



February

Shady Shores Baptist Church

2019

From The Pastor's Heart . . .

As I mentioned last month, I am writing on the subject of stewardship as it relates to God's Word in my newsletter articles this year. I had not planned to address the issue below, but due to a timely blog, Janet Denison, addresses an issue with which many have been confronted. The idea that if I am a Christian, God automatically wants me to prosper. The article is reprinted below by permission.

An Important Message from Joyce Meyer and King Solomon

January 23, 2019

It might seem strange to mention Joyce Meyer and King Solomon in the same sentence, but keep reading. Both people came to similar conclusions in their later years about the subject of prosperity. All of us can benefit from their words. Recently, Joyce Meyer announced she had come to believe the Bible teaches a different message than what she had previously believed and taught. The *Christian Post* reported, Popular televangelist Joyce Meyer has admitted that her beliefs in prosperity and faith were at times out of balance. "When bad things happen to people, such as the death of a child, Meyer said she now understands that it's not because they didn't have enough faith."

What Is The Balance Between Faith And Blessings?

King David said, "For the LORD is a sun and shield; the LORD bestows favor and honor. No good thing does he withhold from those who walk uprightly" (Psalm 84:11). King Solomon wrote, "The blessing of the LORD makes rich, and he adds no sorrow with it" (Proverbs 10:22).

Jesus was preaching the Sermon on the Mount when he said, "Give, and it will be given to you. Good measure, pressed down, shaken together, running over, will be put into your lap. For with the measure you use it will be measured back to you" (Luke 6:38). David was offering a psalm of praise to God. His words speak of all that God is able to do, not all that God has obligated himself to do. We should define "good thing" as God intends, not as something we want it to be. A proverb in Scripture is a word of general truth, not a promise. King Solomon was not saying that if God is blessing our faith, he will make us rich and without sorrows. Solomon was saying that God's blessings are our wealth, whatever those blessings may be. All of us can know the peace of God's presence *in our sorrow*, but sorrow does not mean that God is not with us. And Jesus was not saying that whatever we give or do, God is obligated to return that gift or blessing to us. If that were true, then why did Jesus, who treated others with perfect

love, suffer persecution and death. I appreciated Joyce Meyer's recent words admitting that at times her message of prosperity was "out of balance." It was a good reminder that we should all be cautious about the words we teach as well.

What Is The Prosperity Gospel?

An article in *Christianity Today* provides this definition: "An aberrant theology that teaches God rewards faith—and hefty tithing—with financial blessings, the prosperity gospel was closely associated with prominent 1980s televangelists Jimmy Swaggart and Jim and Tammy Bakker, and is part and parcel of many of today's charismatic movements in the Global South."

The prosperity gospel has always been popular because it is a message, we enjoy hearing. Those who preach that gospel are often popular and, quite frankly, wealthy. If a preacher/teacher wants to own a private jet and a mansion, it is probably a good idea to call it a "blessing." We want to believe that, if we follow their message, we will always be blessed with health, wealth, and happiness. And it is possible to use God's word to create a prosperity gospel. But God's word cannot be accurately taught using snippets of truth. Theology requires wisdom and knowledge of God's entire Scripture. Theologian John Piper provided this caution about the prosperity gospel and those who teach it. He said, "Look for the absence of a serious doctrine of the biblical necessity and normalcy of suffering, the absence of a doctrine of suffering; the absence of a clear and prominent doctrine of self-denial; the absence of serious exposition of Scripture; the absence of dealing with tensions in Scripture; exorbitant lifestyles of church leaders; and preachers' prominence of self and a marginalization of the greatness of God." Each of us needs to listen to sermons and biblical teaching with a Berean church mentality. Scripture speaks of those believers saying, "They received the word with all eagerness, examining the Scriptures daily to see if these things were so" (Acts 17:11). None of us will be able to stand before the Lord in judgment and say, "Well, the preacher said..."

What Do Joyce Meyer And King Solomon Have In Common?

Joyce Meyer and King Solomon both achieved great wealth and popularity in their lives. Both teach God's word. Both are flawed human beings God used to bless others. But the strongest similarity is found in the wisdom each gained toward the end of their lives. King Solomon amassed greater wealth than anyone in Scripture but, at the end of his life, he said, "I have seen everything that is done under the sun, and behold, all is vanity and a striving after wind" (Ecclesiastes 1:14). Joyce Meyer said, "I'm glad for what I learned about prosperity, but it got out of balance. I'm glad for what I've learned about faith, but it got out of balance."

The Truth About Prosperity

I hope Joyce Meyer will focus on teaching the entire truth of God's word. Biblical theology is crucial to teaching others, and the so-called prosperity gospel does not prosper and is not the gospel truth. King Solomon's perfect teaching is found in Scripture and therefore reliable truth. I try to remember

Solomon's closing words in Ecclesiastes as a "north on the compass" lesson. At the end of his life, Solomon provided us with a message of wisdom that should benefit anyone who will take it to heart. He said, "Now all has been heard; here is the conclusion of the matter: Fear God and keep his commandments, for this is the duty of all mankind. For God will bring every deed into judgment, including every hidden thing, whether it is good or evil" (Ecclesiastes 12:13-14). If we live with Solomon's wisdom, we will prosper in whatever circumstances God allows for our earthly lives. The gospel truth about prosperity is found in Romans 10:13: "For everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved."

In other words, if you are a Christian, you are blessed.

As I mentioned last month, the Bible speaks extensively about money and the proper use of it. I pray that these articles will help you to be rightly related to the money God allows you to have. The mistake too many people make is they believe they worked for it so it is their money. Big mistake. Huge mistake. God, speaking through the prophet Haggai (2:8) says, "The silver is Mine, and the gold is Mine," declares the LORD of hosts. Since it is all His, He is the ONLY ONE who has the authority to determine what we do with it. To deviate from His plan is to leave ourselves open to the enemy's subtle whisperings that we know better than God on how we relate to money.

See you Sunday: Looking Up, Reaching Out, Going Forward.

From My Heart To Yours,

Bro. Bob

rkjoyce@shadyshoresbaptist.org

