

# **PROSPERITY** Another Gospel



**Are Wealth and Riches  
Promised To Every Believer**

**Chuck Morley**

## ***Prosperity Another Gospel***

Unless otherwise indicated, all scripture references are taken from the *King James Version* of the Bible.

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For emphasis, some words in scriptural references have been placed in italics or underlined.

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## FORWARD

**A terrible thing has happened in the land: The prophets prophesy lies, the priests rule by their own ability, and my people love it this way. But what will you do in the end?"** (*Jeremiah 5:30, 31 NIV*)

Our family enjoys Christian television. The cable TV company in our area provides us with 4 evangelical Christian stations. A fifth one buys time slots from two of these stations as well as from several secular markets. So, there is no time, day or night, that we can not hear the Gospel.

However, "**A terrible thing has happened in the land:**" Twice a year several of the stations raise funds through telethons. There is nothing wrong with telethons. Believers should help support the preaching of the Gospel. But during these fund-raisers I was hearing promises of rewards for giving, that did not ring true with scripture.

"**The prophets prophesy lies...**" These are a few of the promises the host pastors and evangelists were making to prospective donors during some of the recent telethons.

It's time for your increase.

God's going to give you a double portion (money, temporal goods).

The devil is going to return seven times what he's stolen from you.

You're going to receive miraculous debt cancellation.

Miracle money is on the way.

It is amazing how far we have deliberately misrepresented the truth of God's Word to make believers think that His ultimate desire for them is to become rich. I believe the underlying purpose for this is nothing less than to seduce the viewers into giving. It is frightening to hear supposedly men and women of God proclaim, "God wants you to have the best. Poverty is a curse. To be poor is a sin, etc." Even more troubling is when these clichés are used for no other purpose than to fill their own coffers through the greed and spiritual immaturity

of their followers.

**"...and my people love it this way."** Their audiences respond to these empty promises with thunderous applause and praises. Unknowingly, or maybe even refusing to believe that scripture, in its context, does not support such teachings. However, it does describe many of those who preach it. "And through covetousness shall they with feigned words make merchandise of you..." (2 Peter 2:3)

My purpose in this book isn't to attack any individual teacher or follower of the prosperity gospel. As I quote them, I won't reveal their identity, because that's not the issue. Instead, I want you to look at the scriptures used in its propagation and try to put them back into the context that the Holy Spirit originally intended.

It is a fact that every false teaching introduced to the church within the last two thousand years has never gone without some type of scriptural reference. Although most of the time twisted and stretched into unbelievable contortions, all heresy must utilize scripture in an attempt to prove its validity. We must also examine our own motives to see what attracts us to such teachings. Does it draw me closer to the heart of Jesus? Does it work in me a hunger for righteousness and holiness? Does it break the power of continued disobedience and sin in my life? Or does it pander to my flesh; my greed, my lust for things? Does God really want to make me wealthy so that I can become a great philanthropist for His Kingdom? I think not! In fact, for the most part, the opposite is true.

In order to better understand why these scriptures must be twisted and contorted by its teachers, it is important to know the teaching's origins, and its long term harmful effect on its followers.

## **Religious Mind Science**

This false gospel is molded after success formulas promulgated by such people as Napoleon Hill, who has presented his theory in such books as *Think to Grow Rich* and *The Power of Positive Mental Attitude*. However, Napoleon Hill tells us that he was into the occult, and that this information was given to him by disembodied spirits and that the system operates under the principle of mind over matter. Hill and his religious imitators in the pulpit claim that we can visualize our desires, and that what our mind can visualize we can achieve in real life. Our act of visualization becomes a substitute for true faith in God. The Christian prosperity preacher says that because we are the

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children of God, He desires the best for us. They ask, "What father would not give his children the best he can provide? How much more will our heavenly Father give us out of what He has to give!" Then they roll out a few dozen "success" stories and the checkbooks come out across the congregation.

The strategy seems to be molded after some of the multilevel marketing programs that have also captivated many people. These programs offer great wealth, power, prestige, and honors. Every meeting has its buoyant leaders, its testimonials of great success - and also its silent victims.

Yes, a few of the people do make fortunes, but the greatest numbers buy into the program (usually with money they cannot afford), run at full pace trying to duplicate the miracles they heard about at the last meeting, draw in a few friends or acquaintances, end up broke, discouraged, and with a garage full of soap or vitamins. (*Fast Facts on False Teachings; Ron Carlson/Ed Becker, Harvest House, pg. 198,199*)

The gospel of prosperity is not the Gospel of the New Testament. It is a composite of the many heretical teachings of the metaphysical cults, such as New Thought, Christian Science and Science of Mind. It targets those who are spiritually immature and scripturally unlearned. It is peppered with out of context scriptures promising a life of bliss, wealth and temporal comfort. But in reality it is as the apostle Peter warns.

But there were false prophets also among the people, even as there shall be false teachers among you, who privately shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them and bring upon themselves swift destruction. (*2 Peter 2:1*)

## ONE

### SOWING AND REAPING

"God is not moved by *need*, He is moved by *seed*."

These were the opening remarks of a nationally known pastor hosting a local Christian telethon. "If God moved because of need," he went on, "He would go to the poorest of countries like Haiti..." You can imagine the rest.

Although he later said he wasn't suggesting that you could buy a miracle, everything else he said testified to the fact that you could, just by planting a *seed* (sending money to the station).

There are few in the church today who are not familiar with the phrase *seed faith*. It was coined over fifty years ago by a famous tent evangelist. Its theory is if you want corn you sow a corn kernel, then you will reap a harvest of more corn than you sowed. If you want wheat; a wheat kernel. The end result will be a harvest of more wheat than you sowed. If you want money, you sow your money into the ministry, and God will return to you more money than you sowed. Hmm, sounds logical, even spiritual. But it doesn't pass the litmus test of scriptural context.

One scripture misused to make people think that sowing money will cause them to reap a harvest of more money is John 4:35-38. Let's see if that is what Jesus is speaking about.

Say not ye, There are yet four months, and then the harvest? Behold, I say unto you, Lift up your eyes, and look on the fields; for they are white already to harvest.

And he that reapeth receiveth wages, and gathereth fruit unto eternal life: that both he that soweth and he that reapeth may rejoice together.

And herein is that saying true, one soweth, and another reapeth.

I sent you to reap that whereon ye bestowed no labour: other men laboured,

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and ye are entered into their labours. (*John 4:35-38*)

In these verses there is no mention of money. Jesus is referring to soul winning; the sowing of the word, the reaping of a harvest of souls.

I can hear the wheels turning now. "But pastor, you can use the same principle for sowing money." NO YOU CAN NOT! You cannot use any principle that is not already set forth in scripture. When you take the text (verses) out of the context (the meaning of the verses) you have a pretext (appears right but is wrong). Sowing money into a ministry for the purpose of getting more money is a pretext. The same is true with Galatians 6:6-9.

Let him that is taught in the word communicate unto him that teacheth in all good things.

Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting. And let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not. (*Galatians 6:6-9*)

Once again there is no mention of sowing money. Sowing to the flesh is the attempt to satisfy us, our personal desires, lusts, pleasures and fleshly comforts. Many who follow the prosperity gospel are followers for this very reason.

A well known pastor's wife, during her television program, began to upbraid members of the congregation for evidently judging her choice of a new car. The price of the automobile she purchased runs about six figures. That is hundreds of thousands of dollars. I don't believe there is anything wrong with a new car. Nor is there anything wrong with an expensive one, if you can afford it. The problem was the attitude. Arrogance just seemed to ooze from every word. I don't remember her exact words, but paraphrased it went something like this, "It's none of your business what I buy, I prayed about it, and God told me He wanted me to have the best. Now get over it!"

The attitude revealed her motive for the purchase; satisfy the flesh. God received no glory, and the vehicle became a stumbling block. Another prosperity teacher said.

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The whole point is I'm trying to get you to see - to get you out of this malaise of thinking that Jesus and the disciples were poor and then relating that to you - thinking that you, as a child of God have to follow Jesus. The Bible says that He has left us an example that we should follow His steps. That's the reason why I drive a Rolls Royce. I'm following Jesus' steps.

Another lady who teaches the prosperity gospel has said that she will not buy any dress that does not cost at least \$500. She also feels she should walk in the footsteps of the wealthy Jesus.

You find nothing in the Bible where Jesus ever owned a camel, horse or even a donkey. There is no reference to designer clothes, a big house or land while he walked this planet for thirty three years. The fact is He had to borrow a colt to make His entry into Jerusalem. Maybe we should really learn how to follow in His footsteps, instead of trying to impress people with our expensive cars and fancy clothes.

On the other hand, sowing to the spirit conditions me to crucify myself and everything that pertains to me; *my* wants, *my* desires, *my* agenda, *my* ministry. His will for me is that He becomes the central figure. The things I do, I do for Him, and I do them to the best of my ability. Those are the things He blesses; His things. I would not doubt for a minute that the lady prayed about her purchase. But maybe if she had remained in the presence of God for just a few seconds longer, she might have heard. "My daughter, I want you to have the best....Chevrolet."

There is however, one place in scripture that does teach about money and its relationship to sowing and reaping. I want to look at three verses in 2 Corinthians 9, and remind you that all three work together. You can not take the first one out of context, or it will bring about error and confusion.

But this I say, He which soweth sparingly shall reap also sparingly; and he which soweth bountifully shall reap also bountifully. (The prosperity teachers stop here, but there is more.) Every man according as he purposeth in his heart, so let him give; not grudgingly, or of necessity: for the Lord loveth a cheerful giver. And God is able to make all grace abound toward you; that ye always having all sufficiency in all things, may abound to every good work. (2 Corinthians 9:6-8)

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Now let's look at these verses. First, the word *sparingly* in verse six means "stingy." I think we can all agree on that. But the Greek word translated *bountifully* does not mean "in abundance". It means "with blessing" or in "reverential adoration." So our giving becomes an act of worship, praise and maybe even sacrifice. Its motive comes from the heart, to honor God, not to receive more money.

"Every man according as he purposeth in his heart, so let him give..." Paul admonishes us to give the amount we feel in our heart to give. God may be leading you to give \$10 when the evangelist is asking for \$100. The opposite can be true also. The point is, listen to your heart and respond as you are moved by the Holy Spirit.

Don't give "grudgingly" or reluctantly. If God speaks to your heart, listen to Him and obey Him. Do it freely as an act of worship and love. Don't let anyone intimidate you into giving, or fan the flames of greed with promises of more.

Don't give "out of necessity." Don't let the evangelist talk you out of your rent money. That belongs to your landlord. When people are up against the wall financially, they will give anything in hopes of reaping a windfall profit. Even if it means using money that is earmarked for bills and food.

Finally, there is a return, but not the type you hear about so often from prosperity teachers. "And God is able to make all grace abound toward you; that ye always having all sufficiency (notice the word is not abundance. It is sufficiency; just enough) in all things may abound to every good work." If you will give according to verses six and seven, God's favor will abound towards you so that you will have just enough to accomplish every good work. What is every good work? It is the work He has called you into and commissioned you to do.

