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Dear community, here is an article that I have just written. I am posting it here for the correcting of error and the edification of the Body. I apologize that I won't have time to interact or respond to this thread for the next few weeks since I am currently deep down in Mexico and have limited internet access. If anybody has genuine questions, I will try to respond whenever I get the time. May the Lord bless you all.

Prosperity Preachers and Financial Gain

by Josef Urban

A Scriptural Examination of the Modern Doctrine of Financial Prosperity

It is a very common thing within the church nowadays to hear a preacher making references to supposed promises in the Bible that promise believers to have financial and economic prosperity. Statements like, "God doesn't want us to live in poverty" and "God promises to bless you economically if you honor Him" and so on, give the impression that Christians should believe for and seek material, financial, economic prosperity on this earth. Frequently the impression is given which ultimately makes people think, "God wants me to have more money". And so believers start praying and asking God for more financial prosperity and even begin to seek after increasing their economic status in this world. But does God really promise to give all Christians in the New Testament financial and economic abundance and prosperity? Does the Lord really want us to not be satisfied if we are living in poverty (if that is our appointed lot) and to seek after increasing our material substance?

The Scriptures are very clear about the subject of financial prosperity in the New Covenant. In fact, the Lord Jesus talked about money more than He specifically talked about Heaven and Hell combined—so there's absolutely no excuse for or ignorance on this subject. We have simply to look at what the Word of God teaches. But before we do this, let us first understand that God doesn't always work the way we work. His thoughts are as high above our thoughts as the heavens are above the earth (Isa. 55:9). So God may operate in ways that we don't quite understand with our natural minds, and He may do things that are contrary to what we have thought or understood about Him.

Many times we hold to traditions, mindsets, or beliefs that aren't Scriptural, and when we do, there comes a time when God is faithful to confront us with truth and bring us correction. Whether we are obedient to the Lord or not, and whether we will continue to walk with God or not, is largely determined on how we respond to the correction He gives us. It is important to realize that He doesn't correct us because He wants to rub our errors in our own faces, but because He loves us and wants us to walk in truth. When we are confronted with the Word of God and it teaches us that we were in error on some point, then we need to humble ourselves, repent where necessary, and correct our views.

Now, with that being said, chances are that some of the things you are about to read may not be what you have been taught or believed. So the question is: what are you going to do with the truths that you are about to be presented? Will you diligently search the Word of God and pray for understanding from above and seek the Lord in humility until it becomes clear? Or will you just reject and ignore everything you're about to read and continue to hold to unscriptural doctrine and practices? I urge you in the name of Jesus Christ to receive with meekness the blessed Word of truth and to take your stand with God's Word rather than with the preachers on TV, your own traditions or mindsets, or even your own church.

Before we continue, it is important for every one who is going to continue reading this lesson to get their Bible and to have it close at hand. There will be frequent statements in this lesson that are paraphrasing or relating to some particular passage of Scripture, and the Scripture reference is given in parenthesis after the statement. It is important that whenever you run across a statement with a Scripture reference after it, that you look it up in your Bible and read it for yourself. This will take some discipline and much more time to finish reading this lesson if you look up all the Scripture references, but it will be much more rewarding and will allow you to get the full benefit from this teaching. In fact, if you don't have your Bible by your side right now, go get it, and don't continue reading unless you have it and are ready to look up every Scripture reference.

So let us now proceed to answer the initial questions we asked about financial prosperity, namely: Is it promised to ever

y Christian? Does God want us to live in material abundance? Does the Lord promise to increase our economic status if we serve Him? Let us not speculate or reason, but rather, to see what the Word of God says.

FINANCIAL PROSPERITY NOT SIN IN ITSELF

First of all, let us make it absolutely clear: It's not a sin to have a large income and be financially prosperous in this world. There were saints whose lives are recorded for us in the Bible who were financially prosperous and who the Lord delighted in, and the Lord was even the cause of their financial prosperity. Their hearts didn't depart from the Lord on behalf of their prosperity, but rather, they used it generously to glorify His name, to demonstrate His love and to serve His purposes. Let us never make the mistake of thinking that because someone has a large income that they are in sin. It is easy to judge such people and be wrong because even though we may know that they receive a lot of money, we don't always know what they are doing with all that money, unless of course we see that they are using it to live in luxury and self-indulgence on the earth.

HOARDING TREASURE FOR SELFISH INDULGENCE IS SINFUL

So while the Scripture doesn't condemn a large income in itself, it does emphatically condemn selfish spending, selfish accumulation, and hoarding up earthly luxuries and treasures for ourselves; as Jesus said: "Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal: But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal: For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also" (Mat 6:19-21).

Jesus commanded us not to store up "treasures" on earth, because if we do, it proves that our hearts are not with Him in Heaven. Storing up earthly "treasures" proves that our affection is on things of the earth and not with the things of God in Heaven. It proves that we are so worldly-minded that we're of no Heavenly good. The Scripture commands us to set our affections on the things above, not on things of the earth (Col. 3:2). If we are laying up financial abundance for ourselves on earth for the purpose of enjoying ourselves in this world then we are in disobedience. Even if we say, "Well, I know that I have much material abundance laid up on earth, but my heart is really with Jesus in Heaven", it doesn't matter because Jesus said that our heart will always be wherever our treasure is. If you have such treasure on earth, it proves that your heart and affection is on earth and not in Heaven, and that you love the things of this world more than you love God. If you didn't, you would love Jesus enough to obey Him (Joh. 14:15) and you would get rid of your earthly treasures for the Gospel's sake and store up treasure in Heaven just as He commanded (Luk. 12:33), thus proving that your affection is in Heaven (Luk. 12:34). If you refuse to get rid of your abundant earthly treasures and abundant non-essential luxuries, it proves that you love them more than you love heavenly and eternal things, because Jesus said that you couldn't have both.

The Lord goes on to describe these "treasures", they are things that the moth eats away (such as the extra and abundant clothes in the back of the closet that are rarely used), things that rust corrupts (such as metals, jewelry, and fancy cars), and things that thieves break in and steal (such as things of great value). Do thieves break in and steal toilet paper, food, your clothes, and other necessities? —Not usually. What they look for is treasures, for things of extraordinary value. So Jesus forbids us to store up luxurious abundance on earth for the purpose of self-gratification.

Yet, this is EXACTLY what these prosperity preachers on TV and all over the world are doing. They are living extravagant lives, living in luxury, self-indulgence, buying the most expensive hotel suites, driving in the most expensive luxury cars, living in the most lavish multi-million dollar homes, feasting on most expensive dinners as a lifestyle. They are in clear disobedience to the Lord Jesus and are living in the practice of sin as they play the harlot and commit spiritual adultery on God by being friends of the world: "Ye adulterers and adulteresses, know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? Whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God" (Jam. 4:4). There is no middle ground and no room for compromise in the Kingdom of God —they either love God and hate the fleshly appeals of this world, or else they hate God in their hearts (despite what they say with their lips) and love the things that this world has to offer. Their actions prove where their hearts are, for "ye shall know them by their fruits" (Mat. 7:16).

