

Does God Promise Health and Wealth?, Part 1

Scripture: Selected Scriptures

Code: 90-63

The subject tonight in our study of the charismatic chaos is the health, wealth, and prosperity gospel. We can title this message with a question: "Does God Promise Health and Wealth?" When I was in the Soviet Union a couple of weeks ago, they said to me, "We want you to preach on the health and wealth gospel." I was talking to hundreds of pastors, and Pastor Dukharchenko (sp?) who heads up the church there in the Ukraine said, "I want you to preach on the health, wealth gospel." I said, "You're not telling me that that's a problem here?" How could anybody go to the Soviet Union and promise people wealth? A whole nation in poverty. He said, "It's here." He said, "Recently, outside of Kiev, a man came from America and he called the people in the city together, and he said he represented Jesus Christ, and he was going to preach, and a great crowd of non-Christian people came to hear him, and he promised them that God wanted them healthy and wealthy. And he said if they came back the next night, the power of God would fall and they would all be healed." And so they came. He said a large crowd came and nobody got healed, and they spit on the man, they spit on the man. The kind of foolish promises that are being made that cannot be fulfilled bring a terrible reproach to the name of Christ.

One of the most unusual legacies of World War II has been what are known as the cargo cults of the South Pacific. Anybody who lives in Australia or New Zealand knows about them. Many aboriginal island people ranging from northern Australia to Indonesia were first exposed to modern civilization through the Allied armed forces during World War II. The American military, in particular, often used these remote islands in the South Pacific as sites for temporary landing strips and supply depots. Those of you who remember the scenario of World War II - personally I have absolutely no memory of any of it because I was so small, but I've read and I know what occurred. Some of you will even remember, and some of you will remember your history books and be reminded of the fact that we were all over the South Pacific on remote little islands with our landing strips and our supply depots so that we could keep our men in the air, particularly.

So, when Americans and other Allies came to these little islands and met these aboriginal island people, they came bringing cargo. They flew in there, created these airstrips so they could fly larger equipment in there, and then they brought in huge warehouses full of cargo and they left as quickly as they came when the war ended. The tribal people had absolutely no opportunity to learn the ways of civilization. But for a brief moment they saw high technology up close. Cargo planes would swoop in from the sky, they would land, they would unload their payload, and then take off. Natives who lived in the bush all of a sudden saw cigarette lighters that produced fire instantly, and they believed it to be miraculous. They saw large machines come in and push trees down. They went all the way from not even having a wheel or a cart, to seeing a Jeep, modern weaponry, refrigerators, radios, talking boxes, power tools, and many varieties of food in all kinds of cans and jars.

They were fascinated by all of that and many of those tribal people concluded that the white men were gods. When the war was over and the troops were gone, tribesmen built shrines to the cargo gods. Their tabernacles were perfect replicas of cargo planes, control towers and airplane hangars. They made them out of bamboo and woven material. These structures looked remarkably like the

control towers and the plane hangars and the planes themselves, but they were really nonfunctional; all they were was shrines or temples to the cargo gods.

On some of those remote islands today the cargo cults still thrive. Some have personified all Americans in one deity, and they call that deity Tom Navy. They pray for holy cargo from every airplane that flies over. They venerate religious relics like Zippo lighters, cameras, eyeglasses, ballpoint pens, nuts and bolts, and so on. As civilization has begun to penetrate some of these cultures, their fascination for cargo has not diminished. In fact, missionaries that have been sent to these areas where cargo cults have flourished receive a warm reception at first because the cargo cultist's view their arrival as the second coming of the cargo god. But they're looking for cargo not gospel, and missionaries say they find it very difficult to penetrate the materialism that is the essence of the cargo cults.

In recent years the charismatic movement has spawned its own variety of cargo cult. It is called the word faith movement; known otherwise as the faith movement; known as the faith formula; known as the word of faith, hyperfaith, positive confession, name it and claim it, health, wealth, and prosperity teaching. All of those titles. This subdivision of the charismatic movement – Listen - is easily as superstitious and materialistic as the cargo cults of the South Pacific. The leaders of this word faith movement, including Kenneth Hagin, Kenneth and Gloria Copeland, Robert Tilton, Fred Price, and Charles Capps promise each believer financial prosperity and perfect health. Anything less, they argue, is not God's will.

