

Just a few short decades back, we saw the pervasion of a teaching which used to be referred to as “Prosperity Theology,” or simply, “Prosperity.” This teaching was a direct violation of Colossians 3:2, which tells us to set our affections on things above, not on things on this earth. It, of course, became popular because who wants to accept the idea that life for a true believer in a sin-filled world is hard, if you can go to a church which teaches you how to live in fleshly comfort?

Now, some of you don’t even know what I’m talking about, because prosperity teaching is not as obvious as it used to be; and there is a main reason why this is true. Prosperity teaching has pervaded so deep into the Christian religion that it no longer stands against a background which it contrasts with. Today, prosperity, or some form of the doctrine, is standard in most churches. You may not see it because it has become so blended into what is now “normal” Christian theology that it practically is the theology everything else is based on. All those things that made it stand out have been put in the basement or thrown in the dumpster. One very prominent example is the song books we used to use. We used to sing songs about suffering through this life and about all its heart-ache coupled with how it would be worth it all when we saw Jesus face to face. We used to sing about that glorious day when all the burdens we have been carrying and all the persecution which comes from living this life according to God’s Word, was over. We looked forward to that day we would lay it all down at the foot of God’s throne. We sung about how one day we would exchange it all for a crown-of-life, and that was the true prosperity we sought!

However, most people in church today don’t think that way. In fact, many have been taught that kind of thinking is archaic, and something which has held the church back for many a century. They teach, we have grown into a new light of understanding, which is that God wants all Christians to live in prosperity and success. They tell us that old suffering attitude of the church should be a thing of the past; because once you come to the Lord, you’re a child of the King who owns it all. However, the problem is not teaching that God is the King and we are His children. The problem is that they miss the point: all humans were created by God whether people want to admit it or not. God made this world and everything in it for the use of all men as they see fit, not just those who believe in Him. The problem is also not the teaching that God wants us to prosper or be successful. The problem is what they are interpreting as being



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prosperous and successful. The point they are missing is that the Word tells us when we come out from the world and choose to live for God, old things pass away and all things become new. (II Cor. 5:17) They want us to just keep seeking the old!

Amazingly enough, a few of the old songs do still get sung, but people do not often know what they mean.

They have been so trained to believe and focus on this life that many people believe their trials are about those setbacks and struggles they face while learning how to, and climbing to, the top. Prosperity teaching used to say silly things like, just ask God for a new car and you shall receive it. This is why the teaching has often been referred to as: “Name it and claim it; Blab it and grab it.” The beginnings of this teaching were ridiculous, and far too many people tried it and it simply did not work. Now, many of the people teaching those very first doctrines will also mock the past of this teaching; because even though it failed to pan out, the basic idea got most people’s attention, and that gave false teachers time to grow it into something far more philosophical sounding. The base idea that you can have it all here and heaven too, is a very appealing idea which many people will put great effort into attaining if there is even the slightest hope it could work. So, now we are told there are actually steps and keys to getting what you want instead of just ask and get. This new highbred version of the teaching has allowed many people to, almost unknowingly, plug this great sounding teaching into their belief system without even taking a second thought. Today, Christians understand there are struggles to face and hardships to bear, but they believe they’re all about doing what is necessary to climb out of that economically oppressed, old-fashioned suffering for the things of God, kind of state Christians have been led to believe in the past.

This is also why the fiery preaching of the past is going away, and being replaced by preachers who sound more like motivational speakers! According to them, no longer is living for God about coming to a place of repentance from our sin and growing through the convicting power of the Holy Ghost in our lives and churches. No longer are people taught - nor do they want to hear - that taking up the cross and following Christ takes both hands, which means we must release this world and the things it has to offer. (John 12:25) No longer are we taught that the reward for serving God is knowing God! Today, people have heaped to themselves teachers who will tell them lies instead of the truth, because people have itchy ears which desire to hear physically comfort-

