

## Bob Goodman - The Prosperity Gospel

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The prosperity gospel. You know, I know what you're thinking as soon as I say those words or as soon as you heard that title, because it has a really negative connotation, doesn't it? You know, in today's world, there is a prosperity gospel. It's also called prosperity theology, and it's the fastest growing conservative movement in Christendom.

Kind of surprised me. It teaches that wealth is an indicator of God's grace and favor, and it's often associated with Pentecostalism, evangelism, charismatic Christianity, and when we see a lot of these mega churches, that's usually an integral part of their message, you know, for the poor, and I wasn't aware of this until I researched it, but this is not just a US Trend.

This is in Central America, South America, really around the world, and for the poor, it offers the hope of getting out of poverty. Sounds pretty good, doesn't stresses tithing, and also often going well beyond that.

And here's the kicker. It affirms religious legitimacy of wealth accumulation.

So you can be a good Christian and you can increase and accumulate massive amounts of wealth.

And finally, it associates financial success with moral soundness. Wow, something sounds fundamentally wrong here to me because we all know that the rich and powerful are also often the most morally corrupt.

You know, in the Bible, this is termed as teaching gain is godliness. Kind of being frank here today and here when I. When we said prosperity gospel, you probably thought of one or more of these individuals. These are charismatic speakers. They have wonderful messages, but the message is mixed and the message is corrupt.

You know, what is the prosperity gospel given to us in the Bible? That's the question. You know, Jesus spoke frequently of spiritual wealth, but we all realize there's a difference between spiritual wealth and financial wealth, and when he did speak of material wealth, it was often a cautionary tale. Cautionary beware.

So when he talked about material wealth, there was a lot of caveats that this could be a bad thing and this could be a stumbling block, because God knows human nature.

Our theme scripture kind of, for this part of this talk is first Timothy 6, 5, where at the end of this it says they suppose that gain is godliness, and when we cut to the chase on the message, even if there's a lot of other really good message in there, they're saying gain is godliness, and we're warned about this in First Timothy. We'll look at that a little bit. You know, the Lord tells us who the true church is.

The church of the living God, the pillar and ground. Of truth, and that's the church we seek for, not for this church or that church. It's a universal church worldwide.

I was reminded in July 8, Man, I thought this was a wonderful comment that kind of puts things in perspective. The large church, the only one to which the name ecclesia body or church is properly applicable, is so insignificant, so unostentatious and comparatively poor in this world's riches that it is not recognized nor recognizable. From a worldly standpoint, the true church is going to be

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invisible. Yeah, you can find them, but they're not out there on the marquee, are they? It is neither man made nor man ruled.

Important point. When you think about those seven that we put up, you identify the name, not the church.

It is neither man made nor man ruled, nor are its members enrolled on the earth, but in heaven. The focus is spiritual.

You know, in James 1:14, we have a really cautionary warning here. Pay attention. Temptation comes from our own desires. We all have desires whether we want them or not. So we've got to be cautious about it, right?

Which entice us and drag us away if we allow them. These desires give birth to sinful actions, and when sin is allowed to grow, it gives birth to death. So don't be misled. Really, in a nutshell, this is saying the new creature mind needs to be in charge.

If the flesh is in charge, we need adult leadership. Let the new creature be the guide, be the filter, be the ultimate thing that controls our actions. So once again, let's look at these preachers. Now, is wealth in itself bad? No.

But in every one of these cases, they made their million millions preaching the gospel.

What do they have in common? Well, there's a lot of scandals. So this is a list of all the scandals of these seven individuals.

When you look at the list, it looks more like a crime family than a church family, doesn't it? This is the record. Some of these have been criminally indicted in a court of law, found guilty by their peers. This is their legacy.

They are motivated not by love, but by greed.

Paul warns us about false teachers, for such are false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into apostles of Christ, and so what this is saying is that there will be wonderful, powerful, charismatic, and seemingly good Christian ministers that are not apostles or ministers of life.

And he frames this up, and no marvel for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light. Therefore, it is no great thing if his ministers also be transformed as ministers of righteousness whose end shall be according to their works.

So if Satan can transform himself into an angel of light. He's warning us that there will be those that will follow. God knows the end from the beginning. He says, I'm going to warn you there's going to be wolves in sheep's clothing out there, and not only that, but their message is going to be deceitful as well.

And don't be surprised. Satan was the very first and the tradition continues. So don't be surprised, but be forewarned and be cautious. Satan will twist the gospel. That's the warning, and that's what we see if we look at the record of these individuals.

You know, we have further warnings in First Timothy, chapter six.