Furthermore, these famous prosperity preachers are RICH by ANYONE'S standards. Who would dare say that they aren't rich when they live such lifestyles? Now hear what the Lord Jesus said: "But woe unto you that are rich! for ye have received your consolation." (Luk 6:24-26). Far from pronouncing them blessed and favored by God, the Lord Jesus pronounces woes and sorrows upon them! He tells them that they have already received their consolation, which means "reward". They have no reward waiting in the Kingdom of God for them, because they have lived in luxury on the earth and have decided to receive their reward here on earth. As James describes: "You have lived on earth in luxury and se

If-indulgence. You have fattened yourselves in the day of slaughter.” (Jam 5:5 NIV). James was talking to the rich in this world who live in selfish luxury. In contrast, he says in the same epistle: “Hearken, my beloved brethren, Hath not God chosen the poor of this world rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom which he hath promised to them that love him?” (Jam 2:5). James, just like Jesus, clearly rebukes the rich who live in abundance, luxury and self-indulgence while he pronounces blessing on the poor and oppressed.

PARTIALITY TO THE POOR

In James chapter 2, the Apostle is rebuking those who show favoritism to the wealthy and treat the poor as if they’re not as worthy of respect and honor. The people who he was rebuking were treating the rich extremely well by giving them the best seats in the church but shaming the poor by making them sit on the floor. They would honor the rich but shame the poor, and for this the Word of God rebukes them. Yet, this is exactly what this modern “gospel” of prosperity is doing—it honors the rich as if they’re blessed by the Lord and it shames the poor as if they’re not blessed and treats them like they aren’t living right or don’t have enough faith to get out of their poverty. It’s a “gospel” of partiality that mocks the poor by saying it’s their own fault and lack of faith that causes them to be poor. This “gospel” of prosperity is a rotten abomination in the eyes of the God whose word says, “Whoever mocks the poor reproaches his Maker” (Pro. 17:5).

This is happening today in many churches. The poor and afflicted members aren’t shown as much favor as those members who are wealthy and always have everything going well for them. And the modern “gospel” of success and prosperity is shaming the poor man and making him think that he must be in sin, not because there is actually sin in his life, but because of his poverty. What an indictment against the poor!

And those churches that are large and wealthy are seen as particularly blessed, while those churches that are small and struggling are seen as not so blessed, and even thought of as not in the will of God as they should be. Yet, the Lord Jesus sees things entirely different. In the book of Revelation, there were seven churches that He delivers the prophetic word to. Two of these seven churches were the church of Smyrna, and the church of Laodicea.

The church of Smyrna was physically poor, going through severe tribulation, and was suffering tremendously, but hear what the Lord said to them: “I know thy works, and tribulation, and poverty, (but thou art rich)...” (Rev. 2:9). Even though they are physically extremely poor, the Lord calls them “rich”, that is, spiritually. He had nothing to rebuke that church for, but rather commended them and encouraged them to persevere. But the church of Laodicea was a financially prosperous church that was rich on earth, so wealthy that they needed nothing, and the Lord said to them: “Because thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked” (Rev. 3:17). Even though they appeared to be blessed and physically prosperous, the Lord rebuked them sharply and called them “poor” in his sight. How many churches today are physically prosperous and have large congregations but are lukewarm and wretched in the sight of God?

PROSPERITY PREACHERS VS. THE WORD OF GOD

The message of the Bible stands in direct contrast to what these prosperity preachers are saying...

The prosperity preachers are telling us to get more for ourselves, but Jesus told us to get rid of what we already have (Luke 12:33). Who’s right—them or the Lord Jesus?

The prosperity preachers are telling us that God wants us to be rich, but the Apostle Paul said that those who desire to be rich fall into many temptations and snares and foolish hurtful desires which drown men in destruction (1 Timothy 6:9). Who’s right—The prosperity preachers or the Apostle Paul?

The prosperity preachers are telling us not to be content with what we have but to command God to give us more, but the Bible commands us to be content with what we have (Hebrews 13:5). Who’s right—Them or the Word of God?

The prosperity preachers are telling us that God wants us to have the best that this world has to offer, but the Apostle John told us that if we live like the world and love the things of the world then we’re not even saved (1 John 2:15). Who’s right? Are we to believe them or the Apostle John?

The prosperity preachers are standing up in front of worldwide audiences and boasting about how much silver and gold they have, but the Apostle Peter had to say to a poor beggar that he didn’t even have any money to give him (Acts 3:6).

Surely Peter wasn't lying. He actually had no money! Who's right—the prosperity preachers or the Apostle Peter?

The prosperity preachers have stood in the midst of the Church and used the things of God to accumulate mass monetary gain for themselves, but when Jesus entered the house of God, He did the opposite, He made a whip and cleared out those who were in it to make money (Mark 11:15). Has the Lord changed His mind?—Never! He's the same yesterday, today and forever!

The prosperity preachers are telling us that God wants us to be rich, increased with goods, and have need of nothing, but the Lord Jesus said that those who are such make Him want to vomit (Revelation 3:16-17).

The prosperity preachers are telling us to serve them and to give to their ministry, but the Lord Jesus came to serve us and gave all that He had (Mark 10:45).

The prosperity preachers are telling us to give to their ministries and that in return we will be extraordinarily blessed by God, but when a man in the Bible tried to give money to the Apostle Peter in return for the blessing of the Holy Ghost, the Apostle rebuked and condemned him (Acts 8:18-23).

The prosperity preachers are telling us that they deserve to be rich because of their great anointing and that we must give to them, but the man of God Elisha wouldn't even accept an offering from a man healed under his ministry, and furthermore, when his servant went and collected the offering afterwards without Elisha's consent, Elisha rebuked him and the Lord cursed him and his descendants forever (2 Kings 5).

The prosperity preachers are telling us that the world should love us because of our prosperity and desire to be like us as a result, but the Lord Jesus pronounced dreadful sorrows on those who are spoken well of by the world (Luke 6:26).

The prosperity preachers are telling us that Jesus came to give us life more abundantly and that this means that we are to have an abundance of the material things that we possess, but the Lord Jesus said that this abundant life is Eternal Life and that life doesn't consist of the material things which a man possesses (John 10:10, Luke 12:15). Should we believe these prominent wealthy preachers, or the meek and lowly Lord Jesus?

The prosperity preachers are telling us to use God to get money, that God wants us to have more money, but Jesus said that we cannot serve both God and Mammon (Matthew 6:24). The Lord said that we will either love God and hate Mammon, or else be devoted to God and despise Mammon, but that there could be no neutrality, and no aspiring after both. So should we believe them as they serve God and money at the same time (as proven by their extravagant and luxurious lifestyles), or should we believe Jesus who despised the world's good in order to please His Father in all things?

The prosperity preachers tell us that Abraham was rich and because of this, we should be rich too. They tell us, according to Galatians 3:14, that we are to receive the "blessing of Abraham", and therefore, since Abraham was blessed and rich, we should be too. Yet, the Scripture makes it clear that the "blessing of Abraham" isn't earthly riches: it's eternal life! "That the blessing of Abraham might come on the Gentiles through Jesus Christ; that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith." The blessing of Abraham is the promise of the Holy Spirit by which we're adopted into God's family and are saved. It is a blatant twist of Scripture to take this and turn it into a promise of earthly prosperity and riches.