Giving money to God with the sole intention of getting more money in return is not biblical.

### **Is God moved by our need, or by our seed?**

And he was teaching in one of the synagogues on the Sabbath. And, behold, there was a woman who had a spirit of infirmity eighteen years, and was bowed together, and could in no wise lift up herself. And when Jesus saw her, he called her to him, and said unto her, Woman, thou art loosed from thine infirmity. And he laid his hands on her: and immediately she was made straight, and glorified God. (*Luke 13:10-13*)

Luke makes no mention of sowing anything. No money, no prayer, not even faith is spoken of in these verses. Jesus saw a need, a daughter of Abraham, bound by the devil and he acted on the need.

And he entered into the synagogue; and there was a man there which had a withered hand... And he saith unto the man which had the withered hand, Stand forth.

...he sayeth unto the man, Stretch forth thine hand. And he stretched it out: and his hand was restored whole as the other. (*Mark 3:1, 3,5b*)

Again all Jesus required was a need. No offering was taken, nor was there any question of his degree of faith. How about the widow's son?

...he (Jesus) went into a city called Nain; and many of his disciples went with him, and much people. Now when he came nigh to the gate of the city, behold, there was a dead man carried out, the only son of his mother, and she was a widow: and much people of the city was with her. And when the Lord saw her, he had compassion on her, and said unto her, Weep not. And he came and touched the bier: and they that bare him stood still. And he said, Young man, I say unto thee, Arise. And he that was dead sat up, and began to speak. And he delivered him to his mother. (*Luke 7:11-15*)

What drew Jesus to this funeral procession? Did He see an opportunity for an offering? Judas could have whispered something like, "Rabbi, here is a perfect opportunity to finance our trip to Samaria. There's no telling how much this widow would be willing to give to have her son back. Just imagine what we could take in from all these people who want to see signs and wonders." No, that's not how the real Jesus operates. He saw a need. When he saw it He was moved with compassion, and met the need. No strings attached. Many times in the gospels compassion was the only motivating force behind Jesus' miracles.

The word compassion does not mean love. Compassion is the grief or pain you experience when you see the suffering of another, it drives you to help them and meet their need. Look up the word compassion in your concordance, and then follow it through the gospels.

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Compassion fed the multitude in Matthew 9 and then again in Matthew 15. Compassion healed the sick in Matthew 14. In Matthew 20 compassion opened the eyes of the blind. Mark records in chapter 1 the cleansing of the leper because of compassion. Mark also tells of the maniac of Galarza being delivered through the compassion of Christ in chapter 5. Chapter 9 tells the story of His compassion towards the demon possessed boy and his father. No my friend, your seed does not move God. Anyone who would tell you differently may very well be trying to exploit your seed for their gain. Like this man:

Are you ready to sow? Are you ready to sow? I want you to sow the best seed you care about. I want you to sow the best seed. People, the ground is wet and moist by the anointing. I want you to sow your best seed. Many of you right now can sow \$100. Many, some can sow \$1000. Don't tip God. Don't tip God tonight. Do not or you're going to miss what's coming in this harvest time. When you don't give money, it shows that you have the devil's nature.  
(Famous prosperity teacher)

### **Charismatic Indulgences**

In Catholicism there is a doctrine regarding a place called Purgatory. *The Catholic Encyclopedia* gives us the following definition.

The souls of those who have died in the state of grace suffer for a time a purging that prepares them to enter heaven and appear in the presence of the beatific vision. The purpose of purgatory is to cleanse one of imperfections, venial sins, and faults, and to remit or do away with the temporal punishment due to mortal sins that have been forgiven in the Sacrament of Penance. It is an intermediate state in which the departed souls can atone for un-forgiven sins before receiving their final reward... To this is added the Christian teaching that such purgatorial punishments may be relieved by the offerings of the living faithful... (*The Catholic Encyclopedia Robert C. Broderick, Thomas Nelson, Inc. Pg. 502*)

Notice the underlined portion of the definition. It states that the act of giving offerings by the faithful, shortened the time a loved one would have to spend in the torment of Purgatory. This is called an *indulgence*. Like today's Charismatic prosperity teachers, Catholicism had its indulgence teachers.

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One of the most notorious of these was a German monk named Johann Tetzel, who in the early part of the sixteenth century was commissioned by the Pope to raise money for the building of St. Peter's Basilica.

Like the prosperity teachers of today, who depend on and feed off of people's greed to get them to give, Tetzel and the Pope took advantage of their parishioner's guilt and fear. Here is an excerpt from one of Tetzel's sermons on indulgences.

You should know that all who confess and in penance put alms into the coffer according to the counsel of the confessor, will obtain complete remission of all their sins (giving to get). Don't you hear the voices of your wailing dead parents and others who say, "Have mercy upon me, have mercy upon me, because we are in severe punishment and pain. From this you could redeem us with a small alms and yet you do not want to do so." Open your ears as the father says to the son and the mother to the daughter... "We have created you, fed you, cared for you, and left you our temporal goods. Why then are you so cruel and harsh that you do not want to save us, though it only takes a little (money)?" (Source: *W. Kohler, Dokumente zum Ablassreit, pp.125-126*)

German reformation historian Friedrich Myconius writes about Tetzel.

At the time a Dominican monk named Johann Tetzel was the great mouthpiece, commissioner, and preacher of indulgences in Germany. His preaching raised enormous amounts of money which were sent to Rome. This was particularly the case in the new mining town of St. Annaberg, where I, Friedrich Myconius, listened to him for over two years. The claims of this uneducated and shameful monk were unbelievable. Thus he said that even if someone had slept with Christ's dear Mother, the Pope had power in heaven and on earth to forgive as long as the money was put into the indulgences coffer. And if the Pope would forgive, God also had to forgive. He furthermore said if they would put money quickly into the coffer to obtain grace and indulgence, all the mountains near St. Annaberg would turn into pure silver. He claimed that in the very moment the coin rang in the coffer, the soul rose up to heaven. Such a marvelous thing was his indulgence. In sum and substance: God was no longer God, as he had bestowed all divine power to the Pope: *'Tu es Petrus, tibi dabo claves, quodcunque.'* (*Fredriech Myconius, Historia reformationis, p.14*)

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The lies that were told from the pulpits of the dark ages still ring true today. They have been dressed up and modified only slightly so they can fit into the culture and traditions of our times. But, nonetheless the heresy remains. In his book *Christianity in Crisis*, Hank Hanegraaff adds a little more to the information about Tetzel. I pray that the response from Christians he describes from the preaching of the indulgence gospel will be mirrored as Christians of today respond to the heresy of the prosperity gospel, and birth in the Church a new reformation.

His pitch was simple. According to Tetzel, people could purchase a pardon from God that would purge them from a place called purgatory. Unbelievably, thousands fell for his ruse. In fact, the masses - from monks to magistrates - hailed Tetzel as a messenger from heaven. Capitalizing on their spiritual insecurity and scriptural illiteracy, he fleeced them to fund papal projects and his own extravagant lifestyle.

Although Tetzel's methods for merchandising the gospel were outrageous, no one seemed willing to expose him. His popularity, backed by the power of Rome, seemed too formidable a foe. That is, until a monk named Martin Luther came along. Luther could no longer go along with the con. As Philip Schaff so aptly stated: "As a preacher, a pastor, and a professor, he (Luther) felt it to be his duty to protest... To be silent was to betray his theology and his conscience." And so, in 1517, Luther nailed his famous Ninety-Five Thesis to the door of the castle at Wittenberg. (*Hank Hanegraaff, Christianity in Crisis, Harvest House, pp.193-194*)

## **The \$1000 Miracle**

Every telethon has its success testimonials. They usually go something like this:

An individual was in a church service or watching a ministry on television when the Lord instructed them to give an offering. In the majority of the testimonies I have heard the amount is usually \$1000. They argue with God that one thousand dollars is all they have, or that they don't have a thousand dollars, but they are led to make a pledge and send it in as they have opportunity. They end their testimony with a list of all the financial miracles they had reaped for sowing their \$1000 seed.

I do not challenge God's ability to bless those who give to His work as He leads them. The problem arises in the fact that the viewing audience is manipulated into believing that if they send in \$1000 they will receive the same return. In many cases, this is deliberate misleading of the people. God did not promise them a return or any other blessing for their offering.

I have attended many crusades where person after person was brought to the microphone to tell of the financial miracles they received for giving to a particular ministry. Sometimes the offering portion of the service would take over an hour. Because of the reports of blessings for giving, great sums of money were collected. The problem is that the offering was not led by the Holy Spirit it was manipulated by man with the promise of being blessed financially if they gave. When man manipulates us to give with promises of bigger, better and more, the driving force behind our giving is no longer obedience and love. It is now *greed*, pure and simple.

The same is true with the preacher who stands in front of a camera or behind a pulpit and tells you, "God told me that there are one hundred people who can give \$1000 tonight."

I have heard evangelists tell the people that he wanted to pray a special financial blessing over those who gave. He would have those who would give \$100 to come forward and stand in a certain place on the platform, then those who would give \$50, then \$25 etc. Those who could not give went home empty handed. If this type of offering had been taken in Jesus' day, He would have had to praise the rich men and not the widow who could give only 2 mites.

## TWO

### **POVERTY IS A CURSE TO BE POOR IS A SIN**

Poverty comes from Hell, ...prosperity comes from Heaven. Sow a big seed, when you confess it, you are activating the supernatural forces of God. (*famous prosperity teacher*)

Before we begin this section, I would like to say that I believe both God and Satan make certain individuals rich or poor. But there are exceptions on both sides.

1. Satan is responsible for the riches accumulated by all illegal and immoral activities. God does not prosper the drug dealer, the bootlegger, the pimp, the thief, or the religious hireling. I believe Satan does. He also contributes to the poverty, sickness and death that many suffer because of their addictions and promiscuous lifestyle. However, we must realize that Satan can do nothing without first receiving permission from God.

2. "For promotion cometh neither from the east, nor from the west, nor from the south. But God is the judge: he putteth down one, and setteth up another." (*Psalms 75:6-7*)

I'm going to use a scripture that makes most Prosperity and Word of Faith teachers cringe. "...the Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord." (*Job 1:21*) They cringe at this verse because it is one of the biggest contradictions to their gospel. They try to explain Job's statement away with the notion that since the book of Job is the oldest in the canon of scripture, he had no other biblical writers to influence and guide him. So, he was wrong when he said, "...the Lord gave and the Lord hath taken away..." It seems he just didn't know any better. Listen to this example.

You know what? We've said this a million times and it's not even scriptural - all because of Job: "The Lord giveth and the Lord taketh away. Blessed be the

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name of the Lord." I have news for you: that is not Bible, that's not Bible. The Lord giveth and never taketh away. And just because he said, "Blessed be the name of the Lord," don't mean that he's right. When he said, "Blessed be the name," he was just being religious. And being religious don't mean you're right. (*famous prosperity teacher*)

This evangelist should have continued reading into the next verse.

