

Dodgy Doctrines: The Prosperity Gospel / Word-Faith

At the beginning of May, in the course of his sermon, the visiting speaker at our Sunday service mentioned the Prosperity Gospel. He said:



"There are some people involved in Evangelism who make really false promises ... Any evangelism which takes the line, 'Trust in Jesus, and all will be well' is false. It is deceitful ... Our Saviour is with us and helps us through the problems, but He doesn't take the problems away. He can do; sometimes he does. But we mustn't make that a promise to draw people into the Church under that false pretense.

One of the great scourges in our world today is the Prosperity Gospel ...

Pastors who say, 'Trust in Jesus, and all will be well – oh, and by the way, give me your money', are an absolute plague ... it is critical to ... try to combat this false gospel ... it is tragic to see people who are very poor paying money to these false teachers to pray for them; pastors enriching themselves at the expense of poor people. These false preachers are drawing people in with this belief – that if we trust in Christ, then all will be well ... But the Prosperity Gospel is a lie. And if we come across it, we have to fight it" [Paul Chandler, *New Life in Zaraheth*, FBC Zoom Service, 2nd May 2021].

Strong words! But are they justified?...

Quickie Overview of the Roots of Prosperity/Word-Faith

Also called Word-Faith (WoF), Health and Wealth, Name-It-and-Claim-It, or Seed-Faith, the Prosperity Gospel is more popular in the US than in the UK, but there are some churches in the UK which promote the teachings of the men and women known as the 'Money Preachers'.

The Prosperity Gospel or Word-Faith movement is not rooted in Scripture, but in the metaphysical cults: Christian Science, New Thought, Mind-Over-Matter, Transcendentalism, and Theosophy. Prominent names associated with these philosophies were Phineas P. Quimby, Ralph Waldo Emerson, and Mary Baker Eddy; all of whose thinking greatly influenced E.W. Kenyon - considered the 'father' of the Prosperity Gospel. E.W. Kenyon then passed their doctrines down to some of the more well-known proponents of the Word-Faith movement, such as Kenneth Hagin, Kenneth Copeland, Benny Hinn, Paul Crouch, and many others.



Health and Wealth

The best-known teachings of the Prosperity Gospel are that we can 'claim' health and wealth, simply by 'confessing' them:

- **"What I confess, I possess"** [E.W. Kenyon],
- **"We can have what we say ... I don't believe in sickness"** [Kenneth Hagin],
- **"And say this ... money come out to me now!"** [Kenneth Copeland],
- **"There will be no sickness for the saint of God"** [Benny Hinn],
- **"[W]e can lay claim to the promise of financial prosperity"** [Creflo Dollar],
- **"We don't allow sickness in our home"** [Fred Price],
- **"Jesus was handling big money"** [John Avanzini],
- **"Christians need never be sick"** [T.L. Osborn],
- **"Confession brings possession"** [Marilyn Hickey],
- **"Use your words to change the situation"** [Joel Osteen].

“One of the central Word-Faith doctrines is that physical healing, as well as salvation was provided for in the atonement of the Lord Jesus. Consequently, most Word-Faith teachers use the part-verse ‘with His stripes we are healed’ as proof that, through the Lord’s sufferings, none of us ever need experience any illness ... and [that] if we remain sick it is because we are failing to positively confess our healing.”

In reality, we should obey James 5:14, whilst recognizing the inescapable fact that we all become sick at times, and we will all eventually die. Likewise, few of the Lord’s disciples were rich, and this has been so for most Christians down the centuries. It is true that the Lord does financially prosper some of His servants, that they may in turn bless others, but in the main, the Bible’s focus is on us trusting the Lord, not our wealth, for our daily bread.

“Faith is a Force”

Underlying the Prosperity Gospel and Word-Faith theology is the belief that:

“Faith is a force and words activate the force ... Proponents believe they can use words to manipulate the faith-force, and thus actually create what they believe Scripture promises (health, wealth). Laws supposedly governing the faith-force are said to operate independently of God’s sovereign will – God Himself being subject to the ‘laws’ of faith”

But, according to the Bible, we exercise true faith when we simply trust what God says in His Perfect Word. He doesn’t promise us ‘health or wealth’ in this life, but He does promise us everlasting life if we believe that Christ died to save us from sin.



“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” (1 Timothy 1:6-11)

“What we can say is that it is God’s will to give us spiritual wholeness and holiness, and it is His plan to prepare all Christians for eternity with Him, and if physical healing is necessary to that preparation, then He will heal us ... God’s primary purpose for us, even when we are ill, is to sanctify us and use us to help build His Kingdom. If we are walking closely with God and know we are being obedient to Him yet He still chooses not to heal us physically in this life, we may not fully know the reason why until we go to be with Him. But we do know that He is always in control and that ‘all things work together for good to them that love God’ (Romans 8:28).”

For the source references for all the quotes in this article, and for a number of other articles and books discussing PG/WoF teachings, please see: <https://www.bayith.org/WordFaith.htm>

*May the Lord help us always to trust in His good and perfect will for us in all things,
Elizabeth McDonald
29 July 2021*

(A slightly different version of this item first appeared in the Aug-Oct 2021 edition of the Frindsbury Baptist Church Magazine)