

The Other Gospel; the Prosperity Message

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The Bible has been, and still is, one of the books most controversial, most questioned, most persecuted, most rejected, and most undervalued. The Bible is not like any other book because the Bible is considered God's written Word. Many writers with many trades from many places and separated by time, culture, and circumstances were moved by the Holy Spirit to share in written form God's message to a fallen human race. But the Bible has a weakness; its message has no meaning without the illuminating guidance of the One who inspired it. Those who read, study, and meditate on the Bible's contents will fall short if they don't follow through with obeying the truths found in it. They will be like a person who won't take a medicine that could cure him/her from a deadly illness because of the taste and appearance.

Another major issue about the Bible is that many of the followers of its message and its Author have no clue about the treasures found in it. Those who say they believe in the God who inspired this priceless Book have failed miserably in obeying His commandments. It takes a great effort to read, study, and meditate on the truths found in the Bible and even a greater effort to obey its commands, precepts, and laws. Those who lightly take the reading and studying of this awesome Book has greatly paid the price of being prey of those who would twist its message for their own interest and perdition. In the midst of a storm, it is almost impossible for one to meditate on the message of hope and assurance the Bible brings to one's life if the same person has failed to read and study its pages long before the storm. Obeying the message of the Bible is an even distant task when one fails to devour the words of wisdom, knowledge, love, joy, and hope found in this precious book.

Another major issue with the Bible is that many false preachers, teachers, and prophets have capitalized on the fact that many are the ones who do not seriously read and study the Bible. As a result, these false ones have come up with “new” revelations and doctrines which the Bible as a whole do not support or endorse. This is not a new thing; even the Apostle Peter spoke of these types of people when he spoke about the writings of the Apostle Paul (2nd Peter 3:16). The latest “new” revelation and doctrine today among the Christian community is the message of prosperity. Though the words “prosperity” and “prosper” are found in the Bible and though there is some type of prosperity for God’s people, the Bible does not advocate God’s desire for all His children to be millionaires. In the Bible there were some men of God who were poor and some others rich and yet they made an impact in the world they lived in the time they lived because God was with them and not because of the abundance or lack of material things. God can use one’s poverty or surplus to touch the world. Right now, I would like to address the Prosperity Message found within many Christian churches today and see if it measures out against the Bible’s view of prosperity.

For decades, many teachers and preachers of the Gospel have “spent their time in nothing else but either to tell or to hear some new thing” (Acts 17:21) just like the Athenians in the time of the Apostle Paul when he preached to them the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Many of them, if not all, have come to congregations with a “new” message from God who has “revealed” to a few the “secrets” to the power to prosper. Of course this power to prosper is going to cost the Church some “dinero”. These advocates, for the so commonly called “The Gospel of Prosperity”, manipulate the Scriptures to support their quest to become rich as the expenses of the “little” people; the sheep of Jesus’ pastures.

To support “the Gospel of Prosperity”, they use, among other Scriptures, Joshua 1:8, “This Book of the Law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate in it day and night, that you may observe to do according to all that is written in it. For then you will make your way *prosperous*, and then you will have *good success*”, Luke 6:38a, “Give, and it will be given to you: good measure, pressed down, shaken together, and running over will be put into your bosom”, and James 2:5, “Listen, my beloved brethren: Has God not chosen the poor of this world to be *rich* in faith and heirs of the kingdom which He promised to those who love Him?”

The many verses they use *seem* to have some support to their claims which go like these; “If God is a King, and if He is the owner of silver and gold (Haggai 2:8), and since we (Christians) are the King’s kids, therefore we are heirs of the King’s treasures and should be rich”, “Since Jesus Christ ‘has made us kings and priests to His God and Father’ (Revelation 1:6), therefore, we must not be poor, but wealthy ‘exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think’ (Ephesians 3:20)”, “If you are poor it is your fault. You either are not having enough faith or are not praying the right prayers”. There are many more claims they use but the ones mentioned above are very much the ones they generally use.

During the time of Christ, and since, there have been many who have misused the Scriptures “for the sake of dishonest gain” (Titus 1:11) and who have abused their position in the Church to fill their pockets with money. This “new” Gospel is spreading like wild fire across the United States of America and has thousands, if not millions, of followers. My wife and I used to be part of them who were taught to follow God so we can get His riches. They teach, deceitfully, Matthew 6:33 which states, “But seek first the kingdom of

God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you.” They usually and consistently remind the sheep that “All is all” and cunningly teach and preach the adding blessings of this verse rather than having an intimate and dynamic relationship with our Heavenly Father through Jesus Christ our Lord and Savior.

They hold on to their principle that to possess the riches from heaven, one has to confess the Word. They also believe that if a man or a woman is prosperous, they are in right standing with God. Having riches equals spiritual prosperity; lacking them equals spiritual ruin. Their definition of a prosperous man or woman is no where near to what God considers for a man or woman to be prosperous in His sight. Let me point out that prosperity is in the eyes of the beholders (notice that I did not say “eye of the beholder”). Individuals who may not consider themselves prosperous in their eyes may be considered prosperous in God’s eyes. On the other hand, individuals who may consider themselves prosperous in their eyes may not be considered prosperous in God’s eyes. In order for individuals to categorize themselves as prosperous, they must see themselves as God’s sees them and not as the world sees them; they must be in agreement with God’s view of prosperity. Like the Church of Laodicea, many today are saying, “I am rich, have become wealthy, and have need of nothing”, but God is saying to them, “You ‘do not know that you are wretched, miserable, poor, blind, and naked’”.

