

TOTAL TRUTH
Recovering A Comprehensive Christianity #16

I. Introduction

I want to take some time to teach on 2 rather touchy topics:

Blessing and Prosperity

My title tonight is...

“The Blessing Of Obedience”

My primary premise tonight is that *obedience to God brings blessings from God*. We shall also see that the Bible contains promises of prosperity to those who keep God’s commandments. But before we can even begin to teach biblical truth on these topics in today’s American church culture, we are faced with a problem.

We will have to overcome the oceans of perverted prosperity preaching that have flooded the modern American church in recent years.

These false teachings flies under many flags...

It’s been called the "Health and Wealth Gospel"; the "Word of Faith"; "Name It And Claim It"; or the teaching that "God wants you to be rich".

Some “Prosperity” preachers openly brag about their houses, their \$20,000 watches and their private jets. When asked why he needed 2 private jets, Jesse Duplantis said, “Why not? Don’t you have 2 cars”?

“Little Gods?”

Jesse Duplantis is also one who teaches that we are ‘little gods’: in one You Tube video he asks, “Do you want to know what God looks like? Look at me!”

I don’t want to paint all Word of Faith preachers with a broad brush. One of the best Pastors we ever had was a Word of Faith man. (Still a friend).

But the truth is that the abuses have become so bad and so ‘far out’ that many godly people have turned away from any kind of teaching on the subjects of prosperity and blessing. But...

To ignore what the Bible says about prosperity and blessing because some preachers pervert it is like ‘throwing the baby out with the bathwater’.

The Bible, as we shall see, does contain promises of prosperity; and blessing; but the prosperity preachers almost never tell the people that the blessing of God comes with the condition of obedience to God’s commandments.

Let’s begin with God’s words to His people in...

Deuteronomy 29:9

Therefore, keep the words of this covenant, and do them, *that you may prosper in all that you do.*

This text provided the title of Ray Sutton’s classic study of the covenant in his book, “That You May Prosper”. Keep in mind that Sutton is not a preacher of the “Prosperity Gospel”. Actually, he is a Bishop in the Anglican Church.

Rev. Ray Sutton, “That You May Prosper”

God desires for His people to prosper. He desires for His people to live in the full blessings of the Kingdom. Unfortunately, because most people have not understood the nature of the Covenant, they have pursued those blessings in an entirely unbiblical fashion.

Rev. Ray Sutton, “That You May Prosper”

“They have resorted to the pop-psychology of positive thinking, or the pop-sociology of imaging, or the pop-theology of positive confession.”

(Much of the modern day mumbo-jumbo preaching on prosperity treats God like a vending machine and only ends up making the ministers rich)

“But Christians will only truly prosper by keeping the terms of the Covenant.”

‘Keeping the terms of the covenant’ means obedience to God’s law.

Exodus19:5

Now therefore, if you will indeed obey My voice and keep My covenant, then you shall be a special treasure to Me above all people; for all the earth is Mine.

Obedience to the covenant brings a blessing; on the other hand....

Jeremiah 11:3-5

Thus says the Lord God of Israel: 'Obey My voice, and do according to all that I command you; so shall you be My people, and I will be your God, that I may... give you a land flowing with milk and honey.'

Notice: Blessing comes from obedience to God's covenant, which means keeping God's commandments. *This is not speaking of a salvation by works!* God is speaking these words to a people He had already redeemed by grace. The Law does not teach men how to be saved; it teaches saved men how to live!

Gary DeMar

We hear some say, "We're under grace and not law." Yes, in terms of justification, a believer is not under the law. But being under grace does not exempt a person from keeping God's moral commands. Jesus said, "If you love Me, you will keep my commandments" (John 14:15) And Jesus' commandments are God's commandments.

God does not become our Father because we keep His commandments.

We keep His commandments because He has become our Father!

Obedience to our Father God PLEASES Him; HONORS Him; GLORIFIES Him!
(When we see children who honor and obey their parents, who gets the glory?)

Obedience brings blessing: as David, on his deathbed, said to his son Solomon:

1 Kings 2:2-3

"I go the way of all the earth; be strong, therefore, and prove yourself a man. And keep the charge of the Lord your God: to walk in His ways, to keep His statutes, His commandments...

1 Kings 2:2-3

...His judgments, and His testimonies, as it is written in the Law of Moses, that you may prosper in all that you do and wherever you turn."

Many years later, Solomon said something similar to his own son...

Proverbs 3:1-2 ESV

My son, do not forget my teaching, but let your heart keep my commandments, for length of days and years of life and peace they will add to you.

