

The Prosperity Gospel Exposed
By Michael D. Fortner
Introduction

This book clearly explains the truth about the prosperity gospel. It reasonably explains, with detailed examples, how they misinterpret the Scriptures, and presents the correct interpretation of the passages of Scripture that the prosperity preachers use to teach their false doctrines. It also provides Scriptures that are indisputably against the prosperity message.

The ministers who teach that all Christians should be materially wealthy, I will call "get-rich" preachers. These get-rich preachers will scream and wail about being attacked, so I will only refer to them by a letter, like G, X, or L; these letters are not their initials.

It is my opinion that the prosperity gospel is the biggest hindrance to Christians in the Charismatic movement, and a blight to Christianity in general. It is one of the most dangerous and ruinous doctrines in the Church today. The doctrine of greed is perhaps the biggest single reason that many people turn away from the Charismatic movement. The abuses of the teachings of the prosperity gospel could fill a book, but I will stay with explaining how the get-rich preachers misinterpret the Scriptures.

Out of one side of their mouths the get-rich preachers say that the purpose of their ministry is to help people get out of debt, and help people prosper so they can give large sums of money to the spreading of the gospel. But out of the other side of their mouths they teach that we can have whatever material possessions we want, such as a luxury home or a Rolls Royce.

Having been raised Pentecostal, I am not against the Charismatic movement, but consider myself part of it. I have also read most of G's books and at one time was a firm believer in what has come to be known as the prosperity gospel. There was a time when I gave money in offerings for the purpose of getting rich and commanded angels to bring me money, but I am thankful to God that he gave me wisdom instead, which is the true wealth of the Kingdom:

Wisdom is supreme; therefore get wisdom. Though it cost all you have, get understanding.
(Proverbs 4:7)

Choose my instruction instead of silver, knowledge rather than choice gold, for wisdom is more precious than rubies, and nothing you desire can compare with her. (Proverbs 8:10-11)

Let me make it perfectly clear, that the Bible does in fact teach that God wants to prosper us, but "biblical prosperity" is not the same as the "prosperity gospel." God does not want us in poverty, but when we receive a great harvest it's not for our own enrichment, but so we can help people who are in great need. There are many needs throughout the body of Christ today, and God will give us more income than we need so that we can give towards meeting those needs. But God does not promise to make each of us wealthy. Though God does make some people rich because he wants to reward them in this life, or wants them to have a ministry of giving, it does not apply to the average Christian.

Chapter One
The Prosperity Message in the Early Church

(1) The First Get Rich Preachers

Preachers teaching from the Scriptures how to get rich is not new. The apostles also had to face this problem as detailed by Paul to Timothy:

3 If anyone teaches false doctrines and does not agree to the sound instruction of our Lord Jesus Christ, 4 he is conceited and understands nothing. ... 5 ... who have been robbed of the truth and who think that godliness is a means to financial gain. 6 But godliness with contentment is great gain. 7 For we brought nothing into the world, and we can take nothing out of it. ...

9 People who want to get rich fall into temptation and a trap and into many foolish and harmful desires that plunge men into ruin and destruction. 10 For the love of money is a root of all

kinds of evil. Some people, eager for money, have wandered from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs. (1 Timothy 6:3-10)

How could it be said any clearer? Paul was obviously talking about ministers who were teaching Christians a way to "get rich" from the Scriptures, which Paul referred to as "false doctrines." Paul said that anyone who desires to get rich this way has departed from the faith, because we should be content with what we have! Does this sound like a man who believes in the prosperity gospel? Not a chance. Verse 5 says: "supposing that gain is godliness" (NKJ). The literal translation says, "supposing gain to be godliness" (Interlinear Greek-English New Testament by J.P. Green)(IGENT). The false teachers were teaching that it was godly to get rich and that a righteous man will become prosperous, which is exactly what is being taught today. There is even seminars for that teaches preachers how to milk their congregation for every dollar they can get.

Notice also that Paul said people that desire to get rich will fall into a trap and a snare. I know a man who had his own furniture and custom wood-working business. He had a wife, a son, a house, and no debts, but he read the books and listened to the tapes of the get-rich preachers and became dissatisfied with his situation; he wanted wealth. So he got to thinking and came up with a new idea which he thought came from God; he would make special little tables for the purpose of putting miniature bonsai trees on them. The tables cost \$ 200-300. He took out a line of credit at the bank and built many of these tables and nothing else for many months. He went to bonsai shows but with no success. The last I heard, he had sold 4 tables and was \$20,000 in debt. I expect he has probably gone back to making furniture and will be paying off his debt for many years to come. He believed that God was leading him into making those tables, but he was led into a trap by the false teachers.

One of the get rich preachers says,

Child of God, as you study God's Word carefully, you will find that God's clearly stated intention is to take very good care of His children, especially those that walk in His footsteps and obey His will.

There it is again, the very thing that Paul spoke out against; that God guarantees financial gain to Christians. But Paul said, "if we have food and clothing, we will be content with that" (1 Tim. 6:7). Is this what the get-rich preachers teach? That we should be content with food and clothing? Certainly not! Paul continues in 1 Timothy:

But you, man of God, flee from all this, [the get-rich gospel] and pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, endurance and gentleness. (1 Timothy 6:11)

Now, Paul had previously told Timothy not to pursue riches, then Paul told him what he should pursue. Nowhere in the list does Paul say that Timothy should pursue a big harvest of money so he can help finance Paul's ministry. If Paul really believed and taught the wealth gospel, as the get-rich preachers claim, why didn't he travel in a golden chariot pulled by six white horses-- the modern equivalent of a Cadillac or Mercedes Benz, like the get-rich preachers do? Paul continues:

17 Command those who are rich in this present world not to be arrogant nor to put their hope in wealth, which is so uncertain, but to put their hope in God, who richly provides us with everything for our enjoyment. 18 Command them to do good, to be rich in good deeds, and to be generous and willing to share. 19 In this way they will lay up treasure for themselves as a firm foundation for the coming age, so that they may take hold of life that is truly life. (1 Timothy 6:17-19)

Those Christians who are wealthy do not need to be taught how to acquire wealth. If you have the calling to be rich, then you will not have to seek after wealth or follow a step-by-step plan to get it, it will find you. Paul says earthly riches are uncertain, and are not a firm foundation. Why then should we seek it out? The get-rich preachers teach that God will positively give you lots of money, without fail. So if riches are uncertain-- because they can be easily lost or stolen, then how is that we should be so certain that we will always have plenty of these riches?

And since Paul is clearly speaking out against wanting to be rich and depending on wealth, then he does not turn around and contradict himself when he says God "richly provides us with everything for our enjoyment." He is saying that God provides everything we need to enjoy life, things that have nothing to do with the material lusts of the flesh; that is, worldly luxury.

Notice the emphasis on good deeds and sharing. Life that is truly life is when you depend on God for your supply and spend your time helping others rather than making money. It is piling up treasure in heaven, not here on Earth. Piling up treasure here on Earth does not bring fulfillment or contentment, it is not part of the true Christian life. Paul continues:

20 Timothy, guard what has been entrusted to your care. Turn away from godless chatter and the opposing ideas of what is falsely called knowledge, 21 which some have professed and in so doing have wandered from the faith. ... (1 Timothy 6:20-21)

This is more evidence that those who were teaching the get-rich doctrines were doing so from the Scriptures--they were claiming that they had knowledge and insight into the Bible that the apostles and Paul did not have; like get-rich preacher X:

Please note I am not using the word revelation loosely. I use it in its strongest sense. What you are about to read is a body of truth I received directly from our Lord. Now mind you, it's not a new truth, it's neglected truth.

It is possible to understand something that other people do not, but the passages X refers to are absolutely not about money (as we will see shortly). He and others like him lack wisdom, and therefore do not rightly divide the Word. Peter also spoke out against the same get-rich preachers:

3 In their greed these teachers will exploit you with stories they have made up. ...10 This is especially true of those who follow the corrupt desire of the sinful nature and despise authority. ... 14 ... they are experts in greed -- an accursed brood! 15 They have left the straight way and wandered off to follow the way of Balaam son of Beor, who loved the wages of wickedness. ...18 For they mouth empty, boastful words and, by appealing to the lustful desires of the sinful human nature, they entice people who are just escaping from those who live in error. (2 Peter 2:3, 10, 14-15, 18)

Peter said the false get-rich teachers entice people who have just escaped paganism, which means they are newly converted, so they do not have the spiritual maturity to see the falsehood of the materialistic gospel. The Good News Version says, *"In their greed these false teachers will make a profit out of telling you made-up stories"* (2 Peter 2:3). What kind of stories did they tell? "This lady sent me an offering, and within ten days she received \$500. If you want to prosper, send me an offering. If you want a miracle, send me an offering. If you want God to bless you, send me an offering." They will provide you with numerous examples of people who gave money and got a check in the mail. Well what about all the people who do not give and get checks in the mail or win the lottery? O what about all the people who gave and not only did not get a check, but became more in debt through no fault of their own, such as having to buy a new stove or refrigerator.

In his book, *The Way I See It*, Don Basham said there was a prosperous businessman who was a member of a church he used to pastor *"who boasted he had no need to tithe, because 'I'm a Christian and everything I have already belongs to God'"* (p. 76). He was rich and did not even tithe which goes against the teaching of the get-rich preachers. (Make no mistake, I do believe in tithing.) This man did not give money for the purpose of gaining prosperity, and yet he was wealthy.

In the 1800s a certain man who taught Sunday school for over 20 years in a Baptist church, and became the wealthiest man in the world. He also did not pay tithes. Quite the opposite, he was the reason that journalists came up with the term, "Robber Baron." The man was John D. Rockefeller. He engaged in ruthless and illegal business practices and built an oil company called Standard Oil that was so large that when it was broken up because of antitrust laws, several major oil companies were created from that one company. One hundred years ago, John D. Rockefeller was worth over one billion dollars, which today would be 150 to 200 billion dollars. I'm sure he did not pay tithes because that would mean an income of 100 million dollars (15 to 20 billion today) to his local church. And it was not God that "blessed" him with great wealth, it was Satan, the god of greed. God does not lead people to engage in ruthless and illegal business practices.

Let's take a look at another example. There is today a man who planned to become a missionary when he was young, but he not only turned against his calling, he turned against Christianity. Do you suppose that God has blessed this man? He is today a multi-billionaire! What lessons are we to learn from this? One very important thing is that God does not always bless people, very often Satan will give people lots of money because Satan knows that money is very deceitful and can make the most devout Christian lukewarm. Who is the man? Ted Turner, who started CNN and is a partner in Time- Warner, and other media companies. In Ephesians, Paul again refers to these false teachers:

5 For of this you can be sure: No immoral, impure or greedy person--such a man is an idolater--has any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God. 6 Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of such things God's wrath comes on those who are disobedient. 7 Therefore do not be partners with them. (Ephesians 5:5-7)

The get-rich preachers of Paul's day were apparently asking for regular contributions, saying that if people give to support their ministry, that God will make the people prosperous; just like the get-rich preachers today who ask that their "partner" with them.

