

## Prosperity...for whom?

(www.voicewithvision.org)

Prosperity teaching is attracting many believers in the Church. It is taught in many mega churches around the world.

This teaching has been given many names, such as the “name it and claim it” gospel, the “blab it and grab it” gospel, the “health and wealth” gospel, the “word of faith” movement, the “gospel of success,” the “prosperity gospel,” and “positive confession theology.”

I prefer not to use the word “gospel” while describing this, as the word “gospel” means good news. This teaching has no good news. Hence, I prefer to use the word “prosperity teaching”

I believe it is immoral and anti-Christian to live on this earth with the only objective of accumulating wealth.

These preachers encourage their followers to pray, and even demand, of God everything from clothes, cars, big houses, jewellery, more cars, furniture, and aeroplanes, including large bank accounts.”

Why are large groups of people attracted to this teaching?

*You should know this, Timothy, that in the last days there will be very difficult times. <sup>2</sup>For people will love only themselves and their money. **2 Timothy 3:1,2***

The above verse from the Bible explains the mindset of people of last days. They will be lovers of themselves and their money.

This teaching affirms and encourages people who love themselves and their money. Instead of correcting such people this teaching confirms that their behaviour is Biblical and encourages them to love themselves and their money more.

They also make people believe that even Jesus lived like that.

For example, one teacher John Avanzini preached that “Jesus had a nice house, a big house, Jesus was handling big money, and even “wore designer clothes.

The reason why many people do not want to come out of this teaching is because this teaching teaches something they want to believe. It does not matter whether it is right or wrong, they want to believe a certain lie and this teaching affirms that lie and even spiritualizes that lie and tells them what they believe is according to the word of God.

This is what happens when men want to believe what they want to believe instead of what God wants them to believe.

Prosperity teaching is based on faulty understanding of the word of God. This teaching is a result of corrupted minds taking the word of God out of context and making the word of God say what they want to say.

Since the message they preach is not from God, they have to resort to this.

I give below four faulty understandings based on this teaching:

### **1. Abrahamic covenant.**

According to the prosperity teaching, the primary purpose of the Abrahamic covenant was for God to bless Abraham materially. Since believers are now “Abraham’s spiritual children”, they consequently have inherited these financial blessings of the covenant.

Prosperity teacher Kenneth Copeland wrote, “Since God’s Covenant has been established and prosperity is a provision of this covenant, you need to realize that prosperity belongs to you now!”

To support this claim, prosperity teachers such as Copeland and Hagin appeal to Galatians 3:14, which says “that the blessings of Abraham might come upon the Gentiles in Christ Jesus.”

But if you read Galatians 3:14 fully and in context, that is not what it says.

*Through Christ Jesus, God has blessed the Gentiles with the same blessing he promised to Abraham, so that we who are believers might receive the promised Holy Spirit through faith.*

As you can read clearly, this verse promises believers the blessing promised to Abraham, but the blessing promised is Holy Spirit through faith.

But these teachers ignore or cut off the last part of this verse and read only the first part of this verse that suits their teaching. Because they have a carnal mind, they are unable to accept the promised Holy Spirit as a blessing. In their mind they had already decided that blessing means “wealth, power and influence”.

### **2. Atonement**

Another faulty understanding is that both physical healing and financial prosperity have been provided for in the Atonement.

For this they quote 2 Corinthians 8:9 “yet for your sakes he became poor, so that by his poverty he could make you rich”.

They use this verse to prove that Christ died for us so that he could make us rich. But if you read this verse in context, it says the very opposite of what they preach.

*7Since you excel in so many ways—in your faith, your gifted speakers, your knowledge, your enthusiasm, and your love from us<sup>[c]</sup>—I want you to excel also in this gracious act of giving.*

*8I am not commanding you to do this. But I am testing how genuine your love is by comparing it with the eagerness of the other churches.*

*9You know the generous grace of our Lord Jesus Christ. Though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, so that by his poverty he could make you rich.*

Paul here is writing to the Corinthians about giving (v7). If you read from verse 1, you will see that Paul is asking the Corinthian Church to give to the church in Macedonia which is a poor church.

He is encouraging the Corinthians to give generously to this church in need. It is in this context, he is showing Jesus as an example. Since Jesus generously gave himself up completely so that by his poverty he could make us rich.