The Apostle Paul wrote the following to the Church in Galatia; “I marvel that you are turning away so soon from Him who called you in the grace of Christ, to a different gospel, which is not another; but there are some who trouble you and want to pervert the gospel of Christ. But even if we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel to you than what we have preached to you, let him be accursed. As we have said before, so now

I say again, if anyone preaches any other gospel to you than what you have received, let him be accursed.” (Galatians 1:6-9 – NJKV)

In the book to the Galatians, the Apostle Paul addressed the issue of giving heed to what he called “another gospel”, though later on he stated that there was not such a thing as another gospel. Through the history of Christianity, there have been individuals who have come to the Church with “new” revelations and doctrines supposedly received from the God who inspired the Holy Scriptures. Today there is no difference; there are thousands of individuals and religious movements which have “discovered” a “new” message hidden within the pages of the Bible. This message was somehow overlooked in the past by previous faithful men and women of God. This message, according to them, is for the Church of Jesus Christ, today. The message is that somehow God’s kids have not understood their place in God and, as a consequence, have not claimed their inheritance. In other words, Christians are missing out on what God has in store and the reason behind it is not lack of faith but lack of confessing what the Holy Scriptures say they should have as co-heirs with Christ. What they usually refer to as claiming what is rightfully belonging to Christians, is not the anointing of God’s Spirit, or more power to witness, or more wisdom, or more love and concern for the lost, or more unity, or more forgiveness; what they are usually referring to is the wealth that God Almighty possesses and which He has in store for the heavy givers. The proponents of this “new” message preach and teach that if God is a King and He is rich, and if Christians are God’s kids then His kids must be living in prosperity in all areas, especially financially.

They manipulate and twist the Scriptures to support their message and as they do that, their bank accounts get bigger while at the same time the people they lead are getting

poorer. Proponents of this type of message do not generally preach or teach about holiness, reaching the lost for Jesus Christ, hell, the devil, and of course, sin. They claim that the reasons Christians are not living the abundant life Jesus promised in John 10:10 are because Christians are not confessing what is rightfully theirs. They also profess that in order for God to bless His people, they have to give money directly to the preacher or the preacher's ministries so God can release such blessings. They also state that one must not confess negative thoughts, feelings, or words because that could hinder God's purposes or blessings in one's life. In order to express negative thoughts, feelings, or words, the proponents of this message use phrases like "I am in victory with my back" instead of stating of being in pain with their back.

To deal with this message or any type of message that claims to be the latest revelation from the throne of God, at least one question must be asked, "What do the Scriptures say about it?" I was taught that in order to properly interpret the Holy Scriptures, the student of the Bible must ask at least 2 questions: "What do the Scriptures *say* about a subject, topic, or theme?" and "What do the Scriptures *mean* when the Scriptures *say* what they say about such subject, topic, or theme?" For example, Paul writes the following in 2nd Corinthians 13:1 (NLT), "This is the third time I am coming to visit you. As the Scriptures say, 'The facts of every case must be established by the testimony of two or three witnesses.'" Prosperity message proponents use this Scripture passage to give them the "go" to find "two or three" Scripture passages that support material gain and financial security. But Jesus keeps saying in Luke 12:15 (NLT), "Beware! Don't be greedy for what you don't have. Real life is not measured by how much we own."

In order to have followers, the prosperity message proponents search for Scriptures references that include among other words, the following words and its derivatives: “prosperity”, “blessings”, “blessed”, “seed”, “harvest”, “sow”, “reap”, “promise”. Then, they put these words inside a spiritual blender, make a spiritual shake and serve it to their followers. Their followers, looking at their lives, tend to come to the conclusion that they are missing out on God’s blessings so they sacrifice their moneys to make the prosperity message proponents richer and richer while at the same time, most followers get poorer and poorer. They also start to wonder why Almighty God is not opening the windows of Heaven on them as He promised in the Book of Malachi. If the proponents of this message sense that people are losing hope and faith because they are not seeing results, they will usually invite a bigger proponent of this message to “crank up” the Church to give more because “the blessing is around the corner and the devil is causing you to doubt.” So the followers continue to give, their bills at home are getting bigger and bigger, the bank accounts are getting smaller and smaller, and the prosperity message proponents are getting better and bigger cars and houses, eating better, and dressing costlier and nicer clothes than the sheep they are supposed to care for.

Churches that have fallen prey of this fad are churches which love can not even be spelled much less showed and shared. Jesus is no longer the main reason to gather together as a Church. The pastor who endorses this type of message is in the Church for himself and no one else. He/she does not care about how many souls are saved, how many marriages are strengthen, or how many persons are helped and ministered unto, but instead they are interested on how much money comes in. It is a big time business. Be on guard

and don't be deceived; what God has in store for His children is much more precious and valuable than all the riches of the world.