Chapter Two Having Too Much

(1) 2 Timothy

The get-rich preachers are also spoken of in 2 Timothy: For the time will come when men will not put up with sound doctrine. Instead, to suit their own desires, they will gather around them a great number of teachers to say what their itching ears want to hear. (2 Tim. 4:3) If there ever was a doctrine that told people what they want to hear, this is it, the get-rich gospel. Sadly, the doctrine is especially appealing to two groups, the very poor and the rich, because the poor want to get out of poverty and the rich like to here that it is ok to live in luxury while people are homeless just a few blocks away.

The Bible in fact teaches that people can have "too much" money, because it results in spiritual loss:

Two things I ask of you, O Lord; do not refuse me before I die: Keep falsehood and lies far from me; give me neither poverty nor riches, but give me only my daily bread. Otherwise, I may have too much and disown you and say, "Who is the Lord?" Or I may become poor and steal, and so dishonor the name of my God. (Proverbs 30:7-9)

The above passage contains very important truth that is being totally over looked not only by the get-rich preachers but by most of Christianity in America today.

The Bible puts the main emphasis on giving money to giving to the poor, while the get-rich preachers, and most churches, put the emphasis on giving to the preacher, or to pay for an expensive building.

A generous man will himself be blessed, for he shares his food with the poor. (Proverbs 22:9)

He who oppresses the poor to increase his wealth and he who gives gifts to the rich-- both will come to poverty. (Proverbs 22:16)

These verses teach the opposite of what the get-rich preachers teach, that you should give to the rich, especially a rich preacher. According to their reasoning, the rich preacher is being blessed of God so if you give to the rich preacher you will be more blessed than if you give to a poor preacher because the poor preacher is not being blessed of God; comparing it to sowing into rich soil or poor soil. Notice also that the verse says that if you want to be blessed you should give to the poor, which is also what Jesus taught. But the get-rich preachers teach that you should give money to them-- the wealthy preachers -- so they can drive luxury cars and live in luxury homes. "Belly up to the table" is what they literally say.

Paul said, "I am amply supplied, now that I have received from Epaphroditus the gifts you sent" (Philippians 4:18). Did Paul say, "Now that I have received your gift, I can buy the carriage and six white horses I need in my travels"? or "the cathedral I need to build to legitimize my ministry;" or "the body guards I need"? No! He was amply supplied but still traveled by walking, and never stayed at the Hilton or had body guards. This shows the belief that we should have the best of everything, especially preachers, to be completely unreasonable and unscriptural. None of the apostles traveled first class and if any preacher needed body guards it was Paul who was beaten and stoned nearly to death several times.

The get-rich preachers say you can have anything you want. They teach that if you are born-again and spiritually mature, that your inner spirit-man will not want anything you should not have. Therefore, if you want something like a Rolls Royce, it's ok for you to have it. I guess Paul wasn't spiritually mature enough or he would have desired a carriage with six white horses.

By saying it is ok to have whatever you want, these preachers are giving in to the desires of the flesh which will cause you to sin through covetousness and greed. It's not your inner spirit-man that wants to eat gourmet food, it's your flesh. It's not your spirit that wants a flashy sports car, it's your flesh. It's not your spirit that wants a big diamond ring, it's your flesh.

Those who live according to the sinful nature have their minds set on what that nature desires; but those who live in accordance with the Spirit have their minds set on what the Spirit desires. (Romans 8:5)

So I say, live by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the sinful nature. For the sinful nature desires what is contrary to the Spirit, and the Spirit what is contrary to the sinful nature. ... (Galatians 5:16-17)

It is clear, therefore, that the get-rich preachers live according to the sinful nature and not according to the Spirit because their minds are set on the desires of their sinful natures. Having lots of material wealth is contrary to the Spirit because it results in lukewarmness (more about this later). As long as we are in the flesh we are subject to the desires of the flesh, which is why Paul said we should put to death the desires of the flesh and:

Put to death, therefore, whatever belongs to your earthly nature: sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil desires and greed, which is idolatry. (Colossians 3:5), see also (Rom. 8:13)

God said he would give us the desires of our hearts, not the desires of our flesh! Not that the flesh itself is evil, it is not, but it is still under Satan's dominion, which is why we still must crucify the desires of the flesh. Paul said, "Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things" (Colossians 3:2).

(2) Jim Bakker

Jim Bakker is the founder and builder of the Inspirational Network, Heritage USA, and the PTL program. He taught a gospel of health and wealth, but God made an example of him. It was all stolen from him by another big-name preacher, and Bakker was sent to prison. While in prison he studied the Scriptures in-depth until he finally recanted his wealth gospel. His story is told in his book "I Was Wrong." Bakker said he believes God sent him to prison so he could learn the truth. After his release, he was exonerated of all the charges which sent him to prison in the first place, so it does sound like God sent him there to learn the truth. Bakker said:

The more I studied the Bible, however, I had to admit that the prosperity message did not line up with the tenor of Scripture.... I was deeply grateful that God had not struck me dead as a false prophet! (p. 533) I had studied every word of Jesus over a period of two years, and I was convinced that the prosperity message was at best an aberration and at worst "another gospel" contrary to the gospel of Jesus Christ. (p. 543)

(3) A Rich Jesus?

Not only do the get-rich preachers teach how to get rich from the Scriptures, but probably the greatest blasphemy is they claim that Jesus was rich! Paul said,

For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor . . . (2 Corinthians 8:9)

There you have it, indisputable proof that Jesus was not wealthy, he was poor! (More about the above verse later.)

Jesus clearly teaches that we should not store up treasure on earth. Is a Rolls Royce treasure? How about big diamond rings or a fur coat? How many Christians in America actually have safe's in their homes where they keep their valuable treasures? Lots, I'm sure. Perhaps their treasure is only a million-dollar retirement account, but it is treasure anyway. To store up treasure does not mean to have huge rooms full of gold, anything that is valuable that you would want to insure is a treasure!

Chapter Three What Jesus Taught About Wealth

(1) Matthew Chapter 6

Jesus made a very important statement when he said;

"Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moth and rust do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also." (Matthew 6:19-21)

This Scripture cannot be reasoned away, it can only be ignored or twisted by twisted teachers, as it certainly is by the get-rich preachers. I heard the wife of one of them on TV, about the above verse, say we should not strive to store up treasure ourselves, but if we seek first the kingdom (Luke 6:22-31) then God will give us "all these things." This means that God will give us treasure that rusts and that moths eat and that thieves break in and steal! It is not us storing it up, but God storing it up for us; then it's ok to have all these things. This is a clear case of the blind leading the blind, and both will fall into the ditch.

Jesus does not want us to desire things that are not needed and merely serve to satisfy materialistic or envious cravings. Neither did Jesus say, if you pay tithes and offerings you can waste the remainder on expensive suits, dresses, and jewelry. Jesus did not say, your treasure will be where your heart is, he said where your treasure is,

there will your heart be. So if you have great earthly wealth, you will become materialistic because your heart will be where your treasure is. If your treasure is in heaven, your heart will be centered toward spiritual things, if your treasure is here on earth then your heart will be concerned with the things you own here. After stating the above passage about not storing up treasure, Jesus continues in Matthew 6 on the same subject of materialism and money;

"The eye is the lamp of the body. If your eyes are good, your whole body will be full of light. 23 But if your eyes are bad, your whole body will be full of darkness. If then the light within you is darkness, how great is that darkness!

24 "No one can serve two masters. Either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and Money. (Matthew 6:22-24)

If we see the goods our neighbor has and we desire to have just as much, then our eye is bad. We should not have our eyes on material goods or money. We cannot pursue and store up material goods on Earth and expect to please God and receive his blessings, which are wisdom, understanding, health, long life, happiness). We cannot seek after God and money.

Jesus continues in the same chapter on this same subject:

25 "Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or drink; or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more important than clothes? 26 Look at the birds of the air; they do not sow or reap or store away in barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not much more valuable than they? 27 Who of you by worrying can add a single hour to his life? 28 "And why do you worry about clothes? See how the lilies of the field grow. They do not labor or spin. 29 Yet I tell you that not even Solomon in all his splendor was dressed like one of these. 30 If that is how God clothes the grass of the field, which is here today and tomorrow is thrown into the fire, will he not much more clothe you, O you of little faith? 31 So do not worry, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?' 32 For the pagans run after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them. 33 But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well. 34 Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own. (Matthew 6:25-34)

I am amazed that people actually use these verses to promote the get-rich gospel. The get-rich preachers teach that if we seek first the kingdom, that God will give us "all these things," referring to nice homes, fancy cars, fine clothes, gold rings, and so forth. Wow! Jesus just went into detail explaining to us that we should not desire or store up material goods, and now we have God giving us all the stuff that moths eat and that rust destroys-- incredible! Incredible blindness to the truth!

What this passage says, is that we should not worry about the basic necessities of life because God knows we need them. We don't need a four bedroom condo on the beach and a Corvette. If we don't seek treasure of this earth, but have our treasure in heaven, God will see to it that we have all we need. Not a single luxury item was mentioned in the above verse, but only food, drink, and clothing; not a vacation in Hawaii.

This passage does not refer to all the things of a materialistic society like America! Even a poor American would be considered rich by the standards of the first century. King Herod did not own a refrigerator that stored food. He did not have hot and cold running water in several rooms of his home. He could not call his friends on the telephone for a chat. He did not ride on smooth roads in an air-conditioned car, and did not sleep on an inner-spring mattress. But even these things are not good enough for the get-rich preachers, they want the best car, the best home, the best clothes-- if this is not greed and materialism, nothing is!

(2)

Give Up Everything to Follow Christ

In the above passage, notice the statement "seek first the kingdom"; this passage is actually part of a disciple-recruiting speech. Luke chapter 14 also contains statements and parables that were part of a disciple-recruiting speech. Jesus said, "*any of you who does not give up everything he has cannot be my disciple*" (Luke 14:33). This was not just a test of loyalty, he meant that literally! All seventy of Jesus' disciples had to give up everything. This was not a requirement of the average person who would come to believe in Jesus, but it was a requirement of those who were to become missionaries and ministers of the Gospel. All of the seventy disciples were missionaries and ministers-in-training, and they all had to sell everything they had and give the proceeds to Jesus for the support of all the disciples and the poor they ministered to.

