

This Big Lie in American Christianity Is Making Us Weak

It was another eye-opener to me when in recent articles I shone a light on the gain-is-godliness-carnal-prosperity message and received comments from readers, even friends, accusing me of judging—with some even fighting for their right to be rich and have possessions. At times I'm not even sure these "addicted to prosperity" Christians have ever heard the real gospel or tasted the real salvation. They string a few obscure Scriptures together and make up a be-all, end-all gospel of riches.

To these people, it's disrespectful to not want to become extremely wealthy, since Jesus died that we could all have wealth. They say Jesus was made poor so we could be rich—as if deliverance from poverty was the proof of our spiritual salvation. Is that really what the sum of the Scriptures teaches? This is the American gospel, my friends, and God has shown me that much of the excess and covetousness so common in the West today is rooted in this evil system.

What this belief system actually does, though, is stunt the growth of believers who have no ability to withstand any adversity, because they think any kind of lack is a tragedy of biblical proportions. They don't know how to depend on God in the midst of real trials, because they think every problem is an attack of the enemy and a sign that God has removed his favor from them because of some hidden sin. But Jesus himself said that we would have troubles in this world, but to "take heart" because he would be with us in those troubles.

"I have told you these things so that in Me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation. But be of good

cheer. I have overcome the world" (John 16:33).

A large majority of the things Christians are distraught and overwhelmed about are petty and trivial things or empty and vain disappointments in not getting what they want out of this earthly life. They are in sore need of a much larger biblical perspective.

Stop believing the lies of the "self-help," "be happy" false gospel. Do not accept the weak and anemic version of a materialistic gospel that produces instability in your soul where you cannot deal with the slightest offense, hardship, trial or any kind of disruption that upsets your belief system that being a follower of Jesus guarantees you the "good life."

I am not downplaying the real pain in life in each of our personal journeys, but the road to recovery requires we change our pie-in-the-sky mentality to a more realistic point of reference. Trials are a big part of life and our Christian walk.

I have some young friends who are missionaries in Kolkata (Calcutta) who are spending their lives to help the neediest of the needy. I've not yet been to Kolkata; it's on my bucket list, though. I understand it's common as in many cities of the world to step over people living on the street in cardboard boxes—but worse yet is passing by others literally sitting in pools of their own urine, waiting to die. In Kolkata you can actually walk over corpses lying on the sidewalk in the middle of the day, dead from starvation and exposure with no one bothering to pick them up. How utterly heartbreaking to see humans made in the image of God reduced to such base objects of horror.

And you think you have problems because your boss didn't give you a pay raise that you thought you deserved, or your boyfriend dumped you for another woman, or you're pouting because God didn't come through for you in some materialistic

fashion? Many Westerners are so spoiled, and Christians are not exempt, as even our own character can be so unchristian at times.

How God's heart must also break over the petty, self-centered-entitled-narcissism so prevalent here in the West and in His people, who should know better. Must every little trivial disappointment over not getting what you wanted out of life send you over the edge into manic depression? Many of us are living in affluence compared to most of the world, and we still complain.

True prosperity is found in a man who has the "blessing of God." And Jesus told us how to identify people with great blessing. He said they were the folks who figured out it was more blessed to give than it was to receive.

"In all things I have shown you how, working like this, you must help the weak, remembering the words of the Lord Jesus, how He said, 'It is more blessed to give than to receive'" (Acts 20:35).

Let us be those blessed people who not only count it all joy when they fall into diverse trials and temptations, but, who instead of seeking their own, seek the things which are Jesus Christ's, support the weak and live to give.