

Prosperity Gospel

Modified on: Fri, 22 Feb, 2019 at 8:17 AM

Global Media Outreach position on Word of Faith theology and the so-called "prosperity gospel"

(God's words to Ananias regarding Paul) "Go, for he is a chosen instrument of mine to carry my name before the Gentiles and kings and the children of Israel. For I will show him how much he must suffer for the sake of my name." (**Acts 9:15, ESV** (<http://esv.to/Acts9.15>))

"...that no one be moved by these afflictions. For you yourselves know that we are destined for this. For when we were with you, we kept telling you beforehand that we were to suffer affliction, just as it has come to pass, and just as you know." (**1 Thessalonians 3:3-4, ESV** (<http://esv.to/1Th3.3-4>))

(Paul's testimony of his prosperity) "To the present hour we hunger and thirst, we are poorly dressed and buffeted and homeless, and we labor, working with our own hands. When reviled, we bless; when persecuted, we endure; when slandered, we entreat. We have become, and are still, like the scum of the world, the refuse of all things." (**1 Corinthians 4:11-13, ESV** (<http://esv.to/1Cor4.11-13>))

(Paul's testimony of his health) "...on my own behalf I will not boast, except of my weaknesses—though if I should wish to boast, I would not be a fool, for I would be speaking the truth; but I refrain from it, so that no one may think more of me than he sees in me or hears from me. So to keep me from becoming conceited because of the surpassing greatness of the revelations, a thorn was given me in the flesh, a messenger of Satan to harass me, to keep me from becoming conceited. Three times I pleaded with the Lord about this, that it should leave me. But he said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness." Therefore I will boast all the more gladly of my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may rest upon me. For the sake of Christ, then, I am content with weaknesses, insults, hardships, persecutions, and calamities. For when I am weak, then I am strong." (**2 Corinthians 12:5-10, ESV** (<http://esv.to/2Cor12.5-10>))

In 2 Corinthians 12, Paul makes it very clear that it is not always God's will to heal at the request of his faithful servants. Instead of using this as a proof-text that we cannot always speak, or "faith-out" healing for ourselves by positive confession, we should examine the further revelation Paul received as to why he did not receive healing.

It was:

- So that he would not boast or become conceited in his own experiences, influence or possessions.
- So that God's grace and power would be made perfect (mature, complete, manifestly accomplished) by contrast with the Apostle's documented experience of human weakness.
- So that he could serve as an example for us, that obvious weakness, insults, hardships, persecutions and calamities do not drive disciples to despair but make them embrace the role of struggle and suffering as ways to make them keener examples of Christ's active power
- A related principle is that we should not use prosperity and physical health as a signal of God's favor. This is more subtle in this passage, but there is mention of the surpassing greatness of revelations Paul received as "a chosen vessel" who nevertheless suffered mishap, poverty and illness (as Jesus had promised).

Sometimes this passage is referenced as an example that even the faithful believer is not always healed. As the above demonstrates, it is that and far more. It reveals why it is not always God's decision to heal a faithful believer, and at the bottom of it is the true definition of faith. God is sufficient; we do not need material prosperity or even physical health in order to be strong. In fact, when we are at the end of our resources, we are in the best position to rely on Him.

Meanwhile, it is a defective definition of faith that proposes it means anything other than a committed reliance upon God, as **Hebrews 11:1, 6** (<http://esv.to/Heb11.1.6>), defines it:

Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen. ...And without faith it is impossible to please him, for whoever would draw near to God must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who seek him. (**Hebrews 11:1,6** (<http://esv.to/Heb11.1.6>))

It is the Prosperity Gospel's impersonal view of faith that has the most potential to harm our seekers, though it also has the harmful side-effect of adding to the misery of the impoverished and chronically ill by proposing they are at fault for these conditions because of what they have pronounced over themselves.

There are all sorts of ways to get the gospel wrong. The Protestant Reformation was begun by believers who were zealous to revive awareness that salvation is by grace alone, through faith alone, by Christ alone. A message that does not teach Jesus is the One True and Living God is not a gospel that can save. Proposing that Jesus' death, burial and resurrection only made it possible for a person to earn their own way to God is a false gospel. Making faith a force of the universe we (and even God) only harness to manifest reality in the world is another faith, just as it's possible to have "another Jesus" or to have "no grace" by adding works. (**Romans 11:6** (<http://esv.to/Rom11.6>))

Known teachers: **Benny Hinn** (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TNFDhY7Jv0Y>), **Kenneth Hagin** (<http://www.letusreason.org/Wf14.htm>), **Kenneth Copeland** (<http://www.deceptioninthechurch.com/wells4b.html>), **Charles Capps** (<http://www.letusreason.org/wf25.htm>), **Frederick K. C. Price** (<http://www.letusreason.org/Wf2.htm>), **John Avanzini** (<http://www.letusreason.org/Wf15.htm>), **Morris Cerullo** (<http://www.letusreason.org/Wf3.htm>), **Joyce Meyer** (<http://www.letusreason.org/popteac17.htm>), **E.W. Kenyon** (<http://www.letusreason.org/Wf8.htm>), **Creflo Dollar** (<http://www.letusreason.org/Wf23.htm>), **Joel Osteen, T.D. Jakes** (https://www.google.com/books/edition/Christianity_In_Crisis_The_21st_Century/nlZqm-1gQgYC?hl=en&gbpv=1)

(This is by no means an exhaustive list. These are some of the more well-known teachers.)

For more detail, see <https://www.theopedia.com/prosperity-gospel> (<https://www.theopedia.com/prosperity-gospel>).

Acts 9:15, ESV (<http://esv.to/Acts9.15>) **Acts 9:15, ESV** (<http://esv.to/Acts9.15>) **1 Thessalonians 3:3-4, ESV** (<http://esv.to/1Th3.3-4>)