The parable that Jesus gave in Luke 14 is conclusive proof that the disciples had to give up their possessions to become one of his disciples:

"Or suppose a king is about to go to war against another king. Will he not first sit down and consider whether he is able with ten thousand men to oppose the one coming against him with twenty thousand? If he is not able, he will send a delegation while the other is still a long way off and will ask for terms of peace. In the same way, any of you who does not give up everything he has cannot be my disciple." (Luke 14:31-33)

Back in those days armies frequently went to war for the purposes of plundering another nation of its gold, silver, cattle, land, and women. In this parable the king with only 10,000 men would be wise to seek terms of peace, which means he would have to ask the stronger king, "how much gold, silver, cattle and women do you want from me to not invade my nation?" The king with the weaker army would then pay whatever the king with the stronger army demanded; it was called tribute.

Jesus then said, "In the same way, any of you who does not give up everything he has cannot be my disciple." Since the king with the weaker army had to give up lots of material goods to have peace, "In the same way" means exactly what Jesus said it means, that to become one of his disciples, a person had to give up everything he had. That was the cost that Jesus demanded. I believe he also wants that of preachers today, but quite the opposite is happening in the United States. Today the call is, "become a preacher and you will have a \$75,000 per year salary, or perhaps \$100,000, or \$600,000, or even more! Jesus did not say, "*take up your Cadillac and follow me*" he said "*take up your cross and follow me*" (Luke 14:27).

Then he said to them all: "If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me. For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for me will save it." (Luke 9:23-24)

This means that any preacher must be willing to give up everything. It's about sacrifice, sacrifice, sacrifice. But the only people who are expected to sacrifice are the people who are not preachers, and they are expected to give sacrificially so the preacher can have a huge income! Abomination! Jesus said to the rich ruler, "*Sell everything you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me*" (Luke 18:22). Jesus did not say that because the ruler cared too much for his wealth, though it was true, but because Jesus required all his disciples to give up everything. So now we know why most of his disciples were poor, the rich were not willing to up their wealth.

Jesus looked at the rich ruler and said it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the Kingdom. The Greek refers to a sewing needle. Jesus was using exaggeration (hyperbole) to make a point. The point being, that it is very difficult for the rich to enter heaven. Then the disciples asked, "*Who then can be saved?*" ... "*We have left all we had to follow you!*" (Luke 18:26,28).

Those who teach the prosperity message say that statement proves the apostles were rich. The *Wycliffe Bible Commentary* says, "*A common error of Phariseeism and Judaism in general was the undue emphasis upon material wealth as evidence of God's approval*" (p. 940). So if rich people were blessed by God, then they must be more righteous than poor people. In other words, Peter was saying, "if the rich have a hard time entering the kingdom of God, how can anyone enter? How can we get into the kingdom, we have impoverished ourselves to become your disciples?" So even if the apostles had been rich, they were no longer; they "*left all*" to become disciples. And leaving all does not mean leaving it at home to come back to later. No, leaving all meant they no longer possessed any material goods of significant value.

(3) 100 Fold Return?

Right after Peter said, "We have left all we had to follow you!" Jesus said, "no one who has left home or wife or brothers or parents or children for the sake of the kingdom of God will fail to receive many times as much in this age" (Luke 18:29-30). In Matthew Jesus says the person will receive 100 times as much. How can you receive 100 mothers, fathers, sisters, and brothers? It refers to our brothers and sisters in Christ. Their house is our house, their family is our family. It does not refer to receiving great material wealth like the get-rich preachers teach today! In Luke 12:22-31, Jesus tells his disciples (and potential disciples) that they should not worry about food or clothing because God knows that they need those things, and if they seek first the Kingdom, then God will provide them with the necessities of life. He then commands them to "*Sell your possessions and give to the poor.... For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also*" (Luke 12:33-34). This was not just an admonition against materialism. It was a command to his "*little flock*" (Luke 12:32) who would become the ministers of the church after his death. Jesus was saying, "do not be concerned that you are giving up all your net worth. If you seek first the kingdom, God will see to it that you have all the food and clothes you need. So go

and sell your possessions so we can give the money to the poor." (And for the support of Jesus and the disciple.) Now read what X says about the similar passage from Matthew 6:

Notice GOD adds "all these things." When you effectively do YOUR PART of first ESTABLISHING HIS KINGDOM, then God will do HIS PART-- and give you "all these things" you need and want for the good life ... IN ABUNDANCE! [ellipses and capitals in the original]

Finally, the get-rich preachers point out that Jacob reaped a hundred fold harvest during a famine. Yes, but they fail to mention that it only happened once; during another famine he had to send his sons into Egypt to buy grain from pagans. Should we then expect that pagans will be the source of supply during lean years? No, you cannot take something from the Old Testament that happened to one person one time and apply it to everyone today. The hundred fold harvest was only an example of what is possible if God wills it, not what will happen every time you give an offering or have enough faith.

Chapter Four The Prodigal Son

(1) The Prodigal Son

In Luke 15 Jesus gives a parable of the prodigal son who squanders his inheritance. The get-rich preachers even use this parable to back up their claims, saying that we should demand our inheritance just like the prodigal son; it's an abomination! Let us take a fresh look at the parable.

"There was a man who had two sons. 12 The younger one said to his father, 'Father, give me my share of the estate.' So he divided his property between them. (Luke 15:11-12)

First, notice that the son demanded his inheritance. This is evidence of greed. He did not merely receive what was offered to him because none was offered. Later the son confesses, "I have sinned against heaven and against you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son." What exactly was his sin? If the get rich preachers are right, then his only sin was in squandering the wealth, but I believe it was both the demanding of his inheritance and the squandering of it.

Consider this; the other son was upset because of the feast given for the prodigal son, so the father said, "everything I have is yours." Now if everything our heavenly Father has is ours, why would anyone need to demand their inheritance? This tells us that any time we need anything, the Father will supply it.

What is perhaps most important, is what this parable says regarding those that demand their inheritance now. If you get all of your inheritance now, then once it's gone you are not entitled to a penny more. A feast was held in honor of the prodigal son who returned, but he already received his inheritance. Nothing is said to indicate that he will get another share of his father's net worth. Once it's gone it's gone, the Father was not obligated to give the son any more. But if you do not get your full inheritance, then everything the Father has is yours and you will have the right to ask God to supply your needs (and God's means of meeting your needs is often through other people).

Jim Bakker came to a fresh realization of the Prodigal Son while he was in prison. Most of the people in prison are there because of greed. Whether it was dealing drugs, robbing, embezzling, fraud, tax evasion, and so forth, most people in prison have a problem with greed. Jim Bakker realized this while in prison.

Even "The Prodigal Son," one of my favorite stories told by Jesus, took on new meaning as I read it for the first time with an overview of Scripture in mind. I quickly noticed that the story began with the younger brother saying to the father, "Give me! Give me my part of the inheritance" (Luke 15:12). He didn't even say, "Please give me." He simply demanded. Before long that young man landed in the pigpen. I began to see that the fastest route to the pigpen begins with "Give me" ... and the fastest route to the "big pen," the federal penitentiary, often begins with the same phrase, "Give me!" (I Was Wrong, p. 531-532) (Ellipses are in the original)

In Luke 16 Jesus said,

10 "Whoever can be trusted with very little can also be trusted with much, and whoever is dishonest with very little will also be dishonest with much. 11 So if you have not been trustworthy in handling worldly wealth, who will trust you with true riches?" (Luke 16:10-11)

How we use worldly wealth will determine whether we receive heavenly riches, which are health, long life, happiness, and wisdom and understanding about the things of God and his Word. If we use money to buy luxury

goods, we are not using it properly and we will not be given understanding about the Word of God. What this means is, that those that teach the get-rich message will not, they absolutely will not, be given insight into the word of God to understand its meaning. This explains why the get-rich preachers so often are teaching something from a Scripture that is totally wrong. They just do not have much understanding, because God cannot trust them with true riches.

Chapter Five **Mark Chapter 4**

(1)

The get-rich preachers avoid those passages of Scripture that clearly contradict the get-rich gospel. X wrote a whole book (which was given away free by TBN) about Mark chapter 4, claiming it teaches the doctrine of great abundance, yet he never mentioned verse 19 that says, "the deceitfulness of wealth and the desires for other things come in and choke the word, making it unfruitful." Amazing! So Jesus says earthly wealth can deceive you, choking out the true Gospel. The get-rich preachers are so blinded by their own greed they pass right over that verse and do not even know it's there! They have been deceived by wealth.

X's book is full of gross error. X said that Jesus promised in Mark 4:13 that those who understand the parable of the sower of seed, will be able to understand all other parables, but that is not what Jesus was saying in verse 13. The NIV makes it clear:

Then Jesus said to them, "Don't you understand this parable? How then will you understand any parable? (4:13)

Jesus was saying that this parable should be the easiest of all the parables to understand-- so if you do not understand this easy parable, how can you expect to understand any of the other parables? This is almost the opposite of what X said it means. Clearly, X does not understand the parable in Mark 4 because he does not even understand that simple verse! So it is no surprise that he said the first part of the parable is about farming! Here is the parable and Jesus' interpretation:

3 "Listen! A farmer went out to sow his seed. 4 As he was scattering the seed, some fell along the path, and the birds came and ate it up. 5 Some fell on rocky places, where it did not have much soil. It sprang up quickly, because the soil was shallow. 6 But when the sun came up, the plants were scorched, and they withered because they had no root. 7 Other seed fell among thorns, which grew up and choked the plants, so that they did not bear grain. 8 Still other seed fell on good soil. It came up, grew and produced a crop, multiplying thirty, sixty, or even a hundred times." ...

14 The farmer sows the word. 15 "Some people are like seed along the path, where the word is sown. As soon as they hear it, Satan comes and takes away the word that was sown in them. ... 18 Still others, like seed sown among thorns, hear the word; 19 but the worries of this life, the deceitfulness of wealth and the desires for other things come in and choke the word, making it unfruitful. 20 Others, like seed sown on good soil, hear the word, accept it, and produce a crop - thirty, sixty or even a hundred times what was sown." (Mark 4)

Jesus did not repeat the parable. He gave a parable, then he interpreted it. This is clear evidence that X greatly lacks understanding of the Word of God. X says that in the second parable (it's actually the interpretation of the parable) the agricultural seed, has become money: There you have it. When you give your money into the gospel, God automatically gives it seed-power.

Jesus never said the seed represented money, he said it represented the Word! If the seed is the Word, it's not money. Nothing could be more blasphemous than to equate the Word of God with unrighteous mammon-- money! It's an abomination!

(2)

The correct interpretation of the parable in Mark 4 is this. The ground represents the hearts of men. The seed represents the Word of God. So it's not money that produces the crop, but the Word of God which is sown into the hearts of people. Some Christians are like the good ground that produce a great crop from the Word, by growing spiritually to produce a Godly family and become great in the Kingdom. While others barely advance at all. They profess to be Christians but continue to sin, lack understanding of God's Word, and do not produce any fruit.

