

Misled

(A book survey of Allen Parr's "Misled")

Cross Brand 7.30.25

The Prosperity "Gospel"

I. What Is Prosperity Gospel?

Prosperity theology, the prosperity gospel, the Word of Faith movement, and health and wealth theology are all terms for this false doctrine. Together they comprise a collection of teachings that share a few common features, especially the notion that financial prosperity and perfect health are always the will of God for believers.

But even if we or an angel from heaven should preach to you a gospel contrary to what we have preached to you, a curse be on him! Galatians 1:8

II. Problems with the Prosperity Gospel

PROBLEM #1: THE PROSPERITY GOSPEL IS INCONSISTENT WITH THE MESSAGE OF THE BIBLE

But he was pierced because of our rebellion, crushed because of our iniquities; punishment for our peace was on him, and we are healed by his wounds. Isaiah 53:5

"⁶but godliness with contentment is great gain. ⁷ For we brought nothing into the world, and we can take nothing out." 1 Timothy 6:6-7

"Don't store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal. ²⁰But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys, and where thieves don't break in and steal." Matthew 6:19-20

PROBLEM #2: PHYSICAL HEALING IS NOT ALWAYS CONTINGENT ON PEOPLE'S FAITH

"Then the news about him spread throughout Syria. So they brought to him all those who were afflicted, those suffering from various diseases and intense pains, the demon-possessed, the epileptics, and the paralytics. And he healed them." Matthew 4:24.

After this, a Jewish festival took place, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem. ² By the Sheep Gate in Jerusalem there is a pool, called Bethesda in Aramaic, which has five colonnades. ³ Within these lay a large number of the disabled—blind, lame, and paralyzed.

⁵ One man was there who had been disabled for thirty-eight years. ⁶ When Jesus saw him lying there and realized he had already been there a long time, he said to him, “Do you want to get well?”

⁷ “Sir,” the disabled man answered, “I have no one to put me into the pool when the water is stirred up, but while I’m coming, someone goes down ahead of me.”

⁸ “Get up,” Jesus told him, “pick up your mat and walk.” ⁹ Instantly the man got well, picked up his mat, and started to walk.

Now that day was the Sabbath, ¹⁰ and so the Jews said to the man who had been healed, “This is the Sabbath. The law prohibits you from picking up your mat.”

¹¹ He replied, “The man who made me well told me, ‘Pick up your mat and walk.’”

¹² “Who is this man who told you, ‘Pick up your mat and walk’?” they asked. ¹³ But the man who was healed did not know who it was, because Jesus had slipped away into the crowd that was there. John 5:1-13

PROBLEM #3: THE PROSPERITY GOSPEL ISN'T EVEN AN OPTION IN MOST PARTS OF THE WORLD

PROBLEM #4: THE PROSPERITY GOSPEL TEACHES A FALSE DEFINITION OF FAITH

PROBLEM #5: PROSPERITY THEOLOGY GETS THE TIMELINE WRONG

III. WHY IS THE PROSPERITY GOSPEL DANGEROUS?

Danger #1: It Weakens Our Faith In God

Danger #2: It Creates False Guilt

Danger #3: It Creates False Hope

Danger #4: It Promises a Quick Fix to Problems

IV. WHAT DOES THE BIBLE REALLY SAY ABOUT SUFFERING?

Even the Faithful Suffer

Suffering Is Promised

Remember the word I spoke to you: ‘A servant is not greater than his master.’ If they persecuted me, they will also persecute you. If they kept my word, they will also keep yours.” John 15:20

“I have told you these things so that in me you may have peace. You will have suffering in this world. Be courageous! I have conquered the world.” John 16:33

V. WHAT DOES THE BIBLE SAY ABOUT SICKNESS?

Paul's Thorn

Especially because of the extraordinary revelations. Therefore, so that I would not exalt myself, a thorn in the flesh was given to me, a messenger of Satan to torment me so that I would not exalt myself. 2 Corinthians 12:7

Trophimus

Only Luke is with me. Bring Mark with you, for he is useful to me in the ministry. Erastus has remained at Corinth; ²⁰I left Trophimus sick at Miletus. 2 Timothy 4:11, 20

Timothy

Don't continue drinking only water, but use a little wine because of your stomach and your frequent illnesses. 1 Timothy 5:23

Epaphroditus

But I considered it necessary to send you Epaphroditus—my brother, coworker, and fellow soldier, as well as your messenger and minister to my need— ²⁶since he has been longing for all of you and was distressed because you heard that he was sick. ²⁷Indeed, he was so sick that he nearly died. However, God had mercy on him, and not only on him but also on me, so that I would not have sorrow upon sorrow. Philippians 2:25-27

VI. IS THE GIFT OF HEALING FOR TODAY?

A careful reading of the Bible reveals just three short periods in human history when miracles were prevalent:

God knew that people wouldn't listen to their *message* without first seeing their *miracles*.

VII. HOW SHOULD CHRISTIANS VIEW PROSPERITY?

⁸ If we have food and clothing, we will be content with these. ⁹ But those who want to be rich fall into temptation, a trap, and many foolish and harmful desires, which plunge people into ruin and destruction. ¹⁰ For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil, and by craving it, some have wandered away from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs. 1 Timothy 6:8-10

¹⁷ Instruct those who are rich in the present age not to be arrogant or to set their hope on the uncertainty of wealth, but on God, who richly provides us with all things to enjoy. ¹⁸ Instruct them to do what is good, to be rich in good works, to be generous and willing to share, ¹⁹ storing up treasure for themselves as a good foundation for the coming age, so that they may take hold of what is truly life. 1 Timothy 6:17-19

1. Paul didn't prohibit believers from being rich; rather he instructs us how to behave if we happen to be rich.
2. He cautions us not to be arrogant with our wealth.

3. Paul says that we shouldn't set our hope on wealth.
4. We ought to enjoy all the things God has richly provided.
5. Paul tells us what we should ultimately do with our wealth; be generous.

VIII. FINDING A HEALTHY BALANCE

How should Christians regard health and wealth?

- Reject the idea that God has promised these things to every believer in this life.
- If you are in good health, thank God for this gift every day, because many suffer with poor health and will not be healed this side of heaven.
- While some will not find healing on this earth, when people we know and love are ill, ask God to be gracious and heal them.
- Reject the idea that poverty glorifies God any more than prosperity does
- Apply biblical principles to save money, get out of debt, invest, and steward your finances wisely.
- Be generous stewards with the wealth God has given, without flaunting it.
- Be vigilant about helping as many people as possible escape the false and dangerous teachings of the prosperity gospel.