

8 Reasons to Flee From Carnal Prosperity Preachers

There have been some articles of late that have been very balanced and served to warn us of ministers with excessive teachings and lifestyles of extreme luxury and extravagance. I've thought long and hard about these things for many years and have received some light from the Scriptures on the perilous fate of some of these ministers.

This is a solemn warning against those who are walking in the error of Balaam.

"Woe to them! For they have gone in the way of Cain, have run greedily in the error of Balaam for profit, and perished in the rebellion of Korah" (Jude 11).

Jude uses strong terms when he compares false teachers to "spots in your love feasts," "clouds without water," "autumn trees without fruit, twice dead," "raging waves of the sea" and "wandering stars for whom is reserved the blackness of darkness forever."

These were men who "crept in among them" and even ate at their love feasts, which were fellowship meals. In other words, they were part of the church.

Peter also writes in eerily similar language warning of false teachers given to covetousness.

"And in their greed they will exploit you with deceptive words. Their judgment, made long ago, does not linger, and their destruction does not slumber" (2 Pet. 2:3).

He speaks of the doom and depravity of these false teachers using terms such as, "spots and blemishes," "carousing in their own deceptions," "having eyes full of adultery,"

“enticing unstable souls,” “a heart trained in covetous practices,” and “accursed children” (2 Pet. 2). And notice the comparison to Balaam again:

“They have forsaken the right way and have gone astray. They follow the way of Balaam the son of Beor, who loved the wages of wickedness, but who was rebuked for his iniquity. The mute donkey speaking with a man’s voice constrained the madness of the prophet” (2 Pet. 2:15-16).

A dumb donkey had to speak what the Lord was really saying because Balaam had gone astray after the wages of unrighteousness. Too many today are speaking what the Lord is not saying, and not speaking what He is saying. They too may need dumb donkeys to speak on their behalf. Some have given over to familiar spirits and other voices, and still believe God is speaking to them—but He’s not. They are deceived.

Please understand that Balaam was a genuine prophet. The Spirit of God would come upon him and he would hear from the Lord (Num. 22: 8-9, 24:2), but money ruined him. Covetousness led to his downfall. God warned him, but he didn’t listen (Num. 22:12-13). The Scriptures list him as an example of one whose heart was not right toward money. How many false prophets, slick televangelists and carnal prosperity preachers does this apply to today? Some have received genuine callings and anointings from the Lord, but they have been caught in the error of Balaam.

Perhaps the greatest error of these carnal prosperity preachers is that they “suppose that godliness is a means of gain” (1 Tim. 6:5, NKJV). They equate their millions and their excessive materialistic lifestyles with spirituality—even telling the public that they are rewards for preaching the gospel. The apostle Paul uses the strongest of terms as to how we should respond to them:

“From such withdraw yourself” (1 Tim. 6:5).

Why You Should Withdraw From Carnal Prosperity Preachers

1. Woes are pronounced on rich selfish believers in contrast to unselfish and sacrificial believers (Luke 6:20-26).
2. There is no reward waiting in heaven for those who lived in luxury and self-indulgence. They are fattening themselves for the day of slaughter (James 5:1-5).
3. In contrast to God choosing the poor of this world who are rich in faith (so much for the doctrine that if you have enough faith you'll be rich, too), the rich of this world are rebuked for living in abundance, luxury, and self-indulgence while blessing is pronounced on the poor and oppressed (James 5:1-5). These are believers.
4. The Lord said He knew the poverty of the church in Smyrna, but said they were rich (Rev. 2:9). On the other hand, the Lord rebuked the self-centered rich church in Laodicea and said they were poor (Rev. 3:17).
5. Many carnal prosperity teachers like to reference Abraham, the father of faith, who was very rich. They make a case for every believer being very rich. But this verse shows where Abraham's heart really was (Heb. 11:10).
6. Solomon is also used as an example of someone who was very rich, but as the king, he multiplied to himself silver and gold and such things, in direct disobedience to the Law of God (Deut. 17:15-20). Solomon regarded silver as chump change because he had so much of it (2 Chron. 9:20). Strange women caused him to sin, which is often the byproduct of a rich and lavish lifestyle (Neh. 13:26). Plainly stated, Solomon served other gods (1 Kings 11:1-8). Why would anyone use him as an example of a rich man for the church to follow?
7. Moses possessed the riches, pleasures and luxuries of Egypt, but the Word says he despised them and forsook them and exchanged them for knowing God. Let us imitate not only Abraham and Moses, but all these heroes of the

faith as well (Heb. 11:35-39).

