

Prosperity Of The Jerusalem Church

Intro: As a basis for our study consider the beloved physician, Luke, and his inspired history in Acts 6:7 ⁴⁷ And the word of God increased; and the number of the disciples multiplied in Jerusalem greatly; and a great company of the priests were obedient to the faith.”

Most in our society view prosperity from an almost exclusively materialistic perspective. While material prosperity is not sinful, the greatest prosperity is acceptability with God and fellowship within the New Testament church.

In the early days of the church at Jerusalem, we note how those brethren submitted themselves to God's pattern and discovered ultimate prosperity in their acceptability with God. In this lesson we note such prosperity was due to several factors.

I. IT WAS SPIRITUAL

A. They were not only members of the local church, but members of the church universal.

1. As one obeys the Gospel the Lord adds them to the church.
 - a. Acts 2:41 ⁴¹ Then they that gladly received his word were baptized: and the same day there were added *unto them* about three thousand souls.”
 - b. Acts 2:47 ⁴⁷ Praising God, and having favour with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved.”
2. As such they had undergone the new birth process.
 - a. John 3:5 ⁵ Jesus answered, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.”
 - b. Born of water; Tit. 3:5 ⁵ Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost;”
 - c. Born of Spirit; Jam. 1:18 ¹⁸ Of his own will begat he us with the word of truth, that we should be a kind of firstfruits of his creatures.”
 - d. As such they were members of the kingdom of Christ.
3. They made up the church universal and the totality of the saved; Eph. 5:23 ²³ For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church: and he is the saviour of the body.”

B. It resulted in a real brotherhood.

1. Acts 2:44-45 ⁴⁴ And all that believed were together, and had all things common; ⁴⁵ And sold their possessions and goods, and parted them to all *men*, as every man had need.”
2. Acts 4:32, 34-35 ³² And the multitude of them that believed were of one heart and of one soul: neither said any *of them* that ought of the things which he possessed was his own; but they had all things common. ³³ And with great power gave the apostles witness of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus: and great grace was upon them all. ³⁴ Neither was there any among them that lacked: for as many as were possessors of lands or houses sold them, and brought the prices of the things that were sold, ³⁵ And laid *them* down at the apostles' feet: and distribution was made unto every man according as he had need.”
3. This brotherhood wielded a powerful influence; Acts 4:13 ¹³ Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were unlearned and ignorant men, they marvelled; and they took knowledge of them, that they had been with Jesus.”

C. They bore the fruit of the Holy Spirit.

1. Gal. 5:22-23 ²² But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, ²³ Meekness, temperance: against such there is no law.”
2. Gal. 6:7-8 ⁷ Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. ⁸ For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting.”
3. Mat. 7:20-23 ²⁰ Wherefore by their fruits ye shall know them. ²¹ Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in

heaven. ²² Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? ²³ And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity.”

II. IT WAS STEADFAST

A. By this we refer to the Jerusalem’s church faithfulness.

1. This would be true collectively.
2. This would be true individually.
3. Acts 2:42 ⁴² “And they continued stedfastly in the apostles’ doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers.”