In all this Job sinned not, nor charged God foolishly. (*Job 1:22*)

Does the Lord "giveth and never taketh away" ring true throughout scripture? Do you remember the story of King Saul and his disobedience to the Lord in the battle with the Amalekites? Let me remind you of Samuel the prophet's words to King Saul.

...Because thou hast rejected the word of the Lord, he hath also rejected thee from being king. (*1 Samuel 15:23*)

God gave Saul the position of King, and God took it away.

You see, the truth is, Job had the same guidance and influence as Moses, the prophets, Peter, Paul etc.

All scripture is given by inspiration of God... (*2 Tim 3:16*)

Knowing this first, that no prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation. For the prophecy came not in time by the will of man; but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Ghost. (*2 Peter 1:21*)

Job didn't miss God. He didn't have to preach someone else's sermon, as is so popular today. There was no religious celebrity's bandwagon to climb on. The Holy Spirit filled his heart, and his mouth spoke as if it had been God himself.

Job is also a prime example that God does bless some people with earthly riches. But no where in scripture does He promise every believer this same blessing.

Both Luke and Mark record the story of the widow who gave her only two mites, and was commended by Jesus over the rich men of the synagogue who

gave much more. Take a close look at this story.

And he looked up, and saw the rich men casting their gifts into the treasury. And he saw also a certain poor widow casting in thither two mites. And he said, Of a truth I say unto you, that this poor widow hath cast in more than they all: For all these have of their abundance cast in unto the offerings of God: but she of her penury hath cast in all the living that she had. (*Luke 21:1-4*)

Twice Jesus referred to this widow as being poor. He also says she gave out of her *penury* which means "extreme poverty and want." And because of that extreme poverty she could only give two mites. That's all that she had to live on that day.

Now, if being poor is a sin, as the church is being led to believe, why was there no rebuke from our Lord? If poverty is a curse or a demonic spirit, why was there no offer of deliverance? The reason is simple; neither belief is true.

Instead, only praise, because her offering was one of compassion and obedience. She did not give to get, she gave to love. If you think that she gave all that she had in order to receive a 30, 60 or 100 fold return, how will you explain Romans 11:35? "Who has ever given to God, that God should repay him?" (*NIV*) If that had been her motive, than Jesus would have been obligated to rebuke her. You see, the focus was not of the quantity of the gifts, but the quality (motive) of the givers. Matthew, Mark and Luke tell this story.

And, behold one came and said unto him, Good Master, what good thing shall I do, that I may have eternal life?

...if thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments.

...The young man saith unto him, All these things have I kept from my youth up: what lack I yet? Jesus said unto him, If thou wilt be perfect, go and sell that thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come and follow me. But when the young man heard that saying, he went away sorrowful: for he had great possessions. (*Matthew 19:16-22*)

Let's look at verse 21. "...sell what thou hast, and give to the poor..." If being poor is a sin, again, the question, should money or repentance have been ministered? If being poor is a sin, why are we not warned in scripture about

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falling into its trap? Like adultery, stealing, or lying, shouldn't there have been a commandment like, "Thou shalt not labor for any wage below minimum?" Or maybe, "When thou workest, be sure thy pay scale is above poverty level?" No, that's ridiculous. And so is believing that poor people are sinners, and that if you live below the poverty level you are under a curse.

There is another reason why this man could not give up his riches. When Jesus spoke to him in verse 21 He had discerned something and said, "If thou wilt be *perfect*, go and sell that thou hast..." The word perfect comes from the Greek word "teleios". It means, "complete, growth, mental and moral character." In one word; maturity.

When children want something, they will usually go to any length to get it. Have you ever been in a grocery or department store and heard the screams of a child who wanted something but was denied by his or her parent? When children want to keep something they already have, it's the same response. Have you ever tried to take a cookie, piece of candy or a toy from a child?

This man had kept the law outwardly, but was still immature spiritually. Jesus was saying, "If you really want to demonstrate the love of God that you profess you have, then sell everything." He wasn't too different than a lot of today's church members. As long as they can serve God on their own terms, everything is fine. But when the Holy Spirit begins to challenge their lifestyle or begins correcting them, they will start looking for a new church.

He left sorrowfully because he knew Jesus had spoken the truth. He may very well have wanted to serve God and be assured of heaven, but he didn't want to give up his way of life to do it.

How about the heroes of faith in Hebrews eleven? When prosperity teachers teach about men and women of faith, they always seem to skip over this group.

And others had trial of cruel mocking and scourging, yea, moreover of bonds and imprisonment: They were stoned, they were sawn asunder, were tempted, and 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: (*Hebrews 11:36-39*)

According to prosperity teaching these stalwart soldiers of the living God

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are considered cursed and in sin. But God gives them a good report through faith. They will stand shoulder to shoulder with the widow to hear Jesus proclaim them as **good** and **faithful** servants.

I'm sure someone will respond with, "But pastor, look in verse 39, they did not receive the promise." What was the promise they didn't receive? Was it the promise for wealth and prosperity through faith? Was it the promise of abundant living through positive confession; or lands and houses? No, it was the same promise that's in verse 13.

These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth. (*Hebrews 11:13*)

So what was the promise these men and women of faith never received? Very simple, Abel, Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and Sarah looked for the coming Messiah. The New Testament saints looked for His deliverance.

Their faith was not in acquiring wealth and riches, houses and land. It was in seeing and experiencing the King of Kings and Lord of Lords.

## THREE

### THE ONE HUNDRED-FOLD RETURN

Another well known prosperity teacher was a guest on a national Christian network during their semi-annual telethon. He stood before the cameras and declared that God had told him:

I want you to lay hands on that offering, and I want you to speak a hundred-fold increase over that offering - that it will be multiplied back to the giver one hundred-fold.

Another prosperity teacher claims:

Give \$100 and receive \$1,000; give \$1,000 and receive \$100,000. I know that you can multiply, but I want you to see in black and white how tremendous the hundred-fold return is... Give one house and receive one hundred houses or one house worth one hundred times as much. Give one airplane and receive one hundred times the value of the airplane. Give one car and the return would furnish you a lifetime of cars. (*famous prosperity teachers*)

This fantasy blessing was taken from Mark 10:28-30.

Then Peter began to say unto him, Lo, we have left all, and have followed thee.

And Jesus answered and said, Verily I say unto you, There is no man that hath left houses, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my sake, and the gospel's, But he shall receive an hundred-fold now in this time, houses, and brethren, and sisters, and mothers, and children, and lands with persecutions; and in the world to come eternal life. (*Mark 10:28-30*)

Do these verses promise us that if we give money, God is obligated to reward us with a one hundred-fold cash return? No, it doesn't. Peter explains to

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Jesus that he and the other disciples had forsaken all to follow Him. They had left their families, their jobs, they had walked away from every worldly possession that they had worked for all their lives. Is Jesus promising His disciples that since they left everything that He was now going to bless them with one hundred fathers, one hundred mothers, sisters, brothers? No, of course not. Jesus breaks down His promise for rewards of self-denial and sacrifice into two groups.

First, the here and now, and then the eternal. "But he shall receive an hundred-fold now in this time..." (*vs. 30*) The rate of exchange is not one hundred fathers mothers, houses etc. What Jesus is promising them is spiritual blessings and relationships that will more than compensate for anything they gave up to be identified with Him.

Also in this life, with these blessings, we must come to expect persecutions. "Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution." (*2 Tim. 3:12*) Someone has interpreted this persecution to have originated from those who have not yet experienced the same increase of wealth. He explains that because of other's jealousy, as your prosperity increases, 30, 60 and 100 fold, the persecution will increase proportionately against you. This is ridiculous.

The next, and the greatest of these blessings is the world to come; life eternal. The things He has waiting for us cannot be imagined. We must learn to give up and crucify our wants and our agendas. Live for Him and Him alone. Suffer for Him; die if need be. Then Romans 8:17 tells us, "...that we may be also glorified together."

The compensation for our faithfulness in these verses also holds true in Luke 6:38. "Give, and it shall be given unto you; good measure, pressed down, and shaken together, and running over, shall men give unto your bosom. For with the same measure that ye mete withal it shall be measured to you again." Jesus is not speaking of giving money in order to receive more money, it is about ministering to the needs and the forgiveness of others. Begin reading in verse 20, and there will be no mistaking His intentions.

The following year, during the telethon, our popular prosperity teacher had to share a new revelation. Maybe because so many complained to the network that they did not get their one hundred-fold return.

When you hear one hundred-fold you got to be careful. But... I never understood one hundred-fold. I thought hundred-fold was a hundred times... But Vine's dictionary says the hundred-fold is the optimum harvest. (*famous*

*prosperity teacher)*

He also followed it up with a book listing over twenty reasons why the people did not receive their hundred-fold blessing. Every excuse he wrote about laid the blame back to those who gave.

It should break our hearts for those who could not see the error to begin with. Then after reading the book, I'm sure many plummeted into condemnation believing themselves to be the cause of the problem.

When someone stands before you and says, "Thus sayeth the Lord," or "The Lord told me to tell you," and it does not come to pass, he or she is, according to scripture, a false prophet.

When a prophet speaketh in the name of the Lord, if the thing follow not, nor come to pass, that is the thing which the Lord hath not spoken, but the prophet hath spoken presumptuously: thou shalt not be afraid of him.  
*(Deuteronomy 18:22)*

If it had truly been God who said, "I want you to lay hands on that offering, and I want you to speak a hundred-fold increase over that offering - that it will be multiplied back to the giver one hundred-fold." **Everyone who had given an offering would have received a hundred-fold return.**

I heard someone say, "If the 'hundred-fold' message were true, there would never have to be another telethon again." Think about it. If those who preach it would give their dollars to other ministries, their return would keep them on the air until the second-coming. When they needed \$2 million to build their new administration building, or buy a new jet, they could just send \$20,000 to a ministry that's feeding the poor, visiting the prisoners, taking care of the widows, orphans and the fatherless. Their money problems would be over!

## FOUR

### PROSPER AS YOUR SOUL PROSPERS

Beloved, I wish above all things that thou mayest prosper and be in health, even as thy soul prospereth. (*3 John 2*)

I love the internet. It has made Bible study exciting to me. It has enabled me to access numerous commentaries and other writings that I do not have in my library. As I began to search what reliable men of God had to say about John's writing, I found that all were together in their interpretation of this verse. Not one of them understood it to mean financial prosperity.

I even found a quote from Jim Bakker, former CEO of *Heritage USA* and the *PTL Network*. Two decades ago, before his incarceration, brother Bakker was one on the biggest proponents of the prosperity gospel. I believe he said it the best.

I'd always quoted 3 John 2, saying, "Above all things God wants you to prosper." I loved that Scripture. It looks great on a TV screen when you're raising funds, and I interpreted it as God wants you to be rich. But when I got to the words of John, I said, "Now this don't make sense." So I took the word prosper apart in the Greek and found out it's made up of two words - the first word means good or well and the second road. It's a progressive word, so it's like a journey. So, here's John saying, basically, "Beloved, I want you to have a good journey through life as your soul has a good journey to heaven." It was a greeting! Building theology on that is like building the church on "Have a nice day."