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In verses three through five, we have warnings about false teachers and the love of money. In six through 10, we have the cautionary warnings about wealth. So it's saying, be careful. Some of you are wealthy, you know, by the world's standards, we're all wealthy here in the United States. So he's going to give us cautionary tales and we should say, okay, I need to pay attention to this.

Paul's warning. First of all, it ends with supposing that gain is godliness. But then if we go back up above, it lists all the characteristics, and by the way, there is an association here. So if we look at these individuals, we can see this.

If any man teaches otherwise and consent not to the doctrine which is according to godliness, which he just reviewed now he's going to give us the characteristics of those false ministers. He is proud, knowing nothing, but dotting about questions and strife of words, wherein cometh envy, strife, railings, evil surmisings, perverse disputings of men of corrupt minds and destitute of the truth, supposing that gain is godliness. So if you want to know what we're being told about these individuals, this is the record. I submit this in court. This is their indictment.

What does he say from such withdraw thyself, don't get suckered in, don't get swindled, don't get pulled in. I've listened to some of these preachers. They are grand orators. They are eloquent. They have a wonderful message that's mixed with Bible truth.

But don't get sucked in from such withdraw thyself, don't get pulled into this. This is the advice about false teachers.

You know, we have further warnings about wealth because we are one of the wealthiest nations on earth.

We, I dare say, don't worry about what we're going to eat tomorrow or how we're going to get to work, and there are many countries in the world where they don't know what they're going to eat tomorrow. So be clear. We are the Laodicean church and we have a lot of wealth, for we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out, and having food and raiment, let us therein be content.

You know, I was up in southern Alabama with some of the friends up there and some relatives that were not in the truth, and one of those individuals had a saying that I thought was just so wonderful that addresses this very point. He said, the Lord has taken care of all of my needs and a goodly number of my wants.

That's a powerful statement, isn't it? You know, we kind of mix the two together, my wants and my needs. But in fact, the Lord does provide.

But they that fall, they will. 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. So it says, if you're getting immersed in these wants, and we've seen it with the wealthy, one house is not enough. Two houses is not enough. Oh, I have to have one on the continent.

Oh, I need a ship. I need a plane. For the love of money is the root of all evil, which some have coveted after they have erred from the faith and pierced themselves through with many sorrows. But thou, O man of God, flee from these things. Now, it does not say that money is evil.

It says, the love of money is evil. There is a saying, money is a good servant, but a terrible master, and that's the difference. Is your money a tool for doing the things that you need to do for the work

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and the truth? Or is it your master?

Is it driving you so that you always need a little more? That's the difference. The love of money is the problem.

They're really preaching not a gospel of prosperity, but a gospel of greed, and this is not prosperity. We're going to look at what prosperity is. Money is not prosperity. You know, I know in business we solve all problems with money.

I've sat in executive meetings where they would say, how much is that going to cost? Can we allocate it from our budget? We're going to solve that problem. That's not prosperity. Money is not prosperity.

But that's the mindset that we have here. He who dies with the most toys, wins. You know, that's kind of the prevailing thought amongst the world. But we realize, as the scripture we just read said, you didn't have anything when you came into the world and guess what you got? You're not going to take it with you when you go out, only your character.

So this is really. We're going to label it like it is. It's the gospel of greed, and it's all about scarcity. It's all about greed.

So one of these evangelists will say, I need you to contribute so God can do this wonderful work and my bank account can get bigger. It's all about scarcity. I need more money. You give it to me, and when we look at scarcity, there's a balance here.

You can't see the details, but basically it says, you know, we have limited resources, land, capital, entrepreneurship and labor and time as well.

And then on the other side of the scale, I'll put it in larger print. Virtually unlimited human wants or desires. So we got a problem here. Now I'll pose a question. Is there enough accumulated wealth in the world today to feed every man, woman and child and have them at least have a subsistence level of being of existence?

And the answer is yes, and why don't we do it? Well, we're going to look into that. But the bottom line is that you have limited resources and virtually unlimited desires.

Now I remember in college economics was all about supply and demand, and when demand goes up, supply goes down and so forth. Right? Remember that. It's all about scarce resources and the allocation of those.

So when the price of gas goes way up, we buy and travel less. Supply, demand, scarcity.

We're going to focus in on that. Virtually unlimited human wants. These are the desires. So we have a car, but we would like to have the newer one. We have a house, but we remodel it.

Or maybe we move up or maybe we need a vacation home, and it goes on and on. We all know the routine. There's a suggestion from BBC News. This is from 2015.