Furthermore, Abraham was prosperous in this earth. That is obvious. But this doesn't mean that every Christian should be. God had a plan to make a huge, great nation out of Abraham, and it was necessary for him to have abundance in order to fulfill the promise of God to make a great nation out of him, a nation through which the Messiah, Christ Jesus would come to save mankind from sin. Obviously God isn't planning on making a huge and great earthly nation out of every Christian, so it isn't necessary to give such material abundance to them. And even furthermore, it has to be remembered that Abraham didn't even want to aim after earthly riches since he was seeking nothing of this earth, but was "looking for a city whose builder and maker is God" (Hebrews 11:10). Abraham proved that he was willing to forsake everything of this world to gain God's approval. He despised not only Mammon for the sake of his love for God, but his own son Isaac as well, as proved by the fact that he offered him upon the altar (Genesis 22). Abraham was a holy man of God that sought God's approval no matter the cost, and despised anything this world has to offer for the sake of inheriting the eternal city of God in the age to come.

The prosperity preachers tell us that Solomon was rich and prosperous, so therefore we should be too.—But this is completely erroneous, because Solomon was in clear disobedience to the Law of God which commanded that the king of Israel

Israel not multiply much silver and gold for himself (Deuteronomy 17:15-20). Solomon disobeyed that to such an extent that in his palace, silver was regarded as mere chump change in comparison (2 Chronicles 9:20). Solomon also took many wives for himself, over 900 in fact, which was also in clear transgression of the command of God. His heart was turned away from the Lord and he even built pagan shrines to false gods in Israel (Nehemiah 13:26, 1 Kings 11:1-8). Solomon became a backslider and for a season he was in rebellion against the Lord, seeking happiness in things of this world rather than in God—this is exactly what the book of Ecclesiastes tells us. So why on earth would we want to set up Solomon as an example for the Church to follow? Dare we aspire after earthly things like he did and have our hearts turn from the Living God? Thank God that Solomon learned his lesson and came around in the end and forsook his pursuit of earthly pleasures and riches and learned to be obedient in the fear of God (Ecclesiastes 12:13-14). May we learn the same thing from his example and not from falling into the same error ourselves!

TRUE OLD TESTAMENT EXAMPLES

What about the example of Moses? Moses was a man who, as a baby, was adopted by the daughter of Pharaoh and throughout his years was raised in all the rich luxuries of Egypt. As the son of Pharaoh's daughter he was in line to receive many riches as a legal heir to an inheritance in the kingdom. Moses could have had all this world has to offer in terms of riches and success. Yet, the Scripture tells us that Moses despised the riches and pleasures and luxuries of Egypt for the sake of knowing the Lord:

“By faith Moses, when he was come to years, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter; Choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season; Esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt: for he had respect unto the recompense of the reward” (Heb. 11:24-26).

How easy would it have been for Moses to stay in Egypt, and to say, “I love the Lord and I'm going to follow Him and be a light to the world where He has placed me”? Yet, he made no excuse, he refused to compromise in the least, and forsook it all for the sake of being identified with the true people of God. He counted it a much greater blessing to suffer reproach and affliction for Christ than all the treasures that Egypt had to offer, for he knew that if he forsook all such earthly riches that he would have treasure in Heaven, so he was able to forsake it all joyfully as he looked to the great reward that awaited him in the Kingdom of God. Let us learn from the example of this extraordinary man of God and imitate his faith!

And let us not only imitate the faith of Moses, but the faith of all the true men of God and prophets of the Lord who, “we were tortured, not accepting deliverance; that they might obtain a better resurrection: And others had trial of cruel mockings and scourgings, yea, moreover of bonds and imprisonment: They were stoned, they were sawn asunder, were tempted, were slain with the sword: they wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins; being destitute, afflicted, tormented; (Of whom the world was not worthy:) they wandered in deserts, and in mountains, and in dens and caves of the earth. And these all, having obtained a good report through faith, received not the promise” (Heb. 11:35-39). The description of the Word of God that tells us what they went through sounds like anything but prosperity! In fact, it sounds like just the opposite—it sounds like they were often times poor, afflicted, mistreated, abused, suffering, despised, and tried, and the reason is because the world was not worthy of them. Therefore the world hated them, and they too hated the system of the world. These are not rare or extreme examples, because the Scripture tells us that we're called to imitate their faith and example and follow their practice. The Lord Jesus even said to all those who would follow Him: “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” (Joh. 15:19). And the Word of God likewise promises us, “that we must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God” (Act. 14:22). This sounds like anything but the nice, happy, “abundant life” that many of these modern prosperity preachers are telling us we should have!

A WORD ABOUT THE LAW

The prosperity preachers are frequently quoting promises of prosperity from the Old Testament and from the Law of Moses (such as is found in Deuteronomy 28). But it must be remembered that regardless of how prosperous or rich a particular saint was under the Old Covenant, that it's not the same with every believer under the New Covenant. It's a dangerous thing to take scripture out of context. The blessings and curses of the Law don't apply in the same way to believers under the New Covenant. We can't be mixing the Old Covenant with the New, the old wine with the new wine (Matthew 9:17). The New Testament teaches us that we're not under the Law (Galatians 3:10, 4:21). It teaches that we're “dead to the Law” (Romans 7:4). It teaches us that the Law is “done away” (2 Corinthians 3:11). It teaches that the Old Covenant is old, decaying, and “ready to vanish away” (Hebrews 8:13). It is against the teaching of the Word of God, against the New Covenant, which we are currently under, to pick and choose blessings or curses from the Old Cove

nant and apply them to the believer in Christ under the New. We are not under the Old Covenant any more, and none of it is binding on the New Covenant believer in Jesus who is justified freely by grace (Romans 3:24).

This doesn't mean that the Law is not important, because it is still the word of God, which remains forever (1 Peter 1:25), and has many practical applications, shadows of things to come (Hebrews 10:1), and instructions for our learning (1 Corinthians 14:34). And this doesn't mean that we can live licentious lives because we're not under the Law. To the contrary, we live in freedom from the dominion of sin since we're not under the Law (Rom. 6:14). The heart of God is found in the Old Law, which believers in the Lord Jesus fulfill in the true spiritual meaning and purpose of the Law by loving God and loving others, and in that sense the Law is fulfilled in those who believe in Christ (Romans 13:10). But we cannot take abstract promises of earthly prosperity from the Law and apply them in the same way to believers in the New Covenant, because if we are going to take some of the Law then we have to take all of it and render perfect obedience to it (Galatians 3:10). We can't take the things from the Law that we like and ignore the things from the Law that we don't like. Yet this is exactly what these prosperity preachers do. They take the promises to Israel for earthly prosperity in the Old Covenant and twist them to be promises for the Church in the New Covenant, but they ignore all the other things written in the Law and all its requirements for absolutely perfect obedience.

THE NEW COVENANT PROMISES NO EARTHLY PROSPERITY TO EVERYONE

In the New Covenant, there are absolutely no promises given which apply to every individual in the church promising them earthly, financial prosperity. The New Testament contains no promises to financially increase every believer and make them physically prosperous with an abundance of money or material worth. There are numerous promises that when we are truly living in the will of God, and honoring God first in our lives, and walking in obedience and love in the Lord Jesus, that as we do so God will provide our physical necessities. And there are promises that state that if we are generous with our material substances and money and give to those in need that God will see to it that we are provided for and rewarded in return (for example, as in 2 Cor. 9:6).

Jesus said, "Seek first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these other things will be added to you". But he explained in the context what these "other things" are that God would add to us—they are "food" and "clothing" (see Matthew 6:25-33). God promises to supply all our "needs" according to His riches in glory, not all our "wants" or "desires" (Philippians 4:19). Jesus had our basic necessities in mind when He promised that God would provide for us. To twist this into a promise for financial prosperity is, to put it plainly, to adulterate the Word of God.

