

John Piper: 3 Things the Prosperity Gospel Gets Wrong

When quoting only Psalm 35, prosperity gospel subscribers get three things wrong, theologian John Piper says in a recent podcast.

“In all my criticism of the so-called prosperity gospel, I don’t wish for or pray for poverty on anyone. I don’t wish for or pray for sickness on anyone. I don’t wish for or pray for persecution or calamity on anyone. No one, I think, should make it his aim to suffer from poverty or sickness or calamity or persecution. Those are not the goals of life. And we rejoice when people are delivered from them into Christ-exalting well-being, or what the Bible calls *shalom*,” Piper says.

Piper says many who support the prosperity gospel use Psalm 35:27 as their basis. The psalmist writes: “May those who favor my righteous cause shout for joy and be glad; may they say continually, ‘The Lord be magnified, who delights in the peace of His servant.’”

Piper finds three flaws with basing prosperity on this scripture:

1: Wrong Timing

Prosperity preaching tends to bring into this life greater expectation of prosperity than is intended for this life and only intended for the next life. Scripture is crystal-clear that in the next life, the age to come, there will be no sickness, no poverty, no persecution, no calamity, no evil, no discouragement of any kind. In other words, the gospel does include health, wealth and prosperity. It is coming; namely, in the age to come when we are so spiritually mature and perfected that we are suited to enjoy these things to the

full with no hint of idolatry.

2: Wrong Perspective

My second problem with the prosperity church is a lack of clear, deep, biblical teaching on the necessity of suffering in this life and the goodness of God in it and his control over it—not just Satan’s; God’s control over it—and the benefits that may come from it that God decides. We don’t. It is a missing note, it seems to me, that gives the legitimate promises of God’s earthly help a superficial ring because “through many afflictions [we] thus enter the kingdom.” That was Discipleship 101 in Acts 14:22b, as Paul taught the churches.

3: Wrong Comfort

All of this (everything I have said so far) tends to lead prosperity preachers to comfort people not with the presence of Christ in suffering and his rescue from suffering in the age to come, but rather to comfort people with the assurance that they will get out of suffering in this life if they follow the right prescription.

The theologian summarizes, “Let Romans 8—perhaps the greatest chapter in the Bible—put Christian gladness and Christian groaning in their painful and precious relationship in this age.”

Do you agree? Sound off! {eoa}