Continuing in Mark chapter 4, verses 21-25 refer to understanding the truth of God's Word:

21 He said to them, "Do you bring in a lamp to put it under a bowl or a bed? Instead, don't you put it on its stand? 22 For whatever is hidden is meant to be disclosed, and whatever is concealed is meant to be brought out into the open. 23 If anyone has ears to hear, let him hear." 24 "Consider carefully what you hear," he continued. "With the measure you use, it will be measured to you--and even more. 25 Whoever has will be given more; whoever does not have, even what he has will be taken from him." (Mark 4:21-25)

These verses say that God intends for all truth to come to light. But not everyone will understand. Whoever rightly divides the Word of God will be given understanding so he may understand even more of God's Word than he now does. And if anyone does not rightly divide the Word, what little understanding he does have will be taken away. X says the passage refers to understanding how to receive a great harvest of money! Here is X's words-- Paraphrased, it would be as follows: If any man has ears to understand, let him understand. He said again to them, be careful what you understand, because with whatever measure of understanding you do your giving, whatever you give will be measured to you. Unto you who properly understand shall more be given.

Clearly our Lord is telling us that with this new insight, the more you understand about Him and His Word when you give, the greater your rate of return will be.

... The more understanding you have, the greater your return will be, for he who has understanding will receive, and he who doesn't have understanding, even the wealth he has will be taken from him.

Wow, so it is evident that the get-rich preachers lack even basic understanding of the Word. The get-rich preachers have misapplied the Word of God by calling the seed of God's Word, money. Then they have developed the doctrine that the seed (money) must be in the ground for a long time before it will grow to produce a harvest. Which means that when you give money to them, the reason you do not get anything back is because you have not waited long enough; even money-seed must be allowed to grow, which is pure nonsense. How many years does it take for God to find someone a job? God is more than able to get someone a job today! Or he could say, "buy that vacant lot" and in one month sell it for ten times the cost.

But the fact of the matter is, when people give money for the purpose of getting lots of money back, which is the whole doctrine of the get-rich preachers, then they are giving with wrong motives, which is the reason they are still waiting for their big harvest.

You want something but don't get it . . . You do not have, because you do not ask God. 3 When you ask, you do not receive because you ask with wrong motives, that you may spend what you get on your pleasures. (James 4:1-3)

Nothing is said in this passage about not receiving from God because they did not give money as seed. God will give to those who ask, if they need the money or desire to use the money to help the poor and the spread of the Gospel. But the get-rich preachers say that asking is not enough, we must give money before we will get any back. X says:

I can personally testify to the difficulty that goes with this waiting time, for my wife and I have been through it. Waiting caused us to look like fools to our family. It was as if we were standing still financially. Everyone seemed to be doing better than we were. We gave and gave, and then just gave some more. However, no matter how much we gave, we just didn't seem to be getting ahead, as the others in our family were. All we could see were the stalks. Oh, yes! God met our needs, but we didn't seem to be accumulating anything.

X reveals that he wanted more than his needs met, he wanted to "accumulate" things. He shows his desire to keep up with the Jones'. He reveals his desired for financial gain and that he gave money with the wrong motives so he could use the money on material pleasures. He also reveals that his trust is not in God, but in money:

How wonderful it is when the farmer thrusts in the sickle and takes the harvest!... This glorious feeling is especially wonderful when it comes in the financial realm. You have unspeakable joy when the fear of insufficiency is gone from your life.

What a shame that he put so much trust in money rather than God.

Chapter Six Spirituality and Riches

(1)

Even though he teaches how to get rich, X said he noticed that Christians who prosper tend to become spiritually

cold. Really? What a surprise! Guess what, this is exactly what the Bible teaches about Earthly riches!, starting as far back as Deuteronomy:

Be careful that you do not forget the Lord your God . . . when your herds and flocks grow large and your silver and gold increase and all you have is multiplied, then your heart will become proud and you will forget the Lord your God, who brought you out of Egypt, ... (Deut. 8:11,13-14)

And this is exactly what happened to the Israelites. Their wealth increased until they forgot God and were destroyed because of it. And the get-rich preachers want us to have wealth like them so we can become spiritually cold also. No thank you, we should learn from them and not become wealthy. The more money and material goods you have the more you come to rely on the money rather than God. It is just a fact of human nature. X wants us to become wealthy so we can become spiritually poor, blind, and naked like the Laodiceans. It is not a coincidence that the Laodicians were materially wealthy but spiritually poor, while the church in Smyrna was materially poor but spiritually rich:

14 "To the angel of the church in Laodicea write: These are the words of the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the ruler of God's creation. 15 I know your deeds, that you are neither cold nor hot. I wish you were either one or the other! 16 So, because you are lukewarm--neither hot nor cold--I am about to spit you out of my mouth. 17 You say, 'I am rich; I have acquired wealth and do not need a thing.' But you do not realize that you are wretched, pitiful, poor, blind and naked. 18 I counsel you to buy from me gold refined in the fire, so you can become rich; and white clothes to wear, so you can cover your shameful nakedness; and salve to put on your eyes, so you can see. 19 Those whom I love I rebuke and discipline. So be earnest, and repent. (Revelation 3:14-19)

About the Laodiceans, the Zondervan NIV Bible Commentary says: The spirit of the surrounding culture had crept into the congregation and had paralyzed their spiritual life. But did they claim to be materially rich or spiritually rich? Most likely both were involved; the Laodiceans probably interpreted their material wealth as a blessing from God and thus were self-deceived as to their true spiritual state.

Christ's revelation of the Laodiceans' actual situation shatters their illusions and calls them to repentance: "But you do not realize that you are wretched, pitiful, poor, blind and naked." (Vol.2, p. 1153)

These people were materially wealthy but spiritually poor. The Greek for "poor" is ptochos, and means:

Poor and helpless... abject poverty, utter helplessness, complete destitution... The adjective ptochos, indicates complete helplessness (in contrast to penes, which means poor but capable of providing for oneself). Therefore, ptochos is sometimes translated "beggar" because of the helplessness of the individual, begging being the only means of survival. (Complete Word Study Dictionary, p. 1252-1253)

The Greek for "blind" is taphlos,

...to envelop with smoke, be unable to see clearly... Figuratively in respect to the mind, ignorant, stupid, slow of understanding. (CWD)

Most rich Christians are spiritually impoverished, especially those who teach others how to acquire wealth! These rich people are in the worst possible spiritual condition. The only way these Christians will ever be able to see and understand the truth about wealth, that they should give their wealth to the poor, is to suffer the fire of hardship, like gold is refined, only then will they will repent.

How could the rich Laodiceans become spiritually rich? Only by acquiring gold refined in the fire, referring to hardships and adversities, including sickness. So it is no wonder that so many Christians in America suffer health problems, it is one of God's ways of refining prosperous Christians who have become lukewarm.

(2)

To the church at Smyrna, Jesus said, "*I know your afflictions and your poverty--yet you are rich!*" (Revelation 2:9). The poor are blessed because they go through much more hardship than prosperous Christians, and are therefore more likely to be strong in faith. This is why James said, "*Has not God chosen those who are poor in the eyes of the world to be rich in faith*" (James 2:5). Being poor forces you to trust God day to day. But the get-rich preachers teach that a person rich in faith will drive a Rolls Royce or BMW. No, it is the rich who are greatly lacking in faith because they trust in their riches, while the poor must look to God. As a poor person myself, I know of what I speak. I was even homeless. The homeless suffer much more than you can imagine and yet little is being done by prosperous Christians to help them. What a shame.

In fact, having wealth can be a great Hinderance to our ability to connect with God. When we fast, it denies the flesh and increases the spiritual connection. Our prayers and spiritual gifts seem to be more potent. Having lots of material goods is like having a full stomach. So if you live a fasted life without lots of money and the bank or material goods, you will be spiritually stronger, like fasting from food. This is probably one of the reasons that Jesus required his disciples to give up their material wealth before they could become his disciples; probably just as important as his need to raise money to feed the poor.

The apostle James said:

9 The brother in humble circumstances ought to take pride in his high position. 10 But the one who is rich should take pride in his low position, because he will pass away like a wild flower. 11 For the sun rises with scorching heat and withers the plant; its blossom falls and its beauty is destroyed. In the same way, the rich man will fade away even while he goes about his business. (James 1:9-11)

So rich people are not only spiritually poor, but they also hold a low position with God. So wealth is not a blessing from God! Satan is the god of this world and he will give generously to all who desire to pursue materialism, but the spiritual cost is high.

Don't let any of the get-rich preachers fool you into believing that they are not talking about getting luxury items, that they are really talking about getting money so you can give to God. What they are teaching, is that if you give to God, he will make you rich enough to also have plenty of money for yourself, so you can buy a speed-boat, a BMW, a big nice home, and so forth. X says,

Don't worry about missing out on the good life. As long as you fulfill God's purpose in your giving, God will loose abundance into your hands.

This means that if you send him money, you will become rich, which is what he means by "the good life." On the one hand, X teaches that in order for the Great Commission to be completed, the Christians must take over all the wealth of the world, because the cost is so great. But on the other hand, he teaches that God always supplies the need for every minister he calls, which would mean that none of them ever lack for anything. So why are they asking for money?

God has already given plenty of money to Christians which they should be using to preach the Gospel and take care of the poor, but they are spending the money on "the good life"-- big homes, luxury cars, boats, multimillion-dollar churches, recreation halls, roller rings, gymnasiums, and so on. If most Christians lived like they were fighting a war, more than enough money would be available for the spreading of the Gospel.

Chapter Seven Using Proper Context

(1) Mark 11

Another Scripture that the get-rich preachers misinterpret is Mark 11:23: "I tell you the truth, if anyone says to this mountain, 'Go, throw yourself into the sea,' and does not doubt in his heart but believes that what he says will happen, it will be done for him." 24 Therefore I tell you, whatever you ask for in prayer, believe that you have received it, and it will be yours.

This verse is supposed to mean that if you have enough faith, you can have anything you want. What nonsense! Jesus does not contradict himself. Just consider all the passages that have been included above that describe the deceitfulness of riches and how we are not to have Earthly treasure, and how rich people have a low standing with God, and little faith. Jesus was saying, "*if you pray for anything you will receive it*"--within the context of everything he had taught them up to that point.

For example; suppose your son has severe convulsions and goes into a coma every time he eats chocolate, and this condition has been present for five years. Then one day he asks, "What can I have for desert?" And you say, "Whatever you want." Are you in fact telling your son that he can eat chocolate? Of course not, and he knows it. He knows he cannot eat chocolate, so when he hears that he can have whatever he wants he is not so stupid as to suppose that he now has permission to eat something that could kill him. It is ridiculous that you should have to tell him every single day, "You can have anything, except chocolate," "...anything, except chocolate," "... anything, except chocolate." Likewise, Jesus is not going to tell you in every chapter of the Bible not to commit adultery, because it is clearly stated in the Ten Commandments. So also Jesus does not expect to have to continually repeat himself for you to understand what he teaches about worldly riches.