And there are many people who chime in with this. In fact, as I understand, last week there was a great, great convocation at the church of Fred Price, which espouses this, attended by many, not only charismatics and Pentecostals, but even a leading Presbyterian pastor in our area. They were all there. The tentacles of this kind of theology has reached out far and wide. They have sought mainstream acceptance, and they have managed to build relationships with people who, because of those relationships, will not speak the truth against them. And so the thing flourishes like a wildfire. Of course, it appeals to people because it demands nothing but faith. It doesn't demand holiness. It doesn't demand devotion or dedication. It only demands faith, and it promises that if you have enough you'll get rich and healthy. That's a popular message.

I suppose we could say that virtually every false religion ever spawned by man worships a god whose function it is to deliver some kind of cargo. That is, human religion invariably invents gods for utilitarian reasons. They invent gods that give them what they want. They invent deities to serve them, rather than the other way around. The word faith theology has turned Christianity into a system that is no different from the lowest human religions. It is a form of voodoo where God can be coerced, cajoled, manipulated, controlled, and exploited for the Christian's own ends.

I received a mailing sent out by one rather extreme word faith teacher named David Epley. A brochure was included with a bar of prayer-blessed soap. "We are going to wash away all bad luck, sickness, misfortunes, and evil. Yes, even that evil person you want out of your life. Jesus helped a man wash blindness from his eyes; I want to help you concerning hexes, vexes, home problems, love, happiness, and joy," the brochure said. Inside the brochure were testimonies from people who had been blessed by that ministry. "Door opens to new job," said one. "An \$80,000.00 dream comes true," said another. "Couldn't use my hand for 12 years," said another. Also inside was a personal letter from the pastor, closing with a full page of instruction on how to use the soap. If you used it right, it would bring you healing and money. "Now, after you wash the poverty from your

hands, take out the largest bill or check you have. That \$100.00, \$50.00, or \$20.00 bill, hold it in your clean hands and say, 'In Jesus' name I dedicate this gift to God's work and expect a miracle return of money.'" And of course, your largest bill or check must be sent to David Epley.

The last paragraph said, quoting, "Through this gift of discernment, I see someone sending a \$25 offering and God is showing me a large check coming to them in the next short while. I mean large. It looks like over \$1,000.00. I know this sounds strange, but you know me well enough to know that I have to obey God when He speaks. I'll be here waiting for your answer."

Frankly, that sounds more like black magic. Certainly, a more outrageous example than most, but still it reflects a style that is typical of nearly all word faith ministries. If it was just plain hucksterism, that would be bad enough. I guess I could tell you honestly: I can take Reverend Ike; I can take Reverend Ike because - I don't know if you know who he is, but if you don't, don't worry about it. But I can take Reverend Ike because he uses the same gimmick, but he doesn't make it Christian. What corrupts so devastatingly is to tie this kind of con game into Christ. Word faith teachers have corrupted the heart of New Testament Christianity. They have moved the believer's focus off sound doctrine, worship, service, sacrifice, and ministry. And they've shifted it instead to promised physical, financial, and material blessings. Those blessings are the cargo that God is supposed to deliver to those who know and follow the word faith formula.

Word faith writings, there are myriad of these; you can't even keep up with them. I got a new one this week that somebody sent me to try to help me to see the truth. It's a thick book, and it's all about all of these word faith teachers. It has all their pictures on the front. There's almost no end to the proliferation of literature, but there - many trees are dying in this operation to be used for pulp and paper. Word faith articles carry titles like, "How to Write Your Own Ticket with God," "Godliness Is Profitable," "The Laws of Prosperity," "God's Creative Power Will Work for You," "Releasing the Ability of God Through Prayer," "God's Formula for Success and Prosperity," "God's Master Key to Prosperity," and "Living in Divine Prosperity," and so it goes.

In word faith religion the believer uses God, whereas the truth of biblical Christianity is: God uses the believer. Word faith theology sees the Holy Spirit as a power to be put to use for whatever the believer wants. The Bible teaches, however, that the Holy Spirit is a person who enables the believer to do whatever God wants. It is absolutely the opposite of Scripture. Many word faith teachers claim that Jesus was born again so that we might become little gods. Scripture, however, teaches that Jesus is God and it is we who must be born again.

