

Topic : Dismantling the Myths of the Prosperity Gospel (Part 2)

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The term 'Prosperity Gospel' used today has taken on a meaning to describe a message that is lop-sided, primarily focusing only on:

- i) financial wealth and health (covered last week)
- ii) the love and grace of God largely disregarding other admonitions of scriptures.

Wrong thinking leads to wrong beliefs.

Wrong Thinking #1 - "Age of Grace" means that sins do not carry any consequences.

A. The bible clearly warns that all sins have consequences.

Romans 3:23

for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God ...

Glory of God – this means that it is meant for man to be mighty in spirit, well developed in soul and health.

Romans 6:23

For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Some of the consequences of sin are seen as man having doubts, despondency, depression, discouragement, etc.

B. Believers will suffer for their own sins, errors and mistakes.

1 Peter 2:20a

For what credit is it if, when you are beaten for your faults, you take it patiently?

What are faults? They are sins, weakness, infirmities, foibles, wrong doings. There is no credit to suffer for faults.

1 Peter 4:15

But let none of you suffer as a murderer, a thief, an evildoer, or as a busybody in other people's matters.

Our human nature makes us inquisitive. Sometimes, we cross the line and it becomes gossip or slander and people are hurt.

C. Believers will also suffer by living in this fallen world.

John 16:33

These things I have spoken to you, that in Me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world.

The fallenness of man and works of the evil one results in:

i. All kinds of conflicts between Man.

E.g. Covetousness Robbery Quarrel Murder Envy Hatred etc

In this journey, from time to time, we make mistakes but we need to move on.

ii. Physical death:

(a) Aging Process [affecting life-span]

(b) Sickness and Disease

(c) Corruption and Mortality of the physical body.

iii. Fracture of the physical earth and corruption of the environment.

Romans 8:22

For we know that the whole creation groans and labors with birth pangs together until now.

We have droughts, floods, tsunamis, tornadoes, earthquakes, typhoons, eruptions and extreme weather resulting in hurricanes. There will come a time where the earth will be reconstructed with fire. There will be a new heaven and earth.

Wrong Thinking #2 - We only need to ask God to provide all our needs and we will receive it.

A. This is true but inadequate.

Matthew 6:33

- Seek first His Kingdom and His Righteousness
- His Reign and Rule
- His Word - Instructions
- Laws and Principles of Life

B. We must also activate the laws of sowing and reaping.

Galatians 6:7

Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, that he will also reap.

Of the 100% income, 10% is seed money, the 90% is bread. 10% is to be seed down in the kingdom of God.

Genesis 8:22

While the earth remains, seedtime and harvest, cold and heat, winter and summer, and day and night shall not cease.

This is a law of life placed on earth.

C. We need to apply the biblical exhortation to:

i. Seek God for wisdom (James 1:5)

It's foolishness to borrow money via credit cards. It's foolishness trying to keep up with our peers and to have things that are beyond our ability.

ii. Have integrity (Luke 16:10-12)

iii. Apply what the Holy Spirit draws to our attention (Romans 8:16; 9:1)

Wrong Thinking #3 - We will not face trials and tribulations due to our grace covering.

This is completely not true. In a fallen world, there will be suffering.

A. We live in a fallen world.

Romans 3:23

for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God

All suffering in our lives are trials! If we have no job, we will not have income and we will suffer lack in provision and this will be translated into a trial. Health issues are trials of faith. Believers and unbelievers will be exposed to struggles and ailments in life. The rain falls on the just and the unjust.

B. Both believers and unbelievers will face trials and tribulations due to the fallenness of man.

John 16:33

These things I have spoken to you, that in Me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world.

C. Whenever there is a ground given to sin, the evil one works to steal, kill and destroy - John 10:10a.

1 John 5:18 tells us that the evil one cannot touch the child of God but he may be given a foothold if ground or doorway is given.

Ephesians 2:2

in which you once walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit who now works in the sons of disobedience

Ephesians 4:27 (NIV)

... and do not give the devil a foothold [doorway-ground].

Verse 27 follows a series of admonitions. We are not to let anger continue. By doing so, we give the devil a ground.