It has been suggested that if everyone on the planet consumed as much as the average US citizen, it would take four Earths to sustain them. Now let's do the math. If half the people that ever have lived are alive now, that means it would take eight Earths, the resources of eight Earths, for

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everyone to live at our level of living, and so what we've got is we've got really heavy demand down here and we've got supply shortages. There's just not enough to go around.

But as we know, the problem is not necessarily the supply, but the demand. Let's look at the prosperity gospel in the Bible and it's all about God's kingdom, you know. First of all, you realize it's not talking about now. We're going to look at why. Because we can't have it now.

It's about abundance too. Did you notice in the promises that we hold dear to our heart, there is no scarcity and there are no shortages. There's enough for everyone and it's motivated. This prosperity is motivated by love, not by selfishness, and in this case, we have abundant supply, a lot of supply, and the demand is light.

And so there's more than enough.

But this requires two things that can't be fixed today. It requires a change of heart and it requires a perfect earth.

Now, the Bible's prosperity gospel is not gain is godliness. That's false. We were told that. We examined that. But godliness with contentment.

And we find this right in the same chapter. Godliness with contentment is what great gain, and this is talking about, this is a message addressed to the church. What do you have? Be content with it.

Some have more, some have less. Be content. God has arranged your circumstances. You're not going to starve, you're going to have clothes. He's going to take care of all your needs in a goodly manner.

Number of your wants. But don't confuse wants with needs. When we work at this word, contentment, it means self satisfaction, contentment or sufficiency. You're not in want of things that are needful.

The first comment was a perfect condition of life in which no aid or support is needed. Sounds pretty good. A mind contented with its lot. Now why is this a requirement for the true church? Because if you're not content, then you have the love of other things, right?

You're motivated to get the next whatever widget or whatever it is versus focusing in on the things of God. Be content with what you got, and it starts with a change of heart. So we've had a change of heart. At the time you give your life to the Lord, you say, I've turned it over to you.

He gives it all back to you and says, now use it. This is a test. But if we don't have that change of heart, we will find ourselves motivated by the things of this world, and we will be driven, driven, driven. We will be distracted.

Sounds familiar, doesn't it? There's millions of distractions in this world. But there are other impediments to prosperity. This is why prosperity can't work right now. It can't work.

It can't work. Death disobedience evil, fear, greed, homelessness, hunger, ignorance, injustice, lies, limitations, loneliness, loss, opportunities, pain, pollution, poverty, pride, purpose, safety, sickness, sin, stress, strife, struggle, time. It's a big constraint, isn't it? We never have enough. Is there a solution for that?

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Yeah, there is. Unrighteousness, loss of vitality, loss of wholeness and meaningful work. Now, if we had to summarize this up, if we had to roll it all up, what's the cause of this? It's separation from God. So there's nothing that can be done in this present evil world, but everything can be done in his kingdom.

So why can't man pull himself up? Well, we all know the answer to this. It's right in the first book of the Bible, in the second chapter of every tree of the garden that thou mayest eat freely of, but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it. For in the day thou eest thereof, thou shalt surely die. So the first basic premise, the verse, basic understanding you have to have to understand the Bible's prosperity gospel is the fall because it marred not only man's existence, but the planet.

Remember, the curse was on the planet as well. Thorns and thistles. That's how you're going to eat. You're going to have to struggle, and that's the condition that everyone in the world is in right now.

And the lesson was, sinful man cannot redeem himself. He can't have prosperity without God. Now we know this fact. We know this fact. This is exciting.

This is the gospel we preach, and that's the true prosperity gospel, isn't it?

You know, God gives us promises, and sometimes they're very, very simple, and in Psalm 104, 28, 31, almost exactly in the middle of the Bible, God gives us promises and reveals his plan, and it's balanced out. Now, when you first read these, you, you know, to the casual reader, these would not really strike their consciousness or get their attention. But let's look at it. Thou openest thy hand and they are filled with good.

We call that creation. Remember, it was good. It was good. It was very good creation. Thou hidest thy face and they are troubled.

You know, when Adam and Eve sinned, they withdrew themselves from God. They were able to commune with him. They had a relationship with him and they blew it, and God hid his face from them so that they could learn the lesson of sin and sorrow, so that ultimately it would be to their benefit and the whole world's benefit as well.

Nothing teaches you to not put Your hand on the stove, like burning your fingers. You do it once and then you never do it again, and that's the lesson that we're learning now. He continues, and said, thou takest away their breath and they die and return to their dust.

You know, if we had to label this downward trend, it would really be called destitution. That's this present evil world. This is what we struggle with in our flesh every day, the consequences of those sins. But our God did not leave us without promises. He did not leave us without hope.

