

No Other Gospel Part 1

The Gospel of Christ vs. the Prosperity Gospel

Mosaic Rockford - Dave Spooner – July 16th, 2017

Intro:

- Connection from last week – letter to the church in Laodicea – where the people became just like the people around them, and in this case the people around them were rich and prosperous and needed nothing.
- Christ’s assessment of this church was that they were “wretched, pitiable, poor, blind, and naked” and they needed to gain from Him the things that really mattered: Faith that comes through suffering, character that comes from new life, and vision that sees through his eyes.
- This sets the stage for our focus for this week and the next where we are looking at the gospel of Christ vs. our modern day “prosperity gospel”.
- The prosperity gospel is a very serious theological abomination and philosophical distortion that has crept into the church and is being proclaimed to the countries of the world. Prosperity theology is one of America’s biggest exports; people are being destroyed by it, Christians are being weakened by it, God is being dishonored and misrepresented by it, souls are perishing because of it. Prosperity theology provides a false hope, presents a failed message, and proclaims a false gospel.
- We are going to talk about this because:
 - Because of responsibility. We have a responsibility to God and His Word, I have a responsibility to you.
 - Because of relationship. I have a relationship and love of God, and I have a relationship and love for you and the people of the world.
- The apostle Paul during his time and ministry said this:

Gal 1:6-9 ESV

I am astonished that you are so quickly deserting him who called you in the grace of Christ and are turning to a different gospel— 7 not that there is another one, but there are some who trouble you and want to distort the gospel of Christ. 8 But even if we or an angel from heaven should preach to you a gospel contrary to the one we preached to you, let him be accursed. 9 As we have said before, so now I say again: If anyone is preaching to you a gospel contrary to the one you received, let him be accursed.

- There are false gospels and false prophets that distort the Gospel of Christ, and we are prone to quickly desert Christ and His Grace and His Gospel and follow them, because we don’t know the scriptures, and their message strongly appeals to our flesh.
- What does scripture have to say about false gospels and false prophets

False gospels and false prophets

- Watch out for them

Matt 7:15-16 NIV

Watch out for false prophets. They come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ferocious wolves. 16 By their fruit you will recognize them.

- Be alert for them

Acts 20:29-31a ESV

I know that after my departure fierce wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock; 30 and from among your own selves will arise men speaking twisted things, to draw away the disciples after them. 31 Therefore be alert

- Avoid them

Rom 16:17-19 ESV

I appeal to you, brothers, to watch out for those who cause divisions and create obstacles contrary to the doctrine that you have been taught; avoid them. 18 For such persons do not serve our Lord Christ, but their own appetites, and by smooth talk and flattery they deceive the hearts of the naive.

- Have nothing to do with them

2 Tim 3:1-5 NIV

But mark this: There will be terrible times in the last days. 2 People will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boastful, proud, abusive, disobedient to their parents, ungrateful, unholy, 3 without love, unforgiving, slanderous, without self-control, brutal, not lovers of the good, 4 treacherous, rash, conceited, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God— 5 having a form of godliness but denying its power. Have nothing to do with them.

- Do not partner with them

Eph 5:5-7 NIV

No immoral, impure or greedy person — such a man is an idolater — has any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God. 6 Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of such things God's wrath comes on those who are disobedient. 7 Therefore do not be partners with them.

- Expose them

Eph 5:8-12 NIV

For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Live as children of light 9 (for the fruit of the light consists in all goodness, righteousness and truth) 10 and find out what pleases the Lord. 11 Have nothing to do with the fruitless deeds of darkness, but rather expose them.

The message of the prosperity gospel

- Definition of the prosperity gospel

What is the prosperity gospel? It is a 'gospel' claiming freedom from sickness, poverty, and all suffering based on Christ's death on the cross. Promising material, physical, and visible blessings for all who would embrace it, the prosperity gospel insists that God's Will is for all His children to prosper here and now.

(*PROSPERITY? Seeking the True Gospel* by Michael Otieno Maura, Conrad Mbewe, Ken Mbugua, John Piper, Wayne Grudem)

The prosperity gospel (also known as the “health and wealth gospel” or by its most popular brand, the “Word of Faith” movement) is a perversion of the gospel of Jesus that claims that God rewards increases in faith with increases in health and/or wealth. As Stephen Hunt explains,

In the forefront is the doctrine of the assurance of “divine” physical health and prosperity through faith. In short, this means that “health and wealth” are the automatic divine right of all Bible-believing Christians and may be procreated by faith as part of the package of salvation, since the Atonement of Christ includes not just the removal of sin, but also the removal of sickness and poverty.