"Give and it shall be given unto you." When I put that Scripture back into its context, I found Christ was teaching on forgiveness, not on money. He was teaching us that by the same measure that we forgive, we will be forgiven.

I had gotten my sermons from other people. The Bible warns about the shepherds who get their messages from each other. I think today the reason

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we have another gospel and another Jesus being preached is because men have gotten their sermons from each other and from motivational teaching. A lot of what's being taught today is simply motivational teaching with a few scriptures put to it. (*Jim Bakker, on Prosperity Preaching, taken from site <http://www.gospelcom.net/apologeticsindex/p00.html>*)

In his book *I Was Wrong* he writes.

The more I studied the Bible, however, I had to admit that the prosperity message did not line up with the tenor of Scripture... I was deeply grateful that God had not struck me dead as a false prophet! I studied every word of Jesus over a period of two years, and I was convinced that the prosperity message was at best an aberration and at worst "another gospel" contrary to the gospel of Jesus Christ. (*Jim Bakker, I Was Wrong Nelson Publishing, pp. 533, 543*)

The NIV version also helps us to get a little better understanding of this verse.

Dear friend, I pray that you may enjoy good health and that all may go well with you, even as your soul is getting along well. (*3 John 2 NIV*)

## FIVE

### THE THIEF COMETH

The thief cometh not, but for to steal, and to kill, and to destroy: I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly. (*John 10:10*)

This is another in the litany of scriptures twisted to prove the prosperity message.

They teach that the thief is the devil. He is the one who comes to steal, kill and destroy. His target is our health, our finances, family and so on. Jesus has come that we might have a life of abundance. Abundant health, finances, and an abundance of temporal comforts. But everyone knows, even the majority of the prosperity teachers; *it ain't gonna happen*. "Man that is born of a woman is of few days, and full of trouble. He cometh forth like a flower, and is cut down: he fleeth also as a shadow, and continueth not." (*Job 14:1-2*)

Through John 10:10, prosperity teachers want us to believe that everything that is uncomfortable in our life, emanates from Satan. All the things we enjoy come from God, and they come abundantly.

It sounds pretty simple, but has nothing to do with what Jesus is trying to tell us.

To understand John 10:10 requires us to read the ninth and tenth chapters of John. This will help us understand Jesus' meaning. First of all, He is not speaking about the devil. He is addressing the Pharisees. These were the false teachers of His day. The Pharisees were the self-proclaimed religious leaders. They were not called, chosen or anointed by God to bring men into His Kingdom. Their message was the traditions of men, rather than the Word of God.

In the first nine verses of John 10, Jesus reveals that He is the only door into the kingdom and that anyone who comes in any other way, enters as a thief and a robber.

When I was a young Christian, I loved to read Oliver B. Greene's Bible

studies and commentaries. His explanations of scripture were simple and easy to understand. When I began to study this verse, his book was one of the first I went to. So I'm going to let you read how he puts this verse into context and makes it understandable.

The thief cometh not, but for to steal, and to kill, and to destroy: I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly. (*John 10:10*)

In this and the verses that follow, the Lord drops the figure of Himself as the Door and presents Himself as the Good Shepherd. In this verse He contrasts the object of the false shepherd with His own object of coming into the world. "*The thief cometh not, but for to steal, and to kill, and to destroy.*" The background here is still that of the sheepfold, which Jesus uses to show the difference between the false shepherd and Himself, the Good Shepherd. A thief does not enter the sheepfold in the interest of the flock, but in his *own* interest; he comes not to help, but to harm. These Pharisees were teachers in the religion of the Jews *to their own advantage*. They taught doctrine that ruined souls and led them astray instead of saving them. The same is true today. In many pulpits, "false shepherds" have entered the ministry to use it to their own ends, whereas all *true* shepherds are in the ministry because they entered by the Door, and such a minister has the good of his flock at heart. The Apostle Paul was that kind of minister. He said, "I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who hath enabled me, for that He counted me faithful, putting me into ministry." (*1 Timothy 1:12*)

In contrast with the false shepherds (the thieves and robbers), Jesus presents *Himself* and His main purpose in leaving the bosom of the Father to come into the world: "*I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly.*" The thief comes to *take* life; Jesus came to *give* life - life abundant, which is the spiritual birthright of every believer.

"*They*" in the latter part of our present verse refers to the "*ANY man*" of verse 9 - ANY man who will enter in by the Door.

"*Abundantly*" points to the marvelous grace of God, and what that grace affords. "For the grace of God *that bringeth salvation* hath appeared to all men, *teaching us* that denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in the present world looking for *that blessed hope*, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Savior Jesus Christ; who gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from all iniquity,

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and purify unto Himself a *peculiar people*, zealous of good works." (*Titus 2:11-14*). (*Oliver B. Greene, The Gospel According to John, Vol. 2, pgs.121,122, The Gospel Hour Inc.*)

Can you see the correlation between the false teachers of Jesus' day and those of our day? Both are out for themselves, not for the sheep. Even before Jesus' day the prophet Micah proclaimed, "The heads (the judges) judge for reward, and the priests thereof teach for hire, and the prophets thereof divine for money." (*Micah 3:11*)

I realize scripture teaches us that Satan is indeed a thief, murderer and destroyer. However, we must again remember that he can do nothing without first obtaining permission. He had to petition God when he wanted to steal all that belonged to Job. In Luke's Gospel Jesus warns Peter, "And the Lord said, Simon, Simon, behold, Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat." (*Luke 22:31*)

How did Jesus know? Satan had petitioned the Father to destroy Peter. The exciting part is found in the next verse when Jesus encourages Peter with, "But I have prayed for thee that thy faith fail not..." (*verse 32*) When Peter hid himself under the wings of the great I AM, the devil could not touch him. Satan is not sovereign, only God is. The power over who lives and who dies is in the hands of only one person, Jesus Christ.

"I am he that liveth, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for ever more, Amen; and have the keys of hell and of death." (*Revelation 1:18*)

**SIX**

**JUST DECREE IT  
GOD IS OBLIGATED**

If you will pledge your \$40 donation tonight, even if you don't have it, God will give it to you. Just decree it. You can decree a thing. (*famous prosperity teacher*)

A decree is, "A formal and authoritative order or decision." (*Funk & Wagnalls Standard Desk Dictionary p. 166*) Imagine that. I no longer have to petition God, fast, or even seek His will. All I need to do is decide what I want, give the Creator of the Universe *my* formal and authoritative decision, and He must obey. Wow, it doesn't come any better than that. The only problem is, it's utter nonsense, just another pretext.

Thou shalt make thy prayer unto him, and he shall hear thee, and thou shalt pay thy vows. Thou shalt also decree a thing, and it shall be established unto thee: and the light shall shine upon thy ways. (*Job 22:27-28*)

These verses are also used in the recovering of all that the devil has stolen from us. By way of our decree, the devil is obliged to restore every dollar and every temporal blessing he has swindled us out of.

A famous prosperity teacher explains what he calls, "God's law of retribution." He quotes Job, (out of context).

...you will pay your vows (to his or the ministry that has asked him to raise money). You will also decree a thing and it will be established for you..." "Get violent in the spirit world and take back what's been stolen." (*famous prosperity teacher*)

I watched the television screen in amazement as the pastor of a local church

led his Sunday morning congregation in a popular charismatic mantra. "Gimme my stuff, Gimme my stuff!" They screamed, they laughed and they shook their fists at the devil, demanding all their temporal gods be returned.

Before we look at the verses in Job, let me say something. Prior to my becoming a Christian, like all of us, I was a sinner. Thinking back on that period in my life, I must admit, I was a good sinner. I enjoyed sinning; I looked for reasons and opportunities to sin. I spent a lot of money pursuing the fulfillment and satisfaction of my flesh and price was no problem. The devil never stole anything from me; I gave it to him willingly. And if the truth were told, we all did.

Now, let's look at Job 22. If we take these verses at face value, it provides a very strong argument in the defense of the prosperity gospel. However, if we do take them at face value we will violate 2 Timothy 2:15. "Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, **rightly dividing the word of truth.**"

Many years ago I learned that there are several keys that must be utilized when trying to rightly divide the word. They are; who is speaking, who are they speaking to and why are they saying this. It is also important to know the historical and cultural aspects of what is being said and how it is delivered. We found the latter to be true in our interpretation of 3 John 2.

In these verses it is not God instructing us to tell Him what to do. It is not Job who tries to put us into a position of authority where God becomes our servant and we the master. The Lord did not dispatch a prophet or an angel. The speaker was Eliphaz, one of the three self-proclaimed spiritual know-it-alls, who believed they were sent of God to straighten Job out. The problem was, Eliphaz and his cohorts were wrong.

First, Eliphaz was wrong in his estimation of the cause of Job's trouble. He had equated Job's suffering as his penalty for sin. In verses 5, 6, 7, and 9 of chapter twenty two, he lists the man of God's iniquities and transgressions. In verse twenty three he encourages Job to repent and turn back to the Lord.

Secondly, he was wrong about being able to decree anything. Where is the sovereignty of God in a decree? We have taken the creator of the universe out of the center of the equation and replaced Him with ourselves. We have Him running all over the universe doing our bidding and getting us what we want.

In the last twenty years a mountain of books have been written about the *authority of the believer* and to a limited degree we do have authority. However,

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we must understand that we do not have authority *over* God, only *in* Him. When we stretch and contort the Word we are no longer in Him. He imparts to us His authority for only one reason; so we can do His will. The prosperity teaching reverses this concept and has the King of Kings and Lord of Lords serving, rather than being served.

Eliphaz had missed God. The Lord addressed him and his two friends in chapter 42:7. "My wrath is kindled against you and against your two friends, because you have not spoken of Me what is right as My servant Job has." (NIV)

In the teaching of most churches today it is easy to fall into the deception of decreeing (ordering) God to provide what we want. The reason is we are told that we are coequal with God; we are little gods. Listen to some famous prosperity teachers.

Man...was created on terms of equality with God, and he could stand in God's presence without any consciousness of inferiority... God has made us as much like Himself as possible... He made us the same class of being that He is Himself... Man lived in the realm of God. He lived on terms equal with God... You don't have a god in you, you are one. Man was designed or created by God to be the god of this world. We were created to be gods over this earth, remember to spell it with a little g. I'm a little messiah walking on earth. I'm a little god! Critics, be gone!

Some of the people I just quoted fill churches, coliseums and stadiums when they come to your city. Their faces are seen 7 days a week over national and international television. To the average church member, because of these people's visibility, they are believed to be true men and women of God. What they say is even accepted by some as divine truth. However, nothing can be further from the *real* truth. These quotes borderline heresy and cannot be substantiated in scripture. In fact, becoming a god is the same lie Satan told Eve in the Garden of Eden (Genesis 3:5).

The prophet Isaiah asked this question. "Shall the potter be considered as equal with the clay?" (*Isaiah 29:16*) The man of God didn't leave the rebellious Israelites hanging on an unanswered question. Listen to the response of God through His prophet.