Frankly, I have little or no tolerance for these deceptions, these corruptions of Scripture and false claims of the word faith movement. I have absolutely no constraints on me to speak to this issue because I believe I am literally bound by my obligation as one called to minister the truth of God to so speak, because this defies everything I understand to be true about Scripture.

The movement closely resembles some of the destructive greed sects that ravaged the early church. Paul and other apostles were not accommodating to or conciliatory with the false teachers who propagated ideas like that in their day. They identified them as dangerous false teachers and urged Christians to avoid them. Paul warned Timothy, for example, about, and I quote, "Men of depraved mind and deprived of the truth, who suppose that godliness is a means of gain."

This isn't anything new. Paul was dealing with those who thought godliness was a ticket for money. Paul further said to Timothy, "But those who want to get rich fall into temptation and a snare and many foolish and harmful desires which plunge men into ruin and destruction. For the love of money is a root of all sorts of evil, and some by longing for it have wandered away from the faith, and pierced themselves with many a pang but flee from these things." These cults are generated - Know this - out of a love for money. They develop a religion to accommodate their lust. Jude wrote of the greed mongers of his day, "Woe to them, for they have gone the way of Cain, and for pay they have rushed headlong into the error of Balaam, and perished in the rebellion of Korah. These men are those who are hidden reefs in your love feasts when they feast with you without fear, caring for themselves, clouds without water carried along by wind, autumn trees without fruit, doubly dead, uprooted, wild waves of the sea casting up their own shame like foam, wandering stars, for whom the black darkness has been reserved forever. They are grumblers, finding fault, following after their own lusts, they speak arrogantly, flattering people for the sake of gaining an advantage." End quote.

There is nothing I could say that would be as strong as that, and that's out of God's Word. Peter wrote, "But false prophets also arose among the people, just as there will also be false teachers among you, who will secretly introduce destructive heresies, even denying the Master who bought them, bringing swift destruction upon themselves and many will follow their sensuality, and because of them the way of truth will be maligned and in their greed they will exploit you with false words." Peter went on to say, "Their judgment from long ago is not idle, and their destruction is not asleep...For speaking out arrogant words of vanity they entice by sensuality." That is, they entice you by the things you lust for, and they entice those who barely escape from the ones who live in error, "promising them freedom while they themselves are slaves of corruption, for by what a man is overcome, by this he is enslaved."

You show me a person who preaches the money gospel, the money message, the wealth message; I'll show you a person who has been corrupted by the love of money. That's what Peter's saying. Paul said covetousness is idolatry, and Paul forbade the Ephesians to be partakers with anyone who brought either a message of immorality or a message of covetousness (Ephesians 5:5-7).

Now, the question is, How closely do modern word faith teachers resemble the greedy false teachers that the apostles described? Is it fair to write the movement off as heretical? As sub-Christian? Well, I want us to look at that, and let's find out. In some ways, I hesitate to label the word faith movement as a cult only because its boundaries are as yet somewhat hazy. Many sincere Christians hover around the periphery of the word faith teaching. It isn't a sort of bordered, identifiable cult. It's somewhat amorphous and it floats in an almost undefined way and bumps in and out of all kinds of groups of Christians.

And so while on the one hand we can't say that everybody that it touches is cultic, all of the elements within it are cultic. It has a distorted Christology, that is, a warped view of Christ. It has a distorted view of man, an exalted view of man. It has a theology built on human works. It has a process of sanctification that justifies greed. It has a belief that new revelation from within the group is unlocking secrets that have been hidden from the church for years. It believes that extra-biblical human writings are inspired and authoritative, and it has an exclusivity that compels its adherents to shun any and every criticism of the movement. In fact, as you know, Benny Hinn said if anybody criticizes him, he wants to get a Holy Ghost machine gun and blow their head off.

Without some exacting corrections in the movement's doctrinal foundations, it will become a clearly

identifiable cult, if it is not already so. It certainly is the closest thing on earth to the greed cults of the New Testament era, which the apostles bluntly labeled heresy. Now, I know that is a serious verdict, but I think there's ample evidence to bear it out. At almost every turn, the word faith movement has tainted, twisted, garbled, misunderstood, corrupted, or obliterated the crucial doctrines of Christian faith.

