

False Teachings about False Teachings Part 1

Prosperity

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According to what is written in the Bible, throughout time and especially in the “End Times,” there will be many “False Teachers, and False Prophets.” These people will appear and will, in some cases, lead many astray, this is an undeniable fact; accordingly, many others will attempt to expose these “false teachers and false prophets.” However, could there be false teachers within their ranks as well? **Matthew 7:15 (NKJV)**

15 “Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravenous wolves. Anyone that pokes around the Internet or “YouTube,” will find many religious critics with long lists of people they call, “Word of Faith Preachers,” whom they say are, “Of the Devil!” While I may agree with some of these assessments, I wholeheartedly disagree with others. I have noticed that anyone who even mentions healing or prosperity seems to be immediately labeled as a “false teacher” by some of these critics; this is what concerns me. Ironically, many of the critics I have observed seem to have forgotten about preaching the Gospel, especially the part about “Making Disciples” as they devote virtually all of their energy to tearing down anyone who may disagree with their understanding of the Bible concerning the power of faith. They rarely (if ever) proclaim the message of salvation to anyone. So, could some of these critics in fact be those “ravenous wolves” Jesus spoke of, out to cause confusion and in doing so leading people away from truth? If you read the rest of Matthew 7, it certainly seems to point to that possibility.

The critic’s list of the so-called “Word of Faith Heretics” is so extensive that chances are, your favorite preacher is on this list as well, as only a relative handful seems to be exempt from their condemnation. As I started to do some research for this article, I was quickly made aware that there are many false generalized statements being made by these critics against **all** the preachers they deem to be of the “Word of Faith” persuasion. I was “Born Again” at the beginning of the so-called Charismatic Movement back in 1972. A pastor who attained a “Doctorate” from Dallas Theological Seminary led the church I was attending at the time; therefore, early in my “Christian Walk,” I heard all the arguments against Charismatic and Pentecostal theology. I was also instructed by that same pastor to check and verify everything I see, read, or hear, against the Word of God itself! This is where I began to realize that even the most learned pastors, including those with a “Doctorate Degree,” could fall victim to “Bias” when it comes to interpretation of Scripture. From the beginning, I had personally felt that God would not give us His Word in such a way that only a select few would be able to understand it. Yes, there are the Parables of which Jesus Himself stated, **“Therefore I speak to them in parables, because seeing they do not see, and hearing they do not hear, nor do they understand.” Matthew 13:13 (NKJV)** But what did Jesus mean by this? Was Jesus referring to education, religious training, or was He talking about “Spiritual Discernment?” Remember, He was talking to His twelve disciples who for the most part were ordinary people, like you and me! I feel that the verses immediately following show that the Scripture goes on to explain itself; and the only requirement is to read it... to seek the truth, and anyone truly doing so will be able to understand God’s Word as the Holy Spirit will reveal truth to anyone seeking it. Is this not one of the main functions of the Holy Spirit in the life of a believer?

Another thing I have noticed among the Word of Faith *critics* is that they always use the “most extreme examples” they can find, in order to reinforce their point of view. For example, they will point out the most radical looking and radical sounding preachers out there and unfortunately there are indeed many from which to choose. Any preacher that mentions, prosperity; to the critics, it automatically means that they are teaching that all anyone needs to do to become rich is to believe that God wants them to be rich, speak a word of faith, and BAM... money will come floating out of heaven! If this is in fact what someone is teaching, I would be their critic as well! Yes, there are some “Preachers” teaching like that, but not **all** as the critics would lead you to believe! Another thing I have noticed is that most of the video clips they use are from many years ago! I know that I personally have adjusted my views over the years, and likewise there are some other preachers that have as well. I know of one in particular who was a “Hard Core” prosperity preacher years ago, but has since switched his teaching to the Grace message, focusing on making disciples!

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People can change! Hence, there are many preachers that currently “Rightly Divide” the Word concerning these topics who formally may have been in error. Read the following passage... what does it mean to you?

John 10:9-10 (AMP)⁹ I am the Door; anyone who enters in through Me will be saved (will live). He will come in and he will go out [freely], and will find pasture.¹⁰ The thief comes only in order to steal and kill and destroy. ***I came that they may have and enjoy life, and have it in abundance (to the full, till it overflows).***
Emphasis Mine

In order to analyze this in more detail, we have to consider meanings of some particular words. I will start with the definition of prosperity. **According to Dictionary.com the very first definition is as follows:**

Prosperity - noun, plural *prosperities*. a successful, flourishing, or thriving condition, especially in financial respects; good fortune. If you call yourself a Christian, take a moment and ask yourself, “After all God has done for me... He came to earth as ordinary man, suffered - died on a cross for my sins... would He do all that, and not want me to at least be successful?” Didn’t He endure suffering so that we wouldn’t have to? Would He not want us to flourish and thrive after sacrificing so much for our well-being? Don’t we, as mere “humans,” wish that for ourselves, and our own children? If we go back to some of the “promises”, God made to His people in the past, to those who obeyed His Word and put their faith in Him, let us consider those questions... **Deuteronomy 28:1-8 (NKJV)**¹ **“Now it shall come to pass, if you diligently obey the voice of the LORD your God, to observe carefully all His commandments which I command you today, that the LORD your God will set you high above all nations of the earth.**² **And all these blessings shall come upon you and overtake you, because you obey the voice of the LORD your God:**³ **Blessed shall you be in the city, and blessed shall you be in the country.**⁴ **Blessed shall be the fruit of your body, the produce of your ground and the increase of your herds, the increase of your cattle and the offspring of your flocks.**⁵ **Blessed shall be your basket and your kneading bowl.**⁶ **Blessed shall you be when you come in, and blessed shall you be when you go out.**⁷ **“The LORD will cause your enemies who rise against you to be defeated before your face; they shall come out against you one way and flee before you seven ways.**⁸ **The LORD will command the blessing on you in your storehouses and in all to which you set your hand, and He will bless you in the land which the LORD your God is giving you.**