Then what is Jesus referring to? He is referring to anything that is according to the will of God for Christians, which includes healing the sick, feeding the poor, clothing the naked, and preaching the Gospel. If you ask for something you need, then you are asking rightly. But if you are asking for money for a luxury car then you are asking wrongly, and you will not get what you ask for, so states James 4:1-3:

You want something but don't get it . . . You do not have, because you do not ask God. 3 When you ask, you do not receive because you ask with wrong motives, that you may spend what you get on your pleasures. (James 4:1-3)

I hope this is clear to you. Jesus was not saying that if you have enough faith you can cause a chest of gold to appear before your eyes, nor was he saying that you can have what you should not have. That statement must fit with everything else he taught in all four gospels.

(2) John 14

"I tell you the truth, anyone who has faith in me will do what I have been doing. He will do even greater things than these, because I am going to the Father. And I will do whatever you ask in my name, so that the Son may bring glory to the Father. You may ask me for anything in my name, and I will do it." (John 14:12-14)

Is Jesus saying we can acquire "even greater" material wealth than he had? Of course not. The subject of this paragraph is the works of the Gospel; which are bringing people into the Kingdom, healing the sick, feeding the hungry, and other works that bring glory to God. The Scripture has NO connection with getting material goods from God that Jesus has already told us we should not have!

Driving a BMW while people a few blocks away are barely eating and do not have the money to pay their electric bill, does not bring glory to God. But if you ask God for the funds to pay their bill, that would bring glory to God.

(3) John 15

This next passage is much like the last one:

"If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be given you. This is to my Father's glory, that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be my disciples." (John 15:7-8)

To bear fruit does not mean to get rich. This passage cannot be made to refer to wealth. Jesus is here saying that we can ask for what qualifies as bearing fruit; fruit that will bring glory to God. Bearing fruit is doing the work of the gospel, feeding the hungry, etc. In this way we show ourselves to be His disciples. Having money does not show people that you are a disciple of Jesus, but giving it to help the hurts of needy people in Africa or Asia does show people that you are his disciples.

(4) John 10

The thief cometh not, but for to steal, and to kill, and to destroy: I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly. (John 10:10)(KJV) This is another verse the get-rich preachers use to support their claims that Christ wants us to have abundant possessions. But they intentionally disregard what Jesus said in Luke: "Watch out! Be on your guard against all kinds of greed; a man's life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions." (Luke 12:15) Since Jesus does not contradict himself, there can be NO QUESTION about it. Abundant life is not abundant possessions. And we should be careful least we start thinking that it is. But many people have been deceived by riches; they have been overcome by greed so that they believe that abundant life equals abundant possessions, or an abundance of money in the bank. What's more, the Greek for "life" in John 10 is zoe (2222, Strong's number), which relates to the spiritual life. Why didn't Luke use bios (979), which refers to this physical world and is translated "possessions"? Because Jesus was not talking about material abundance but spiritual abundance, and that's most important.

Bios is translated "possessions" in 1 John 3:17, "*If anyone has material possessions and sees his brother in need...*" The literal translation says, "*Whoever has the means of life of the world, and sees his brother having need...*" (IGENT). So when Jesus was referring to this physical world Luke used "bios," which means Jesus was not referring to the material side of life when he said he came to give us abundant life. In the next passage "bios" is translated "life":

"The seed that fell among thorns stands for those who hear, but as they go on their way they are choked by life's worries, riches and pleasures, and they do not mature." (Luke 8:14)

Notice that life's riches can choke out the Word of God! If the riches of this world can choke out the Word of God, then Christians should be very careful about not having too much of these riches. As it stands now, the get-rich preachers do not believe the above statement and preach that Christians should be millionaires. We just learned that having wealth is very dangerous to us, spiritually, yet the get-rich preachers want us to become wealthy. No, it is Satan who wants Christians wealthy because he knows the harm it will do us, he is the one behind the get-rich gospel.

(5) 3 John 2

Even Baptists and other main-stream Christians preach that a righteous man will naturally tend to become prosperous -- "I wish above all things that thou mayest prosper and be in health, even as thy soul prospereth" (3 John 2) (KJV). But other translations give a different perspective:

Beloved, in regard to all things, I pray for you to do well, and to be in health, as your soul does well. (IGENT)

Dear friend, I pray that you may enjoy good health and that all may go well with you, even as your soul is getting along well. (NIV)

These translations tell us that 3 John 2 does NOT say that we should become financially prosperous as our spirit grows in Christ. But it does say that the person John was addressing (Gaius) was doing well spiritually, and he prayed that Gaius would also do well or prosper in all other areas of his life, just as his soul was prospering. But to prosper does not mean to become rich! Jesus did not contradict himself and neither did his apostles contradict him. Here again, we must take into account the whole of the teachings of Jesus and the apostles.

(6) James

In the book of James we learn that the people were giving rich people the best seats at their church meetings, so this proves there were rich church members there, right? Wrong.

2 Suppose a man comes into your meeting wearing a gold ring and fine clothes, and a poor man in shabby clothes also comes in. 3 If you show special attention to the man wearing fine clothes and say, "Here's a good seat for you," but say to the poor man, "You stand there" or "Sit on the floor by my feet," 4 have you not discriminated among yourselves and become judges with evil thoughts? (James 2:2-4)

He said "Suppose" a rich man comes in and a poor man, this is not saying that there were rich church members as some preachers claim, but it is merely saying that if a rich man does come into the church then he should not be given the best seat. The next passage proves that James did not think much of the rich people in that community,

6 ... Is it not the rich who are exploiting you? Are they not the ones who are dragging you into court? 7 Are they not the ones who are slandering the noble name of him to whom you belong? 8 If you really keep the royal law found in Scripture, "Love your neighbor as yourself," you are doing right. 9 But if you show favoritism, you sin and are convicted by the law as lawbreakers. (James 2: 6-9)

It should be obvious to anyone with a high school education that James was coming down hard on the rich people who came to those church meetings. They were unsaved, not Christians. Christians would not have been guilty of exploiting Christians, having law suits against Christians, and even slandering Christ! But the rich in that community were guilty of those things. Such people should not be given the best seats if they happen to visit!

(7) Big Nice Home

The apostle John relates this story:

Turning around, Jesus saw them following and asked, "What do you want?" They said, "Rabbi" (which means teacher), "Where are you staying?" "Come," he replied, "and you will see." (John 1:38-39)

A get-rich preacher on TV translated the above verse like this: "Rabbi, we heard you have a big nice home; we want to see it." Laughable and ludicrous! Deception knows no limits. Did you know that Jesus actually acknowledges that he was not rich and did not have a palace? When Jesus was speaking to a crowd about John the Baptist, he said:

"What did you go out into the desert to see?... A man dressed in fine clothes? No, those who wear fine clothes are in king's palaces." (Matthew 11:7-8)

John did not have a king's palace and neither did Jesus because Jesus did not live as an earthly king. Only literal earthly kings could afford palaces and fine clothes in those days. Today, merchants are the richest men in the world, but in those days the kings were the richest. (Merchants were rich but not as rich as kings.)

As proof that Jesus was rich, X said that Jesus wore expensive clothing. People that are healed of a deadly illness or that have their child brought back to life, can be very grateful. It would come as a big surprise if people did not give gifts of gratitude to Jesus. No doubt someone such as the royal official (John 4:46) whose son was healed, gave Jesus some clothes. It would have been more than rude to sell them to feed the poor, as long as enough money was available for the purpose of feeding the poor. So the fact that Jesus was wearing nice clothes on the day of his arrest does not prove that he was wealthy. Again, read the whole Bible, folks, the whole thing.

(8) Pressed Down and Shaken Together

"Give, and it will be given to you. A good measure, pressed down, shaken together and running over, will be poured into your lap. For with the measure you use, it will be measured to you." (Luke 6:38)

As we have seen, Jesus does not contradict himself, so is he here telling us that when we give money to a preacher that we will get back a whole heap a cash? No. In context, Jesus was teaching reciprocity, as the verses just before that one shows,

"Do not judge, and you will not be judged. Do not condemn, and you will not be condemned. Forgive, and you will be forgiven." (Luke 6:37)

Taking into consideration everything Jesus has taught about money and giving, and the context of this passage (6:38), he was saying this: "Give much to others when they are in need, and they will give much to you when you are in need." In other words, you reap what you sow. This is the basic philosophy that Jesus taught and the apostles taught. It does not mean that if you sow money you get money, but if you give money to those in need, when you are in need you also will have your needs met. At the most, it could mean that you will not come into great need, but it does not mean you will get piles of money.

Chapter Eight No Returns

(1) The Next Millionaire

Jesus and his disciples were watching people put money into the temple treasury, including rich people. Then a widow came and put in two coins that amounted to less than a penny:

43 Calling his disciples to him, Jesus said, "I tell you the truth, this poor widow has put more into the treasury than all the others. 44 They all gave out of their wealth; but she, out of her poverty, put in everything--all she had to live on." (Mark 12:43-44)

Now, if the teaching of the get-rich preachers is accurate, then this widow should have become the richest woman in Israel because she gave all she had, which Jesus considered to be more than the rich had given. The get-rich preachers teach that a big offering, like \$1,000, will net you a bundle. So this woman gave MORE than the rich, which means she should have gotten a wagon load of gold.

(2) Obedience

The weakest proof that the get-rich preachers use to support their get-rich doctrines, is experience. Just because you give money to a preacher and you get a raise on your job or a better job, does not mean that one results from the other. Even the worst sinners get raises and good jobs. It rains on the just and the unjust. God is not going to cause you to lose money or lose your job in an attempt to get you to see that you are giving with wrong motives, unless he specifically desires to teach you what is right in this area. But the vast majority of people who give money do not get anything back, which is the reason the get rich preachers also teach that you must wait many years before you get a return, to cover the fact that the vast majority of people are not getting returns.

Don Basham relates his experience with giving and receiving:

Some years ago I felt strongly urged by the Lord to give \$150 to a fellow minister in need. I obeyed, even though at the time that \$150 represented about 75 percent of my total financial resources. That simple act of doing what the Lord wanted was followed by months of unexpected prosperity.