D. God is NOT the author, direct, specific, explicit source of all our troubles - sicknesses, earthquakes, flood, etc.

We may have heard other pastors or books that say, "God allows." There are implications and various meanings with making this statement.

Examples:

- i. By saying "God allows," we are implying that He directly and specifically caused a bad thing to happen. The answer to this is "NO". Luke 11:13; James 1:17

God does not engineer evil. A sickness is not a good thing. Flood is not a good thing. Why? It's because lives are lost. As in James 1:17, He is the giver of good and perfect gifts. We use scriptures to verify our experiences and not the other way. A principle must be true. We must go back to the whole weight of scriptures.

- ii. By saying "God allows," we are implying that God endorses it with active approval. The answer is "NO". Ezekiel 33:11; 2 Peter 3:9

God doesn't allow the earthquake. In Ezekiel 33, it says that He has no pleasure in the death of the wicked.

- iii. However, if we say that “God allows” because He knows the outcome according to Laws and Principles of Life that He placed on earth, then the answer is “YES”.

If we choose to jump, the law of gravity will work and God will not unilaterally intervene. God binds Himself to His Word and laws. He can never be accused of being unfair or of being temperamental. In Psalm 139, we see that He is omniscient, omnipotent and omnipresent. He is the God of Romans 8:28 and Gen 50:20.

Romans 8:28

And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose.

Genesis 50:20

But as for you, you meant evil against me; but God meant it for good, in order to bring it about as it is this day, to save many people alive.

How will God intervene? It's when His people pray and earnestly seek Him.

Wrong Thinking #4 - Prosperity from God means mainly material wealth will be given to us when we ask for it.

A. Prosperity from God relates to our whole being of spirit, soul and body.

1 Thessalonians 5:23

Now may the God of peace Himself sanctify you completely; and may your whole spirit, soul, and body be preserved blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.

3 John 2

Beloved, I pray that you may prosper in all things and be in health, just as your soul prospers.

B. In the area of material resources, we are blessed:

- i. means we have more than enough so as to be a blessing to others.
Ephesians 2:10 - blessed to do good works.

For those struggling with health or finances, there is no condemnation.

Hebrew 4:16 exhorts us to go to His throne of grace that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need.

At the throne of grace, we seek wisdom and favor. For some, they are under a 'curse' where everything they touch turns up wrong. They need to deal with some issues and have the favor of God. For those handicapped, we don't condemn, saying, "You are sick." Rather we encourage you to appropriate the grace of God which is sufficient for you. Thus, strengthen the weak hands and feeble knees.

- ii. to the degree we are able to handle the material resources.
 - Matthew 25:14-30; Luke 16:10-12

Our lot in life is not the same. Think the parable of the talents. Money is given according to the ability we can handle; faithful in much, faithful in little.

Wrong Thinking #5 - The OT is not applicable as we live in the NT "Age of Grace".

A. The Death of Christ and His blood shed supersedes the old sacrifices of goats and bulls.

Only the ceremonial laws in the OT were superseded. Today, when we are sick, we don't bring a goat to have it slaughtered.

B. The New Covenant of Grace did not make the Ten Commandments obsolete.

- i. All the moral laws are still valid as they are given by God for men's protection and safety.

In the New Covenant, the 10 commandments are expressed in different light.

E.g. 1 Thess 4:1-6- live holy lives; do not covet your brother's wife. The moral laws are still valid.

- ii. The New Covenant of Grace by the power of the Holy Spirit, enables us to fulfill the Commandments of the law of love.

Matthew 22:37-39

37 Jesus said to him, "You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind." 38 This is the first and great commandment. 39 And the second is like it: 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.'

Can we do the above? Yes. It's not by us but through the power of the indwelling Spirit.

iii. Grace is not lawlessness.

We cannot “commit adultery”, “steal”, “lie”, “covet” under the New Covenant by saying the Ten Commandments are obsolete.

Titus 2:11-12

11 For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men, 12 teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in the present age.

What is godliness? It is to factor God in our considerations, behavior and motivations. The Ten Commandments were not nailed to the cross. Those who said so had misunderstood Colossians 2:14-15. Jesus cancelled the written code—the accusation and condemnation of the evil one against us.