Ye are my witnesses, saith the Lord, and my servant whom I have chosen:

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that ye may know and believe me, and understand that I am He: before Me there was no God formed, neither shall there be after Me. (*Isaiah 43:10*)

Thus saith the Lord the King of Israel, and His redeemer the Lord of Hosts; I am the first, and I am the last; and beside me there is no God. (*Isaiah 44:6*)

I am the Lord, and there is none else, there is no God beside Me; I girded thee, though thou hast not known Me: That they may know from the rising of the sun, and from the west, that there is none beside me. I am the Lord, and there is none else... Tell ye, and bring them near; yea, let them take counsel together: who hath declared this from ancient time? Who hath told it from that time? Have not I the Lord? and there is no God else beside Me; a just God and a Savior; there is none beside Me. Look unto Me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth; for I am God, and there is none else. (*Isaiah 45:5-6, 21-22*) Any questions?

Because of their belief in man's exaltation to equality with God, the decree becomes very viable. The positive confession becomes an intricate part of the decree and works the same way. Dave Hunt in his book *Beyond Seduction* allows those who teach it to describe how it operates.

**Faith's force is released by speaking words.** "Words are the most powerful thing in the universe" because they "are containers" that "carry faith or fear and they produce after their own kind." God operates by these very same laws. "God had faith in His own words... God had faith in His faith, because He spoke words of faith and they came to pass." "That faith force was transported by words...." "...the God kind of faith... is released by the words of your mouth." "Creative power is in God's mouth. It is in your mouth also."

**You get what you confess.** The vital key is *confessing*, or speaking aloud, thereby releasing the force of faith. "You get what you say." "Only by mouth can faith power be released, allowing tremendous things to happen." "Remember, the key to receiving the desires of your heart is to make the words of your mouth agree with what you want." "Whatever comes out of your mouth shall be produced in your life." "They're (his two children) 30-some years of age today, and I don't believe I prayed more than a half a dozen times for both of them in all these years. Why? Because you can have what

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you say - and I had already said it!" (Dave Hunt, *Beyond Seduction* p.52,53 Harvest House)

The positive confession has its roots and basic teachings in *New Thought* and *Christian Science*. It is cultic, it is a false and dangerous teaching that the church has embraced and will only lead to spiritual death

Proponents of this teaching talk about the "God kind of faith." But who did God need to have faith in? He is God! He didn't need faith in His words, He is God! He didn't need faith in His faith, He is God!

John MacArthur, in his book *Charismatic Chaos* writes.

...Word Faith theology teaches that God is bound by spiritual laws that govern health and prosperity. If we say the right words, or believe without wavering, God is forced to respond in whatever way we determine. (*Famous prosperity teacher*) claims that God is already committed to His part of a covenant relationship with us. We can make whatever commitment or promise to Him we want, "then we can tell God on the authority of His Word what we would like Him to do. That's right! You can actually tell God what you would like His part in the covenant to be!"

In the Word Faith system God is not Lord of all; He is not able to work until we release Him to do so. He is dependent on human instructions, human faith, and above all human words to get His work done...

According to (*another famous prosperity teacher*) God has turned over His sovereignty - including His creative authority - to people. He (*famous prosperity teacher*) has written:

"In August of 1973, the Word of the Lord came unto me saying, 'If men would believe Me, long prayers are not necessary. Just speaking the Word will bring you what you desire. My creative power is given to man in Word form. I have ceased for a time from my work and have given man the book of MY CREATIVE POWER. That power is STILL IN MY WORD.

For to be effective, man must speak it in faith. Jesus spoke in faith when He was on earth and as it worked then so it shall work now. *But it must be spoken by the body*. Man must rise up and have dominion over the power of evil by my Words. It is my greatest desire that my people create a better life by the spoken Word. For my Word has not lost its power just because it has been spoken once. It is still equally as powerful today as when I said, "Let there be

light."

But for my Word to be effective, *men must speak it*, and that creative power will come forth performing that which is spoken in faith.'

Why pray at all if our words have so much creative force? Indeed, some Word Faith teachers come dangerously close to explicitly denying the need to seek any help from God through prayer. (*another famous prosperity teacher*) says it is better to talk to your checkbook, your disease, or whatever predicament you are in than to turn to God in prayer. "You aren't supposed to talk to Jesus about it. You're supposed to talk directly to the mountain in Jesus name... Do you have a financial mountain in your life? Start talking to your money. Tell your checkbook to line up with God's Word. Talk to your business. Command customers to come into your business and spend money there..." (*John F. MacArthur Jr., Charismatic Chaos, pg. 329, 330, Zondervon*)

I'll close this section with a quote of truth and Godly warning to those who follow this gospel of mysticism.

There is an evil wind... blowing into God's house, deceiving multitudes of God's chosen people. It is a kind of humanism wrapped in scriptures. It is a scriptural take-off on Napoleon Hill's book, *Think and Grow Rich*. This perverted gospel seeks to make gods of people. They are told, "Your destiny is in the power of your mind. Whatever you can conceive is yours. Speak it into being (decree). Create it by a positive mind set. Success, happiness, perfect health is all yours - if you will only use your mind creatively. Turn your dreams into reality by using mind power.

Let it be known once and for all, God will not abdicate His lordship to the power of our minds, negative or positive. We are to seek only the mind of Christ, and His mind is not materialistic; it is not focused on success or wealth. Christ's mind is focused only on the glory of God and obedience to His Word.

No other teaching so ignores the Cross and the corruption of the human mind. It bypasses the evil of our ruined Adam nature, and it takes the Christian's eye off Christ's gospel of eternal redemption and focuses it on earthly gain. Saints of God, flee from this wind...! It will lead you to despair and emptiness. (*David Wilkerson, "A Prophecy Wall of Fire," available from World Challenge, Inc., P.O. Box 260, Lindale, TX 75771*)

## SEVEN

### FAKE IT 'TIL YOU MAKE IT

If you want to be a millionaire you have to do what millionaires do. You have to dress like a millionaire, talk like a millionaire, you have to drive a car and live in a house like a millionaire. "You gotta fake it - 'til you make it!" I heard this last night while watching a local prosperity teacher on television. At first I couldn't believe how bold this man was in his conviction to lead his congregation into a lifestyle that is nothing less than an outright lie! I also could not believe that many in his congregation loved it and accepted it with shouts and a standing ovation. If any scripture fits this scene it has to be our opening verses. **"...the prophets prophesy lies... and my people love it this way..."** (*Jeremiah 5:30,31*) The fruit of this gospel is now manifesting.

Even so every good tree bringeth forth good fruit; but a corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit. A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit. (*Matthew 7:17,18*) A good man out of the good treasure of the heart bringeth forth good things; and an evil man out of the evil treasure bringeth forth evil things.  
(*Matthew 12:35*)

Our opening scripture in Jeremiah 5 ends with a very solemn question, **"...What will you do in the end?"** It is obvious, you will be faced with financial ruin. You can only live above your means for a very limited time. When you live in a house or drive a car with payments that can not be met, it takes about ninety days for the bank to foreclose or re-possess.

For the past several years my wife has volunteered two days a week at a church's food pantry. You would be surprised at the number of new or nearly new Cadillacs, Lincolns, Lexus, BMW's and even Mercedes that help fill the parking lot.

I realize that people, whether they drive expensive cars or inexpensive ones, whether they live in beautiful homes or shanties, can run into hard times

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financially. Some lose their jobs, maybe illness necessitates their visit. However, too many are driving, wearing or living in what causes them to have to feed their families from the food pantry. All because their lifestyle is a fake; a lie.

Would you tell a sinner to "fake it 'til you make it?" Would you have them to pretend that they have repented of their sins, join the church and live a life of hypocrisy? No, of course not, yet hypocrisy is exactly what is being preached here.

Holy living has been misrepresented as a life of temporal comfort and happiness. Many have judged another's spiritual success only by what they possess from a worldly perspective.

The truth is, no matter what you say or even believe about yourself, the righteousness of God is not your ultimate goal. The riches of the world and your pursuit for them has choked the pure Word out of your life. Without repentance and a renunciation of this false gospel your spiritual life can do nothing but spiral downward. If you continue to live a lie and a hypocritical life, your reward will be nothing less than financial ruin, and empty promises or excuses from those who have separated you from your money.

Many prosperity teachers have looked right into the camera with all the piety and righteousness they could muster and proclaimed, "God wants you to have wealth and possessions, just as long as wealth and possessions don't have you." If you have to live a life that is cloaked in hypocrisy, **THEY HAVE YOU!**

If we would lie in order to make people think we possessed wealth, it stands to reason we would possibly lie to get wealth. Slowly, read the Apostle Paul's warning to Timothy.

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. For the love of money is the root of all evil; which while some coveted after they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows. (*1 Timothy 6:9,10*)

Listen, there is no reason to live or even believe a lie if you can understand the scriptures as they relate to Israel and the Church. C. I. Scofield helps us better understand this relationship.

Continuing his researches, the student finds large mention in scripture of

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another distinct body, which is called the Church. This body also has a peculiar relation to God, and, like Israel, has received from Him specific promises. But there similarity ends, and the most striking contrast begins. Instead of the relation being formed of the natural descendants of Abraham alone, it is a body in which the distinction of Jew and Gentile is lost. Instead of obedience bringing the reward of earthly greatness and wealth, the Church is taught to be content with food and raiment, and to expect persecution and hatred, and it is perceived that just as distinctly as Israel stands connected with earthly and temporal things, so distinctly does the Church stand connected with spiritual and heavenly things. (*The First Scofield Study Bible, Rightly Dividing the Word of Truth, C. I. Scofield, World pg. 1567*)

Deception is the most powerful weapon in Satan's arsenal in his attempt to stop Christ's Church. "But evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse, deceiving, and being deceived." (2 Timothy 3:13) All who believe a lie will become liars themselves because they will repeat the same lie.

Those of us who do not study the Word of God and develop an intimacy with the God of the Word are at the highest risk. That is why Paul admonishes Timothy in the next two verses. "But continue thou in the things which thou hast learned and hast been assured of, knowing of whom thou hast learned them; And that from a child thou hast known the holy scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation, through faith which is in Christ Jesus." (2 Timothy 3: 14,15)

These *fakers* (liars) of wealth follow Jesus for what He can provide, not for who He is. When the focus is on the provision, the provision now becomes our idol. But the fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death." (*Revelation 21:8 emphasis added*)

## EIGHT

### THE WEALTH OF THE WICKED IS LAID UP FOR THE RIGHTEOUS

Somewhere in the bleak, dark expanse of our universe, there is a giant cosmic bubble. This bubble is filled to its capacity with the wealth and riches of the wicked. And maybe, just maybe, if I send in enough offerings; if I order enough talismans (prosperity bracelets, miracle anointing oil, Jordan River water etc.); maybe if I can conjure enough faith to move a mountain; or trace the outline of my hand enough times for a point of contact; maybe, just maybe, God will pluck a feather from the wing of an angel and thrust its point into the bubble so it can rain down my miracle money.

I am not trying to be facetious, I'm trying to make a point. There are people who live in a fantasy world in regards to the prosperity gospel. And rightly so, because they have never heard the real truth of God's Word, only out of context scriptures to seduce them into giving. How do the prosperity teachers suggest we are to access this great abundance of wealth?