A few years later, in a time of relative abundance, I gave \$1,000 to another ministry I felt was worthy of support. But this time there was no flood of blessing in return. At first I felt resentful

that God hadn't been impressed by my generosity. But eventually, I acknowledged that the second gift had been my idea, not God's. God let me give the gift, but He hadn't told me to give it. (p.106)

I can relate a similar story. One time God told me to give \$25.00 which was a lot of money to me, and within a month my income almost doubled, but even then it was still only about \$300 per month. Does that mean every time I give \$25 or an equal percentage of my present income that I can expect my income to double? Not a chance. The key here is that Don Basham and I had obeyed God when God told us to give. Obedience is better than sacrifice. The increase in income was not a sowing and reaping principle, it was a reward for obeying God. If God tells you to give money to someone you can be confident that you will be rewarded, not because you sowed a seed. You may get a return from sowing a seed but it will not be anywhere like it is when you give when God tells you to give.

(3) Didache

The Didache, also called The Teachings Of The Twelve Apostles, says:

And when he departs let the apostle receive nothing save bread, until he finds shelter; but if he ask [for] money, he is a false prophet. (Didache 11:6)

8 Yet not every one that speaks in the Spirit is a prophet, but only if he have the ways of the Lord. From his ways therefore the false prophet and the prophet shall be recognized. 9 And no prophet when he orders a table in the Spirit shall eat of it; otherwise he is a false prophet. (Didache 11:8-9) And whosoever shall say in the Spirit, Give me silver or anything else, ye shall not listen to him; but if he tell you to give on behalf of others that are in want, let no man judge him. (Didache 11:12)

If we applied this standard to the preachers of today, there would be very few who passed the test; hummmm.

(4) A Certain Rich Man

Jesus told a parable about a certain rich man who's farm produced a bumper crop. Like the get-rich preachers, the man rejoiced in his abundance. The man built bigger barns to store his grain and relaxed, knowing that he had plenty to last him for several years. Then Jesus said:

"But God said to him, 'You fool! This very night your life will be demanded from you.' ... This is how it will be with anyone who stores up things for himself but is not rich toward God." (Luke 12:20-21)

What this rich man did is widely practiced today; it's called a retirement account, or pension funds, or investments! Many ordinary people are actually millionaires because of the size of their retirement savings. But Jesus suggests that people who do not give large portions of their income to the Work of God will die and leave their hoarded wealth to others. I suggest that if they do not die, they will suffer illnesses and be forced to use the money for medical bills or other major problems.

Certainly many rich people have lived cursed lives, such as J. Paul Getty, who had one child die of a brain tumor, another committed suicide at age 48, another became a drug addict. His granddaughter Irene said, "*I hate money... I don't want to be a Getty*" (Interview on Dateline NBC, 1996). Irene was a drug addict with aids. Her brother is nearly a vegetable because of a drug overdose.

Since retirement accounts are usually invested in the stock market or bond market, you could lose it all if the markets crash. It is best to give what you have today to take care of your poor brothers and sisters in Christ in other countries and God will see to it that your needs are met. Many Christians in Asia and Africa are literally naked and wearing rags while the Christians in America are spend thousands of dollars on a trip to Disneyland or a big screen TV.

Chapter Nine More Than Enough

(1) More Than Enough

When the apostles agreed that Paul should preach to the Gentiles, "*All they asked was that we should continue to remember the poor, the very thing I was eager to do*" (Galatians 2:10). What? The man who was homeless and hungry remembered the poor?! Occasionally Paul even worked to support himself rather than take money from the people he ministered to. The get-rich preachers today would say that Paul cheated the poor out of an opportunity to be made prosperous by giving to him. I am not saying that preachers should not receive an income

from preaching; of course they should. But how big of an income? Did Paul collect money from those who were financially able, so he could travel from city to city in a coach pulled by six white horses? No, but he did collect money to help other Christians in financial need:

I am not trying to relieve others by putting a burden on you; but since you have plenty at this time, it is only fair that you should help those who are in need. Then, when you are in need and they have plenty, they will help you. In this way both are treated equally. As the scripture says, "The man who gathered much did not have too much; and the man who gathered little did not have too little." (2 Corinthians 8:13-15) (Good News Version)

Yes, God will supply our needs, but according to the above verse, his intended way of doing so is through our fellow brothers and sisters in Christ. The above verse also says Christians can have "too much." That is, much more than they need, while others are suffering want. The church definitely believes you can have too little, but who teaches that you can have too much? "God is sure blessing brother so-and-so, have you seen his new Cadillac?" According to the above verse, everyone who does not give all he has above his basic needs, has too much and is keeping what God intends for the benefit of others.

While the children of Israel were in the desert, God fed them with manna, but they could only gather enough for one day. If they gathered more than they could eat it ruined overnight, except when they gathered enough for the Sabbath. God was teaching them to depend upon God and not hoarded wealth. The NIV Study Bible says this about the above passage in 2 Corinthians:

The reference is to the gathering by the Israelites of the manna in the desert. Though in the daily gathering the aged and weak might collect less than the prescribed amount and the young and vigorous might collect more, there was an equal distribution, so that the excess of some ministered to the deficiency of others. (NIVSB)

) So Paul was using Deuteronomy as a proof text for requesting money for the assistance of other Christians, and rightly so. After everyone gathered the manna they measured it out and each person received one omer of manna (about four quarts). This is a very important lesson for us today but prosperous Americans are too greedy to share their wealth. They want to keep it all for themselves. They have bought into the idea that people should not be given "hand-outs" and should be homeless if they cannot find work. This is not God's plan, it's Capitalist economics, not Biblical economics.

(2) Might Become Rich

Since we are in 2 Corinthians, it is a good time to deal with verse 9 which is used by some get-rich preachers:

9 For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, so that you through his poverty might become rich. (2 Cor.8:9)

The get-rich preachers would have you believe that Paul was saying that Christ came and died on the cross so that we can become millionaires, and that the Corinthians were millionaires because of what Paul said, "you ... might become rich." Yes, they have actually said that! Let's look at the context of the whole chapter.

In the first part of the chapter Paul referred to Christians who were poor, yet they gave richly, "*their extreme poverty welled up in rich generosity*" (2 Cor.8:2). Here is an example of Paul using the word "rich" to refer to something other than millions of dollars. Poor people cannot give millions of dollars, therefore, their "rich" generosity was only rich to the extent that it was more than they could really afford to give.

In like manner, the term rich in verse 9 does not mean "worth millions of dollars," and the verses that follow that statement of Paul, prove the point.

. . . [give] according to your means. 12 For if the willingness is there, the gift is acceptable according to what one has, not according to what he does not have. 13 Our desire is not that others might be relieved while you are hard pressed, but that there might be equality. (2 Cor.8:11-13)

Here Paul is telling the Corinthians that they should give according to their means. Now, if they were rich, that is, worth millions of dollars, then how could they be hard pressed if they gave to others? Surely a millionaire would not be hard pressed even if he gave \$50,000 to help feed the other Christians. Paul is speaking to people that had abundant harvests or had green fields for grazing their livestock. Paul was not asking them to give more than they could really afford to give, which is why he said he did not want them to be hard pressed. They have enough to share with others, but were not wealthy, and the very next passage positively proves it,

At the present time your plenty will supply what they need, so that in turn their plenty will supply what you need. Then there will be equality, . . . (2 Cor.8:14)

There you have it; at the present time the Corinthians have an abundance, but they obviously don't have much of an abundance because next year the other people could have more than the Corinthians and could be suppling the Corinthians! How could they possibly need to be supplied by a poor church if they were genuinely rich in the way we think of riches today? No, they were obviously not that far apart in their wealth, because it did not take much for them to become equal in their worth, "Then there will be equality"! Equality! Equality! Equality! Apparently the get-rich preachers are hard of hearing because they just cannot or will not hear the truth.

(3) The Rich Man and Lazarus

Jesus told a story about a beggar named Lazarus who sat outside the gate of a rich man who "was dressed in purple and fine linen and lived in luxury every day" (Luke 16:19). Dogs came to lick the sores that covered Lazarus' body. Lazarus longed "to eat what fell from the rich man's table." When Lazarus died the angels carried him to "Abraham's bosom" (KJV). When the rich man died he was buried and woke up in Hell, begging for a drop of water to cool his tongue.

Now, what exactly was the rich man's sin? No sin is actually mentioned, only that he was rich and living in luxury and did not help poor Lazarus. Apparently, the rich man had violated the exhortation of the prophets such as Isaiah 58. The rich man was living in "luxury" while Lazarus suffered, that was the rich man's sin. He had too much and Lazarus had too little. The rich man appealed to Abraham--

"But Abraham replied, `Son, remember that in your lifetime you received your good things, while Lazarus received bad things, but now he is comforted here and you are in agony.'" (Luke 16:25)

Living in a global community as we do today, a rich man has ample ability to know about and meet the needs of Christians in any nation on Earth. But he should start with his own city. There are people who need basic transportation; others need a permanent place to live and food to eat. It is not their fault that they are not able to compete with others in the job market.

Some people will never be the best applicant and will never be hired, for any job. But what good is a job that does not pay enough to pay rent, buy food, clothing, and so forth. Without those things one cannot even hold a job. Employers are very demanding and unforgiving, they do not tolerate someone showing up late because they had to walk because their old car broke down, or showing up bedraggled because they have no iron with which to iron the wrinkles out of their clothes. Do people who can't compete deserve to sleep under a bridge? Never!

Notice also that Lazarus was a righteous man, yet he was very poor, had sores on his body, perhaps from malnutrition, and died in that condition. It is apparent that God expected the rich man to feed Lazarus or God would not have held him accountable for not feeding Lazarus. Also, God did not send angels or anyone else to feed Lazarus. An angel fed Elijah, but not poor Lazarus. I guess Lazarus did not have enough faith or sow enough money seed.

(4) Beyond Our Needs

What about the verses that seem to say that God is the one who will supply our needs, and not just our needs, but far beyond our needs?

And God is able to give you more than you need, so that you will always have all you need for yourselves and more than enough for every good cause. As the Scripture says, "He gives generously to the poor, His kindness lasts for ever." (2 Corinthians 9:8-9) (Good News Version)

) The "He" is God. God cares about the poor and gives generously to them. But what this verse says is that God gives to the poor through you and I by giving us more than we need so that we can give to good causes, like to helping the poor. It is not promoting wealth-getting, and cannot rightly be used to increase the size of church offerings, like it so frequently is. It is talking about helping the poor! God will give us more than we need so we can give generously to the poor!

The question is, how much is more than enough? When is there extra money? In our materialistic society we never seem to have anything left over. Our lifestyle reflects our income. If your income increases, that is just more money to buy a bigger house, a sports car, diamond rings, a motorhome, a speed boat, and so forth. Paul does not say that after you have everything you need to satisfy your fleshly lusts, then if there is any left over you can give it to the poor.

The problem with American Christians is they have been brought up to seek after the "American Dream." They are climbing the ladder of success through ever increasing income, and view it as reward for hard work. It just might be that the only reason your income has increased is so the additional amount can be given to help the

poor; "more than you need."