Wrong Thinking #6 - We do not have to keep on asking the Lord for forgiveness. He has already forgiven us forever even for our future sins.

A. This is a difference between provision-availability and appropriation-receiving the forgiveness of God.

Bi. Salvation is available for all mankind but not all will be saved [John 3:16].

Bii. Redemption has been provided for all mankind but not all will be redeemed [1 Corinthians 1:30; Ephesians 1:7].

Biii. Forgiveness is also available for all believers but believers are not “automatically” forgiven.

Biv. Salvation and forgiveness are available on God’s terms.

C. The epistle of 1 John is written to believers.

It is written to “little children”, “young men” and “fathers” – to counter the false teachings of the Gnostics.

- 1 John 2:1, 12-14, 18, 28
- 1 John 3:7, 18
- 1 John 4:4
- 1 John 5:21

D. The 7 “ifs” of 1 John 1-2.

- i. IF we say we have fellowship with Him and walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth (v6).
- ii. But IF we walk in the light as He is the light, we have fellowship with one another and the blood of Jesus Christ cleanses us from all sin (v7) .
- iii. IF we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us (v8).
- iv. IF we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness (v9).
- v. IF we say we have not sinned, we make Him a liar and His Word (truth) is not in us (v10).
- vi. My little children, these things I write to you, so that you may not sin. And IF anyone sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous. And He Himself is the propitiation (lit. mercy seat) for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the sins of the whole world (2:1-2).
- vii. Now by this we know Him IF we keep His commandments ... (v2:3).

Wrong Thinking #7 - Repentance only means “a change of mind”.

A. This is true but inadequate and incomplete.

B. Repentance also includes godly sorrow for sins.

True repentance is spoken of in the following passage:

2 Corinthians 7:9-11

9Now I rejoice, not that you were made sorry, but that your sorrow led to repentance. For you were made sorry in a godly manner, that you might suffer loss from us in nothing. 10For godly sorrow produces repentance leading to salvation, not to be regretted; but the sorrow of the world produces death. 11For observe this very thing, that you sorrowed in a godly manner: What diligence it produced in you, what clearing of yourselves, what indignation, what fear, what vehement desire, what zeal, what vindication! In all things you proved yourselves to be clear in this matter.

C. At times, repentance also include:

- i. Restitution (Numbers 5:7-8; Luke 19:8 - Zacchaeus)

- ii. A change of direction (Luke 15:17-20 - Prodigal Son)
- iii. Definitely a change of lifestyle (John 21 - Peter)

Bottom Line:

Jeremiah 9:24

But let him who glories glory in this, that he understands and knows Me, that I am the LORD, exercising loving-kindness, judgment, and righteousness in the earth. For in these I delight," says the LORD.

One of the fears that SP has with regards to pastoring the church is that of how God is represented. He doesn't want to misrepresent God. What sort of God are we worshipping? Who is God? God is one who exercises loving kindness. He is full of love, compassion and loving-kindness. He is also the God of justice. Thank God we don't get justice the way we deserve lest we die in hell. God is merciful and we receive what we don't deserve.

Romans 11:22

Therefore consider the goodness and severity of God: on those who fell, severity; but toward you, goodness, if you continue in His goodness. Otherwise you also will be cut off. There are believers who have left the faith. In the New Testament, Demas left the faith.

Deuteronomy 30:19 tells us to choose blessings or curse, life or death.

John Bevere conversed with his sons. He told them, "Sons, Mum and Dad love you, not any less even if you make mistakes. But sons, you are responsible for how pleased Mum and Dad are with you."

God loves each of us the same! Nothing can change that! His love is unconditional!

But we are responsible as to how God is pleased with us! God's pleasure in us is not unconditional but based on how we live!

End

Questions for discussion

1) What are some things and applications that you have picked up regarding Wrong Thinking #1 to #3?

2) Share also what you have learn from Wrong Thinking #4 to #6?

3) For Wrong Thinking #7, what is your understanding of the Bible's position on repentance?

4) Share any other things that you have gleaned from the message.

No condemnation, no comparison, no competition but only encouragement...