SOME OBJECTIVE SCRIPTURES EXAMINED

There are a number of favorite "proof-texts" often given by prosperity preachers to "confirm" their doctrines that they try to use to "prove" that God wants all Christians to be rich. While we don't have the time or space here to deal with them all, let us briefly look at a couple of them:

"For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might be rich" (2 Cor. 8:9). The prosperity preachers tell us that this is saying that Jesus was physically rich in Heaven, but came down to earth and became poor, and redeemed us from having to suffer poverty, so that we now can become financially rich. But is this really what this text is teaching? It can't be because it would utterly contradict the rest of the teachings in the New Testament on this subject. If the Apostle Paul was saying that we should be physically, financially rich, then he miserably failed to practice what he preached. Paul himself was an extremely physically poor man (Paul says that he didn't even have proper food and clothing a lot of times, and that he was homeless; see 1 Cor. 4:11). If Paul meant that we should all be financially rich because Jesus became poor, why wasn't he rich? Why was he so poor? And why did he suffer so much (as he says a few chapters later in 2 Cor. 11:23-28).

And if God wants us to be physically rich, then why did all the other Apostles live such humble, poor lifestyles as Church history records? Even in the book of Acts the Apostle Peter said to a poor beggar, "Silver and gold have I none" (Act. 3:6). Out of all people, the chosen Apostles of Jesus Christ were in the perfect will of God—so why didn't they get rich if God promised it? Were they living defeated lives outside the will of God because they lived in poverty? Who would dare say such a thing? Yet this is exactly what these prosperity preachers are saying, not directly, but by saying that it is God's will that all believers be prospered financially. This means that if anyone isn't financially prospering, then they are not in God's perfect will!

In 2 Corinthians 8:9 (quoted above), the Apostle Paul is relating the physical to the spiritual. He mentions Jesus' physical riches and glories in Heaven, says that He left all of that to humble Himself and become physically poor, so that we thr

ough His poverty and suffering might become spiritually rich. If this is not what he meant, then he utterly contradicts himself since he was so poor, and since he clearly implies that it's only the appointed lot of some to be rich (1 Tim. 6:17). But this must be what he meant, since this agrees with what the rest of the Bible teaches. (And the Bible does speak of both physical and spiritual riches in the same verses, such as in Revelation 2:9 where it speaks first of physical riches but then of spiritual riches in the same sentence, just as it does in 2 Corinthians 8:9.) So God is concerned with our spiritual prosperity, not with our physical prosperity. God wants us to be spiritually rich towards Him, abounding in good fruit that glorifies His name. This cannot be taken as a promise for every believer that guarantees earthly riches.

Another favorite Scripture used often by the prosperity preachers is 3 John 2: "Beloved, I wish above all things that thou mayest prosper and be in health, even as thy soul prospereth." The prosperity preachers quote this and say, "See, the Apostle John says that he wishes above all things that we would materially and financially prosper and be in good health, just as our soul prospers spiritually." They say that this is a promise to every believer that we can be financially prosperous if we will only believe and claim it by faith. But let's not be so naïve. Remember, the Word of God must be read and interpreted in its context. This is something the prosperity preachers fail to do. So let's examine this verse in context.

First of all, this isn't a statement of an absolute promise from God; it is a statement of the desire of the Apostle John. He said, "Beloved, I wish..." It's a statement of desire. John is not promising the person he is writing to that God will prosper him, he is simply stating that he desires that he will prosper. To take this as a statement of a definite promise from God is to take it beyond its plain and literal stated meaning.

Secondly, we have to take into consideration who the Apostle John is writing this to. He is obviously not directly writing this to every single person who call themselves a Christian. He is writing this to a man named Gaius, a beloved and faithful brother in the Church. In this short epistle, we are given a couple of praiseworthy characteristics of this beloved brother Gaius: He is a personal friend and is personally commended by an Apostle of Jesus Christ as being a brother in the Lord and John alludes to being his spiritual father in Christ (vv. 1, 4). He is walking in full obedience to the truth of the Gospel (vv. 3-4). He is faithful to serve, be hospitable to, and to give generously to brothers, strangers, and especially missionaries (vv. 5-8). Gaius isn't just any average so-called "Christian"; he is a faithful brother who has sat under the Apostle John, is walking in love and obedience in holiness and truth, and is going out of his way to show generosity and love to traveling missionaries. Gaius is a man who is busy in the Lord's service.

Therefore, we can assume that as long as Gaius is healthy, and is well off and prosperous in all things, that the work of the Lord will continue to flow through him and the brothers, strangers, and missionaries will continue to be ministered to. Why would anyone not want such a faithful brother to prosper in all things? As long as he prospers, he is helping the work of God generously! So the Apostle John desires that Gaius will prosper and be in good health because John knows that as long as he does, the missionaries will be supported. John in no way desired that Gaius should prosper so he could lay up for himself the luxuries and pleasures of this world—the whole reason he states that he wishes that Gaius prosper in all things to begin with is because he heard that Gaius was generously helping missionaries!

GOD DOES PROSPER SOME IN THE CHURCH

This brings us to another point. Although it is not promised by God that every Christian prosper financially, no doubt it is evident that God does choose to financially prosper some of His children. Like Gaius, God does choose to entrust some of his children with material prosperity. But the reason why He does, again, is not so such a one can lay up for themselves treasures upon the earth, or to use what God has given them selfishly to improve their physical standard of living and live in luxury, but so that they, like Gaius, can use what God has given them to help others and to give to the work of the Lord.

This is why the Apostle Paul said to the young preacher Timothy, "Charge them that are rich in this world, that they be not highminded; nor trust in uncertain riches, but in the living God, who giveth us richly all things to enjoy; That they do good, that they be rich in good works, ready to distribute, willing to communicate; Laying up in store for themselves a good foundation against the time to come, that they may lay hold on eternal life" (1 Tim. 6:17-19). Paul doesn't tell him to outright rebuke those who are rich just because they are rich, since it's not a sin in itself to be rich, but he tells Timothy to command them not to be proud because of their riches, not to trust in their riches, and to command those who are rich that they be rich in good works, in generous giving. This is why God chooses to financially prosper some in the Church—so they can be generous with what they have and help the poor, the widows and orphans, give to those in need, and to fund Gospel workers and missionaries.

This is the essence of the second greatest commandment: to love our neighbors as ourselves (Mat. 22:39). Those who are financially prosperous in the Church by the sovereign will of God are called to show with their money and material things that they love their neighbors just as much as they love themselves. What they do with their money proves how much they love their neighbors. If they are living in excessive and expensive luxury beyond what is reasonable according to the average standard of living, and they see other brothers or missionaries in need but don't give to them, then that proves that they love themselves more than they love others. "But whoso hath this world's good, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him? My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue; but in deed and in truth" (1 Joh. 3:17-18).

In fact, those who come to Christ and are converted who own excessively luxurious or extravagant worldly things are commanded to sell their abundances and to distribute to the poor and needy in the Church. This is exactly what the Lord told the rich young ruler (Mar. 10:17-25) and to all the disciples (Luk. 12:33). If they refuse to part with the extravagant things of this world for the sake of Christ, then they are not worthy of being a follower of Jesus (Luk. 14:33). Refusing to get rid of the luxurious extravagance and abundance is proof that they have a love for the things of this world, since they refuse to depart from such things out of love for Christ. "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him" (1 Joh. 2:15). It is not that God wants us to live without our necessities being met, since God Himself promises to supply all our necessities, but the Lord wants us to obey the truth in love and give to brothers from our abundance who are genuinely in need, that there may be equality in the brotherhood (2 Cor. 8:14) and evident love shown to all the saints (Luk. 10:30-36).