The wicked are stacking up their money for the very day in which we live. They can't help it, for they are being compelled by God to do so... Never before in the history of the world have there been such huge pockets of wealth in the earth. It is God's plan to take this wealth and give it to His Church... Get ready! God is about to release great sums of wealth into your hands. How do you get your share released to you? **By giving!** (*famous prosperity teacher*)

Did you think you were going to get it any other way? Let's put Proverbs 13:22 into context and see what the Holy Spirit intended for us to learn. "A good man leaveth an inheritance to his children's children: and the wealth of the sinner is laid up for the just." To best understand the second half of our verse, we need to understand the first part also. "A good man leaveth an inheritance to his children's children,..." It is not difficult to figure out how this man can bring this

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to pass. It is quite simple - he works for it. He labors days without end, not only to supply the present needs for his family, but also to insure that his legacy will out live him. A good man works, saves, sacrifices and many times he and his wife do without in order to provide for their family. And God endows that good man with the strength and the resources to see it come to pass.

"...and the wealth of the sinner is laid up for the just." (*Proverbs 13:22b*) The point that I believe God wants to make between the good man and the sinner is very simple. The good man's focus is outward. He thinks little of himself, but rather the present and future needs of others. The sinner's focus is inward. My wealth, my reputation, my comfort. His mentality is, "I want what I want, I want it now, and I want a lot of it." He may very well get it, but in the long run, he may lose it.

All that he worked for to satisfy his lust for things, through one misfortune or another, will deplete his vast reserve of riches. Many of the dollars the sinner coveted, will end up in the hands of those who worked hard and lived honest lives. There is an old saying which fits very well here, "What goes around, comes around."

Have you ever looked at an old, wrinkled dollar bill and imagined where it had been since its printing? How many purses, wallets, pockets and cash registers had it been in and out of?

Over the years, what has it helped to buy for those who possessed it? Maybe alcohol, drugs, movie tickets. Maybe it has been won or lost in a poker game, a crap shoot or bought a lottery ticket. Now it's in your hand and God put it there.

The closest example (if any) of the wealth of the sinner being laid up for the righteous can be found in the third chapter of the book of Exodus. This is where the Lord commands the Israelites to borrow gold and silver jewelry from their Egyptian masters before their deliverance from slavery. Another in the New Testament could be Zacchaeus the dishonest tax collector in Luke 19. After his conversion to Christ he promised, "...Behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor; and if I have taken any thing from any man by false accusation, I restore him fourfold." (*Luke 19:8*)

Please notice that nothing was said, or even implied that giving was the key that unlocked the treasuries of the Egyptians or Zacchaeus. Nor does it suggest that this wind-fall is promised to all believers. If you are deceived into giving to a ministry expecting to receive some kind of miraculous transfer of wealth, you

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have a better chance of winning the *Lotto*.

I'm talkin' about your money. You know one of the greatest things that is going to happen in the year 2,000

we're about to see the church rise up with a revelation that only this generation has ever been given of Gods word concerning high finances in the kingdom of God. And we are just about to see the greatest transfer of wealth out of the hand of the wicked into the hand of the just. (*famous prosperity teacher*)

I do believe you know wealth in a sense is like energy you can't destroy it, it's just transferred, and I believe in a great economic collapse. The wealth of the world will not be destroyed it will be transferred, and I believe a lot of it will be transferred to the believers. (*famous prosperity teacher*)

The wicked are piling up the funds and I love the way (*famous prosperity teacher*) teaches on this. He's the best there is when it comes to teaching you on how to get the wealth of the wicked. Man, I like it. (*famous prosperity teacher*)

In the movie *Jerry McGuire*, actor Tom Cruse screamed into the telephone, **“Show me the money!”** The year 2000 has passed, 2001, 2002, 2003, all come and gone. **“Where is the money?”**

The little that a righteous man hath is better than the riches of many wicked. (*Psalm 37:16*)

## NINE

### MIRACULOUS DEBT CANCELLATION

Can you imagine going to your mailbox and getting a letter from GMAC, Ford Motor Credit, Chrysler Credit, the bank or your mortgage company telling you that your debt has been canceled, and not to bother sending in any future payments? It seems hard to believe doesn't it? But, according to some of the prosperity teachers it is very possible. After all it's in the Bible, isn't it? And God is no respecter of persons, right? So if He did it in the Bible, can't He do it for you? Is the concept of miraculous debt cancellation really in the Bible? Let's see.

The other day I bought a book by the prosperity teacher who, I believe, coined the phrase *miraculous debt cancellation*. In the book were several sections describing how God had miraculously canceled debt. I want to look at some of the examples that were given, and you can decide for yourself if *miraculous debt cancellation* really manifested to eliminate these people's debt. Or was the reader just inundated with double-talk and out of context scripture?

#### **Jesus' debt was miraculously canceled**

The debt the writer is speaking of is found in Matthew 17:24-27. Let's look at these three verses and what the writer says about them. Then we will try to put them back into context to see the point Jesus was trying to make.

And when they were come to Capernaum, they that received tribute money came to Peter, and said, Doth not your master pay tribute?

He saith, Yes. And when he was come into the house, Jesus prevented him, saying. What thinkest thou, Simon? of whom do the kings of the earth take custom or tribute? of their own children, or of strangers?

Peter saith unto him, Of strangers. Jesus saith unto him, Then are the children free.

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Notwithstanding, lest we should offend them, go thou to the sea, and cast an hook, and take up the fish that first cometh up; and when thou hast opened his mouth, thou shalt find a piece of money: that take, and give unto them for me and thee. (*Matthew 17:24-27*)

The collectors of the tax spoke to Peter first. They did this, because Peter lived in Capernaum and it was probably his house where Jesus was staying. They were not trying to trap Peter or Jesus, nor were they trying to insult them, they were extending a common courtesy by addressing Peter.

When Peter went into the house the writer got confused and misinterpreted scripture. Listen.

As you look closely, you will see that Jesus actually stopped Simon Peter from paying the debt in the normal way. I believe Peter was on his way into the house to get the tax money from the treasurer, Judas. With this money, he was going to pay the tax bill for Jesus and himself. "...And when he was come into the house, Jesus prevented him..." (*Matthew 17:25*)

This verse tells us that Jesus stopped him from his planned action, for He had a better plan. This time the debt would not be paid from the treasury. There would be a miraculous cancellation of debt. (*famous prosperity teacher*)

Now let's look at a few things our writer says. First, he says, "Peter was on his way into the house to get the tax money from the treasurer, Judas." If you read the first verse of chapter 18 you will see that the other disciples came in at the end of Peter and Jesus' conversation. Judas was not in the house.

Secondly, he writes that Jesus *stopped* Peter from getting the money from the treasury because He had a "better plan" for paying the tax bill, "a miraculous cancellation of debt."

The word *prevented*, in verse twenty five, the writer interprets to mean *stopped*. He is wrong; very wrong. The Greek word translated in the King James Version as prevented is *prophthano*. Its meaning is, "to anticipate; to get an earlier start." It could be better understood from the NIV.

...When Peter came into the house, Jesus was the first to speak... (*Matthew 17:25 NIV*)

Jesus' purpose in speaking first was not to stop Peter from getting money out of the treasury. Jesus knew what was on Peter's mind and in his heart. So He went directly to the subject at hand. "What do you think, Simon?" he asked. "From whom do the kings of the earth collect duty and taxes - from their own sons or from others?" (*Matthew 17:25 NIV*)

The writer says:

Jesus asked Peter a question that dealt with how the corrupt tax system of this world operated. He asked him if he thought the king's children had to pay this tax. Simon said, "No Lord. The strangers have to pay the tax." Jesus was showing Peter that the system controlling the world is corrupt. They tax strangers, and do not tax their own. But He quickly told Simon not to get hung up on this inequity. To keep from offending anyone and causing themselves unnecessary trouble, they would pay the tax, **but not out of the treasury**. Instead they would cancel the tax bill with a miracle. (*famous prosperity teacher*)

Before we go any further, let's look at this tax. First of all it was not a civil tax that would end up in the coffers of the Roman government. This was a church tax. It was a fair tax and as called by Matthew Henry, "a modest tax." Exodus 30: 11-16 tells of it's purpose and commission by God. This tax was used for the up-keep of the temple. The amount of one-half shekel was levied to every man over the age of twenty, and the cost had not risen in over fourteen hundred years. In verses twelve this tax is called a "ransom for his soul unto the Lord." In verse sixteen it is referred to as, "an atonement for his soul."

Matthew Henry helps us understand the reason for this conversation.

He (Jesus) appeals to the way of the kings of the earth, which is, to take tribute of strangers, of the subjects of their kingdom, or foreigners that deal with them, but not of their own children that are of their families; there is such a community of goods between parents and children, and a joint interest in what they have, that it would be absurd for the parents to levy taxes upon the children, or demand any thing from them; it is like one hand taxing the other.

He applies this to himself; *Then are the children free. Christ is the Son of*

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God, and Heir of all things; the temple is his temple (Mal. 3:1), His Father's house (Jn. 2:16), in it *He is faithful as a Son in His own house* (Heb. 3:6), and therefore not obligated to pay this tax for the service of the temple. Thus Christ asserts his right, lest his paying this tribute should be misimproved to the weakening of his title as the Son of God, and the King of Israel, and should have looked like a disowning of it himself. (*Matthew Henry, Matthew Henry's Commentary of the Whole Bible, Hendrickson Publishers, p.1703*)

Third, you may wonder about the real reason Jesus decided to perform a miracle rather than take money from the treasury to pay His tax. He probably did not have the half-shekel required. Contrary to what many teach, while Jesus walked on earth He demonstrated poverty.

The treasury of Jesus' ministry was set up the same way most reputable ministries are today. The alms taken into the treasury were for the expenses of ministry, not for His personal use. Again, Matthew Henry does a sufficient job in explaining.

In his ordinary expenses, he lived upon alms, and in extraordinary ones, he lived upon miracles. He did not order Judas to pay this out of the bag which he carried; that was for subsistence, and he would not order that for his particular use, which was intended for the benefit of the community. (*Matthew Henry, Matthew Henry's Commentary of the Whole Bible, Hendrickson Publishers, p.1703*)

Instead He chose the fish to supply His need, and only enough for the need. He could have had the fish holding a bag full of shekels, but He only needed enough to pay the tax for himself and Peter. And with it, the tax bill was satisfied.

Can this be considered a miraculous debt cancellation? No, not by a long shot. **The debt was not canceled - it was paid.** No where is it suggested that the collectors told Jesus or Peter they did not have to pay the tax. I'm sorry, it just isn't there. You can twist and distort the scripture all day long, this is not a cancellation; it is a paid debt by the person who owed it. Miraculous *provision* is not miraculous cancellation.

### King David's men were in debt

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I started not to use this particular example because of the writer's explanation. Listen, and judge for your self.

In the book of 1 Samuel, we are told of a group of men who joined with David when Saul turned against him. They were not the kind of people you would find on the "Who's Who in Israel" list. Exactly the opposite was true. They were the social outcasts, the malcontents, and the candidates for bankruptcy court. We are told there were about four hundred men, and David became their captain.

