

THE GOSPEL OF PROSPERITY

A popular doctrine being spread by Satan's preachers today is that health, wealth and material success are signs of God's favor and promised blessings to those who invest in their ministries. But what does the Bible teach about this?

One scripture that is used to teach that God wants everyone to be healthy and materially blessed is III Jn. 2, "Beloved, I wish above all things that thou mayest prosper and be in health, even as thy soul prospereth." Note that this verse appears in the salutation portion of the letter, where according to standard correspondence rules, the writer and the intended recipient are identified; in this case, those are John the Elder and Gaius, respectively.

Prosperity - this term has a different connotation depending on whether used with regard to spiritual things or material things. Bible characters such as Job (Job 1:2-3), Abram & Lot (Gen. 13:2-6), Joseph (Gen. 41:39-43), Joseph of Arimathea (Lu. 23:50-53; Is. 53:9) were prosperous from a material standpoint, as the cited scriptures indicate. However, so were various unrighteous people, such as the evil kings of heathen peoples, Israel and Judah. So, clearly, prosperity is not always an indicator of righteous living and God's favor.

Mt. 19:21-24 Hard for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God.

II Cor. 8:9 Spiritual prosperity for the believer comes through the poverty of Christ.

Phil. 4:10-13 Contentment regardless of prosperity or a lack thereof.

God is our shield and our very great reward. (Gen. 15:1)

He was the designated portion for the Levites and for us (Num. 18:20; Ps. 16:5)

God will provide the needs of His people but not necessarily their wants. God is not obligated to bless us.

We cannot assume that our personal circumstances necessarily correspond to our relationship with God. Ps. 73

- Health - the man blind from birth; Paul with the thorn in the flesh
- Wealth/prosperity - Job during his trial; Joseph while in prison

Discussion Questions

1. Mt. 19:29 Does this mean if I give the church \$100, God will give me \$10,000? Why or why not?
2. Lu. 6:38 is another favorite of the prosperity evangelists. Is this verse really speaking of wealth and prosperity?
3. Ja. 5:1-5 What does this passage suggest about material wealth?
4. Rev. 3:17-18 How does this passage help to refute the gospel of prosperity?