of righteousness (2 Timothy 4:8), a crown of life (James 1:12), and eternal rest (Hebrews 4:9). Why do you think God motivates faithfulness with reward language? Does this feel manipulative or generous to you — and why?
5. The prosperity gospel leaves suffering people in guilt — feeling that disease or poverty signals a lack of faith. How does a right understanding of blessing and reward protect

and comfort those who are suffering? How would you counsel someone who believes their hardship means God is withholding from them?

LIVING IT OUT

God wants to bless you more than you want to be blessed. But his best blessings don't fit in a bank account or a doctor's report. He offers refuge when you're in trouble, peace that surpasses understanding, a life lived to the full, and ultimately — himself. The greatest wealth you will ever hold is knowing and being known by God.

Heart Check: Be honest: are you more excited about what God can give you, or about God himself? When life is difficult, do you feel like God has let you down — or do you find yourself drawing closer? What does your answer reveal about where your treasure really is?

This Week: Slowly read and meditate on the twelve promises from the sermon: refuge, favor, peace, provision, blessing, rest, abundant life, renewal, good purposes in hard seasons, wisdom, inheritance, and joy. Choose one that feels most distant or hardest to believe right now. Write a short prayer asking God to make that promise feel real to you this week.

REFLECTION & PRAYER

“Delight yourself in the Lord, and he will give you the desires of your heart.”

— **Psalm 37:4**

Ask God to reorient your desires — to make him your greatest treasure. Confess any ways you've treated him more like a vending machine than a Father. Ask him to help you find more delight in who he is than in what he gives.

Your Prayer:

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