

Synthetic Seeds

Implications of the Prosperity Gospel



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Introduction

I never imagined that I'll one day spend so much time protecting the truth against people whom many of us would consider Christians. My desire was to expound the teaching of God's Word to many in the body of Christ and proclaim the truth against heresies and growing atheism in our generation. It is a sad sight however, for the sake of preserving the faith of our children, friends, and fellow believers, error must be pointed out even if it is found amongst those proclaiming to be Christians. However, my criticism in this paper is not a hearsay, I came out of a church that is 100% a prosperity preaching and I've been involved in senior leadership.

The subject of the Prosperity Gospel (PG) can never be written exhaustively in a small article as this however, whatever truth we can lay hold to warn the people of God, even a small paper is worth it. We need to look at the effects of this heresy if we are going to draw fair conclusions about its unbiblical teachings. The sure way in which we can determine whether a movement is of God is to see if its teachings are representative or in line with the teaching of Scripture.

The Lord Jesus Christ having foreseen the terrible times in which we will live said that His disciples should:

Beware of the false teachers – men who come to you in sheep's fleeces, but beneath that disguise they are ravenous wolves. By their fruits you will easily recognize them. Are grapes gathered from thorns or figs from brambles? Just so every good tree produces good fruit, but a poisonous tree produces bad fruit. A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, nor a poisonous tree good fruit.¹

¹ Matthew 7:15-18, Weymouth's New Testament (WNT)

The PG besides many other heresies is one of the fast growing (numerically speaking) in propagating heretic teachings that are not found in the Word of God. The powerful influence of the media is quite clear, as many of its proponents now use personal Television networks and publishing houses to propagate their man-made doctrines. The seed they sow through their preaching is not the Word of God but their own fabrications, which appear to model after the teaching of Scripture but totally opposed to the true Gospel.

Many people are tempted to keep quiet about this doctrine's dangerous teachings because of its popular teachers and perhaps the influence they wield worldwide. Others are quiet simply because of the dominant spirit of apathy in the world where people no longer tend to criticize but permit all sorts of views to go unquestioned. Both positions are of serious compromise to the true Gospel of Jesus Christ, especially when we know the truth but decide to keep quiet or simply agree to accept certain views just for the sake of maintaining "peace."

As we proceed we will take time together pointing out the errors of this doctrine and how it is influencing and changing the face of Christianity worldwide. The Prosperity Gospel is sowing of heretic seeds which are producing tares rather than wheat, drawing the children of hell into the congregations of the people of God and bringing the world into the church of Christ. It is making the sinners twice sons of hell, driving the believer to the materialism that characterizes the world today, and abuses the teaching of Scripture to advance false doctrines. With the growing of the Word of Faith Movement we see the fulfillment of Paul's prophecy in his writing to Timothy that:

...in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits and teachings of demons, speaking lies in

*hypocrisy, being seared in their own conscience.*²

It is a movement that is gathering people who many of them are haters of sound Biblical doctrines and love to hear what their hearts desire. Since these people at heart may not be truly converted "the time will be when they will not endure sound doctrine, but they will heap up teachers to themselves according to their own lusts, tickling the ear. And they will turn away their ears from the truth and will be turned to myths."³

1. Theological and Philosophical Implications

Unless the falsity of the PG is proven from Scripture many people will still continue to run after this heresy. The PG is propagating a message that is opposed to the whole teaching of God's Word. Regardless of the false biblical claims it makes, it goes about taking advantage of the poor in Africa, Asia and Latin Americas. Many are told that God want them wealthy and healthy if they can only exercise sufficient faith which is often through the giving of money and positive confessions. Instead of people learning to be sacrificial givers to God's work, they are told to bargain through their giving to God and are made promises of receiving staggering blessings (riches and health). There are both philosophical (logical) and theological (biblical doctrinal) reasons of why the PG is false:

It claims that giving results in returns of 30s, 60s and 100s: this follows from the misreading of Mark 4:8. However, commonsense will tell us that this kind of thinking is erroneous. Even non-Christians give with good intentions for humanitarian causes but they don't receive back what they gave in 100s. Giving is often out of personal gratitude to God or having identified a need, not because we want to have something in return, such giving can never be blessed by God. Why don't these preachers give away all their

² I Timothy 4:1-2, Modern King James Version (MKJV)

³ II Timothy 4:3-4, MKJV

luxuries so they will receive staggering harvests? The Macedonian church ought to have been the richest if this is the case.

