

# What Exactly Is The “Prosperity Gospel”?

## Introduction:

- A. Proponents of the “prosperity gospel” or the “health and wealth gospel” teach that the more money you give away, the wealthier you’ll become. “Following God” can serve as a formula for abundant possessions and prosperous living.
- B. What distinguishes “prosperity theology” from secular materialism is that it professes to be built on God’s Word—precisely what makes it so dangerous.

## I. Does God promise to make us prosperous if we obey him?

- A. Undoubtedly, some Old Testament passages link material prosperity with God’s blessing.
  - 1. For instance, God blessed Abraham (*Gen 24:1*), Isaac (*26:12-13*), Jacob (*30:43*), Joseph (*41:52*), Solomon (*1 Kings 3:13*), and Job (*Job 42:10-17*) in a variety of ways.
  - 2. God promised the Israelites that he would richly reward them if they walked in faithfulness to him (*Deut 15:10; Prov 3:9-10; 11:25; Mal 3:8-12*).
- B. But this is by no means the whole picture. God repeatedly warned against the dangers of wealth—especially that in prosperity people often forget him (*Deut 8:7-20*).
- C. Even when people love God with all their hearts, they may suffer (*Acts 14:22; 2 Tim 3:12*).
  - 1. The Bible is full of laments from the righteous (*Job 21:7-9,13; Psa 94:3; Jer 12:1*).
  - 2. Jesus provided a powerful reminder to keep our perspective straight (*Matt 5:45*).

## II. Is there a direct cause-and-effect relationship between righteousness and prosperity?

- A. Job’s “comforters” thought there must be hidden sin in Job’s life (*Job 1:8; 42:7*).
- B. The Pharisees frequently looked down upon others as “sinners” (*Luke 15:1-2; John 9:34*).
- C. The implications of Jesus’ account of the rich man and Lazarus (*Luke 16:19-25*).
- D. In this present life, the righteous may suffer and the wicked may prosper (*Luke 6:20-26*).
  - 1. The righteous may suffer *because* of their righteousness (*2 Tim 3:12-13; Phil 1:29*).
  - 2. Jesus warned that this life may call for the bearing of a cross (*John 15:18-20*).
  - 3. How the apostle Paul viewed his credentials of success (*Phil 3:7-8; 2 Cor 6:8-10*).
    - a. Like many of God’s servants, Paul was neither healthy nor wealthy (*2 Cor 12:7-10*).
    - b. But where is he now? And what would he say about earthly regrets?