B. They were faithful (steadfast) in:

1. Studying God’s Word.
 - a. The apostles’ doctrine.
 - b. 2 Tim. 2:15 ¹⁵ “Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.”
 - c. Did not alter that doctrine.
 - d. The appeal was to that doctrine, not other things (social programs or change, entertainment, recreation, etc.).
2. Unselfish in the fellowship of their material generosity.
 - a. 1 Cor. 16:1-2 ¹ “Now concerning the collection for the saints, as I have given order to the churches of Galatia, even so do ye. ² Upon the first *day* of the week let every one of you lay by him in store, as *God* hath prospered him, that there be no gatherings when I come.”
 - b. 2 Cor. 8-9
 - c. They sold their possessions and gave to those who had need.
3. Regular in their observance of the Lord’s Supper.
 - a. Acts 20:7 ⁷ “And upon the first *day* of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread, Paul preached unto them, ready to depart on the morrow; and continued his speech until midnight.”
 - b. In remembrance of the death of Christ; 1 Cor. 11:24-25 ²⁴ “And when he had given thanks, he brake *it*, and said, Take, eat: this is my body, which is broken for you: this do in remembrance of me. ²⁵ After the same manner also *he took* the cup, when he had supped, saying, This cup is the new testament in my blood: this do ye, as oft as ye drink *it*, in remembrance of me.”
4. Consistent in their prayers to the Father.
 - a. 1 The. 5:17 ¹⁷ “Pray without ceasing.”
 - b. Rom. 12:12 ¹² “Rejoicing in hope; patient in tribulation; continuing instant in prayer;”
5. They sang psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs.
 - a. Eph. 5:19 ¹⁹ “Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord;”
 - b. Col. 3:16 ¹⁶ “Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord.”
 - c. Jam. 5:13 ¹³ “Is any among you afflicted? let him pray. Is any merry? let him sing psalms.”
 - d. Respecting God’s limits regarding the music in worship to Him.
 - (1) Col 3:17 ¹⁷ “And whatsoever ye do in word or deed, *do* all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by him.”
 - (2) 2 John 9 ⁹ “Whosoever transgresseth, and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God. He that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son.”

III. IT WAS PERSECUTED BECAUSE OF GOD'S TRUTH.

A. They were following in the steps of the Lord.

B. Jesus was persecuted:

1. Prophesied: Isa. 53:3 ⁴³ He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief: and we hid as it were *our* faces from him; he was despised, and we esteemed him not."
2. John 15:25 ²⁵ But *this cometh to pass*, that the word might be fulfilled that is written in their law, They hated me without a cause."
3. During His life:
 - a. Luke 4:29 ²⁹ And rose up, and thrust him out of the city, and led him unto the brow of the hill whereon their city was built, that they might cast him down headlong."
 - b. John 5:16 ¹⁶ And therefore did the Jews persecute Jesus, and sought to slay him, because he had done these things on the sabbath day."
 - c. John 7:1 ¹ After these things Jesus walked in Galilee: for he would not walk in Jewry, because the Jews sought to kill him."
4. They ultimately crucified Him.

C. The apostles as Christ's ambassadors were persecuted.

1. Promised by Christ; John 15:18-20 ¹⁸ If the world hate you, ye know that it hated me before *it* hated you. ¹⁹ If ye were of the world, the world would love his own: but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you. ²⁰ Remember the word that I said unto you, The servant is not greater than his lord. If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you; if they have kept my saying, they will keep yours also."
2. In Jerusalem:
 - a. Acts 4:16-21 ¹⁶ Saying, What shall we do to these men? for that indeed a notable miracle hath been done by them *is* manifest to all them that dwell in Jerusalem; and we cannot deny *it*. ¹⁷ But that it spread no further among the people, let us straitly threaten them, that they speak henceforth to no man in this name. ¹⁸ And they called them, and commanded them not to speak at all nor teach in the name of Jesus. ¹⁹ But Peter and John answered and said unto them, Whether it be right in the sight of God to hearken unto you more than unto God, judge ye. ²⁰ For we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard. ²¹ So when they had further threatened them, they let them go, finding nothing how they might punish them, because of the people: for all *men* glorified God for that which was done."
 - b. Acts 5:28-29, 33, 40 ²⁸ Saying, Did not we straitly command you that ye should not teach in this name? and, behold, ye have filled Jerusalem with your doctrine, and intend to bring this man's blood upon us. ²⁹ Then Peter and the *other* apostles answered and said, We ought to obey God rather than men.... ³³ When they heard *that*, they were cut *to the heart*, and took counsel to slay them.... ⁴⁰ And to him they agreed: and when they had called the apostles, and beaten *them*, they commanded that they should not speak in the name of Jesus, and let them go."