8. Did Paul ever preach a carnal prosperity gospel? You be the judge (1 Cor. 4:11, 2 Cor. 11:23-28). And no, I don't believe 2 Corinthians 8:9 is scriptural proof that Jesus died to make us all rich.

In defense of many of these carnal prosperity preachers, people will be quick to say that they also give away far more than most people ever will in a lifetime. So does George Soros. So does Bill Gates. So does Warren Buffet. That is not proof of their spirituality or godliness. The fact that a prosperity preacher is generous does not justify his message. It simply indicates that he practices what he preaches. Some of the rich in the world do that. All it does is testify to the fact that some of these carnal prosperity preachers are rich and generous.

"But they give to the gospel," some might argue, whereas the rich in the world usually don't. I've yet to see any of these carnal prosperity preachers give away their personal mansion, luxury car, big diamond rings and so forth to live a moderate lifestyle. Are they really following Jesus, or does even the suggestion of giving away these things make them sad and sorrowful? (Mark 10:21-22).

This is a warning against carnal prosperity preachers who lead unstable and gullible souls into covetousness by preaching a message that gain is godliness, that financial prosperity equates to spirituality, and who encourage everyone to receive the material prosperity and riches Jesus purchased for them at the cross. It is also a warning to those who follow such preachers and make much of this materialistic message. That is not the gospel, my friends.

I realize the poor can be covetous, too, but this sin is far more associated with the rich.

Understanding the Severity of Covetousness

The word in the Greek is *pleonektes*, and it regresses from good to bad. It's a greed so strong that it will even defraud and manipulate others and forge ahead at their expense. The root word, *pleon*, is the basic word for more—more in quantity, in quality and numerically. Here are other offshoots of this word:

Pleonekteo: to overreach

Pleonexia: avarice; extreme greed for wealth or material gain; excessive or inordinate desire for gain.

This word is grouped in the same category as fornication, lascivious living and immorality (Eph. 5:3, Col. 3:5-6). Those who desire to increase in material wealth and worth and the things of this world are classified as idolaters at heart in God's sight. The Word tells us to be free of covetous conduct and from desiring the things of this world (1 John 2:15-17), and to be content with such things as we have (1 Tim. 6:8, Heb. 13:5). Come on now, how many believers, especially in charismatic circles, do you really know who are content with food and clothing and such things as they have?

Have we forgotten that an idolater has no inheritance in the kingdom of God (Eph. 5:5, 1 Cor. 6:10)?

Thou Shalt Judge

And for those who are already holding up their God-card of "thou shalt not judge," I'll offer the contrary, what Paul said about judgment:

"Do you not know that the saints will judge the world? If the world will be judged by you, are you unworthy to judge the smallest matters? Do you not know that we shall judge angels? How much more the things that pertain to this life?" (1 Cor. 6:2-3, MEV).

We are not only to judge matters that pertain to this life and

the church, but we are to disfellowship and even expose all unfruitful works of darkness. Covetousness and idolatry are among these unfruitful works. We must expose them. That's part of righteous judgment.

"Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of these things the wrath of God is coming upon the sons of disobedience. ... And do not have fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness; instead, expose them. For it is shameful even to speak of those things which are done by them in secret. But all things are exposed when they are revealed by the light, for everything that becomes visible is light." (Eph. 5:6, 11-13).

This carnal prosperity gospel bred in the West is a false gospel with a false Jesus, which can only result in a false salvation.

There are even those who will argue that Jesus was rich from His carpentry business, lived in a luscious home and wore the designer clothes of that day, and of course died so we could have all this and more. Oh beloved, run from those who teach these things.

Think of the examples in Scripture, some of which I've already listed, concerning the deceitfulness of riches and the covetousness often attached to it, and how many have succumbed to the pride and greed of it. This is my solemn warning, and as the Lord witnessed to me—that some of these carnal prosperity preachers have not only fallen into a snare but are in danger of drowning in destruction and perdition.