Any serious study of the Bible connects obedience with blessing so often that one wonders why we don't hear more about it...

Greg Bahnsen

It defies imagination that we should need to prove that God's law is tightly correlated with God's blessing.

(And yet, this is what we intend to do)

II. The Blessing of Obedience: What Is The Biblical Case for Blessing/Prosperity?

A. First Point To Consider is the Nature of God Himself

1. The biblical case for blessing and prosperity is founded upon the nature of the goodness of God, who is our heavenly *Father*.

a. Jesus Himself taught us to ask God for good things...

Matthew 7:7-9

Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it will be opened. Or what man is there among you who, if his son asks for bread, will give him a stone?

Matthew 7:10-11

Or if His son asks for a fish, will he give him a serpent? If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, *how much more will your Father who is in heaven give good things to those who ask Him!*

b. What earthly father does not want to bless his children well? The how much more does our heavenly Father desire a blessing for us? He says, 'Ask'!

c. And yet we still have some in the church who have faith in God as a Savior but have no faith in God as a Rewarder. But faith that pleases God has both!

Hebrews 11:6

But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him.

d. This cannot be talking about salvation because salvation is a gift, not a reward...

"Reward"

Something given in recognition of one's service, effort, or achievement.

...Salvation is not a reward! We can never deserve it based on our service, effort, or achievement. This means that to have faith that God is a 'rewarder' is something we do is *subsequent to salvation*; the child of God must believe this...

Albert Barnes

Believing God is a rewarder is as equally necessary as the belief that He exists. It is not meant here that the desire of the reward is to be the motive for seeking God—but that it is impossible to make an acceptable approach to him unless we have this belief.

e. Now some would say, 'we must never give in order to get'; in a sense, that is true; we ought not give with the motive to get; *but we do have a biblical basis for believing that God will reward our obedience with a blessing.*

Greg L. Bahnsen

It is not—contrary to modern day versions of Christian asceticism—somehow ignoble or unethical for a Christian to be motivated by the thought of reward for righteous living. God often sets before us the prospect of divinely granted benefits as an incentive for moral living.

(Jesus Himself laid down the law regarding

Luke 6:38

Give, and it will be given to you: good measure, pressed down, shaken together, and running over will be put into your bosom. For with the same measure that you use, it will be measured back to you.

f. This is not giving to get; it's a fulfilment of the law of sowing and reaping...

Galatians 6:7

Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, that he will also reap.

Galatians 6:9-10

And let us not grow weary while doing good, for in due season we shall reap if we do not lose heart. Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all, especially to those who are of the household of faith.

g. Is it a sin for a farmer to sow a crop and not expect a return? Of course not. Then neither is it a sin to sow obedience to God's commandments and expect to reap a blessing.

2. Some may be skeptical on this point; but actually, we have many scriptures that connect obedience with blessing.

a. Psalm 1 is called 'the Gateway Psalm' because it sets the stage for all the other Psalms; the blessed man is the man who delights in God's law.

Psalm 1:1-3

Blessed is the man...whose delight is in the law of the Lord, and in His law he meditates day and night. He shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water that brings forth its fruit in its season, whose leaf also shall not wither; *and whatever he does shall prosper.*

(Delighting in the law of the Lord and meditating in it is connected to prosperity)

b. We see the same principle applied in Joshua Chapter One, where God is giving instruction to the man chosen to lead Israel after the death of Moses...

Joshua 1:6-7

Be strong and of good courage, for to this people you shall divide as an inheritance the land which I swore to their fathers to give them. Only be strong and very courageous, *that you may observe to do according to all the law which Moses My servant commanded you; do not turn from it to the right hand or to the left, that you may prosper wherever you go.*

c. One problem we have is that when we hear the word ‘prosperity’ we think it always means ‘money’; but the Hebrew word term is much richer.

Albert Barnes

‘That ye may prosper’ is literally, "that ye may act wisely." The connection of the two ideas of wisdom in conduct and prosperity in circumstances is noteworthy.

(Notice: this promise of prosperity to Joshua never mentions money)

Joshua 1:8

This Book of the Law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate in it day and night, *that you may observe to do according to all that is written in it. For then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have good success.*

(Obedience brings blessing)

d. The Bible consistently teaches that ethics have consequences: We see the same principle applied when God commanded obedience from Israel as a condition for possessing the Promised Land...

Deuteronomy 11:26-28

"Behold, I set before you today a blessing and a curse: the blessing, if you obey the commandments of the Lord your God which I command you today; and the curse, if you do not obey the commandments of the Lord your God..."

