

The gospel of prosperity is bankrupt

Salvation is achieved through faith, not wealth and the sale of indulgences

Chris Johnson

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In times of economic downturn, it appears the gospel of prosperity is becoming popular in churches across America.

The gospel of prosperity that so many mega churches spew is a feel-good message that people want to hear. This false doctrine teaches that health and wealth are mandates from God to his people. American society eats this up without giving it a second thought. Our culture teaches us we are entitled to blessing after blessing because we have earned it. Some preachers turn around and tell their congregations that, because they follow Christ, they are entitled to immeasurable success in life. The Bible does preach in Luke 11:9 that if you ask, you shall receive. But even the most faithful of Christians can wind up being poor.

This is because the Christian lifestyle is not some happy-go-lucky philosophy. Jesus Christ was a rebellious, impoverished homeless man. Time and again, the Bible talks about how the meek will inherit the kingdom of heaven and how strong-armed rich guys will be judged for their oppression. People in the New Testament sure were not off flaunting their gold Caesar coins, telling their congregations to give them money, because God would return it tenfold. The early Christians actually sold their possessions and gave it to the poor. They got rid of everything they had because they believed God would restore it, not add to a stockpile.

Scripture mentions the rich blessings of God in a believer's life, but I think these are more about spiritual blessings and ultimate fulfillment with life. Jesus is constantly hanging out with the lower classes of society, offering them help and showing them love. These people were the outcasts of societies: the lepers, prostitutes and the evil tax collectors. He gave them deep peace in their hearts when he showed them love and affection.

Knowing that you have a purpose in life, and being able to fulfill that, is worth more than the world's coffers combined. Having a direction in your life, and understanding who God made you to be as a person, is what will bring you real joy, not listening to a preacher talk about how to increase your income. God does not want his children to rely on the world for their needs, but rather he wants his children to rely on him. In doing so, he will bless them with their desires and provide for them.

In Jesus' Sermon on the Mount, he tells us, "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." This certainly is a radical message, especially in today's culture. Fathom for a second hearing a homeless guy on the street tell you this. It would sound absolutely insane, and it did during Christ's day as well. It was a simple, yet loaded, message that gave the poor and oppressed a new hope. They no longer had to focus on the bad things in this life. They had something to look forward to, and it was not health and wealth on earth.

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