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False Teachings in the Church (Part II Wealth & Prosperity)



.... I felt I had to write and urge you to contend for the faith that was once for all entrusted to the saints. Jude 1:3 NIV

False Teachings in the Church - (Part II – Wealth & Prosperity)

2 Timothy 3:1-4 (NIV) “¹**But mark this: There will be terrible times in the last days.** ²**People will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boastful, proud, abusive, disobedient to their parents, ungrateful, unholy,** ³**without love, unforgiving, slanderous, without self-control, brutal, not lovers of the good,** ⁴**treacherous, rash, conceited, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God–**”

Proverbs 30:8-9 (NIV) “⁸**Keep falsehood and lies far from me; give me neither poverty nor riches, but give me daily bread.** ⁹**Otherwise, I may have too much and disown you and say, ‘Who is the Lord?’ or I may become poor and steal, and so dishonor the name of God.”**

1 Timothy 6:6-10 (NIV) “⁶**But godliness with contentment is great gain.** ⁷**For we brought nothing into the world, and we can take nothing out of it.** ⁸**But if we have food and clothing, we will be content with that.** ⁹**Those who want to get rich fall into temptation and a trap and into many foolish and harmful desires that plunge people into ruin and destruction.** ¹⁰**For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil. Some people, eager for money, have wandered from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs.”**

Mark 14:7 (NIV) “**The poor you will always have with you, and you can help them any time you want. But you will not always have me.”**

One Friday evening during the summer, back in the late seventies, after a hard week’s work, I was walking down Lexington Ave. in Manhattan from 40th St., where I worked, to 53rd St. to catch the E train to Queens, where I lived. Along the way, I was approached by a man with a very noticeable Jamaican or Trinidadian accent. He asked if I could help him find his way back to the Greyhound bus station where he had placed his luggage in a locker and needed to retrieve it. This man went on to explain that he was a foreigner that had just come into the country and did not know his way around yet, and could not find his way back to the Greyhound bus station.

Being a young man with plans for a Friday night in the summer, coupled with the fact that I was born and raised in New York and didn’t take to strangers, I was reluctant to help this foreigner (I wasn’t a Christian at the time). Somehow this man sensed my reluctance to help him out. He immediately began to assure me that he was not a beggar and that he would pay me fifty bucks if I would just help him find the Greyhound bus station. To prove his ability to pay me, he reached into his pocket and pulled out a wad of money that would choke two horses. On top of his folded wad I saw a brand new \$50 dollar bill. Needless to say, all my plans for that evening were immediately postponed and my typical New Yorker’s reluctance to help or deal with strangers disappeared in order to earn \$50. Not only that, all suspicion and plain common sense went out the window and I was ready to be taken.

Before I could get to the nearest public telephone to call information for an address to the Greyhound bus station, the foreigner had approached another man and made him the same offer of \$50 to help him find the Greyhound bus station. This gentleman knew where the bus station was and told the foreigner he would ride with him in a taxi cab to get there. However, this gentleman had some concerns since this foreigner had flashed the same wad of money to him. Being a native New Yorker, he was concerned that this foreigner was setting him up to be robbed by flashing so much money. So he began asking the foreigner about his luggage that he left in the locker. He asked if there was any money in the locker, and the foreigner answered, "Yes." He asked if anyone saw the money he placed in the locker, he answered, "Yes."

Being the slick New Yorker this gentlemen seemed to be, he told the foreigner that since others knew about the money in his locker and the wad he was carrying, it would not be wise for him to go back to the bus station with the wad in his pocket and risk being robbed by those that saw him put the money into the locker, who were probably waiting there for him to return. The gentleman's solution to the problem was simple. The foreigner was to give the wad to me to hold for him while they took a cab to the bus station. Of course I quickly agreed, since after all, I wasn't a Christian. The foreigner agreed, but had one concern. What if I got robbed while holding his money? The gentleman and I assured him that I would not get robbed. Besides, I was wearing the seventies style pants that had zipped pockets in the pant leg, a place we told the foreigner robbers would never look. He believed us but said he'd feel better if I would put my money in my zipped pant leg pocket with his and I agreed.

We proceeded to a nearby Burger King, sat at a table where the gentleman took my money (\$60-\$65) and the foreigner's wad, wrapped all the money up in a handkerchief and passed the handkerchief to me under the table for me to put it in the zippered pocket in my pant leg, which I did. Then off went the foreigner and the gentleman to the Greyhound bus station in a taxi cab. I think I waited all of 15 minutes before I started running towards the train station on 53rd St. and Lexington Ave. When I got far enough away, I decided to stop and see what so much money looked like in my hands. I had even started thinking how I would spend it (remember, I was not a Christian). So I ducked into a space between two buildings to look at and count the money. I pulled out the handkerchief, opened it and nearly fainted. Inside the handkerchief was neatly cut, folded newspaper, no money. In hindsight, I realized how these two men were able to pull their con game on me; they played on my greed. I wasn't satisfied with the \$60-\$65 I had in my pocket, I wanted more.