MONEY IS GOD'S IDEA

It is true that Jesus spoke on money and material things often, but the thing that prosperity preachers won't tell you is that whenever He spoke of it He almost always spoke against it, that is, against desiring it in any way. This is because the Lord Jesus knew that "the love of money is the root of all kinds of evil" (1 Tim. 6:10). He knew that money competes for the heart and affection and devotion of man in a way that no other thing does and therefore, He constantly warned that it was an imminent trap waiting to snare the soul of any man at any moment. He knew that the desire for money and worldly things would cause a great many of His professing followers to stumble and fall and ultimately, lose their souls.

So does this mean that Jesus hates money, in itself? No. Money was God's idea. He's the One who created the world and everything in it and ordained a monetary system to operate on this earth. So yes, money is His idea. So why did He ordain it? Here's why: to test the hearts of men and especially the hearts of His people. God gives us money to test us to see if we will be devoted to money or be devoted to Him. God may give certain believers an abundance of money, not so they can be selfish and spend it all on themselves but so that they can show the world by the way they spend it that God is their God and that money is not their god. God's design is to give us a chance to magnify Him by using what He has given us in a way that glorifies His name and demonstrating His love. So, dear Christian, do you show the world by the way you spend your money that God has the first place of devotion in your life? Or do you show that you care first and foremost about yourself and your own comforts and selfish desires?

COVETOUSNESS IS IDOLATRY

The Word of God is literally filled with warnings against covetousness, in both the Old and New Testaments. Yet, despite these clear warnings, many of those who call themselves 'Christians' live lifestyles that can't be defined in any other way except 'covetous'. In fact, though they won't outright say that they are covetous, many of them will openly admit that they are by the very definition of the term. The word 'covet' literally means, "to desire or wish for". It means exactly the same thing in both Hebrew and Greek, the languages in which the Old and New Testaments were written. So when a professing Christian looks at a nice car going down the street and expresses desire to have one like it for themselves, they are coveting. When a professing Christian says that they want more money or material things to lay up for themselves or their families, and they truly desire such things in their heart, then they are coveting.

To covet something means that we desire to have it. It suggests that we're not content with what we have, that we're not fully satisfied with the Lord and with what He has given us, and that we need something else in order to satisfy us. So seeing this definition of the term, we see that so many of us in the Church are guilty of covetousness—of desiring a better car, a better house, a larger bank account, of increasing our material worth. It is truly sin in God's sight, and not just any sin, but extremely dangerous sin. The Word of God commands us to put this sin to death and gives us sobering warnings against it:

"Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth; fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, evil concupis

cence, and covetousness, which is idolatry: For which things' sake the wrath of God cometh on the children of disobedience" (Col. 3:5-6). Here the sin of covetousness is grouped in the same level with fornication, with lascivious living and practicing immorality. We are commanded to mortify, or put to death, any desire within us that we find desiring to covet anything. It says that if we are given to covetousness, that the wrath of God will come upon us. This "wrath" is eternal destruction and punishment in Hell. This is how serious God views the sin of covetousness. It doesn't matter if some one calls themselves a "Christian", it doesn't matter if someone is a preacher, it doesn't matter if they have a large ministry and many people like them; if they are given over to a covetous heart they will face the wrath of a holy God against such sin. God hates covetousness just as much as He hates fornication and murder.

And notice that the Scripture says: "And...and covetousness, which is idolatry". It calls covetousness "idolatry". This is especially significant because idolatry is one sin that God particularly hates. The Lord tells us that He is a jealous God and that He will not share His glory with anything or anyone else. He demands our absolute and sole devotion and gets provoked to jealousy whenever something else is desired in place of Him. Those who desire to increase their material worth and desire the things of this world are idolaters in the sight of God. Many Christians look up to these famous preachers with huge ministries who are living in luxury and extravagant abundance, who openly say that they want more money and continually ask their audiences to give them money. Many Christians look up to them as great men of God, but the true God of Heaven looks down on them as idolaters provoking Him to jealousy by clinging to and promoting Mammon.

A particularly enlightening Scripture on this subject is found in Hebrews 13:5: "Let your conversation be without covetousness; and be content with such things as ye have: for he hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee." It commands us to have our conduct free from desiring money or material things, and on the flipside commands us to "be content with what you have". In other words, we are either one or the other; we are either content with what we have, or we are covetous. There's no middle ground, no serving both God and Mammon. We are able to be content solely in Jesus, and in the love of God, because the Lord has promised never to leave us or forsake us. Our satisfaction, joy, pleasure, and contentment should be solely in Him and not in the things of this world. God doesn't want us to be miserable in our poverty (if poverty is our appointed lot); instead, He wants us to glory and take joy in it because whether we have little or much, we're content with knowing Him!

In fact, this was written to Hebrew Christians who had just previously suffered the loss of all their earthly things! The author of the epistle says to them: "(you) took joyfully the spoiling of your goods, knowing in yourselves that ye have in heaven a better and an enduring substance" (Heb. 10:34). They were able to suffer the loss of all things and to take it joyfully without coveting them back, knowing that they had a much greater possession in Heaven waiting for them, being content with the love of Christ in their hearts.

The Apostle Paul wrote to the Corinthians, saying: "But now I have written unto you not to keep company, if any man that is called a brother be a fornicator, or covetous, or an idolater, or a railer, or a drunkard, or an extortioner; with such a one no not to eat. For what have I to do to judge them also that are without? do not ye judge them that are within?" (1 Cor. 5:11-12). He clearly tells them not to fellowship with a professing Christian who is covetous. It is such a serious sin that it should exclude one from being allowed to fellowship with the Church.

We observe by this saying that there must be some way to tell if someone is covetous. There must be some basis of judgment (of making righteous judgment based on the evident fruit in one's life, comparing it to what the Word of God says). Obviously, we are called to recognize those who desire to have more money or material worth in the Church, who constantly desire more, or who are living extravagant lifestyles with abundant riches, and to warn them sharply with the Word of God, and if they don't repent, to break fellowship with them. Why is this not practiced in much of the Church today? Why is the sin of greed often smiled upon and approved of and even promoted from the pulpit by numerous appeals to people to give, give, and give? Far from being expelled from the Church, covetousness is often promoted in the Church!

These prosperity preachers say that they are the true servants of God. But which "god" do they serve? Just because they say they serve the Lord and claim the name of Jesus doesn't mean they are truly men sent from God. And no marvel; for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light. Therefore it is no great thing if his ministers also be transformed as the ministers of righteousness; whose end shall be according to their works" (2 Cor. 11:14-15).

In Exodus 32, the children of Israel took all their gold and made an idol out of it. They made a golden calf for themselves and said, "This is your god, O Israel, that brought you out of the land of Egypt!" They even called it "Jehovah" (Exo. 32:5). But even though they called it "Jehovah" and praised it as the god who delivered them from Egypt, it was only an idol and the anger of God waxed hot against them. And this is exactly what is happening in much of the Church today

. These prosperity preachers and deceived leaders have taken money and gold and fashioned a god out of it for themselves and for their congregations, and have shouted all over the world, "This is your god, O Church!" They say they serve the true God, "Jehovah" but they really serve an idol of gold and materialism. They're serving another god, the god of Mammon. They serve "another Jesus", they have "another spirit", and they preach "another gospel", and just as the Apostle Paul said, the people receive them gladly (2 Cor. 11:4).