ing words about having their best lives right now in this world. (II Tim. 4:1-4) These teachers have put together clever packages of teachings which tell us God has great things in store if you can only prepare your life in the right way, and gain the right kind of knowledge. We are no longer taught to seek God first and His righteousness in our lives. (Matt. 6:31-34) No longer are we taught to love our neighbors and visit those who are sick and in prison. (Matt. 25:31-46) Instead, we are taught who we should try to live next to and rub elbows with to get ahead in this world. No longer are we taught to give our all, even our very lives, for the sake of telling the truth. (Rev. 12:10-11) No longer are we taught that the world will hate us for what we believe, and the world will even seek to destroy us. (John 15:18-21) No longer are we taught that in the end we may leave this old world like Noah, having only boarded eight people including himself onto the ark he spent decades building. No, today we are taught that if we are suffering, it's only in preparation for some great big spectacular future in ministry; or the only reason we haven't got a big church, or the reason the church we attend is only a couple of families, or less, is because we have failed to prepare or apply the right wisdom keys.

This shows us just one of the many problems this teaching brings. Once we have taken on the idea that God wants us all to prosper greatly, it becomes a symbol for judgment on the part of others. Many Christians think you can tell who is, and who is not, truly following God by who has and who has not. The true believer is made out to be the one who is foolish, while the prosperity teacher sets in his mega church and offers it as a symbol of how right he is. However, the Bible tells us, "To every thing there is a season and a time to every purpose under the heaven;" Ecclesiastes 3:1; and my friends, times are changing!

That upward swing man thought all his ideas were taking him on is not such a long ride as he thought! The economic situation in the world today is grim, and many people are looking to the governments of this world to make it all better again. They are crying for peace and safety, but they do not see the sudden destruction which is coming upon them. (I Thess. 5:3) This is not a simple "slump" we are in. What it really is, is just a matter-of-fact. We live in a time when many people of the world are over consuming at an alarming rate, and even going into big debt to do it. The Bible tells us it's not a healthy lifestyle, nor is it sustainable. (Luke 12:15-21) Yet all the government seems to be able to talk about is getting the "credit market" going again so people can go right back to that lifestyle. We also hear the word "bailout" a lot

these days, and what most of that is referring to is the bailing out of the very companies and people who have been irresponsible in the first place. What we are seeing is a total lack of exactly what the Bible tells us we must have.

Now, I'm not trying to be glum and discouraging, but the truth is that many people have and will lose jobs, homes, and many other things of this life. The reason teachers such as myself have held strong against all the prosperity teaching which has been pushed at Christians over the years, is because these times come. It's just the reality of why God must bring this world to an end someday. Evil men and the choices they choose to make will continually bring suffering and pain, in spite of those times when it seems everything is going great. Even when times are "good," there are many many personal stories of crisis. Don't think because you've lost your job or home recently that these things only happen in an "economic crisis." Every year people lose jobs and have trouble finding new ones. Every year people have trouble making ends meet; and whether this happens to just a few or a whole lot of people all at once, the truth is still the same. When you lose a job, a home, that new car you just bought, that is what you have lost; and it can happen to anyone for a number of reasons.

I can't count the number of people I have dealt with over the years who have been deeply disturbed when they got sick or fell on tough times because they thought somehow they had failed to meet some formula the Bible asked of them. They come seeking the answer to, "What did I do wrong that I'm not prospering?" or "What did I do to deserve this?" The truth of the matter is that God is not in the business of prospering us just because we serve Him. God is in the business of helping us find and stay in a place of repentance from the things of this world. It's His desire that we not be distracted by the things of this life so we can focus on growing our relationship with Him. (Luke 18:18-27) This is not to say we will not at times be comfortable, or that God wants us to be miserable all the time. However, time moves forward, and those who are focused on the things of this world put great stock in whether they see what they feel is progress or not. This progress is measured by what they have, what they feel they have built, and/or how comfortable they are day by day; but this is not what a true believer in God should be focused on. Wisdom is not finding fortune, nor is the symbol of wisdom having fortune. Wisdom is knowing the Word of God; and it tells us, "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 this

present world; Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ; Who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works." Titus 2:11-14