Unfortunately, many Christians today are much the same way I was many years ago, vulnerable because of their greed. However, the difference today is the location and characters that are capitalizing on their greed. The location today for the con-man capitalizing on their greed is the pulpit; the characters are the popular preachers of our day. Today, rather than suggest that Christians put their money into a handkerchief in Burger King, they are asked to plant a seed into a particular ministry with promise of a greater return.

According to most (if not all) prosperity and wealth preachers, a "seed" must be planted in order to get rid of their mountain of need. The seed offering given/sown is usually an offering separate from tithes and offerings. The preacher asking for the seed offering will usually tell the givers that giving

them their seed offering is the same as giving it to God, who will multiply their seed. The sad part of this idea of sowing a seed to receive God's blessing in return is that many poor and/or elderly people will give their rent, food or bill money only to find themselves in a deeper hole. Not only that, their faith in God is damaged or destroyed because they feel God didn't come through for them when they needed Him most. We hear these prosperity and wealth preachers on tv and radio telling their followers to, "Seed out of their need," or "If you have a need, sow a seed." If sowing seeds (giving money) really worked as the prosperity preachers say, why aren't they sowing seeds to us (giving us their money)? For some strange reason, these preachers are always on the seed receiving side of things. Go figure!!

In addition to the standard seed sowing for a multiplied return, some are now promising those who sow a seed (money) into their ministry a "hundredfold return" based on Jesus' words in Mark 10:29-30 (NIV), "²⁹ *I tell you the truth*, Jesus replied, *'no one who has left home or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or fields for me and the gospel* ³⁰ *will fail to receive a hundred times as much in this present age (homes, brothers, sisters, mothers, children and fields— and with them, persecutions) and in the age to come, eternal life.*" There are three (3) things to consider in this passage that will help to see the error in the "hundredfold return" being promised to those that give their money to various preachers or ministries:

1. There is no hint in this passage of anyone giving a preacher or a ministry money in order to receive a "hundredfold return" on their money.
2. Giving money is not what causes the "hundredfold return," its "leaving" things for Jesus and the gospel that Jesus promises to give back a hundred times as much.
3. Jesus said that along with the "hundredfold return" there would be persecutions, a fact that is rarely if ever mentioned by those promoting the "hundredfold" blessing.

Secondly, I do not believe the "hundredfold" blessing Jesus promised is to be taken literally as it relates to biological family, here's why:

- It is not possible to literally have 100 biological mothers or fathers.
- It is not possible to literally have 100 literal sisters or brothers.

In my opinion, the home, brothers, sisters, mothers, fathers, children and fields that are to be received a hundred times as much is referring to the saints that will become like family and their fields, etc., will be like yours.

In conclusion, whether it is the standard "seed" sowing or the "hundredfold" promise being used to fleece the saints, it is because of their greed and lack of contentment that they become vulnerable to those preaching this error. Many Christians today are much the same as I was back in the late seventies when I got taken by the hustlers in Manhattan. My greed and lack of contentment with what I had in my pocket (\$60-\$65) opened me up for what should have been obvious, a con job. The Christians taken by the "give to get" schemes so prevalent today are being taken because of their

unwillingness to search God's word to see if what they're told is so. Instead they are so anaesthetized by greed, that the word of God gets replaced by what they want to hear.

Of course those preaching the "give to get" message will try to justify their position by saying things like, "We've been redeemed from the curse of poverty." However, that contradicts at least two (2) things:

- What Jesus said in Mark 14:7 (NIV), "***The poor will always have with you.***"
- Paul's life experiences in 2 Corinthians 11:27 (NIV), "***... I have known hunger and thirst and have often gone without food; have been cold and naked.***"

That said, consider the words of the Apostle Paul in 1 Timothy 6:6-8 (NIV), "***6But godliness with contentment is great gain. 7For we brought nothing into the world, and we can take nothing out of it. 8But if we have food and clothing, we will be content with that.***"

Like it or not, some of the saints of God will experience hardships, some will be without money or modern conveniences and there is no scheme or seed sown that will change their circumstances. Without these times in our lives, we never fully see the power of God and his ability to take care of us. So continue to give your tithes and offerings to your church/ministry as a means of thanking and acknowledging God for his blessings, not as a "give to get" scheme.

God Bless,
Pastor D. M. Duncan

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