It claims that God wants every Christian rich and healthy: this poses a serious philosophic and theological problem. 1) If God wants all believers rich and healthy and not every believer is currently not rich or healthy, it would mean that those who claim to be believers but are poor and sick are in reality not Christians. 2) Since God wants every believer rich and healthy and not all who claim to be believers are rich and healthy, it would mean that they are living outside of God's demands i.e. being poor and sick is a sin. 3) Since God wants every Christian rich and healthy but they are at the moment not all rich and healthy, there is something that limits God from executing His desire towards the Christians i.e. there's something that overcomes God and frustrates His plan.

It claims that people should give with expectation: this is the claim that whenever people intend to give to God they should give with expectation or should tell God why they are giving to Him. Thus, there should be a reason attached to the giving and God should execute the desire of the giver. This also causes its own problems: 1) Giving is no longer out of gratitude for God's blessings. 2) When we seem not to have any significant need, we don't have to give because there's nothing we want in return. 3) Since the giving must be with a goal in mind, it nullifies the purpose of giving and this becomes battering and God renders the unavailable goods to the "giver."

It claims that one's gift is investment in heaven's bank: since it's an investment, the giver can always go to withdraw, actually by demanding it because it's their money they've invested. First, God is not seen as the provider of our money but that we work off our tails in order to invest with Him. Second, our giving makes God the borrower i.e. He is indebted to us and must come up with solutions whenever we need them. Third, giving to God's work is a

security jacket against loss of health, properties, jobs, life etc.

It claims that all silver and gold belongs to God, therefore all His children have access to the wealth of this world: This is a common misinterpretation of Haggai 2:8. They overlook the prophetic implications of this passage and read what they want into it. This passage does not promise wealth to those who put their faith in God but rather God admonishing that in the end He'll gather all the treasures unto Himself. We can see this explained better in Revelation 21:10-22. If God wanted to bestow earthly treasures upon the believer He would however, He chose to give treasures that are surpassing that which adorned the temple of Solomon. Misreading this passage of Scripture and not understanding how God intends to bless and dwell amongst the believers is the reason for giving such wrong meanings. While there are believers who have access to the wealth of the world, they are rarities amongst millions of believers who are characterized by lack of the riches of this world.

It claims that cattle on the thousand hills belong to the Lord: Ps. 50:10, is not a promise of what God will give to those who believe in Him. God is stating an argument with the Jews who thought that God depended on them and that without their sacrifices His work could not progress. God speaks to them that He is not depended upon their cattle and other animals and that if He wanted He would get all the animals in the world because they are all His. Now to reason that just because God is the owner of all in the universe is the reason that we should make claim of the earthly riches is to misinterpret the teaching of God's Word. Because this would imply that all Christians should have a portion of everything that is in the world because it all belongs to God so, it should be divided amongst them as their inheritance. I'm working with very committed missionaries and believers who don't even own a goat, people who have given up their all, in order to serve others through the preaching of the Gospel.

It claims that we're blessed with faithful Abraham:

Gal. 3:8-9, can only be best understood given that the context of Paul's message is taken into consideration. If we are to literally take the interpretation of this text concerning the blessings of God through Abraham, there is no material connection but that it refers to God's spiritual blessing. The spiritual blessing is that of justification through faith and that just as God justified Abraham while he was in his heathen state, so shall He also justify many who shall place their trust in Jesus Christ (the seed of Abraham). To take this passage as meaning material blessing is to deliberately overlook the whole message of Paul concerning God's plan of justifying sinners through faith. The fact that those who now trust in Christ are blessed with spiritual blessings in this world and will inherit an eternal kingdom is more than any material blessing can compensate.

It claims that the Patriarchs were all materially blessed because of their uprightness:

there is no denial to that the patriarchs were rich materially. However, that doesn't not serve as sufficient reason to make their wealth as the ground upon which believers ought to be rich. How did they become rich? Is the question. Some got rich through hard work, some through deceit (Jacob), some through inheritance, and others because they were rulers (David) etc. While God worked with the patriarchs in such a way as a means of displaying His presence with them, we see a total change in the New Testament of how God reveals His presence in the church. The New Testament reveals to us that God has blessed us with spiritual blessings that surpass the material wealth that the patriarchs had. This blessing is God's own presence in the believers through the indwelling power of the Holy Spirit. The fact that God's blessings are spiritual doesn't denote the denial of physical blessings, but only that the material blessings are not God's priority to the believer nor are they requirements for the believer.