I'm deeply concerned that there are so many people in hard times these days that we are going to see a falling away from God in a way which we have never seen before. It's bad enough that the church has taught so many false perceptions, that numerous people set in the pew for years and never truly find a walk with God; but now many of those people will come to the conclusion that God has left them, or worse, that God's Word is a lie! If we are taught that God's Word tells us living for Him brings prosperity and physical comfort, there can be no other logical conclusion to our - fall on tough times - than that God is not telling us the truth, or that we have failed no matter how hard we have tried. This is the draining of hope in God and His power to save us. All this is why it is so important that we read the Word for ourselves, and not just let others - no matter who they are - tell us what it says.

Paul says in Romans 3:4 to let God be true, but every man a liar. This is because of this simple fact: If we take the word of a man and he is wrong, then when it is proven he is wrong, we doubt God. When we choose to doubt God, we lose the true strength we need to walk this life! Losing our trust in God is something - now more than ever - we cannot afford to do. This is why there always used to be a surge in church attendance when tough times came. People understood that when times got tough and they lost the comforts of life, God was the only thing which was true! They understood that what they had been focused on was the lie of a temporal life's gain. They had believed this life and the pleasures of sin for a season was what had value, and they realized what a wrong thought pattern that was to have. (Heb. 11:24-26) In repenting of the things of this world, they turned from death unto life. However, where will people turn in a world where even the church teaches that things of this world, even money itself, is a gage for whether you are truly serving God?

It has long been true that the greatest threat to America, and any country in this world, is the dust on the family and/or personal Bible, or the lack of one at all. However, this is true in these times more than ever before! So, if you are wondering what you should do in this time of trouble, which will likely only get worse, at least for a time, the answer is to dust off that Bible, crack it open and begin to read God's Words for yourself. Step into the Bible with the belief that God is true and every

man is a liar. What you will find is that men will lie to you, often for their own personal gain; but God loves you and will never leave you nor forsake you. (Heb. 13:5) What you will find is that God has made this life, which man has corrupted with sin, a temporary experience; so we do not have to worry about all which surrounds us. (Gen. 3:22-24) We can simply worry about our walk with Him and growing in His righteousness. This is why Matthew 6:33 tells us to seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and then all these things shall be added unto you. Now, you may have heard many teachers teach that means prosperity. However, you will find by reading Matthew chapter 6 for yourself that the previous verses dispute that claim. Jesus told us to consider the lillies of the field and the birds of the air. He points out that they toil not, neither do they sow, yet they have what they need. (Matt. 6:25-32) If you take the time to follow the instruction of Jesus, you will find the birds do not have cars or fancy houses. The lillies do not even have a shelter from the rain. Why? Because they do not need those things!

The natural things God created, live the life they have been given. They do not worry about building a Tower of Babel. (Gen. 11:1-4) They do not worry about overcoming God and His plan for their life. They simply live the life cycles they were created to live, and that is what God is asking of us. Does that mean we will never build anything or have anything which we cannot find growing or lying around? No, but our focus should not be on how big or how fast we can make or build. Our focus should not be on how much we have obtained, or compare that to what others have. (Ex. 20:17) We must choose to walk humbly before God, asking for His will to be done in our lives, and accepting the life our walk with God brings. (Phil. 4:11)

As humans, we must understand the scripture where Job talks about the hope of a tree. If it's cut down or withers, there is a possibility it will sprout again. (Job 14:7-12) However, man does not have this hope. Why? Because while man's fleshly form, which can enjoy all the things of this life, will return to the ground, the hope and opportunity given by God to man is the chance to live on, not just grow again here on this earth. We must understand that is the true value in human existence. What sets us apart from the birds of the air and the lilies of the field is not the fact man can build bigger castles in the sand, but that we can use this world as preparation for the next. We can turn from building temporal things and worrying about temporal things because this world of temporal things is not the only hope for existence we have. Everything in this life, and world, will turn to dust.