He continues, thou sendest forth thy spirit, and they are created. We call that the resurrection. Not quite yet, but soon. The resurrection. Then, he continues, thou renewest the face of the earth.

We call that restitution, and remember when we looked at true prosperity and there was two components that were necessary. A change of heart and body and a restored, perfect earth. Because this earth right now is not able to do what it needs to do, and then it continues.

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And the glory of the Lord shall endure forever. Everlasting life. We're all caught by the tyranny of time. There's never enough, and it's running out quick. But if the Lord endures forever, then this limitation has been removed.

And we call that prosperity and abundance. It brings a smile to my face, and I'm glad when I can, you know, witness to this glorious gospel of the kingdom, aren't you? God's promises are sure. He has promised it. He will deliver it.

Isn't that wonderful? So we have been given a glimpse of his glorious promises, and now we can profess them with surety. You know what in this life is sure. There are very few things in this life that are sure. You ever see this small print in everything that you sign.

But even then, if the company goes bankrupt, that warranty is no good. But God has promised it, and God will deliver it.

You know, during the Babylonian captivity in Jeremiah, we have a promise to the nation of Israel in exile. It says, for I know the plans I have for you, declares the Lord, plans to prosper you, prosper you and not harm you. Plans to give you hope and a future.

The Lord here was not talking about anything that was going to happen immediately. He was looking to the future, and these same promises apply to the church at this time, and these same promises applied to the world of mankind in the kingdom. Plans to give you hope and a future.

God has promised it. He will deliver it, and when we look at this prosper, another word for it is peace. Peace, be still. It means favor, friendly, happy, Health, prosperity, peace, rest.

All of the promises we have, not for this life, but for the kingdom. It's a promise to Israel, it's a promise to the church, and it's a promise that we have the privilege of professing to the world that we're coming soon.

The good news in Galatians 1, 11 and 12 we read. I want you to know, brothers and sisters, the gospel I preach is not of human origin. I do not receive it from any man, nor was I taught it, but rather received it by the revelation of Jesus Christ through the power of the Holy Spirit. That's the promise that we have, that's the hope that we can profess to the world, isn't it?

The prosperity Gospel of the Bible is termed the Gospel of the Kingdom. You know what that gospel is? I dare say if we go to one of the Sunday schoolrooms, even the youngest of our children are learning this glorious Gospel of the Kingdom, and if at a later time in their lives they make it their own and they give their lives to the Lord, it will be their privilege as well to boldly go and profess it to the world.

We can learn more by keying in on Acts 3:21, where the apostle Paul talks about the times of restitution, of all things spoken of by the mouth of all his holy prophets, and this is the key. You know, we think about the gospel which we preach of hope and encouragement, when all will have an opportunity. It's all about these promises that we collect. So we're going to look at some of those promises.

And this is Bible prosperity. This is kingdom prosperity. There'll be one Lord, one God. Today there are literally thousands of religions, but then there will be one.

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Not only that, but the Lord says, I will be their God. That's personal. He's going to be their God. He will return to them a pure language. So the confusion that we have leaning back to Babel will be removed.

And when you don't have different languages, then you eliminate misunderstandings a lot. It's hard to translate. I know at the dawn we have multiple translations and we're always struggling is this thought accurately conveyed? Because different languages have differences in richness. So the English language is very rich.

It has, you know, this many thousands and thousands of words. But there are some languages that are rather simple, and some of the concepts we project are difficult to explain in their terms. But there'll be one language. He will make with them a new covenant, a new arrangement to bring them back into alignment with God.

That's powerful.

He will put his law in their inward parts. It's a way of saying he's going to put it in their hearts. Their heart condition, if they're rightly exercised, will be right, and knowledge of the Lord will be out there like the waters that cover in the sea. That's powerful.

Satan will be bound. So all misinformation and deceit will be eliminated. You know, we look at this, this is perfect learning conditions. He's going to establish an environment where there are no impediments to learning of God coming back into alignment with him and giving them their hearts. Perfect conditions.

Nation will not lift up sword against nation. There's not going to be any more war. You know, part of the issue we have with feeding the world's population now is that we spend such a high percentage of our gross domestic product on the machines of war because we have to protect ourselves from others. No more 100% of that now could go. That energy, that time, those lives could all be focused on other things.

And the land will be like the Garden of Eden. The earth will be restored, and this is necessary too, so that it'll be productive. No shortages. The desert will blossom as a rose, and when we look at a map of the world and we see, you know, the great deserts in Africa and Asia and North America and South America, all of the different, you know, Australia, all of these continents have big areas of deserts.

But they're going to blossom and there's going to be water, and so they'll be productive. This is what's necessary for the world to come back up. All that are in their graves will come forth. All none shall be of their aid.