Let me help you with that by looking at some of them. First of all, the word faith movement has the wrong god, it has the wrong god. I believe that it is fair to say that the god of the word faith movement is not the God of the Bible. Word faith teaching, in effect - Listen to this - sets the individual believer - Are you ready for this? - above God and turns God into Santa Claus, or a genie, or a valet who is there to do whatever the Christian tells Him. See, these word faith teachers are their own supreme authority.

Kenneth Hagin, who is patriarchal in this movement, wrote this booklet called, "How To Write Your Own Ticket With God." He tells about seeing a vision of Jesus and he says to Him, "Dear Lord, I have two sermons I preach concerning the woman who touched Your clothes and was healed when You were on earth. I received both of these sermons by inspiration." I am quoting him. Later on, he quotes what Jesus told him in reply. Jesus said, "You're correct, My Spirit, the Holy Spirit, is endeavored to get another sermon into your spirit but you failed to pick it up. While I'm here I will do what you ask, I will give you that sermon outline, now get your pencil and paper and write it down." That's what Jesus said to him, he says. Hagin claims to have received numerous visions as well as eight personal visitations from Jesus. Hagin has written, quote, "The Lord Himself taught me about prosperity. I never read about it in a book. I got it directly from heaven." That claim is a lie, outright. I'll show you why a little later.

You see, they believe, or they want everybody else to believe, that God is giving this information to them. Do you understand, beloved, that if you do not have a closed canon, and if Scripture did not end with the Book of Revelation, if you believe that God is still giving revelation, there is no way to stop the flood. Everybody is claiming God speaks to them. Fortunately, for the word faith people, God is telling them exactly what they want Him to say. They've created God in the image that they want Him to be.

For example, they have no concept of God as sovereign. Scripture says in Psalm 103:19, "The Lord has established His throne in the heavens; and His sovereignty rules over all." What that simply means is God's in charge of everybody and everything. God is the blessed and only sovereign, the King of kings and Lord of lords (1 Timothy 6:15). Yet in the volumes of word faith material that I have read, I have not found one reference to the sovereignty of God, not one. The reason is clear: they don't believe He's sovereign. Jesus, according to word faith teaching, has no authority on earth; it is all delegated to the church. Kenneth Hagin says this in his book entitled *The Authority of the Believer*, which, by the way, has long sections which were taken verbatim from other books written by other people; and he says he got them from God. It's just not true, but he says Jesus has no authority, He delegated it all to the church; we're in charge of God, and we're in charge of Jesus.

Furthermore, word faith theology teaches that God is bound by spiritual laws that govern health and prosperity. God is bound by some laws, some principles. If we say the right words, or if we have the right faith, God is forced to respond however we determine. Robert Tilton claims that God has already committed to take His part in a covenant relationship with us. "We can make whatever commitment or promise to Him we want," quote, says Tilton, "then we can tell God, on the authority

of His Word, what we would like Him to do. That's right. You can actually tell God what you would like His part in the covenant to be." End quote.

In the word faith system, God is not Lord of all. He can't work unless we release Him to work. He is dependent on human instruments. He is dependent on human faith. And above all, He has to act in response to human words to get His work done. Charles Capps has written, quote, "It is in your power to release the ability of God." In other words, God is stuck until we speak His orders. On the other hand, according to Charles Capps, "Fear activates the devil. If you succumb to fear, even doubting a little," he says, "You've moved God out of it. You have stopped God's ability immediately. Maybe it was just about to come into manifestation, but now you have established Satan's word in the earth, that it is not getting any better. It is getting worse. You have established his word." End quote. What he is saying is: if you have fear, you release the devil to work; if you have faith, you release God to work. So, if you're afraid of Satan, you've bottled God and set Satan loose. My, you're a powerful person.

According to Charles Capps, in his book *The Tongue: A Creative Force*, God has turned over His sovereignty, including - Listen to this - His creative authority, to people. Capps has written, "In August of 1973, the word of the Lord came unto me saying," just that's frightening. And this is a quote; this is the Lord speaking to Charles Capps, quote, "If men would believe Me, long prayers are not necessary. Just speaking the word will bring you what you desire. My creative power is given to man in word form. I have ceased for a time from My work, and have given man the book of My creative power. For it to be effective, man must speak it in faith. Jesus spoke it when He was on earth, and as it worked then, so it shall work now, but it must be spoken by the body. Man must rise up and have dominion over the power of evil by My words. It is My greatest desire that My people create a better life by the spoken word, for My word has not lost its power just because it has been spoken once. It is still equally as powerful today as when I said, 'Let there be light.' But for My word to be effective, men must speak it, and that creative power will come forth performing that which is spoken in faith." End quote.