THE ORIGIN OF THE PROSPERITY GOSPEL

So if the Word of God doesn't teach the modern message of financial prosperity and abundant living in ease, then where did this message come from? Well, we could say that it has two origins: One is supernatural; the other is natural.

The supernatural origin of the doctrines of financial prosperity comes from the depths of Hell. It is a "doctrine of demons", sent to deceive the people of God in order to draw their hearts away from absolute devotion to the Lord alone and to get them to set their affections on the things of the earth, to stifle their spirituality and get them to prostitute themselves with idols of greed. It is designed by the hoards of Hell to be a stumbling block and cause of reproach in the Church because when many of the unsaved see preachers promoting prosperity doctrines and ideas of earthly abundance it causes them to turn away from the Church and even blaspheme the way of truth (2 Pet. 2:1-2). It is designed to plant seeds of covetousness in the hearts of people who are seeking God, and through covetousness damn their souls, since no covetous person will inherit the Kingdom of God (1 Cor. 6:9-10). And it is the perfect trick for Satan's hoards, because it's so deceptive and subtle. The sin of covetousness can be hidden deep within someone's heart, even if they're not physically rich in this world. And somebody can be given over to covetousness without even consciously realizing it, trying to serve both God and Mammon at the same time, and yet abiding under the wrath of God all the while they are claiming to love Him.

The natural origin of the doctrines of financial prosperity originated in the middle of the 1900's. Their major origin can be attributed to a very famous preacher named Kenneth Hagin (Founder of the Rhema Bible Institute which still promotes these doctrines to this day). He was the first to popularize the doctrine and was the major cause of its spread around the world since he was in such an influential position among much of the Charismatic church. He claimed special revelation from God on this subject, and many other subjects as well; even saying such heretical things such as that Jesus suffered in Hell and was tortured by the Devil in Hell. Kenneth Hagin was a "spiritual father" to other famous preachers who would go on to have some of the largest TV ministries in the world. He taught these famous preachers the prosperity doctrines, and they in turn would go in front of massive audiences and on television spreading the idea that God wants us to be financially prosperous and rich.

These preachers are still on Christian TV promoting these doctrines and much of the world looks up to these famous preachers because they have large and supposedly "successful" ministries. Now, wherever there are satellites beaming Christian TV into the homes of Christians and Pastors, you can almost assume that there will be somebody believing the prosperity doctrines. Through the means of these highly influential preachers and international broadcasting on the TV, these false doctrines have spread all over the world and infiltrated much of the church. In areas of the world where there is no Christian programming on the TV, it is interesting to note that you won't find any Christians who believe in the prosperity doctrines, which goes to show that those who believe it get it from the TV and from these apostate preachers and not from the Word of God.

It is interesting to note that before the initial main proponent of these teachings, Kenneth Hagin, passed away, he openly repented from promoting the prosperity doctrines in the way that he did. He went on to write a book in his last days that openly acknowledged his error in promoting financial prosperity to the degree that he did, and he sent copies to the preachers that he mentored that were promoting it on TV, telling them that he was wrong and that they have taken his message to the extreme and have fallen into the traps of greed and covetousness and need to stop. Unfortunately, they didn't listen, and are still on TV promoting such false doctrines. Beware of the "Christian" TV channels—they are the largest promoter of false doctrine on the face of the earth, and there's so much false teaching and talk about money and being financially prosperous that it's best not to even watch them.

We also need to recognize that the doctrines of financial prosperity weren't believed in or invented or promoted in the Church until the 20th Century. This means that there is nearly 2,000 years of Christian history where this doctrine is completely absent! For almost 2,000 years, there were many men of God and preachers and teachers in the Church who wrote extensive commentaries and preached countless thousands of sermons, yet there is not a single trace of them believing or ever mentioning such doctrines. They didn't exist in the Church. And we can safely say that if a doctrine or practice wasn't found anywhere in the Church for 2,000 years, then it is some "new thing" and must therefore be false, because

because there will be no “new thing” in the Church since the canon of Scripture is completed and the Book of God is a sealed book. All doctrine is already established in the completed Word (2 Thes. 2:15, Rev. 22:18-19). There will be continual revelations and prophecies in the Church as related to temporal things (such as a word about the will of God for a specific individual, a warning in a vision or dream, supernatural insight into divine mysteries as is confirmed by the Word such as how certain end-time events will specifically occur, etc.) but the doctrines of Scripture are complete and entire and there will never be anything added to them or taken away. If the doctrine can’t be found in 2,000 years of Christian history, then it must be false.

Furthermore, there are volumes and volumes of writings from leaders in the early Church from the 2nd and 3rd Centuries. These were pastors and preachers from the primitive Church who were overseers during the times immediately following what is recorded in the New Testament (their writings can be found in the “Ante-Nicene Fathers” volumes). These early Church leaders actually speak quite a bit about financial prosperity, but never in a favorable way. They spoke of financial abundance in the life of a Christian not so much as a blessing, but as a snare. They saw it as more of a snare than a blessing because those who have an abundance of finances and material worth in this world find themselves in many more temptations to love the world and to live in selfish pleasure than people who don’t have so much. Those that are such find themselves in many temptations to hoard up treasure on earth for themselves, to keep their things for themselves, to live an easy and selfish lifestyle, and they find it harder to deny themselves, take up their cross, and follow Jesus down the narrow way of adversity because there is such a constant temptation in their face to enjoy their things rather than to renounce their things such as Jesus commanded (Luk. 14:33) and enjoy God supremely instead.

TRUE PROSPERITY IS NOT OF THIS EARTH

While the New Covenant of our Lord Jesus Christ doesn’t promise earthly prosperity and financial abundance to every one who is saved, it does promise heavenly prosperity and spiritual abundance to every believer! “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ” (Eph. 1:3). This is a much greater deal than mere temporary, physical riches on earth. Our lives are passing away on this earth and will soon be gone. We’ll be in eternity where only that which is eternal will remain. Eternal riches are truly what are important. What we really need to focus on receiving is not earthly prosperity, but heavenly, to store up treasure in Heaven, and to be rich in all spiritual things in Christ Jesus. “For what shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?” (Mar. 8:36)

THERE NEEDS TO BE REPENTANCE WHERE ERROR IS PROMOTED

If you, dear Christian, have been guilty of seeking the things of this earth, you know what you need to do. Some Pastors who have promoted these doctrines in their churches need to publicly repent and renounce these false doctrines in front of their congregations and start preaching the truth. Some who are given over to greed need to confess their sin and step down from their positions of leadership since it’s a disqualification for an Elder in the Church to be “greedy for filthy lucre” (1 Tim. 3:3). It’s a high cost to pay and requires a lot of humility to confess such error publicly, but the Lord will richly reward you if you do. There comes a time when you need to count the cost, and determine whether you’re going to obey the Lord and make things right, or are going to rebel to hold to your traditions and your dogmas and reject the Word of the Lord, and ultimately be rejected by the Lord yourself. So which is it? Choose this day who you will serve, whether God or Mammon! You can’t serve both!