Truly from dust it is all made and to dust it shall return. (Psa. 103:13-16, Rev. 21:1)

If you believe the blessings of God are money and things, then you are choosing sand, and that choice will only distract you from the things God truly desires to give you. In spite of how great your life is going, or how bad life is going at the time, the question we all must ask ourselves is, do we believe that God has something more than what this life has to offer? We can see what this life has to offer, and some of it looks pretty good! However, we are constantly being given the opportunity to realize that with many good things of this life comes many bad things. This is why people who had good jobs or great financial packages, which have now been lost, are feeling so doomed. You can have this world by the tail one day, and the next, you're staring at the end of the tiger where the teeth live!

What God desires to give us is not more stress and pain which comes with seeking the sand. What God wants to give us is a life with Him which will never fade, which will never grow old, which will never be affected by an economic down-turn. This is why God tells us in His Word not to set our minds on things of this earth, but to set our minds on the things of God. (Rom. 8:5-6) He tells us, "Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal: but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal: For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also." Matthew 6:19-21 These are the truths which should guide our lives.

It does not matter what man has created or what kind of system man creates in the coming years, all God is asking of men is that they do justly, love mercy, and to walk humbly with Him! (Micah 6:8) Even this is going to be harder for people today than it has for people in the past, because humility is something the world seems to have lost. Sure, there are many people who are victims of the circumstances, and with the way things are going, our human governments are sure to spread that even further. However, we should all have the humility to stop and take a look at how we are living; because walking humbly before our God is a personal thing, which the company you work(ed) for, your mortgage company, your bank or your government has nothing to do with. There may be a lot of laws governing the land in which you live, and there may be little to nothing many of us can do to change those laws; but on a personal level, God has not put on us

more than we can bear. (I Cor. 10:13) God sent His Son Jesus, not so we could live irresponsibly, but righteously!

So, open your Bible for yourself, and don't be fooled into reading one of the new interpretations of the Bible which attempt to confirm the false teachings of this modern day. Don't let false teachers and nay sayers tell you you're not smart enough to understand a true translation, or that reading the Bible from cover to cover will overwhelm you. Open your Bible to Genesis chapter 1 verse 1, and read right on through to the amen of Revelation. When you get done, do it again and again. The reason why so many so called ministers will tell you the Bible, or a true translation of it, is too hard for you to grasp is that long ago they rejected the very thing which is necessary for understanding the Scripture. That is why they teach so many wrong things themselves. The only thing you need to grasp when you open the Word of God to the very first verse and begin to read, even if you have never done it before or never had the Bible taught to you before in any way, is the knowledge that only the Holy Ghost can truly bring understanding to your mind and heart - period! (James 1:5)

Since the days of Cain and Abel, the world has never lacked for men who, because of their jealousy, refuse to learn from observing the things of God, and are instead only driven by self-desire to be the ones in the spotlight. Stop sending money to that televangelist - or so called ministry - who tells you that sending them money is the seed of faith. The love of money is the root of all evil, and Jesus said you cannot serve God and mammon. (I Tim. 6:10, Matt. 6:24) One of the qualifications for ministry, according to the New Testament, is that a man not be greedy of filthy lucre. (I Tim. 3:1-13, Titus 1:5-9) One of the last things which makes sense according to the Word of God, is giving money to a minister who talks a lot about money.

This is the kind of true wisdom which you will receive if you are willing to pick up the Word and read it for yourself. If you ask, you will receive; if you knock, the doors will be opened; and if you seek, you shall find. There are many things out there which will try to lead you away from God by telling you the things of this temporal life are what God wants you to have; but don't believe them. God wants to be personal in your life no matter what the world's current circumstances may be - and that's the truth. The rest is just one big castle in the sand! (Matt. 7) ✍