You know, we had a talk yesterday, and most people in the world are very apprehensive and anxious and fearful right now. But none shall be afraid, and gladness and joy shall follow. They will not labor in vain, and they'll all live under their own vine and fig tree.

They'll build houses and inhabit them. These are just some of the promises from the prophets of old. But this is powerful when you put it all together. This is prosperity.

And ultimately God will be and the church will be the judge in righteousness, whereas we don't have Our justice system, even as good as it might be, is flawed because it's based on imperfection. But in this case, it'll be judged in righteousness. This involves all sorts of things that money can't

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buy. Remember I said this gospel of prosperity that they have, that, you know, I'm going to get more wealth that's got nothing to do with money. Money can't buy a savior.

Money can't buy a relationship with God. Money can't buy a resurrection. Money can't buy health and vitality. Lord knows we would like it to, but it doesn't. We're all going down the same path and where it ends is the grave.

Money can't buy growing pure knowledge without an ear. Money can't buy peace, safety and security. I know what you're thinking. Well, I live in a gated community and it's safe. Let me tell you a little story.

Our health care system that I work for was involved with a place called Celebration Florida. It's down by Disney, and this was to be the ideal living community of the future, and the thought was we're going to be prosperous, we're going to have peace and security. They didn't think they needed a police force.

And then within a year or two, there was a murder at Celebration. Because human nature is human nature. Whether you have a lot of money or you don't. They were trying to have a little place on earth where they could have peace and prosperity. But that's not there yet.

Money cannot buy you adequate time. We're all caught by the tyranny of time. The only thing we can do with time is spend it, and it's limited. So we have a bank account and it's going down right now of time.

But in the kingdom, if you've got forever, that constraint is lifted. Money cannot buy a restored perfect earth. Money cannot buy a transform individuals hearts. Can't be done. Money cannot satisfy everyone's needs.

You know, in our consumer culture, the capitalistic consumer culture in which we live, it's all about more. If you turn on the media, whether it's the TV or watching something on the Internet, it's all about selling, and so we think that if we buy a little more, somehow that's going to make us happier, and we've noticed that we accumulate a lot of stuff. But as the scripture said, you had nothing when you came in, you're going to have nothing when you go out.

So don't worry about the stuff. If anything, get rid of a lot of this stuff because it's an encumbrance, and if that's your motivation, you'll never be satisfied, and money cannot buy fulfilling work. You know, this is a great need.

There's a lot of people that are desperate and hopeless in this world because they don't have fulfilling work. But we're told in the kingdom they will and the bottom line on all of this is only God can provide these things. Money can't buy them, period. This is prosperity, not a bank balance. God has a plan and you are in it.

And what's even better is we can say to the world, God has a plan and everyone is in it. Is there any other better message in the world? No, there's not. Not possible.

Isn't that powerful? God has a plan and everybody is in it. So regardless of your state, if you're the most destitute person in a prison, if you're about to die in a hospital, God has a plan and everyone is in it. Isn't that a message of hope and encouragement? Not for this fleeting life that we're in, but for the future?

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It is.

There's a little tract in the back, one of the things you can take. We brought a bunch of them from the dawn, and it goes like this, and if you will go ahead and close your eyes, close your eyes for a moment to the scenes of misery and woe, degradation and sorrow that yet prevail on account of sin, and picture in your mental vision the glory of a perfect earth, not a stain of sin, Mars, the harmony and peace of a perfect society.

Book or word. Love welling up from every heart meets a kindred response in every other heart, and benevolence marks every act. Here sickness shall be no more, not an ache, nor a pain, nor any evidence of decay, not even the fear of such thing. Think of all the pictures of comparative health and beauty, of human form and feature that you have ever seen.

And know that perfect humanity will be of still unsurpassed loveliness. The inward purity and mental and moral perfection will stamp out and glorify every radiant continent such will earth's society be, and weeping bereaved ones will have their tears all wiped away when thus they realize the resurrection work complete.

I can picture that, can't you? You can open your eyes now.

You know, the bottom line is the only.

We try to solve problems today, but in fact we never quite get it right because there are unintended consequences we cannot plan perfectly. God can. So the only solution is God's kingdoms, and that's why we're so excited to preach it, aren't we? In Matthew 24:14.

This is kind of our mission statement, and this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world to witness unto all nations, and then, and only then, will the end come.

This is our mandate. This is our privilege. So let's go forth and preach that wonderful gospel of the kingdom and give hope and encouragement to the world as much as we can. We thank our heavenly Father for from him and through him and to him are all things. To God be the glory forever.

Amen.