What he means is that even though Jesus Christ had everything, He was God's son and was seated in glory, with angels worshipping him and serving him. He did not have to give up anything, because he never sinned.

But still, He voluntarily gave up everything, his glory, his splendour and his majesty took the form of a humble human being, without even a place to be born. Though everything in this world belongs to Him; He chose not to own anything here.

He gave up all these heavenly riches that belongs to Him and became poor so that you and I could be rich with all these heavenly riches that God promised through the Holy Spirit.

It is in this context Paul says, since Jesus gave up all that belongs to Him, you should also be ready to give up all that you might have for the sake of others. He was urging the Corinthian church to have a mentality like Jesus to give for the sake of others, though the resource they may have is theirs and they may rightfully own them.

Paul was not saying “since you have become rich by Jesus’ poverty, enjoy all the money and stuff you have” - No. He was in fact saying the opposite of that.

He says “since you have become rich by Jesus’ poverty, give it all like Jesus gave to others.”

The message prosperity teaching conveys is “Now you are rich because of Jesus’ poverty, it is your right to own big cars, nice houses, big bank balance and enjoy all that you have”.

### 3. Giving

Another teaching this movement thrives on is giving.

They say that a particular minister is blessed, because he has a big ministry, lots of money, cars, houses and influence. If a believer wants the same affluence in his life, all he has to do is to give to this minister.

By giving to this minister or this ministry he is making himself a part of this blessing and he will get returns from God for his giving.

One minister says openly that returns from his ministry will be 10 times. If you give \$10 you will receive \$100. They say “give so that you may receive a good return”.

It is just like investing in stock market or in mutual funds. You give to me and get good returns.

Jesus taught us to give without seeking any return or reward. He taught us to give without even the left hand knowing what the right hand does. But these people teach to give to get returns.

The bible nowhere encourages believers to give in order to receive returns. It is true that God rewards us if we give to Him. But the reward should not be the motive. The motive should be to build God’s kingdom and to glorify his name, without expecting any reward in return.

In this teaching, the motive is changed from giving to obey God’s commandments to giving to get more. This is nothing but a pyramid scheme, with only people at the top benefitting.

One minister in India said recently that people will be blessed just by seeing him physically, because he is so much anointed. He said “I have so much anointing on me; all you have to do is come to my church, be part of my ministry (or in other words, give me money) and suck this anointing from me.”

But to be honest, all we can suck out of him is his body fat, which he has a lot!

### 4. Faith

In his book, *The Laws of Prosperity*, Kenneth Copeland wrote that “faith is a spiritual force, a spiritual energy, a spiritual power.

It is this force of faith which makes the laws of the spirit world function.

This is certainly a wrong understanding of Christian life and word of God.

Christian life is a Spirit led life. It does not work like a system or a machine. Pushing a button here or a button there is not how we are to live our Christian life.

Every Christian unless he or she is led by the Holy Spirit cannot live a life according to God's word, pleasing to God, according to Romans 8:9.

*You are controlled by the Spirit if you have the Spirit of God living in you. (And remember that those who do not have the Spirit of Christ living in them do not belong to him at all. (Romans 8:9)*

Those who do not have the Spirit of Christ living in them do not belong to him at all. This is Christian life, according to God's word.

Whereas these prosperity teachers teach that Christian life is based on a set of laws and if we understand how to operate in this, then we can even make God what we want him to do for us.

Copeland said once that if you make up your mind to live in abundance of money, cars and without debt you can live as you wish, if you believe strong enough. With faith you can get what you want, if you visualise it in your mind and have strong faith.

One of the teachings of new age philosophy is positive thinking. Positive thinking also says the same thing "Visualize and Achieve".

These prosperity teachers did not get this teaching from God's word. They got it from new age philosophy. They are teaching this new age philosophy using scriptures to Christianize this teaching. They can only substantiate this teaching by quoting out of context from the Bible; because this teaching is not compatible with the word of God.

Can you see how successful Satan is in infiltrating the body of Christ using false teachers, making them teach his theology by sugar coating it with the scriptures?

Deceiving spirits are working in top gear and in full steam to deceive as many people as possible these last days. Only people who love the truth and do not love the world or the things of this world will be able to distinguish and differentiate the truth from the false.

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