D. The members of the Jerusalem congregation.

1. Stephen; Acts 7
2. Acts 8:1-3 ¹ And Saul was consenting unto his death. And at that time there was a great persecution against the church which was at Jerusalem; and they were all scattered abroad throughout the regions of Judaea and Samaria, except the apostles. ² And devout men carried Stephen *to his burial*, and made great lamentation over him. ³ As for Saul, he made havock of the church, entering into every house, and haling men and women committed *them* to prison."
3. They were finally scattered from Jerusalem; Acts 8:2, 4 ² And devout men carried Stephen *to his burial*, and made great lamentation over him. ³ As for Saul, he made havock of the church, entering into every house, and haling men and women committed *them* to prison. ⁴ Therefore they that were scattered abroad went every where preaching the word."

E. Persecution when based upon truth brings out true nobility in the Lord's people.

F. It is certainly not joyous to experience, it does enhance our dedication and devotion to God.

IV. IT WAS UNITED

A. Luke pays special attention to their unity.

1. Acts 2:44, 46 ⁴⁴ And all that believed were together, and had all things common; ⁴⁵ And sold their possessions and goods, and parted them to all *men*, as every man had need. ⁴⁶ And they, continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart.”
2. Acts 4:24, 32 ²⁴ And when they heard that, they lifted up their voice to God with one accord, and said, Lord, thou *art* God, which hast made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and all that in them is:… ³² And the multitude of them that believed were of one heart and of one soul: neither said any *of them* that ought of the things which he possessed was his own; but they had all things common.”
3. They were united even though they came out of different backgrounds:
 - a. Nations, economic status, Jewish sects, etc.
 - b. United in their understanding and passion of the Gospel.
4. They demonstrated the unity for which Christ prayed; John 17:20-21 ²⁰ Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word; ²¹ That they all may be one; as thou, Father, *art* in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me.”

B. This unity was demonstrated in their charity.

C. They remained united even when problems arose.

1. Acts 5
 - a. Ananias and Sapphira lying to the Holy Spirit and being put to death.
 - b. Acts 5:12 ¹² And by the hands of the apostles were many signs and wonders wrought among the people; (and they were all with one accord in Solomon’s porch.”
2. Acts 15
 - a. Jerusalem conference.
 - b. The whole church was united in what to do; Acts 15:22, 25 ²² Then pleased it the apostles and elders, with the whole church, to send chosen men of their own company to Antioch with Paul and Barnabas; *namely*, Judas surnamed Barsabas, and Silas, chief men among the brethren: ²³ And they wrote *letters* by them after this manner; The apostles and elders and brethren *send* greeting unto the brethren which are of the Gentiles in Antioch and Syria and Cilicia: ²⁴ Forasmuch as we have heard, that certain which went out from us have troubled you with words, subverting your souls, saying, *Ye must* be circumcised, and keep the law: to whom we gave no *such* commandment: ²⁵ It seemed good unto us, being assembled with one accord, to send chosen men unto you with our beloved Barnabas and Paul;”

D. They were united:

1. In the one faith
 - a. Eph. 4:5 ⁵ One Lord, one faith, one baptism,”
 - b. Jude 3 ³ Beloved, when I gave all diligence to write unto you of the common salvation, it was needful for me to write unto you, and exhort *you* that ye should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints.”
2. One in practice; Acts 2:42 ⁴² And they continued stedfastly in the apostles’ doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers.”
3. One in work:
 - a. Evangelism
 - b. Edification
 - c. Benevolence.

V. IT RESPECTED THE BASIS AND LIMITS OF FELLOWSHIP.

A. Fellowship is a spiritual nature found within Christ.

1. Fellowship first reaches upward to God.

2. John 17:21 ^{“21} That they all may be one; as thou, Father, *art* in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me.”
3. 1 John 1:3 ^{“3} That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us: and truly our fellowship *is* with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ.”

B. Then fellowship reaches outward to other faithful Christians.

1. When you have fellowship with God and I have fellowship with God, then we have fellowship with each other.
2. Psa. 119:63 ^{“63} I *am* a companion of all *them* that fear thee, and of them that keep thy precepts.”
3. Amos 3:3 ^{“3} Can two walk together, except they be agreed?”
4. 1 John 1:6-7 ^{“6} If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth: ⁷ But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin.”
5. 1 Cor. 1:9-10 ^{“9} God *is* faithful, by whom ye were called unto the fellowship of his Son Jesus Christ our Lord. ¹⁰ Now I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and *that* there be no divisions among you; but *that* ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment.”