WITHDRAW YOURSELF FROM FALSE TEACHERS

The Apostle Paul calls the false teachings of these prosperity preachers, “Perverse disputings of men of corrupt minds, and destitute of the truth, supposing that gain is godliness: from such withdraw thyself” (1 Tim. 6:5). Paul says that these men suppose gain is godliness. This means that they say that the godlier you are, the more monetary gain you’re going to get. They say that if you really have faith and are godly, you will be financially prosperous. But this is perverse and corrupt according to the Apostle! And the Scripture commands us to withdraw ourselves from such preachers! Have you withdrawn yourself from these false teachers? Or are you continually listening to their teaching and soaking up their ungodly ramblings and adulterous perverting of Scripture? Will you obey the Word of God and “come out from among them” (2 Cor. 6:17)?

The Apostle goes on to say, “But godliness with contentment is great gain. For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out. And having food and raiment let us be therewith content. But they that will be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition” (1 Tim. 6:6-9). We are called to be content with our situation, even if we have nothing more than clothes on our back and

ecessary food to eat. But those who desire to be rich fall hard from the faith into temptation and many foolish lusts and are drowned in destruction. It doesn't even say that they are rich; it says that they merely will to be, or desire, to be rich. Yet these prosperity preachers openly admit that they want more, that they desire to have more abundant earthly possessions and finances. Truly, by their own admission, by their own words, they are destitute of the truth.

The Apostle Peter warned us about false teachers in the last days: "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. And many shall follow their pernicious ways; by reason of whom the way of truth shall be evil spoken of. And through covetousness shall they with feigned words make merchandise of you: whose judgment now of a long time lingereth not, and their damnation slumbereth not" (2 Pet. 2:1-3).

Let's break down what he's saying and look at it one statement at a time, comparing it with these prosperity preachers that have infiltrated the Church:

Peter says that there were false prophets in times of old, and shall be false teachers among us. So by this statement we need to take heed and recognize that there are false teachers among us. Peter clearly said there would be, so that must mean that there is. So we need to understand that the Scripture promises us that they are among us and warns us that we need to identify them so as not to be deceived by their cunning craftiness.

Peter says that they secretly bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord. We've already seen that this "gospel" of greed and prosperity is a damnable heresy since it causes people to covet earthly things in their hearts and provokes the jealousy of God, and the Scripture says that the sin of covetousness is a damnable sin that will exclude one from the Kingdom of God. This heresy of a covetous "gospel" has secretly crept into the Church because it comes disguised as something good, cloaked with biblical terminology and extracted from quoting Scriptures out of context. It is secret because it's a hidden thing from the eyes of most that it is wrong; most don't recognize it as being heresy and it secretly deceives them. These false teachers deny the Lord not by plainly saying, "I deny the Lord" –that would be too obvious. They deny the Lord by denying His true teachings and by teaching things that are contrary to what He taught. In denying His truth, they are denying him with their teachings and practices. Even though they claim to serve Him with their lips their hearts are far from Him. They claim to love the Lord with their words but they deny Him in their hearts by loving the things of this world.

Peter says that many will follow their pernicious ways and because of them, people will speak evil of the way of truth. Are we not seeing this fulfilled before our very eyes? There are not a few who follow these prosperity preachers, but many –multitudes upon multitudes of people! And because of their constant ramblings that say that we should be rich or financially prosperous, people who aren't Christians blaspheme Christianity and say, "They just want money".

Peter says that these false teachers, in their covetousness, will exploit us and make merchandise of us with their deceptive words. This is exactly what these prosperity preachers are doing. They are motivated by covetousness, they are motivated by the desire to have more money, and in this motive they give appeal after appeal to their audiences to give them more donations. They preach entire sermons on why we should give money to their ministries. They see the people in their congregations as merely merchandise and they speak great speeches on why we need to give them more money! They create gimmick after gimmick to try to motivate people to give to them. It's the height of deception!

Last of all, Peter says that their damnation does not slumber! If those who are using the things of God to get monetary gain for themselves and are exploiting the people of God with clever speeches and deceptive words, if they don't confess their sin, repent, and get cleansed by the blood of Jesus from all covetousness, then they will surely be swallowed up by damnation from the pit from whence their false doctrines come! The Apostle Peter is not playing games with false doctrine and heresy and speaks in unmistakable and harsh language against these things because he knew that they would deceive so many sincere people.

The prophet Isaiah said, "His watchmen are blind: they are all ignorant, they are all dumb dogs, they cannot bark; sleeping, lying down, loving to slumber. Yea, they are greedy dogs which can never have enough, and they are shepherds that cannot understand: they all look to their own way, every one for his gain, from his quarter" (Isa. 56:10-11). This is the state of these churches where these prosperity preachers are overseeing. They are blind and ignorant; they cannot see any danger approaching, and they can't recognize the subtle tricks of the enemy to deceive people. These preachers are dumb dogs that cannot bark; they don't give any warning of danger approaching, they don't preach against sin and warn people to flee the wrath to come. They rarely preach on the Judgment or on Hell. Instead they are in a spiritual slumber and aren't prepared themselves for the coming of the Lord. They love to slumber,

Re: Prosperity Preachers and Financial Gain, on: 2008/10/27 22:04

CONTINUED FROM PREVIOUS POST...

This is a terrible grievous thing in the modern Church. It should cause us in the fear of God to withdraw ourselves from those who are perverting the ways of truth. It should break our hearts and move us to pray and labor to bring our brothers and sisters out of this end-time deception. We dare not compromise our stance against this "gospel" of greed when the Scriptures are so clear against it. If we compromise then we, too, are in danger of being deceived, for if we fail to receive and act upon the light that we have been given, even what we have been given may be taken away (Luk. 8:18).

LET US SPEAK THE TRUTH IN LOVE

It is not out of a malicious spirit that we are to speak against false teachers; it is out of genuine love for the Body of Christ and love for the truth and glory of God. The Word of God commands us to "earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints" (Jud. 3). We need to love our brothers and sisters enough to warn them of the danger they are in if they are embracing these doctrines. If we don't warn them, how can we say that we love them? Will you love the souls of sincere men and women enough to take your stance against these false doctrines and withdraw yourself from sitting under preachers who promote these things? Will you shut off the programming on TV where these preachers are promoting their heretical doctrines? And will you love people enough to humbly go to them with the Word of God as your authority and to show them the error of promoting financial gain in the name of Christ?

It may bring a sword between your relationships with people, it may bring a sword between you and your church, or you and your pastor, but may we never compromise truth for the sake of trying to preserve so-called unity! Genuine unity is based on the truth and will never compromise the truth in essential doctrine in order to preserve false peace. Jesus said, "Think not that I am come to send peace on earth: I came not to send peace, but a sword. For I am come to set a man at variance against his father, and the daughter against her mother, and the daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law. And a man's foes shall be they of his own household. He that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me: and he that loveth son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me. And he that taketh not his cross, and followeth after me, is not worthy of me" (Mat. 10:34-38).

Will you take up the sword of truth, which is the Word of God, and in love fight against these demons that have infiltrated the Church? "Not to be contentious, or in a vengeful spirit, but in true and sincere love and compassion to correct that which is false and leave the results up to the Lord. We don't need to worry about whether they listen or not, because we're just called to be faithful to the truth. The Lord has all the rest in His hands. Let us trust Him, obey Him, and "purge the heaven from our midst" (1 Cor. 5:7).

(END OF ARTICLE)

Also available online at www.puregospeltruth.com on the "teachings" page.