<https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/article/what-you-should-know-about-the-prosperity-gospel>

- *Five theological errors of the prosperity gospel*

1. **The Abrahamic covenant is a means to material entitlement.**

Gen 12:2-3 ESV

And I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing. ³ I will bless those who bless you, and him who dishonors you I will curse, and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed."

- The prosperity gospel teaches that the primary purpose of the Abrahamic covenant was for God to bless Abraham materially. Since believers are now Abraham’s spiritual children, we have inherited these financial blessings. As Kenneth Copeland wrote in his book *The Laws of Prosperity*, “Since God’s covenant has been established and prosperity is a provision of this covenant, you need to realize that prosperity belongs to you now!”
- To support this claim, prosperity teachers appeal to Galatians 3:14, which reads in context

Gal 3:13-14 ESV

Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us—for it is written, "Cursed is everyone who is hanged on a tree"— ¹⁴ so that in Christ Jesus the blessing of Abraham might come to the Gentiles, so that we might receive the promised Spirit through faith.

- Paul is clearly reminding the Galatians of the spiritual blessing of salvation, not the material blessing of wealth.
2. **Jesus’s atonement extends to the “sin” of material poverty and provides physical healing.**
- The prosperity gospel claims that “both physical healing and financial prosperity have been provided for in the atonement.” Kenneth Copeland preaches that “the basic principle of the Christian life is to know that God put our sin, sickness, disease, sorrow, grief, and poverty on Jesus at Calvary.”
 - They get this from a misconception of the life of Jesus. For example, teacher John Avanzini proclaimed on a TBN program, Jesus had “a nice house,” “a big house,” “Jesus was handling big money,” and he even “wore designer clothes.”

- They get this from a faulty view of the atonement by misinterpreting

Isa 53:4-6 ESV

Surely he has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows; yet we esteemed him stricken, smitten by God, and afflicted. 5 But he was wounded for our transgressions; he was crushed for our iniquities; upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace, and with his stripes we are healed. 6 All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all.

- Why did Christ suffer and die? The verse clearly explains that He died for our transgressions and iniquities—our sins. If He died for our sins, then what is the nature of the healing that His death brings? The clear meaning of the text is that we have been healed of our sinful guilt by Christ's sacrifice.

1 Peter 2:19-24 ESV

For this is a gracious thing, when, mindful of God, one endures sorrows while suffering unjustly. 20 For what credit is it if, when you sin and are beaten for it, you endure? But if when you do good and suffer for it you endure, this is a gracious thing in the sight of God. 21 For to this you have been called, because Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example, so that you might follow in his steps. 22 He committed no sin, neither was deceit found in his mouth. 23 When he was reviled, he did not revile in return; when he suffered, he did not threaten, but continued entrusting himself to him who judges justly. 24 He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, that we might die to sin and live to righteousness. By his wounds you have been healed.

- Dying to sin and living in righteousness; that is the eternal and amazing healing that Christ's sacrifice won for us.
- Over-extended Eschatology

Rom 8:18-25 ESV

For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us. 19 For the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the sons of God. 20 For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of him who subjected it, in hope 21 that the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to decay and obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God. 22 For we know that the whole creation has been groaning together in the pains of childbirth until now. 23 And not only the creation, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies. 24 For in this hope we were saved. Now hope that is seen is not hope. For who hopes for what he sees? 25 But if we hope for what we do not see, we wait for it with patience.

- Rev. 21 and 22
- Kingdom come – in the hearts of men – already / not yet. The benefits of Christ's work are not all enjoyed on this earth.

They get this from a faulty view of the atonement by misinterpreting 2 Corinthians 8:9, which reads,

2 Corinthians 8:9 NIV

For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that you through his poverty might become rich.”

- While a shallow reading of this verse may lead one to believe Paul was teaching about an increase in material wealth, a contextual reading reveals he was actually teaching the exact opposite principle. Indeed, Paul was teaching the Corinthians that since Christ accomplished so much for them through the atonement, they should empty themselves of their riches in service of the Savior. This is why just five short verses later Paul would urge the Corinthians to give their wealth away to their needy brothers, writing “that now at this time your abundance may supply their lack” (2 Cor. 8:14).

Questions for the ride home:

1. What are some things you learned today?
2. How have you seen the “prosperity gospel” effect your life and the lives of others around you?