

Exclusive: Benny Hinn Explains Why He's Speaking Out Against Extreme Prosperity Teaching

Benny Hinn says his heart is changing. Benny, who is now 67 years old, has been a popular televangelist for many years, and for most of his ministry, he's been well-known for his teaching on prosperity. But now Benny is blatantly rejecting the extreme prosperity gospel, even calling it an "offense to the Holy Spirit."

Last year, Benny stirred up controversy in the Pentecostal community by announcing that his understanding of biblical prosperity was beginning to change. *Charisma* even published an article in the August 2018 issue about how Benny's views were starting to morph.

But now, Benny isn't holding back. Yesterday, Charisma News reported that he preached on Monday about the dangers of the extreme prosperity gospel, saying it made him "sick to [his] stomach."

"I believe it's an offense to the Lord, it's an offense to say, 'Give \$1,000,'" he says in a video posted Sept. 3. "I think it's an offense to the Holy Spirit to put a price on the gospel. I'm done with it. I will never again ask you to give \$1,000 or whatever amount, because I believe the Holy Ghost is just fed up with it."

I've known Benny for many years. Our friendship reaches back to before I founded *Charisma* magazine in 1975, and I was even in his wedding. So he was gracious enough to join me on my "Strang Report" podcast to discuss his changing views on the prosperity gospel and why he's deciding to come out strongly

against it now.

Benny tells me he wants to make one thing clear: He is not changing his views on prosperity because of his critics. As a controversial evangelist, Benny has had plenty of critics over the years, including his own nephew, who spoke out last year against his uncle's Word of Faith theology.

Instead, Benny's change of heart came from hours of studying the Word of God day and night as well as deep reflection and prayer. He tells me he initially went into ministry out of a love for his Master, Jesus, but as his ministry grew in fame, he became distracted.

"My love never changed," he tells me. "I just became distracted. ... Today, I'm 67 years old, and I thinking about 'How am I going to finish? What will I leave behind for the next generation? How will they view me?' I want them to view me as one who preaches the cross. I do not want to be known prosperity. I want to be known for someone who preached the cross of Jesus-salvation."

Benny says that in the past, many ministries used him to raise money for their causes. He says he would watch people come down to the front in response to his message on giving, but the things these ministries would tell them were not biblical.

"I did not, at that time, have the boldness or courage to say, 'Look, stop that,'" he says. "Today, I'm sorry, I cannot allow that. Nor will I ever allow that. ... It's manipulation. It's gimmickry to tell someone, 'You give \$1,000, you're going to get a hundredfold.' What if they don't get a hundredfold? And most do not. What happens to their walk with the Lord and their faith?"

I think Benny is putting his finger on the heart of the problem with extreme prosperity teaching. Certain charismatic and Pentecostal preachers have certainly fallen into excess with this theology.

But that doesn't mean that prosperity in and of itself is unbiblical.

"I believe the Bible from beginning to end," Benny tells me. "I cannot take [away] the fact that God wants to bless His people. It's in the Bible—Old and New Testaments. But the Lord we love has made it very clear to us that He will meet our needs, wherever we live. He will take care of us."

He says the book of Acts is a great example of biblical prosperity. That book of the Bible makes it clear that the early believers did not lack anything they needed. And although famine came and threatened to destroy many Christian families, the apostle Paul took up an offering from churches around the known world for the church in Jerusalem.

"The thing I have to make clear is, number one, I believe the Bible," he says. "I believe God wants to bless His people. I believe He wants us to succeed in life. Absolutely. But the focus must be Him."

Benny tells me about an event he attended months ago that caused him to realize he had to do something about abuses within extreme prosperity teaching.

"The guest speaker asked people to come down to give \$1,000," he says. "One man was a businessman—I don't know his name. He gave a large check. And he looks at me in my face, and he says, 'I will see if this will work. If this doesn't work, I will know this all'—I don't want to use the word [he used]. ... And I'm thinking, *This is what people are thinking of them. We have to bring it back to the Bible.*"

Benny also recounts a conversation he had with Pastor Dan Willis of Lighthouse Church of All Nations several days before his Monday video. In that private conversation, Willis shared about something the Lord did for his son because he gave \$1,000.

“And I had to tell him, ‘You know, I don’t want to hear it,’” Benny tells me. “And I told him how I felt. And he received it. ... And my hope and prayer is that others will receive it, who are teaching that, that they go back to what the Bible teaches. Let’s focus back on Jesus. Let’s focus back on loving Jesus. Let’s focus back on the gospel. Let’s focus back on people’s lives and needs. And that’s also protect them from damage.”

I’m grateful Benny is speaking out now and I appreciate his heart to protect and nurture the flock. He made it clear to me that all he wants to do from now on is point people to Jesus Christ.

Listen to my podcast to hear my full interview with Benny. And if you stand by what he says, share this article and spread the word that we can’t put a price on the gospel.