

“Deal bountifully with Your servant, that I may live and keep Your word”
(Psalm 119:17)

The basic request before is for prosperity. Bountiful, full, generous dealings with me! It is a bold, audacious petition, rich and hearty. It is admittedly self-centered but altogether legitimate and acceptable when we consider its implications.

But what does “prosperity”, “bountiful dealings” envision? What are we asking God for when we ask Him to do us good? Is it perhaps, that we may have perfect health, no infirmities, no pain, no handicaps? That we may excel above our peers in beauty, strength, cleverness, and success? Be a winner and not a loser? Is it that I may be respected, admired, adored, not despised, rejected or held in contempt? That I may have wealth, comforts, ease, pleasures, fun? The best of what the world covets? Is it that I may achieve goals, be enabled to plunder creation, rise above others. Is this “life”, the “good life”, “prosperity”? Is this what it is to “live”?

The prayer is well directed. Prosperity must come from God, from His dealings with us, not our outward circumstances. Our well being does not rise out of the economy, the weather, politics, the environment, or other people, but God’s dealings with us. The objective is that “I may *live and keep God’s word*.” That is the essence of life, abundant life. Christ is the way the truth and the life.

God’s bountiful dealings with us then, may include poor health, infirmities, pain and handicaps. They may necessitate poor appearance, weakness, failures and loss. It may incorporate rejection, contempt and derision from the world. God, for our sakes, may give us a poor education, difficult marriage, unruly children, bad government. He may bring us poverty, hard times, hard labors, grief, sorrow and disappointment.

Poor health, infirmities and handicaps may be used to conquer an arrogant independence, a proud self-sufficiency. A physical dependency may well teach us a spiritual dependency and trust in God that could mightily enrich our souls. A poor appearance will deliver us from foolish vanities, from attracting people who care nothing about us but our good looks. Failures and loss may deliver us from fawning hypocrites who only wish to use us for what we can do for them. Poverty and hard times may drive us to God and teach us the live from His bountiful storehouse. Such need may thus deliver us from the worry and anxiety born out of fear of loss of what we possess. A poor education may teach us to teach ourselves, to think, to carefully make good use of all our time and resources, to enjoy the blessedness of hard work. A difficult mate will teach us tolerance, patience, sweeten our disposition so that we are more able to interact with a hostile world. The grief and sorrow born of unruly children will drive us to our knees, keep us prostrated before God, where we will learn His mighty power and faithfulness. Sorrows and heartaches will melt a hard heart, tender a tough, leathery front which has been put up for a defense against these very things, and transform us into loving, compassionate children of God.

So, it is all right to go ahead and pray this prayer. Ask God to deal bountiful with you. He will do what is necessary, what you could not and would not do for yourself. But He will do it because He knows what it will take, and He loves you enough to spare nothing to make you conformed to the image of

Christ and bring you into the life and joy He desires you to have.

-C. M.