C. Non-Christians and Unfaithful brethren are not in fellowship with God.

1. They must accept God’s Divine forgiveness by obeying His conditions to enjoy His fellowship.
2. Non-Christians:
 - a. Upon hearing God’s Word have faith.
 - (1) Rom. 10:17 ^{“17} So then faith *cometh* by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.”
 - (2) Heb. 11:6 ^{“6} But without faith *it is* impossible to please *him*: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and *that* he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him.”
 - b. Repent
 - (1) Luke 24:47 ^{“47} And that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem.”
 - (2) Acts 17:30 ^{“30} And the times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth all men every where to repent.”
 - c. Confess
 - (1) Rom. 10:10 ^{“10} For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.”
 - (2) Acts 8:37 ^{“37} And Philip said, If thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest. And he answered and said, I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God.”
 - d. Be baptized
 - (1) Mark 16:16 ^{“16} He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned.”
 - (2) Acts 2:38 ^{“38} Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.”
3. Unfaithful Christians:
 - a. Confess; 1 John 1:9 ^{“9} If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us *our* sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.”
 - b. Repent and Pray; Acts 8:22 ^{“22} Repent therefore of this thy wickedness, and pray God, if perhaps the thought of thine heart may be forgiven thee.”

VI. IT SAW THE NECESSITY OF BEING SET FOR THE DEFENSE OF THE GOSPEL.

A. We must be set for the defense of the Gospel.

1. Phi. 1:17 ¹⁷ "But the other of love, knowing that I am set for the defence of the gospel."
2. There will be false teachers.
 - a. Mat. 7:15 ¹⁵ "Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves."
 - b. 2 Pet. 2:1 ¹ "But there were false prophets also among the people, even as there shall be false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction."
 - c. 1 John 4:1 ¹ "Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world."
3. We (both collectively and individually) stand opposed to them and expose them.
 - a. Rom. 16:17 ¹⁷ "Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid them."
 - b. Eph. 5:11 ¹¹ "And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove *them*."
 - c. Jude 3 ³ "Beloved, when I gave all diligence to write unto you of the common salvation, it was needful for me to write unto you, and exhort *you* that ye should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints."

B. The Jerusalem church was set for the Gospel's defense.

1. When enemies of truth arose, they stood in opposition to the error.
2. Ananias and Sapphira in Acts 5.
3. The Jerusalem conference and the Judaizing teachers.
 - a. Acts 15
 - b. Gal. 2:1-9 ¹ Then fourteen years after I went up again to Jerusalem with Barnabas, and took Titus with *me* also. ² And I went up by revelation, and communicated unto them that gospel which I preach among the Gentiles, but privately to them which were of reputation, lest by any means I should run, or had run, in vain. ³ But neither Titus, who was with me, being a Greek, was compelled to be circumcised: ⁴ And that because of false brethren unawares brought in, who came in privily to spy out our liberty which we have in Christ Jesus, that they might bring us into bondage: ⁵ To whom we gave place by subjection, no, not for an hour; that the truth of the gospel might continue with you. ⁶ But of these who seemed to be somewhat, (whatsoever they were, it maketh no matter to me: God accepteth no man's person:) for they who seemed *to be somewhat* in conference added nothing to me: ⁷ But contrariwise, when they saw that the gospel of the uncircumcision was committed unto me, as *the gospel* of the circumcision *was* unto Peter; ⁸ (For he that wrought effectually in Peter to the apostleship of the circumcision, the same was mighty in me toward the Gentiles;) ⁹ And when James, Cephas, and John, who seemed to be pillars, perceived the grace that was given unto me, they gave to me and Barnabas the right hands of fellowship; that we *should go* unto the heathen, and they unto the circumcision."

Conclusion: The Jerusalem church followed God's pattern. Likewise, God's pattern must be followed today in spirituality, steadfastness, persecution, unity, fellowship, and defense of the faith. May we fight the good fight of the faith until Christ returns.