

The Primary Error in Extreme Word of Faith Teaching

Many, but not all, of our readers are familiar with a movement called The Word of Faith Movement. Teachers in this movement have become famous for their presentations on material prosperity and physical healing. Some have gone too far and teach that believers have the right to opulent living (See my book, *Prosperity, What the Bible Really Teaches*).

The basic idea is that if we meditate and confess the Word of God, and especially its promises, we will build faith and will walk in God's abundant material provision, physical healing and family wholeness. Indeed, there should also be no tragic accidents for any family members since Psalm 91 says no evil or plague will come near us. Mark 11:24 says that the person with a grain of mustard seed faith will, "Have whatever they say." There is much truth in this. It is the Word of God enlivened by the Holy Spirit who dwells in us, who brings us into faith to believe and walk in all God's promises. As I note in my Prosperity book, meditating on, confessing and standing on the promises of the Bible is the way to strong faith.

The Problem

So when does it become problematic? A couple from upstate New York met us in their congregation. They lost three children in a tragic car accident when they were carpooling with others going to a Christian school. They were asked to leave their Word of Faith congregation where they were elders. The pastor explained that their tragedy was undercutting the faith of the congregation. Wow!

The problem in this teaching is that these promise statements in the Bible are said to be absolute according to a very strict interpretation. According to that interpretation, "...

heals all your diseases," in Psalm 103 allows no exceptions. God is seen as always giving fully according to these promises. So if promises are not attained, then it is asked, "Is the problem with the giver or the receiver?" The answer we hear is, "It is always a problem on the receiving end." So there is no way out of their conclusion.

If you have financial loss, if you are sick or die prematurely, or have tragedy in the family, they say it is your fault. Any other view is seen as diminishing the absolute nature of the promises and undercutting the maximum potential for faith. The weakness in this view is that it does not recognize that faith is something that has to be given by God. The faith that moves mountains in Mark 11:24 cannot be worked up or drummed up no matter what we do. The Word of Faith view on this is a rugged individualism where it is all up to me.

I don't think that is what Yeshua meant. It is God who gives faith, and a mustard-seed level of it can do anything. It is what the faith people call the "God kind of faith." Our part is to worship God, confess His promises and meditate on the Word, but ultimately these promises for human prosperity and healing are under the sovereignty of God. His promises are real. We are healed, in the course of our lives, thousands of times from all kinds of things. But if we die of some disease, it does not mean that we were at fault.

We would like the promises and our ability to receive them to be air tight, but the promises are generalizations, and they are the usual reality. After having done all – and we should do everything that we can, including meditation/speaking on the Word and listening to the Spirit on the matter – it is still up to the sovereignty of God. Too many are now in a situation of depression and have abandoned walking with God because, after tragedy, they were told it was their fault. This is the primary error of the Word of Faith teaching.–

The three heroes who disobeyed King Nebuchadnezzar's decree to

worship the golden image, had a slightly less rigid “take” on the outcome of their “rubber meets the road” faith situation:

“If it be so, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace. “If it be so, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and He will deliver us out of your hand, O king. But even if He does not, be it known to you, O king, that we will not serve your gods, nor worship the golden image which you have set up” (Daniel 3:16-18). {eo}

Dan Juster is the director of Tikkun Ministries International, a Messianic Jewish ministry. He is an author and has been in Messianic Jewish ministry since 1972.

This article originally appeared at .