And every one that was in distress, *and every one that was in debt*, and every one that was discontented, gathered themselves unto him; and he became a captain over them: and there were with him about four hundred men. (*1 Samuel 22:2*)

Their struggle with King Saul went on for years. Eventually, Saul was killed, and David was made king. I have not found any direct word saying these men had their debts canceled. However, after King David came to his throne, most of his original band of four hundred became leaders in Israel. One can easily assume that with David's ascension to the throne, the debts of those who followed his early years were canceled. (*famous prosperity teacher*)

When I read this, only one word came to mind; unbelievable! The writer also, should have considered not using this example! The Bible gives no record of any such tradition of a king canceling the debt of those who followed him. Unbelievable!

### **Nehemiah's Workman Had Their Mortgages Canceled**

The writer's rendition of the cancellation of the mortgages of Nehemiah's workmen is not so much a case of taking scripture out of context. It is more a case of not telling the entire story. First, let's look at what the writer says, and then what the Word of God says.

The Book of Nehemiah records one of the most extensive construction projects of scripture. Jerusalem was in shambles. Much of the wall was broken down. The gates were off their hinges. Nehemiah's men were working

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night and day. In the midst of the labor, Nehemiah found out some of the Jews had been lending money to his workers. These workmen had gotten into a terrible situation at the hands of these unscrupulous businessmen.

And there was a great cry of the people and their wives against their brethren the Jews. For there were that said, We, our sons, and our daughters, are many; therefore we take up corn for them, that we may eat, and live. Some also there were that said, *We have mortgaged our lands, vineyards, and houses*, that we might buy corn, because of the dearth. There were also that said, We have borrowed money for the king's tribute, and that upon our lands and vineyards. (*Nehemiah 5:1-4*)

With this revelation, Nehemiah commanded the Jews to release the laborers from their debts and restore to them everything they had repossessed.

*Restore*, I pray you, to them, even this day their lands, their vineyards, their olive yards, and their houses, also the hundredth part of the money, and of the corn, the wine, and the oil, that ye exact of them. (*Nehemiah 5:11*)

In obedience, the Jewish money lenders released all of Nehemiah's workers from their mortgages and restored all of their lands and possessions. (*famous prosperity teacher*)

Then said they, We will restore them, and will require nothing of them; so will we do as thou sayest... (*Nehemiah 5:12*)

At face value it could be easily assumed that the writer is correct in his belief that all their debt was canceled. However, he jumps from verse four to verse eleven, and in doing so, leaves out the most important part in understanding what really happened to the mortgages of Nehemiah's workmen.

A quick reading of the six verses, that were omitted by the writer, reveals that the problem wasn't so much in paying back the loans as it was the interest on the loans. To guarantee the interest the workmen put up their property as collateral. Let's look at verses 5-10.

Ye know our flesh is as the flesh of our brethren, our children as their

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children: and, lo, we bring into bondage our sons and our daughters to be servants, and some of our daughters are brought unto bondage already: neither is it in our power to redeem them; for other men have our lands and vineyards.

And I (Nehemiah) was very angry when I heard their cry and these words.

Then I consulted with myself, and I rebuked the nobles, and the rulers, and said unto them, Ye exact usury, every one of his brother. And I set a great assembly against them.

And I said unto them, We after our ability have redeemed our brethren the Jews, which were sold unto the heathen; and will ye even sell your brethren? or shall they be sold unto us? Then held they their peace, and found nothing to answer.

Also I said, It is not good that ye do; ought ye not walk in the fear of our God because of the reproach of the heathen our enemies?

I likewise, and my brethren, and my servants, might exact of them money and corn: I pray you, let us leave off this usury. (*Nehemiah 5:5-10*)

Now verse eleven can be made easier to understand.

Restore, I pray you, to them, even this day, their lands, their vineyards, their olive yards, and their houses, also the hundredth part of the money, and of the corn, the wine, and the oil, that ye exact of them. (*Nehemiah 5:11*)

There was nothing wrong with the principal amount of these loans. The problem arose over the exorbitant amount of interest, and the workmen's inability to pay it. This is understood by the use of two words in Nehemiah 5; *usury* and *exact*. Both are translated from the same Hebrew word *nashah* meaning, "money borrowed for security or interest."

The workmen and their families had to borrow again and again just to pay the interest on the principal. You can not do that for any extended length of time. You will eventually lose everything.

When the people came to Nehemiah with their complaints he became outraged. He was outraged because the lenders not only took advantage of the people, but they did it illegally. These lenders were themselves Jews. It was Jew

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lending to Jew and according to Jewish law it was illegal to charge any interest. Deuteronomy 23:19 makes it very clear.

Thou shalt not lend money upon usury to thy brother; usury of money, usury of victuals, usury of any thing that is lent upon usury: (*Deuteronomy 23:19*)

That was Nehemiah's argument to the lenders. They had broken the law. In verse seven of Nehemiah 5 he says.

...I rebuked the nobles, and the rulers, and said unto them, Ye exact usury, every one of his brother... (*Nehemiah 5:7*)

...I pray you, let us leave off this usury. (*verse 10*)

Restore, I pray you, to them, even this day, their lands, their vineyards, their olive yards, and their houses, also the hundredth part of the money, and of the corn, the

wine, and the oil that ye exact (borrowed for interest) of them. (*verse 11*)

The principal was not effected, the workmen still had to continue paying on their loans. Only what the lenders had taken for interest was returned. Can this be considered miraculous debt cancellation? I'll have to answer that with another question. Can expecting God's people to obey God's Word be considered miraculous?

### Double talk

In his book, the writer goes on to list several more examples of what he considers miraculous debt cancellation. His closing remarks in that chapter will explain why I went no further in reviewing the remainder of his examples.

None of these debt cancellations were recorded in Scripture as miraculous events. However, anytime a debt is canceled for a child of God, it is the result of God's intervention on behalf of that faithful son or daughter. That makes every Christian's canceled debt a miracle. (*famous prosperity teacher*)

The Bible does not teach *miraculous debt cancellation*. It either is, or it is not miraculous. It can not be a miracle in the New Testament and not be a

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miracle in the Old Testament. God is the same yesterday, today and forever! If the Holy Spirit does not render these events as miraculous, chances are - they are not!

I have also heard testimonies on programs and telethons where people owed the bank or others substantial sums of money and then received a letter saying that they owe nothing. This clearly is a mistake on the billing part of a company or bank to clear their debt. But they Praise the Lord that He canceled their debt. Lets look at this carefully Lev 5:1 'If a person sins in hearing the utterance of an oath, and is a witness, whether he has seen or known of the matter-- if he does not tell it, he bears guilt.'" When we sign a contract or give our word we are to keep it. We are not to take advantage of other people's mistakes, big or small. Someone has to pay for the mistake. Lev. 6:3-4 "or if he has found what was lost and lies concerning it, and swears falsely-- in any one of these things that a man may do in which he sins. "then it shall be, because he has sinned and is guilty, that he shall restore what he has stolen, or the thing which he has extorted, or what was delivered to him for safekeeping, or the lost thing which he found." The priest who said this thing has to bear the guilt as well since he has led the person into and approves of his sin. This is nothing to Praise the Lord about, it is theft and God does not lead people or bless them to do such a thing. *(taken from www.lestusreason.org)*

## TEN

### SUPERNATURAL POWER TO GET WEALTH

#### Power in Your Hands

If you carefully read Deuteronomy 8:17, you will see that the power to get wealth is given **into your hands**.

...the might of mine *hand* hath gotten me this wealth.

But thou shalt remember the Lord thy God: for it is he that giveth thee the power to get wealth. (*Deuteronomy 8:17,18*)

Just think about it. Your hands have been given miracle power to get wealth!

#### A New Confession

It is important that you begin today to make a new confession about your hands. Hold them before you right now and boldly say, "**These hands have been given supernatural power to get wealth.**" Remember, the Bible says that whatever you say has a great impact on what you will have. ... Look at your hands again and say, "These hands have the **power** to get wealth." You should say this several times a day. You should say it until the doubt and amazement leave you, and strong faith and conviction remain. (*famous prosperity teacher*)

Whether you believe it or not, this prosperity teacher is leading you right into the judgment of God! He asks us to carefully read Deuteronomy 8:17. But he quotes both 17 and 18. If you read it again there seems to be a contradiction; because there is! One says, "...the might of mine hand hath gotten me this wealth." (*verse 17*) The other, "...the Lord thy God: for it is he that giveth thee power to get wealth." (*verse 18*)

As we look at the eighth chapter of the Book of Deuteronomy it will dispel any confusion of the two verses. It will also reveal to us that the confession about our hands is completely opposite of what the writer claims the verse means.

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Chapter eight of Deuteronomy begins a series of warnings, exhortations and instructions to the children of Israel before their crossing the Jordan River into the promised land.

In the first ten verses of the chapter the Lord begins by reminding Israel to keep all of His commandments from that day forward so they could live and multiply and go in and possess the land. He went on to remind them of all the ways he had blessed them and protected them for the last forty years. How He fed them, humbled them and proved them so they could know what was in their hearts and whether they would continue to keep his commandments. For several verses the Lord lists His numerous blessings to His people. Then in verse eleven He warns them about forgetting Him.

Before we begin eleven through seventeen, I would like to repeat something our writer has said, "carefully read." It is important that we understand the following verses, because now the Lord takes Israel into a warning mode.

Beware that thou forget not the Lord thy God, in not keeping his commandments, and his judgments, and his statutes, which I command thee this day:

Lest when thou hast eaten and art full, and hast built goodly houses, and dwelt therein:

And when thy herds and thy flocks multiply, and thy silver and thy gold is multiplied, and all that thou hast is multiplied:

Then thine heart be lifted up, and thou forget the Lord thy God, which brought thee forth out of the land of Egypt, from the house of bondage;

Who led thee through the great and terrible wilderness, wherein were fiery serpents, and scorpions, and drought, where there was no water; who brought thee forth water out of the rock of flint:

Who fed thee in the wilderness with manna, which thy fathers knew not, that he might prove thee, to do thee good at thy latter end;

And thou say in thine heart, My power and the might of mine hand hath gotten me this wealth. (*Deuteronomy 8:11-17*)

Do you see what is happening here? When you get blessed and forget God, you will always heap to yourself the glory for what has been accomplished in your life. When God is not preeminent in our life, self will be. Pride will override

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humility and we will fall. That's Bible. (1 Corinthians 10:12)

How do you think we can rectify that? It is easy; remember it is not us, it is God.

But thou shalt remember the Lord thy God: for it is he that giveth power to get wealth. (*verse 18*)

Before you lift up your hands and begin lying to them; wash them (*James 4:8-10*), then lift them up to the King of Kings and Lord of Lords and praise Him for His goodness and mercy. Worship Him in the spirit of *true* holiness, remembering that He is our power, it is not our own.

### **Is This Wealth for Everyone**

The writer seems to think so.