Most well-off Christians are guilty of robbery because they have kept so much for themselves. They give offerings and even pay tithes, but that is not what Paul and God are talking about here-- they are talking about giving to the poor and needy because you earn far more than you need. Read the next verse carefully; Jesus said,

"From everyone who has been given much, much will be demanded; and from the one who has been entrusted with much, much more will be asked." (Luke 12:48)

Much is being demanded of American Christians because they have enough to share with their poor brothers and sisters in Asia and Africa. But sadly, most Christians in America have bought into the "American Dream" which is preached from the pulpits of many churches as a Biblical doctrine, but wrongly so:

Yes, God will give you much so that you can give away much, and when we take your gifts to those who need them they will break out into thanksgiving and praise to God for your help. (2 Corinthians 9:11) (Living Bible)

I have heard numerous preachers say that the above verse from Corinthians means that if you send money to the preachers that God will always give you more than you need so you will have enough to send money to them, but they are only seeing what they want to see because it's talking about giving to needy Christians, not wealthy preachers! And if God will always supply all Christians with all that they need, then there will never be any needy Christians to give to, except those who refuse to pay tithes. But why would God supply more than we need in order to help those that don't pay tithes?! The above verse says that God will supply you with much so you can give to Christians who are just not able to earn enough money to supply their own needs, especially those with injuries which prevent them from working and end up homeless because they cannot get government disability. There are even homeless people in wheel chairs! And it is neigh to impossible to get disability payments from the government. But even with those payments, it's extremely difficult to survive because the payments are so small.

The get-rich preachers will tell you that God is not poor, that he owns the cattle on a thousand hills so he can afford anything; that he has enough money to supply the poor and still have enough for them to live in luxury. The day that there are no more poor, will be the day they can live in luxury, but not until then!

Chapter Ten **American Church Greed vs Early Church Giving**

(1) Preventing Greed

It is true that God does make some people rich but very few. Few people have nice things as true gifts from God; most people acquire them out of selfishness or greed. We must give, if only for our spiritual well-being. Giving to the poor prevents greed and creates a generous heart:

Then the Lord said to him, "Now then, you Pharisees clean the outside of the cup and dish, but inside you are full of greed and wickedness... But give what is inside the dish to the poor, and everything will be clean for you." (Luke 11:39, 41)

Although we may appear to be outwardly righteous, we develop greed and selfishness on the inside when we do not give to the poor. In this passage, Jesus was not referring to giving to the temple. It does not apply to giving to the preacher, but to people in poverty.

In Matthew chapter 15 Jesus condemns the Pharisees for giving money to the temple that rightly should have been used to support elderly parents:

"But you say that if a man says to his father or mother, 'Whatever help you might otherwise have received from me is a gift devoted to God,' he is not to 'honor his father' with it. Thus you nullify the word of God for the sake of your tradition." (Matthew 15:5-6)

But of course today the elderly in America are often better off than those struggling to make a living, because social security added to retirement benefits has the elderly earning over \$500 to \$1000 a week while a working man is expected to support a family on \$250-\$350 a week. Which means there are a lot of families out there in need.

(2) American Greed

Although hundreds of millions of dollars are donated by Christians every year, rather than it going for the poor or the spread of the Gospel, most of it is spent on the comfort and pleasure of those who gave it: Christian golf courses, swimming pools, and multi-million dollar church buildings and office buildings-- and the best of everything money can buy-- while the world starves for lack of physical and spiritual food. So the materialism of

this society has infiltrated the church. Many millions of dollars have been diverted from the work of the Gospel to build monuments to human egos and the comfort of spoiled American Christians.

According Mission Frontiers magazine, of all church spending, 95 % is on domestic projects; 4.5 % is spent for regular missions, and .5 % on frontier missions (going where no missionary has gone before.) There are many people who would be on the mission field today if they could raise enough money for basic support, but Christians prefer to give millions to big-name preachers on TV.

The few missionaries who manage to raise sufficient funds often live in primitive conditions, while the teachers and preachers here in the U.S. have huge incomes-- some are millionaires:

...her priests teach for a price, and her prophets tell fortunes for money. Yet they lean upon the Lord and say, "Is not the Lord among us? No disaster will come upon us." (Micah 3:11)

Unlike so many, we do not peddle the word of God for profit. (2 Corinthians 2:17)

Even in Paul's day, there were many ministers that traveled around preaching only as a means of making money. They were just doing it for profit. The church in America is the Laodicean church. It is wealthy, yet it is spiritually poor, blind, and naked. They have blinded themselves to the truth because of their desire for material goods, both the liberal churches and the conservative. Christians in America have more than enough money to preach the Gospel to all ethnic groups of the world, and help the poor, but the money is being diverted to build temples for the spiritually dead. One preacher teaches that God will give you a Royals Royce if you want one. Why does he teach this? Because of his own desire for wealth; and he does drive a Royals Royce. I have seen other preachers driving BMWs, and every other kind of luxury car.

Requiring the future ministers of the Gospel to sell all they have was not new. Jesus was following the Old Testament commands of God to Moses that the Levites were not to have an inheritance among the tribes of Israel (Numbers 1:47-49). So this new priesthood that Jesus was forming was to live without material wealth like the Levites. One thing the Catholic Church has correctly received from the early church is that it provides for all the needs of the priests but does not pay them big salaries like Protestant ministers receive. Jesus said,

"If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow me....
26 What good will it be for a man if he gains the whole world, yet forfeits his soul?...27 For the Son of Man is going to come in his Father's glory with his angels, and then he will reward each person according to what he has done." (Matthew 16:24, 26-27)

Here again, this is a speech to potential full-time disciples. If they are willing to give up everything, they will be greatly rewarded at the return of Christ. It is better to give up everything to become a minister of the living Gospel than to pursue the riches of the world which will lead you to become spiritually poor, blind, and naked. People who are not willing to live a life of self- denial should not be allowed to enter the ministry.

(3) The First Social Services Program

Though giving up their material goods was very important training in living by faith and not being attached to material goods, there was more to this than helping ministers to not become materialistic. In those days there was no food stamps, welfare, or social security, so there were many needy people that Jesus wanted to help. So after the disciples sold everything they had there was sufficient funds to provide food and clothing for the poor.

But the church today takes offerings from the poor, saying that by giving to the church God will remove their poverty. Did Jesus take offerings, telling the people they would be blessed, or even become wealthy by giving to him? No, he never did! He did just the opposite, he gave to the poor and required his disciples to give because taking care of the needs of the poor and sick is one of the basic tenants of the historic Christian faith!

Even though Jesus does not require the average Christian to give up everything like he does ministers, he does expect us to sell any excess goods whenever a need arises. Which is why the early Christians sold land or houses and "*gave to anyone as he had need*" (Acts 4:45). So it's best if Christians live close together and share all there goods:

All the believers were one in heart and mind. No one claimed that any of his possessions was his own, but they shared everything they had. ... There were no needy persons among them. For from time to time those who owned lands or houses sold them, brought the money from the sales and put it at the apostles' feet, and it was distributed to anyone as he had need." (Acts 4:32, 34-35)

Those in the early church did not give all they had all at once because there were no banks in which to keep the money safe. So as any need arose, people sold land and houses and gave the money to meet those needs. And those needs were NOT a multi-million dollar church building, or a new Cadillac for the pastor, but were clothes and food for those who could not provide for themselves. This was one of the reasons so many thousands joined the church right after it started; all the people knew that they could be injured or would some day get to old to provide for themselves, and there were no social services.

So God established the first social services and retirement program in the history of Western civilization! And he appointed his Church to carry out that program. If the Christians in America had been following the teachings of the New Testament, there would have been no need for the establishment of Social Security!

Jesus did not come as a ruler, but to serve others: *"I am among you as one who serves"* (Luke 22:26-27). The Greek for "serve" in that verse is diakoneo (1247) and means,

"To serve, wait upon, with emphasis on the work to be done ... serve by waiting on a table... care for someone's needs... helping someone directly is involved. ..." (CWD)

There are in fact several different Greek words which are all translated "serve" or a form of the word, so it was not just a general term. The other Greek words refer to public service, involuntary service in bondage, military service, the service of a priest in the temple, worship offered to God, and so forth. So other words could have been used, rather than a word that refers to waiting on tables. When Luke chose that word he was well aware of its meaning, because Christ met the needs of the poor and the sick! The apostles continued what Jesus started by personally distributing food to those in need. The book of Acts relates that some Jews were upset because "their widows were being overlooked in the daily "distribution of food" (Acts 6:1). Some people were overlooked because the apostles were distributing food and preaching and teaching and studying the Scriptures. So, to make sure everyone received their daily food, the apostles appointed seven others to distribute the food, which included Stephen and Philip. Why were the apostles distributing food in the first place? Because that is what Jesus trained them to do, "Give us today our daily bread" (Matthew 6:11). A passage in Matthew shows that Jesus was training his disciples to be servants:

"...whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first must be your slave-- just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many." (Matthew 20:26-28)

The food distribution was not just a few free meals each year, but was for poor believers on a daily bases. The early church is the example which we should follow.

It does not mean that every person who becomes a Christian must sell all they have and give it to meet the needs of others, but according to Jesus, all ministers are to give up everything and not have great material possessions or monetary wealth. In light of this, it is no wonder that God brought down the PTL network with such a bang. Even though PTL did provide food and shelter to a few needy, the many millions of dollars spent on grandiose buildings could have fed and clothed millions of people. Just the water slide and giant swimming area at Heritage USA cost 13 million dollars (Bakker, *I Was Wrong*, p. 517). Between 1984 and 1987 Bakker spent 15 million dollars just on printing and postage for his mail-outs, probably asking for money!

The average minister in America today preaches about "giving" and drives a Cadillac or other luxury car; but in fact he should be the one who does the most giving-- giving to people in his congregation that have needs, from car repairs to a place to live.

Yes, God will supply your needs, but if you have no income or a low income, God's plan for suppling your needs is for Christians to help you. Do you fear that there will be no Social Security when you retire? You should fear, the way the Church is today, but the early church had no such fear. Even though they had no Social Security or retirement, they knew they would be cared for. The Amish are the only people in America who legally don't have to pay Social Security, because they don't collect it; they take care of their own.

(4) Establishing the Kingdom on Earth

The Kingdom is not just for one day or one meal. A mere handout is not establishing God's Kingdom in people's lives. It should be a complete and well-coordinated effort to meet people's needs in a long-term way, and thereby, to bring people into the Kingdom. Feeding the hungry not only demonstrates God's love for others, it demonstrates our love for our brethren. Jesus said,

"My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you. 13 Greater love has no one than this, that he lay down his life for his friends." (John 15:12-13)

Jesus gave his life for us, and he expects us to love each other in the same way. So Jesus expects us to literally give our lives for others. As I look at the Church world today, I don't see this happening. A few people are willing to give their lives as missionaries, but almost no one will even give up their material goods to feed and clothe their poverty stricken brothers and sisters in Christ.