Now I know that these passages are directed to the Jewish people; but aren’t we, those whom have accepted Jesus as our Lord and Savior, “Grafted into that vine?” Furthermore, what did it take for any of us to be “grafted in?” Simply put... a word of faith! It sounds to me as if a “word of faith” could indeed have some startling, even miraculous effects in our lives if applied correctly by a child of God! If a word of faith could bring us from death unto life, will believing for success or good fortune somehow cause the lights in heaven to dim? When you look at it from this perspective, asking for, and believing for prosperity doesn’t sound so Satanic after all, does it? In fact, it even sounds like prosperity really is God’s will for us! Perhaps some of the Word of Faith critics may in fact be, “The thief *that* comes only in order to steal and kill and destroy,” mentioned in John 10:10. The passage goes on to state... **I (Jesus) have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly.** The Word of Faith critics say that people are being given “false hope” if they believe for an abundant / prosperous life; aren’t they in doing so, calling Jesus a liar in light of the above passage? If we cannot trust the words of Jesus Himself, then indeed there is no hope - for anyone. I concur that there are many preachers in the world that may in fact teaching a false message concerning prosperity. However, they are usually very easy to spot, as they always equate how prosperous you will be by how much money you send to their ministry, *or they are the ones bragging as to who has the most expensive Jet Plane, or Biggest Home.* (More on that later) Nevertheless, we also have to consider the fact that not all preachers that mention prosperity live like Kings or Queens, with Jets, Mansions, and Servants. Some preachers that preach that God desires for us to prosper, do so with the backing of the Word of God as brought out above. One in particular, whom I have followed and supported for many years, does in fact have a huge World Wide ministry, yet he lives in a house not much different than mine, and I am by no means wealthy!

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He lives as a typical middle class U.S. Citizen, and is one of the most humble preachers I know of! When he flies somewhere, he flies on commercial carriers! Yet he too is on that long list of “Word of Faith” preachers referred to as “*Tools of Satan*,” while at the same time his ministry is leading thousands upon thousands to a saving faith in the Lord Jesus!

As I again continue to reference the writings of those critical to the Word of Faith preachers, I cannot help but notice that much of what the critics are saying, I have never personally heard from those they are being critical of! I cannot dispute what they are saying because they do not identify exactly whom they are supposedly quoting, nevertheless, I can say with confidence that I have never personally heard some of the teachings they are using to illustrate their point. If I do hear for myself some of the things the critics are saying, then I may be persuaded to side with those critics; this has happened before, and it can happen again, as I have changed my thinking concerning some preachers in the past. However, the main concern about the Word of Faith critics is that they put *all* preachers that teach on these topics in the same box so to speak, *labeling all of them as heretics*. I know for myself that many of the critics have been wrong many times about some of these preachers as I personally follow and support some who have been “Black Listed” by them. I have witnessed the evolution of some of these preachers as they have grown and made adjustments in their teachings over the years, being guided by the Holy Spirit. There are many different points of view concerning many theological topics, some that are “cut and dry” while others remain open to debate. When both sides cite the same scriptures to support their arguments, it seems only fair to keep the conversation going while avoiding criticism, some of which borders on *Slander*. Perhaps people on both sides have something to learn. A common question among the critics is, “If God wanted everyone to prosper, why aren’t all Christians prosperous?” That is a good question, and to understand that we have to explore perhaps the most misunderstood word relating to God... “Sovereignty.” This we will do in part 2 of this series. Below is a sampling of some Bible passages for which the Word of Faith preachers are condemned as Heretics.

Matthew 21:22 (NIV)

²² If you believe, you will receive whatever you ask for in prayer.”

Luke 11:9-13 (NIV)

⁹ “So I say to you: Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you. ¹⁰ For everyone who asks receives; he who seeks finds; and to him who knocks, the door will be opened. ¹¹ “Which of you fathers, if your son asks for a fish, will give him a snake instead? ¹² Or if he asks for an egg, will give him a scorpion? ¹³ If you then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him!”

John 14:12-14 (KJV)

¹² Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me, the works that I do shall he do also; and greater works than these shall he do; because I go unto my Father. ¹³ And whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. ¹⁴ If ye shall ask any thing in my name, I will do it.

Ephesians 3:20-21 (KJV)

²⁰ Now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us, ²¹ Unto him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end. Amen.

James 4:2-3 (NKJV)

² You lust and do not have. You murder and covet and cannot obtain. You fight and war. Yet you do not have because you do not ask. ³ You ask and do not receive, because you ask amiss, that you may spend *it* on your pleasures.

1 John 5:14-15 (NKJV)

¹⁴ Now this is the confidence that we have in Him, that if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us. ¹⁵ And if we know that He hears us, whatever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we have asked of Him.