(God requires obedience as a condition for possessing the land)

Deuteronomy 15:4-5

For the Lord will greatly bless you in the land which the Lord your God is giving you to possess as an inheritance — only if you carefully obey the voice of the Lord your God, to observe with care all these commandments which I command you today.

Deuteronomy 15:6

For the Lord your God will bless you just as He promised you; you shall lend to many nations, but you shall not borrow; you shall reign over many nations, but they shall not reign over you.

e. We see the same principle applied by the Prophet Isaiah...

Isaiah 1:19

If you are willing and obedient, you shall eat the good of the land.

3. I could multiply many more examples of how obedience brings a blessing; *but does this mean that everyone will be rich? Does this mean that you will never get sick? Does this mean that you will never have to endure suffering?*

4. The problem with the prosperity preachers today is how they fail to preach the whole counsel of God on what it means to be blessed and prosperous.

a. To them, being 'blessed' and 'prosperous' means health and wealth; but I have a better definition:

"Blessed"

**To be in favor with, of one mind with, and in tune with the will of God.
Blessing is not about getting good things or experiencing happiness. It is about aligning oneself with God and His word.**

b. The prosperity preachers of our day seldom speak about sin, much less about aligning our lives with the moral law of God.

c. They leave you with the impression that if you have enough faith you'll never suffer, you'll never be sick, and or ever have a shortage of finances.

5. They tell you that "God has a wonderful plan for your life". That is true; but what did God's 'wonderful plan' look like for some in the Bible?

What is God's Wonderful Plan For Your Life?

For Jesus, God's wonderful plan was crucifixion.

For Joseph, it was betrayal by his brothers and a false imprisonment

For Job, it included the loss of 10 children, and 9 months of suffering in sickness
For Peter, it was to be crucified upside down
Paul had a thorn in the flesh, suffered shipwreck, and was eventually beheaded
God's wonderful plan for Stephen was to be stoned to death

6. The most popular prosperity preachers never take the time to teach on subjects like suffering for Christ, enduring hardship, or keeping God's commandments; they are too busy enriching themselves at the expense of those they have deceived into seeing faith as a means to obtaining material blessings.

a. The Apostle Paul warns us about these wolves...

1 Timothy 6:5

Beware of those who suppose that godliness is a means of gain. From such withdraw yourself. (NKJV)

...men whose minds are depraved and deprived of the truth, who imagine that godliness is a way to material gain. (HCSB)

1 Timothy 6:5

...whose minds are corrupt, and they have turned their backs on the truth. To them, a show of godliness is just a way to become wealthy. (NLT)
... people who are depraved in mind and deprived of the truth, imagining that godliness is a means of gain. (ESV)

b. Paul says 'withdraw yourselves' from those who would use godliness as the way to riches.

1 Timothy 6:6,8

But godliness with contentment is great gain....having food and clothing, with these we shall be content.

c. True godliness is the desire to honor God by keeping His commandments and being *content* with the results. (When I'm not healed or 'prosperous').

1 Timothy 6:9-10

But those who desire to be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and harmful lusts which drown men in destruction and perdition. For the

love of money is a root of all kinds of evil, for which some have strayed from the faith in their greediness, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows.

1 Timothy 6:11-12

But you, O man of God, flee these things and pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, gentleness. Fight the good fight of faith, and lay hold on eternal life...

7. He says: Flee the love of money. Pursue righteousness and godliness. *How can any pursuit of righteousness fail to include obedience to God's law?*

III. Close

A. Review: The Blessing of Obedience

1. We must not allow all the perverted preaching on prosperity to turn us away from this great truth: **Obedience to God brings blessings from God.**

2. If we love God, we will keep His commandments; as a loving son seeks to honor and glorify his father by his obedience; not as a set of rules...

Christopher Wright, "Learning To Love Leviticus"

"Old Testament law was not just about rules but also about relationship with God, founded on God's grace and redemption, and motivated by the mission of living as the people of God in the world, so that the world should come to know the living God."

Keeping God's commandments is our witness to the world! This comports with...

Matthew 5:16

Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven.

Greg L. Bahnsen

If we wish to have a morality which promises blessed consequences, then our morality must be patterned after the law of God.

Greg L. Bahnsen

Moreover, our collective obedience will bring blessing upon a society as well. 'Righteousness exalts a nation' (Proverbs 14:34), giving it health, food, financial well-being, peace, and joyous children.

Proverbs 11:11

By the blessing of the upright the city is exalted, but it is overthrown by the mouth of the wicked.

Closing Prayer

Title