All of the above mentioned claims as reasons of why Christians ought to be rich according to the PG are all false and totally removed from truthful teaching of Scripture. The

Gospel is a call to death both physically and economically because of the animosity that the true Gospel brings against those who proclaim it. However, the PG is based on erroneous philosophic and theological assumptions or on irrational speculations which cannot be supported both by common sense and Scripture. This indicates to us of how dangerous this theology is. It gives false hopes to the believer and lures the unbeliever into the church with wrong intentions in mind.

2. Eschatological Implications

But godliness with contentment is great gain. For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out. And having food and raiment let us be therewith content. 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. But thou, O man of God, flee these things; and follow after righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, meekness.⁴

By eschatological implications we mean, how this doctrine of prosperity that is so prevalent in our days is part and parcel of the fulfillment of Scripture concerning end times. One of the things that will dominate the last days is that people will be lovers of pleasures, riches, money, self etc and we can see how the PG is falling into this category. The writing of Paul to Timothy has a double effect or we can say has been dominant throughout the whole of Church existence. So what Satan is doing these days is to capitalize on it with a newer zeal that sounds spiritual enough to draw the attention of Christians because it is being advocated by men and women who seem to have proper ministry

⁴ | Timothy 6:6-11 (KJV)

credentials and are popular. Let us see some of the things the PG will result in our days:

Firstly, it will go against the whole Biblical concept of contentment and encourage greed and materialism. **Secondly**, it'll motivate people to live as though this world is their home and desire to amass material things for themselves. **Thirdly**, it'll motivate people to live with little awareness for God's eternal kingdom as they will be so earthly minded and will have nothing to do with heaven. **Fourthly**, it will have people who are characterized by discontentment with what seem to be basic necessities of life. The discontentment is presented in such disguise that very few will see that it is an ungodly and heretic message. **Fifthly**, it'll create such a craving in people to desire riches even to the point of losing moral judgment just for them to have. **Sixthly**, people will covet after money but will not realize it and even when they turn away from the faith they will think that they are doing exactly what God desires for them (plundering the riches of Egypt). **Seventhly**, they will not pursue after eternal things that will cause them to lead godly lives because their hearts will be so deceived to think that the spiritual things are only meant for heaven i.e. while we live on earth we must pursue the earthly and when we die our spiritual rewards will be ready for us.

Seeing that the doctrine of the PG is exactly that which the sinners would love to hear, we will see an increasing number of sinners filling the so called prosperity churches. With these will come the increasing of evil, sin and despicable wickedness. Then people will begin to wonder that these not supposed to be the houses of worship which have become no different from the world. When this begins to happen we'll begin to understand Jesus' parable of Matthew 13:24-40 of the weeds and the wheat. The PG is one of the signs of our days of how God will judge the wicked, those hypocrites, deceivers and the deceived, who in their hearts were never truly repented but used the cover of godliness as a means to gain their living.

The PG serves to promote the wrath of God with its contaminated message of preaching Another Gospel other than what was delivered to us by the inspired apostles. When the judgment of God is fully come, these people and their followers will appear before Christ but will be turned away by the Master of all creation, the Judge of all judges, and the One whose judgment is just. On that day the Master will look at them as say "I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity." But while we await for that Day of Judgment this is what will be happening in our days:

Popularity will remove the judgment for truthfulness: in our generation the kwaito, rock, pop, reggae and movie stars have become the icons of truthfulness. This blindness has infiltrated the Christian community, where people no longer judge statements and doctrines made by "popular" preachers. Just as might makes right, today we find that if one is popular it means truth. This idolatry of superstars is increasingly blinding the judgment of many and they leave their lives to be dictated by superstars rather than Scripture.

Personal experiences will dictate the meaning of truth: seeing that many of those who advocate the PG have in a way managed to secure great wealth for themselves. Many unknowing people will use these experiences and the measuring rod for truthfulness regardless of all other forces that have contributed to their material successes.

Shallow theological doctrines will be more acceptable: since shallow theology simply goes only to the level of human curiosity it will become so popular because it will agree with many other doctrines that are advocated by the enemies of the true Gospel. We can see an ever growing hatred for theological discussions that challenge our minds, lives, and worship as more and more people want tailor-made sermons or teachings.