The power to get wealth has been given to you for a specific purpose. God's purpose for the wealth is to establish His covenant. (*famous prosperity teacher*)

He is partially correct. The wealth was given for a specific purpose, and that purpose was definitely to establish His covenant. However, the covenant was for a specific people; Israel. The wealth of that covenant was not given to us. It was given to Israel to establish them and provide for them in the taking and settling of Canaan.

Today many are teaching that since we are the seed of Abraham and heirs to the promise, this covenant of wealth belongs to us also. This is not true. If you study Hebrews 6:11, you will find that the promise spoken of for us (the seed of Abraham) is none other than the hope of the coming Christ.

If we begin speaking to our hands, praising them for the power we think they have, they become our gods. Deuteronomy 8:19 warns us, “And it shall be, if thou do at all forget the Lord thy God: and walk after other gods, and serve them. And worship them, I testify against you this day that ye shall surely perish.”

## ELEVEN

### GOD'S WARNING ABOUT RICHES

Instead of bringing out an arsenal of Bible verses explaining the Lord's view on prosperity, I want you to read a passage from John Piper's book *Desiring God*. In this passage Mr. Piper puts into perspective why God blesses us, and the misconception many have as to why He blesses us.

A wealth and prosperity doctrine is afoot today, shaped by the half-truth that says, "We glorify God with our money by enjoying thankfully all the things he enables us to buy. Why should a son of the King live like a pauper?" And so on. The true half of this is that we should give thanks for every good thing God enables us to have. That does glorify him. The false half is the subtle implication that God can be glorified in this way by all kinds of luxurious purchases.

If this were true, Jesus would not have said, "Sell your possessions and give alms" (Luke 12:33). He would not have said, "Do not seek what you are to eat and what you are to drink" (Luke 12:29). John the Baptist would not have said, "He who has two coats, let him share with him who has none" (Luke 3:11). The Son of Man would not have walked around with no place to lay his head (Luke 9:58). And Zacchaeus would not have given half his goods to the poor (Luke 19:8).

God is not glorified when we keep for ourselves (no matter how thankfully) what we ought to be using to alleviate the misery of un-evangelized, uneducated, un-medicated, and unfed millions. The evidence that many professing Christians have been deceived by this doctrine is how little they give and how much they own. God *has* prospered them. And by an almost irresistible law of consumer culture (baptized by a doctrine of health, wealth and prosperity) they have bought bigger (and more) houses, newer (and more) cars, fancier (and more) clothes, better (and more) meat, and all manner of trinkets and gadgets and containers and devices and equipment to make life more fun.

They will object: Does not the Old Testament promise God will prosper his

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people? Indeed! God increases our yield so that by giving we can prove our yield is not our god. God does not prosper a man's business so that he can move from a Ford to a Cadillac. God prospers a business so that 17,000 unreached peoples can be reached with the gospel. He prospers a business so that twelve percent of the world's population can move a step back from the precipice of starvation...

The issue is not how much a person makes. Big industry and big salaries are a fact of our times, and they are not necessarily evil. The evil is in being deceived into thinking a \$100,000 salary must be accompanied by a \$100,000 lifestyle. God has made us to be conduits of his grace. The danger is in thinking the conduit should be lined with gold. It shouldn't. Copper will do. (*John Piper, Desiring God, pp. 163,167 Multnomah Press*)

Understanding God's Word and His will is not as complicated as some would like you to believe. You do not need *revelation knowledge*. For the most part, all you need is a hungry heart for godly holiness, a transformable mind for instruction and correction, a Bible and the Holy Spirit to lead and direct. All of us have access to these tools. Now, let's take these tools and examine what God's Word tells us about riches.

To those who are in leadership positions in the church, Paul lists the qualifications in 1 Timothy 3:1-13. A very important one is found in verse three. "... Not greedy of filthy Lucre:... (KJV) "...not a lover of money... (NIV)

Let me borrow from Oliver B. Green again. I love this man's writing, he pulls no punches.

Money is a necessity, and it is not evil within itself. There are wealthy men today who are also godly men. Money can be a great blessing, but it can also be a curse. Money can be a Godsend - but it can also be the bait of the devil. Remember Judas, who "had the bag" (John 12:6), and took what he wanted from it.

Any minister who accepts money from God's people is accepting that money under false pretenses unless he preaches the pure Gospel - *All of the Gospel*. When a minister derives his livelihood from a church, mission, or ministry, and yet preaches to please people instead of preaching the pure Word of God, the money he gets from such ministry is *ill-gotten and is "filthy lucre."* Any preacher who refuses to preach the truth to those who pay his salary and provide his living, is a thief and a robber of the lowest order. There is no

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dirty gang of thieves this side of hell than preachers who compromise the truth...

It is not a sin to be rich - if those riches come through honest labor or business; but *love* of money and money acquired by devious means is the bait of the devil to cause a person to stumble into hell. (*Oliver B. Greene, The Epistles of Paul the Apostle to Timothy and Titus, pp. 115,116 The Gospel Hour, Inc.*)

By today's church standards brother Greene's comments would be considered harsh and condemning. They certainly would not be considered Charismatically correct. But I think we should take hold of them as a wake up call. Every pastor, every evangelist, anyone in ministry who solicits money must ask God to examine his heart and expose any methods we have used that are not according to His will and Word. Then repent and if need be return the money to the churches or individual contributors.

For those who follow the prosperity teaching but are not in ministry, Paul instructs from 1 Timothy 6:9-10.

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. For the love of money is the root of all evil: which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows." (*1 Timothy 6:9-10*)

As I studied these verses and those who had written commentaries expounding on them, I found again that Oliver B. Greene gave one of the best explanations. I began to just give a brief synopsis of his remarks about Paul's writing to Timothy, but it would not have done them justice. So again I will quote him.

Brother Greene did not know about the Word of Faith or prosperity gospel when he wrote his commentary back in 1964. But the truths he brings out describe many I have met who have given themselves over to this teaching.

Any truth, whether forty years old or four hundred years old is still truth today. We must grasp it and cling to it as if our life depended on it.

I stated earlier in this study that throughout the New Testament, riches and

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sorrow, riches and tears, riches and damnation, are closely connected. Paul tells us here that there is grave danger that the rich will fall into temptation - they will be tempted to do many foolish and extravagant things; they will practice and participate in lusts made possible through much money. A person who has enough money can purchase just about anything on earth - *except salvation!* Money talks in this world, but not at the judgment bar of God.

The statement "*they that will be rich*" suggests those who set heart and mind on making money. They strive with strength, energy, and talents just to acquire wealth. They are determined to get money and more money - honestly, if possible; dishonestly, if need be. Some men have declared that they will become millionaires at any price; they will do anything to make a million. There are men today who were honest, with character above reproach - until they made a little money and then set their hearts on MORE money. Little by little their consciences were seared; and now they are racketeers who will stop at nothing, however crooked it may be, to make another million.

Mark 10:17-27 gives the account of the rich young ruler - a young man who had acquired much money and had "much possessions." He ran to Jesus, fell down before Him, and asked, "*What shall I do that I may inherit eternal life?*" Jesus named six commandments, all having to do with one's fellowman. The young man declared that *he had kept these commandments* since he was a child. Then Jesus simply said to him, "One thing thou lackest: go thy way, sell whatsoever thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come, take up the cross, and follow me." The young man turned and went away grieved, "*for he had great possessions.*" He had said he wanted eternal life - yet he was not willing to trust Jesus with his earthly possessions.

When the young man turned and walked away, Jesus said to His disciples, "How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of God." The disciples could not understand. Jesus then explained, "*How hard is it for them that TRUST in riches to enter into the kingdom of God!*" The disciples were astonished beyond measure, and they said among themselves, "*Who then can be saved?*" And Jesus "looking upon them saith, With men it is impossible, but not with God: for with God all things are possible." Jesus clearly taught that riches are not an asset to spiritual living.

Verse 10: "For the love of money is the root of all evil: which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through

with many sorrows."

Many times we hear someone say, "money is the root of all evil"; but that is not what the Bible says. As a matter of fact, money has been the root of much joy, much kindness, and much good. There are many things money can buy that will make life much happier. The Bible does not say that *money* is the root of all evil, but rather that "*the LOVE of money* is the root of all evil."

Bible scholars tell us that there is no definite article in the Greek before the word "root." It is not "THE root," but rather "A root" of evil. "*All*" signifies *all kinds* of evil, chief of which is that it causes men to "err from the faith" and forget God. They have erred (or been seduced) from the faith; that is, they have been so deceived that they turn their backs on the faith and all chances of being saved.

The Holy Spirit is saying here that if money occupies the place in your life that God should occupy, then *love of money* is the root of evil that will damn you. Many men make money an idol - and idolatry damns the soul. Money can bring many comforts; but it can also be the means to many sorrows, the greatest of which will come when misguided souls realize how foolish they have been to choose gold instead of God.

"...*Pierced themselves through with many sorrows.*" The word "pierced" cannot be well expressed in its translation. It means to pierce through from one end to another, as a piece of meat on a spit, and conveys the idea of doing this all around, piercing everywhere. In this verse, it means the torturing of one's soul with many sorrows.

However, there are those who have money without loving it, while others who do not have it love and strive for it above all else. It is not a sin to have money if we do not allow money to become our god, a snare that causes us to err from the faith. (*Oliver B. Greene, The Epistles of Paul the Apostle to Timothy and Titus, pp. 221-224 The Gospel Hour, Inc.*)

Our only recourse is the next verse. "But thou, O man of God, flee these things; and follow after righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, meekness." (*1 Timothy 6:11*)

Sadly, some prosperity teachers boast that wealth and riches are the fruit one receives once righteousness, godliness, faith, etc. have been achieved. Listen!

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"Brother, you want to prosper? Money will be falling on your left, right and center. God will begin to prosper you, for money always follows righteousness and right living." (*famous prosperity teacher*)

Yet, the apostle Paul writes, "Even unto this present hour we both hunger, and thirst, and are naked, and are buffeted, and have no certain dwelling place; And labor, working with our own hands: being reviled, we bless; being persecuted, we suffer it. (*1 Corinthians 4:11,12*)

Contrary to the popular teachings of our day, Jesus did not endure the rejection of those He loved, the pain of physical and emotional torment perpetrated by those who hated Him, or the agony and humiliation of an execution as a common criminal to make you and I rich and prosperous. His sole purpose was to reconcile you and I to a Holy God.

Our prosperity cannot be measured nor can it be judged by the temporal amenities we have accumulated. The truth of the matter is, once you have begun your journey with God and you have established an intimacy with Him, nothing else matters. The heart that once coveted the wealth of the world, now only longs for Jesus. The eyes that were blinded by the world's gold, squint in the presence of His glory. The hands that were once raised in an anticipation of receiving are now lifted in true devotion and worship. The feet that ran to every get-rich conference and seminar are now planted at the foot of the cross, where Jesus is the **only** God, the **only** hope, and the **only** salvation. Amen!

***"Labour not to be rich: cease from thine own wisdom." (Proverbs 23:4)***

***"And the cares of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches, and the lust for things entering in, choke the word, and it becometh unfruitful."  
(Mark 4: 19)***

***"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 treasure 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." (Matthew 6:19-21)***

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