Re: - posted by Nellie, on: 2008/10/28 9:13

This is one of the best articles that I've read on this Subject.
Thank-you for taking time to post this, and for the Scriptures.
God Bless you, abundantly.
May you continue to grow in Love, Wisdom, and Knowledge of Him.
Nellie

Re: - posted by Nellie, on: 2008/10/28 21:02

This may be long, but it is well worth the reading.
God Bless
Nellie

Re: - posted by EvangelistC, on: 2008/10/28 22:25

So, what your saying is that the world is going to finance the Kingdom of God right? Poverty is godliness, and riches are of the devil. The bible says that the love of money is the root of all evil. Not money. Am I right? Or am I just tyotally biblically ignorant? I will agree that some "prosperity teachers" have missed the mark. Let's not throw the baby out with the bath water.

Re: - posted by Miccah (), on: 2008/10/29 1:01

EvangelistC wrote:

Quote:

-----I will agree that some "prosperity teachers" have missed the mark. Let's not throw the baby out with the bath water.

I think the bigger question is, what prosperity teachers have HIT the mark, in your opinion?

Re: - posted by myfirstLove (), on: 2008/10/29 6:14

Amen.

This doctrine of demons (prosperity gospel) that came from profess American Christian preachers has spread all over the world. India has been filled with this lie and we are continually battling this doctrine with the sword of His Word.

Josef quote

"It is not out of a malicious spirit that we are to speak against false teachers; it is out of genuine love for the Body of Christ and love for the truth and glory of God. The Word of God commands us to Â“earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saintsÂ” (Jud. 3)."

Amen!

It is good brother, to see you writing exhorting and encouraging articles again. Continue to stir up your gift. May God be glorified!

Lisa

Re:, on: 2008/11/20 17:41

I have just made a "pdf" version of this article for those who find that easier to print off and share.

Here is the link: http://www.cristianismobiblico.com/prosperity_preachers.pdf

Here is the link to the article online: <http://www.cristianismobiblico.com/prosperity.htm>

I would encourage everybody to share this article with those in the professing church that you know that is vulnerable to, or has believed, this gospel of mammon. I encourage all to email it to your contacts, post it on other message boards, etc. to get this word out for the sake of the truth! The people of God have been sitting idly by for too long as Satan has his party in the professing church, it's time to stand up and earnestly contend!

Also, please feel free to take "excerpts" from it to forward to others, since I know it's a long article.

May the Lord bless His glorious Gospel truth in these last days of deception and blindness and open the eyes of His precious elect sheep that are caught up in the midst of this counterfeit gospel!

Re: - posted by MrBillPro (), on: 2008/11/20 18:10

Wow it's about time someone brought this subject up. :-)

Re: - posted by MJones (), on: 2008/11/21 10:08

Quote:

Miccah wrote:

EvangelistC wrote:

Quote:

-----I will agree that some "prosperity teachers" have missed the mark. Let's not throw the baby out with the bath water.

I think the bigger question is, what prosperity teachers have HIT the mark, in your opinion?

In relation to the subject of prosperity preachers, there are some comments I feel I must make. Though I have not read every word of this post, I don't think any have been named specifically. Not knowing if the 3 I will comment on are considered such, but presuming that at least one, if not all, is, I mention them in relation to the undeniable benefit I have experienced personally as a result of their ministry.

My wife and I have been through a very difficult hardship that has lasted now for 2 years. Our work for the past few years has been in residential development. Enough said. I was seeking God before the hardship began, but admittedly, the hardship served to increase the intensity of that seeking.

My personal time with Him went from 1 1/2- 5 mornings a week to 6 1/2- 7. In addition, I filled my evenings with reading in inspirational books and listening to inspirational sermons. Among the books that were the most meaningful were 'Hudson Taylor's Spiritual Secret', John Eldredge's 'Walking With God', and the 'Refiner's Fire' put together by Wilker son and Ravenhill. Mark Hall's song, 'I Will Praise You in this Storm' was especially helpful.

In addition, I recorded and listened to, often at the end of our day, Jakes, Osteen and Meyer; the 3 I wish to direct the following thoughts to. When satan was doing all he could to discourage and destroy, we needed all God could give us to keep us trusting.

I did not take away from them a false hope of prosperity, rather, time and time again, I came away with the assurance that I was on the right track and that God was going to see us through, not to prosperity, but simply that He would sustain us. They confirmed what I sensed in my personal time with God. He used them to lift me.

It is easy when we catch bits and pieces of someone, to criticize them. I am convinced that our creative God works outside the box of what some come to believe is acceptable. He has given a variety of gifts to build His church. Having spent nearly 2 years with those I have mentioned, I can say for a fact He has used them to build me. We would all do well, I think, to learn to glean the good instead of picking at the bad.

Osteen is a little over the top at inspiring hope. But it is not just the hope of prosperity. I have heard him enough to know his heart. I have heard him enough to know, though he does his best to stir us to believe in the great God we serve, I have also seen that he understands that though He slay me, yet will I trust Him.

When Jesus told Peter the way his life would end, Peter asked about John. Jesus' answer is very fitting: 'What is that to you. You follow me'. What God decides to do with Osteen, or anyone else, is up to God. Our personal duty is to find and follow what God has for us.

Re: - posted by elected (), on: 2008/11/21 14:15

Posted By Joseph_Urban

"The natural origin of the doctrines of financial prosperity originated in the middle of the 1900's. Their major origin can be attributed to a very famous preacher named Kenneth Hagin (Founder of the Rhema Bible Institute which still promote s these doctrines to this day). He was the first to popularize the doctrine and was the major cause of it's spread around the world since he was in such an influential position among much of the Charismatic church."

Kenneth Hagin was the charismatic leader who popularized the "word of faith" teaching, but the original thinker was E.W .Kenyon, he was the true father of the modern faith movement. Hagin has been accused of plagiarized Kenyon quotations. D.R. McConnell in his famous book, "A different Gospel" gives substantial proves of plagiarism.

Positive confession and "faith" teaching has been expounded by Kenyon long before Hagin made this teaching famous. Kenyon has been accused by McConnell of being influenced by Christian Science and metaphysical thought by christian apologists, and strange enough there are similiarity of principals between "faith movement" and Christian Science regarding healing.

Did Kenyon and subsequently his disciple Hagin "baptised" Christians Science and metaphysical concepts and principals unaware into evangelical teaching?

There has been a trend since the last century among mystical christians to appropriate the technics and methods of eastern religions into christian tradition and teaching. In other word they have "baptized" those technics and used them as means of communicating with God through prayer of contemplation ,called "contemplative prayer" or "centered prayer". Im talking out of subject but my point is that since the last century unto this day, there has been a trend of appropriating new age movement and eastern religions to christian tradition be it among catholic monks or well known evangelical christians.

No surprize if the word of faith movement and teaching is much indebted to the writings of E.W. Kenyon, the free will baptist preacher who believed to have rediscovered the "new type of christianity" through he revelations he received from God.

Re:, on: 2008/11/29 19:28

Praise the Lord!

La interpretacion de este articulo en Espanol esta completo. (The Spanish translation of this article is now complete!)

There are a lot of Spanish speaking churches in the US who watch the spanish version of TBN (Enlace) and learn these despicable doctrines of demons from the preachers on there. If you know any Spanish speaking Christians you can give them this now.

Here's the link:

Predicadores De Prosperidad: http://www.cristianismobiblico.com/Predicadores_de_Properidad.htm

CRISTO VIENE!
CHRIST COMES!