16 This is how we know what love is: Jesus Christ laid down his life for us. And we ought to lay down our lives for our brothers. 17 If anyone has material possessions and sees his brother in need but has no pity on him, how can the love of God be in him? (1 John 3:16-18)

About this passage, the Zondervan NIV Bible Commentary says,

The dramatic conclusion we are irresistibly led to is this: "And we ought to lay down our lives for our brothers." We are to do this not simply because that is what Jesus did, but because that is what Jesus revealed to be the demand of agape love. Love is denial of self for another's gain. ... How can we know whether we would sacrifice our life for a fellow believer? We can know by being compassionate toward such a one in his or her present need. If we are unable or unwilling to sacrifice material advantage for the sake of our fellow believers, we know that the love of God is not in us. (Vol.2, p. 1097)

The prophet Isaiah associates the coming of Christ with rejoicing by poor people:

In that day the deaf will hear the words of the scroll, ... the needy will rejoice in the Holy One of Israel. (Isaiah 29:18-19)

The following passage in Acts shows that the money given to the Apostles was not just for the work of preaching, but was for individual needs such as clothes and food. It also shows that they prepared their food and ate together:

Selling their possessions and goods, they gave to anyone as he had need.... They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts. (Acts 2:45-46)

1 Corinthians 13 is Paul's well known passage about love, *"If I speak in tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, ... If I give all I possess to the poor and surrender my body to the flames, but have not love, I gain nothing"* (13:1,3). Paul was referring to the motive for giving possessions and doing good works. Some rich people give in an effort ease their consciences or because they think they can buy their way into heaven. Heavenly reward from giving is something you can receive only if you first qualify to enter heaven by trusting in Jesus as your Savior.

Paul goes on to say that all things on this earth will pass away, including all our good works. The only things that will remain into eternity are "faith, hope and love. But the greatest of these is love" (13:13). God is love and love is the foundation of all that he does and should be the foundation of all that we do, including our good works.

Chapter Eleven **What God Gives**

(1) King's Kids

The teachings of the get-rich preachers has caused many people to sin. They teach, "You are the King's kids, you can have whatever you want," "You should have the best," "God blessed Abraham with wealth, he will bless you too." Such teaching causes Christians to develop great desire for material things, especially if they are poor. In an issue of Charisma Magazine a popular Christian singer said,

"Although God has blessed us, I need something that catapults me into the stratosphere financially. I don't need to be just pretty well off. I need to be wealthy, extremely wealthy, and I don't even mind saying it." (July 2000)

God help us, the get-rich preachers are leading many Christians into idolatry. The get-rich doctrines causes people to give to God out of greed, to command angels to bring them money, demand that God give them the money he owes them, and it is all the fault of the false prosperity teachers. This teaching is man-centered and selfish, rather than God-centered and selfless. Some get-rich preachers say, "Those who are against the prosperity message have never been dirt poor. If they had been, they would not be against prosperity." The reason I am against the prosperity message is because the Bible is against it. Also, I have been hungry and homeless, but "Christians" treated me like I had the plague, or was just a lazy bum. I learned a lot about how much Christians do and don't do when I was homeless. I saw the rich Christians drive passed me in their new cars on the way to church, while offering me no help.

Jesus did not have earthly possessions. If there ever was a man who lived by faith, it was Jesus. To live by faith

does not mean to have enough faith to believe God for lots of money. It means to be in position where you must trust God week to week or day-to-day to supply your needs. Which means, only the poor can truly live by faith.

As further evidence for their teachings, the get-rich preachers point out that Abraham, Job, and Solomon were rich. But they fail to mention that Abraham did not live in luxury but lived in a tent, and he had many servants that were full-time employees which he supported fully. He did not pay them a low wage which cannot supply one person with housing, transportation, food, etc. All his servants had all their needs met, of that I am sure. Many rich Christians today are rich because they own businesses and pay their employees slave wages.

(2) Pagan Wealth

The get-rich preachers teach that all the Israelites were sometimes very prosperous, but they fail to mention that the Israelites were prosperous even while they were worshiping the golden calves set up by Jeroboam. Judah was also prosperous while worshiping idols:

Their land is full of silver and gold; there is no end to their treasures. Their land is full of horses; there is no end to their chariots. Their land is full of idols; they bow down to the work of their hands, to what their fingers have made. (Isaiah 2:7-9)

The get-rich preachers also fail to mention that throughout history there have been many nations that had great wealth. Consider the Egyptian tomb of Tutankhamen that was filled with gold objects. Many of the Egyptian Pharaohs had great wealth as did the city-states of Babylon, Athens, and Rome.

Consider also that when Nebuchadnezzar invaded Israel he carried off all the gold that was in the temple. So here we have a case of God giving the wealth of Israelites to a pagan king who used it to build a solid gold statue of himself!

(3) What God Gives

You often hear taught that the Israelites left Egypt with all the gold and silver of the Egyptians. Yet, what you don't hear taught is that while in the desert God commanded that the gold and silver be given to build the Tabernacle of Moses and all the objects inside such as the Ark of the Covenant. You are also not taught about the judgment of God that came upon the people because they were not satisfied with what God provided for them. God provided manna but the people soon tired of it, because they actually ate better while they were in Egypt. So they grumbled and asked for meat (Numbers 11:4). And they got what they asked for, in abundance! Yes, they got meat, tons of it,

31 Now a wind went out from the LORD and drove quail in from the sea. It brought them down all around the camp to about three feet above the ground, as far as a day's walk in any direction. 32 All that day and night and all the next day the people went out and gathered quail. No one gathered less than ten homers. Then they spread them out all around the camp. (Numbers 11:31-32)

I wonder why the get-rich preachers are not using this passage to promote their false doctrines? Could it be because of the next verse!?

But while the meat was still between their teeth and before it could be consumed, the anger of the LORD burned against the people, and he struck them with a severe plague. (Numbers 11:33)

Though we live under grace in this New Testament age, I believe we can still bring judgment upon ourselves when we are not satisfied with what God provides. Many Christians wonder why they have a sickness or some other problem, well it just might be because they brought judgment upon themselves for wanting more, more, more!

The writer of Hebrews made it clear that we should not even desire more than what God chooses to give us: "*Keep your lives free from the love of money and be content with what you have*" (Hebrews 13:5). These passages tell us that we must be very careful when we desire a big house, or big car, or other expensive items, because we are in danger of falling into idolatry and God's judgment.

(4) Woe! To The Money-Loving Christians

Have you ever wondered why the Christians in America are prosperous while the Christians in Asia or Africa are poor? Is it because the Christians in America have more faith or are able to plant more seed money? No, it is because the Christians in America live in America! The nonChristians are also prosperous. It is not faith, it is our

economy that is responsible for the prosperity in America. God has blessed America, but the Christians are not using the money God has given them to help their poor brothers and sisters, therefore God is going to take away their money.

The Bible says that greed is idolatry, which means the Christians in America are guilty of idolatry and the preachers are guilty of leading the people into idolatry. Even those preachers that do not teach the gospel of wealth teach that it is ok to be rich. It is not just the Charismatics that are guilty of materialism, which is idolatry. The parking lots of many churches are like Cadillac showrooms. Therefore God is going to bring economic disaster upon America. God is going to take away the retirement accounts and vacation homes, the sports cars and diamond rings. God is going to teach the money-loving Christians in America a lesson that money cannot buy. God is going to give the money-loving Christians in America spiritual gold which comes only by being refined in fire.

There are millions of Christians in Sudan that are suffering great persecution, but they are getting very little help from Christians in America:

The National Islamic Front is employing murder, rape, and torture to eradicate Christianity from Sudan. Christian villages are burned to the ground and raided. Christian men are killed. Christian women are enslaved and raped. Christian children are sold into slavery. Priests are tortured, imprisoned, and even crucified. Since 1983, more than one million Sudanese Christians have been killed. (Family Research Council, frc.com)

Rather than sending money to help the Christians in the Sudan, the Christians in America are eating up sermons about "money cometh" and "who wants to be a millionaire." There are millions of homeless children throughout the world that are NOT being helped by the prosperous Christians in America, therefore God is going to take the money away from the rich Christians who still don't have enough. Money is not going to "cometh," money is going to goeth. God commands that we share our wealth with those that don't have enough, but American Christians are using the money on themselves. Africa is not the Promised Land of Canaan; the Sahara Desert does not flow with milk and honey, therefore God expects us to help them. I prophesy that an economic depression will begin in 2007. How severe it will be, I do not know, I expect it will probably be as bad as the Great Depression of the 1930s, or worse.

(5) Conclusion

The gospel of greed can be summed up and illustrated with the words of one get-rich preacher on TV in 1997, "I want to pick up a golden fork and knife and belly-up to the king's table." No wonder they don't preach against greed or gluttony either. Another get-rich preacher said on TV in 2000, "*Who wants to be a Millionaire? Operation No Lack-- Send for the tape series . . .*" God help Christianity!

The Christians in America have been deceived by money: "*the deceitfulness of wealth and the desires for other things come in and choke the word, making it unfruitful*" (Mark 4:19). God is saying to American Christians today--

"Like cages full of birds, their houses are full of deceit; they have become rich and powerful and have grown fat and sleek. Their evil deeds have no limit; they do not plead the case of the fatherless to win it, they do not defend the rights of the poor. Should I not punish them for this?" declares the LORD. "Should I not avenge myself on such a nation as this? (Jeremiah 5:27-29)

This is what the Lord Almighty, the God of Israel, says: "Do not let the prophets and diviners among you deceive you. Do not listen to the dreams you encourage them to have. They are prophesying lies to you in my name. I have not sent them," declares the Lord. (Jeremiah 29:8-9)

Rather than thinking of ourselves as the King's kids, we should humbly fall on our faces before God, "O great God, you are awesome, and holy. Thank you for saving me. You are merciful and good. Thank you for providing me with this car (even if it is a 1974 Dodge) but I really need one that runs, thank you for these clothes (even if they are full of holes), but I need some new ones. There is no one like you God, etc."

Some people might suppose that because God heals people when a get-rich preacher prays for them, that it is an endorsement of those doctrines, but that is not the case. There is no group, no church, no preacher that teaches the whole pure gospel, 100% accurate. Miracles happen because they believe in miracles. Miracles also happen to Catholics, such as healings and miracles of provision, but that does not mean that Roman Catholicism has totally accurate doctrine.

So don't let the fact of healings or other miracles blind you into believing the false prosperity gospel. Don't let it create in you a desire for wealth and material goods. Seek God and his righteousness and God will provide what you need.

Go With God.