

## **“The Prosperity Gospel: Another Gospel”**

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“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, NKJV).

There are folks out there who misrepresent the Gospel of Jesus Christ, and Christians and seekers alike must be careful. The specific teaching that we will address here is what is known as the prosperity gospel, which teaches that it is God’s desire for all His children to enjoy health and wealth. As one namby-pamby teacher put it, “you can have your best life now.” I don’t know about you, but I find this life hard and full of many troubles, and I know it is because sin is in this world. “The days of our lives are seventy years; And if by reason of strength they are eighty years, Yet their boast is only labor and sorrow; For it is soon cut off, and we fly away” (Psalm 90:10). May we rest upon the words and promises of Jesus Christ, even this one. “These things I have spoken to you, that in Me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world” (John 16:33).

Consider some fallacies, taught in various forms by false teachers. The first one is that “God would never plague His children.” This one is subtle, insofar as it is true that God does sometimes spare true and obedient believers from plagues, as He did in Egypt by calling true believers out, and will do again at the Rapture when He calls believers out. However, we do find in Scripture that the Lord does plague His disobedient children for the purpose of bringing them to repentance. “If you do not carefully observe all the words of this law that are written in this book, that you may fear this glorious and awesome name, THE LORD YOUR GOD, then the LORD will bring upon you and your descendants extraordinary plagues—great and prolonged plagues—and serious and prolonged sicknesses” (Deuteronomy 28:58-59). The false teaching that

arises from the errant thesis forms a basis for other more insidious teachings. The second fallacy is that “God would never let His children be sick.” Go tell that to the faithful child of God in the local hospital who is suffering with cancer, or to the man who is watching his godly mother suffer with dementia for the last seven years, or to the praying mother with the child in NICU on life support. Our God does not directly cause these things, but they are permitted because we live in a world tainted by sin, which brings with it sickness, suffering, disease, and death. **“Through one man sin entered the world, and death through sin, and thus death spread to all men, because all sinned”** (Romans 5:12). Friends, it is not the perfect will of God that suffering exists, but it is in the permissive will of God. He allows it. Man’s free will and the consequences of sin must run its course. Sickness and disease are not of God. They are a result of mankind being fully contaminated by sin. But thank God that He does not leave us to sin’s consequences without help and hope. Enter Jesus Christ the Savior. **“But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from wrath through Him...Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom also we have access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God. And not only that, but we also glory in tribulations, knowing that tribulation produces perseverance; and perseverance, character; and character, hope. Now hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit who was given to us”** (Romans 5:8-9,1-5). A third false teaching that we will address is the one that says that “God has never used sickness to discipline His children.” Tell that to King Uzziah, a godly King in Judah who committed sacrilege. **“But when he was strong his heart was lifted up, to his destruction, for he transgressed against the LORD his God by entering the temple of the LORD to burn incense on the altar of incense. So Azariah the priest went in after him, and with him were eighty priests of the LORD—valiant men. And they withstood King Uzziah, and said to him, “It is not for you, Uzziah, to burn incense to the LORD, but for the priests, the sons of Aaron, who are consecrated to burn incense. Get out of the sanctuary, for you have trespassed! You shall have no honor from the LORD God.”** Then Uzziah became furious; and he had a censer in his hand to

burn incense. And while he was angry with the priests, leprosy broke out on his forehead, before the priests in the house of the LORD, beside the incense altar. And Azariah the chief priest and all the priests looked at him, and there, on his forehead, he was leprous; so they thrust him out of that place. Indeed he also hurried to get out, because the LORD had struck him” (2 Chronicles 26:16-20). The fool will say, “But that is the Old Testament. Not the New Testament.” Have you not read the New Testament warning for those believers who would come unrepentant to the communion table? “Therefore whoever eats this bread or drinks this cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord. But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of the bread and drink of the cup. For he who eats and drink in an unworthy manner eats and drinks judgment to himself, not discerning the Lord’s body. For this reason many are weak and sick among you, and many sleep. For if we would judge ourselves, we would not be judged. But when we are judged, we are chastened by the Lord, that we may not be condemned with the world” (1 Corinthians 11:27-32).

Now consider Job, God’s servant, who was put on the witness stand, and having been allowed to suffer within an inch of his life, remained faithful to God (Job 2:3-8). Consider John the Baptist, who preached in the wilderness, without concern for material things or comfort (Matthew 3:1-4). The Apostle James was martyred for his faith (Acts 12:1-2). Peter, according to well-attested tradition, was crucified upside down. The Apostle Paul had health struggles, infirmity, and went through times where he just got by physically, and all this was God’s will to strengthen him in faith and service. The Scripture testifies of this. “I know how to be abased, and I know how to abound. Everywhere and in all things I have learned both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need. I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me” (Philippians 4:12-13). “And lest I should be exalted above measure by the abundance of the revelations, a thorn in the flesh was given to me, a messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I be exalted above measure. Concerning this thing I pleaded with the Lord three times that it might depart from me. And He said to me, “My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness.” Therefore most gladly I will rather boast in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. Therefore I

take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in needs, in persecutions, in distresses, for Christ’s sake. For when I am weak, then I am strong” (2 Corinthians 12:7-10). And so it was for many of God’s servants, many of whom wandered this earth weak, infirm, and poor. “They were stoned, they were sawn in two, 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 mountains, in dens and caves of the earth” (Hebrews 11:37-38).

Finally, consider Jesus. He grew up in Nazareth, a relatively obscure place, and took up the trade as the son of a carpenter. Our Lord had a three and a half year itinerant ministry. His focus was on the salvation of souls. Spiritual salvation. Even when He raised the dead, those He raised later died again. In this world, there is material poverty, sickness, disease, and death, and all come to believers and unbelievers alike. “But He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities; The chastisement for our peace was upon Him, And by His stripes we are healed” (Isaiah 53:5). The healing atonement of Christ is a spiritual one. There is no guarantee of healing in this life. Though God may heal you many times, eventually, a healing does not come, and everyone dies physically. But there is a guarantee of spiritual healing for those who would put their full trust and hope in God through Jesus Christ, who died for your sins and rose from the dead. This is the true gospel. Those who accept it will live.