Increasing negativity toward criticizing of doctrines: questioning of doctrine is something that is rapidly

vanishing from the church of Christ as we've opened ourselves to hear all kinds of rubbish from the pulpits in the name of God. This is one leading attitude of our days that is hastening the increase of the PG all over the world – very few theologians are ready to face this heresy in its face and tell the world that it's a heresy.

Dear brethren, if we cannot see that the Prosperity Gospel is a sign of end-time judgment – we will leave this error to continue and wreck the faith of many believers. Not doing anything about it is a clear sign that we stand to condone the progress of evil. The judgment of God is being poured out all over the world and men and women who are haters of God are being handed over to the lust of their own hearts because they hate the knowledge of God.

The people of the world because of their deep love for the world are handed over to their lust. Thus, the cup of their wickedness is full to the degree that they can no longer pretend but that the actual intents of their hearts are being revealed. The lovers of money preach their prosperity gospel. The lovers of this life preach divine health and healing. The lovers of the things of this world are preaching materialism. The lovers of worldly power are preaching how to take over government. Surely, they want all that this world can offer and their commitment to Christ is rooted in their getting of what they need to get as much as they can get.

3. Ecclesiological Implication

The church is the body Christ consisting of believers of all nations, tongues and tribes and it is called to hold onto standards that are Christ exalting. However, while the church is in this world there are many evil forces working against it to contaminate its image. This is very evident through the spread of the PG in the Americas, Africa, Europe, Asia, and Australia. It is being spread in the name of Christ and that it is Christianity regardless of the shameful and immoral practices that comes with it. While we know that Christ will preserve His church from being

destroyed – we should not think that it means that heresies will not crawl their way through into it.

The forces of hell are loose against the church in order to weaken her testimony in the eyes of the world to which she is to witness Christ. When we look at tele-evangelists collecting money from crowds all over the world without satiation. When they proclaim a Gospel that elevates the things of this world and has little to do with Christ. When we see the increasing Biblical ignorance amongst those who follow after these teachers and don't see any error with their teachings. When we see millions of people pursuing vanity while thinking that they are in for glorious rewards in heaven. When we see people laboring for money and have made themselves slaves unto the pleasures of this world and simply live by lip confession that they believe in Christ. And the list can go on. They are indications that the church of Christ is in danger and the forces of evil are all raised against her to see nothing else but her destruction.

Those who proclaim the GP are in reality enemies of Christ. For if they knew the true Christ, they would proclaim what He requires. There are many deceivers gone amongst us, they look like one of us because they are dressed like sheep, they move like sheep, however, as time is passing by they can no longer contain the fact that they are wolves. Their true colors are being revealed fast because God need to purify His church i.e. there need to be a distinction between the sheep and the wolves, between the sheep and the goats, between good trees and the bad trees, between the children of heaven and the children of hell etc. This distinction is definitely something positive for the true church however, as long as she lives in this world the effects of these heresies are damaging to her image. Because of the negative results of the GP:

- 1)** The church must take her rightful place and combat this heresy. We must make use of our pulpits, writing skills, debates, newspapers, magazines, television, internet etc to combat this heresy.

- 2) True believers must dissociate themselves (I John 1:11; Eph. 5:11; I Tim. 5:22; Rev. 18:4) and make our positions very clear. These people should be treated like heathens because they preach what is contrary to the teaching of Scripture.
- 3) We need to take the ministry of teaching doctrine serious to raise awareness of the teachings of Scripture.
- 4) We must not be caught up in the increasing spirit of apathy and cease to point out error just in the name of political correctness.
- 5) We must invest our time in the study of Scripture because it is the source of the truth the Christian needs to know.
- 6) We must pray that God through the Holy Spirit will enable us to discern true doctrines from the false.
- 7) We should pray for true believers who are caught up in this deception that God will grant them His grace and rescue them.

The above list of things is not exhaustive but simply serving as a guide.

Conclusion

Church let us wake up to the reality of the damage of the PG doctrines and if you are involved in any of its practices that you will seek repentance. The PG is a reality and is a false doctrine that is influencing the theology of many, however, it is a contaminating theology that is far removed from the true Gospel. It is not God-honoring, but completely in the forefront of promoting what is of this world. It teaches the pursuing of temporary things and minimizes the value of eternal things.

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