Simply saying - in other words, what he is stating is this - you have the ability, if you have enough faith, to create with your words. You want money? Create it with your faith-filled words. You want healing? Create it with your faith-filled words. It escapes me how one of these popular word faith teachers could possibly be five million dollars in debt. Can't he just speak it into existence? Then, on the other hand, why pray at all if your words have so much creative force? Why pray? What's there to ask for? You really come up with a denial that you need to seek anything from God. After all, God has given the sovereignty to you; He's yielded up His creative power to you. It's not His word anymore. It was His word the first time; it's your word now. Speak it into existence; you don't need Him; you're sovereign.

Another of their teachers, Norvel Hayes, says it is better to talk to your checkbook, talk to your disease, or talk to whatever predicament you're in, than to turn to God in prayer. I'm quoting, "You aren't supposed to talk to Jesus about it; you're supposed to talk directly to the mountain in Jesus' Name, whatever the mountain is in your life. Stop talking to Jesus about it. Stop talking to anybody else about it. Speak to the mountain itself in Jesus' Name. Don't say, 'O God, help me, remove this sickness from me.' Say, 'Flu, I'm not going to let you come into my body. Go from me in the Name of Jesus. Nose, I tell you, stop running. Cough, I tell you to leave in Jesus' Name.' Say, 'Cancer, you can't kill me. I will never die of cancer in Jesus' name.'" I'm quoting him further, "Do you have a financial mountain in your life? Start talking to your money. Tell your checkbook to line up with

God's Word. Talk to your business. Command customers to come into your business and spend their money there. Talk to the mountain."

You laugh at this, and I understand that, but there are a lot of people who don't laugh at this. They're believing this. Norvel Hayes has several publications, and one of them titled "Putting Your Angels to Work," which indicates that you're not only sovereign over this world, but you're sovereign over the angelic world as well. Hayes also teaches that believers can exercise dominion over the angels, quote, "Since angels are ministering spirits sent to minister to and for Christians," he reasons, "we can learn how to put them into action on our behalf. We believers ought to be keeping those angelic creatures busy. We ought to have them working for us all of the time." End quote.

So, I think it's fair to say that word faith theology denies the sovereignty of God, removes the need to pray to God for any relief from burdens or needs, and gives the Christian himself both dominion and creative power. In my judgment, it is human pride at its ugliest. Worse, it is idolatry and the new idol is self; and God is dethroned.

To follow this wrong-god concept a little further, the word faith movement teaches that when you become a Christian, you become part of a race of little gods. Kenneth Copeland has explicitly stated what many word faith teachers more subtly imply. This is what Kenneth Copeland writes: "He imparted in you, when you were born again, Peter said it just as plain. He said, 'We are partakers of the divine nature.' That nature is life eternal in absolute perfection, and that was imparted, injected into your spirit man and you have that imparted into you by God just the same as you imparted into your child the nature of humanity. That child wasn't born a whale; he was born a human, isn't that true? Well now, you don't have a human do you? You are one. And you don't have a god in you, you are one." End quote.

Copeland teaches that Adam was created in the god class; that is, Adam was a reproduction of God. Listen to what he says, quote, "He was not subordinate to God. Adam was walking as a god. What he said went, what he did counted, and when he bowed his knee to Satan and put Satan up above him, then there wasn't anything God could do about it because a god had placed Satan there. Adam, remember, was created in the god class, but when he committed high treason he fell below the god class." End quote.

On the cross, according to Copeland, Jesus won the right for believers to be born again back into the god class. Adam was created, not subordinate to God, but as a god. He lost it, and in Christ, we are taken back to the god class. In saying that, Copeland believes that Jesus, quote, "Won healing, He won deliverance; He won financial prosperity, mental prosperity, physical prosperity, family prosperity. He said He'd meet my needs according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus, and I'm walking around and saying, 'Yes, my needs are met according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus.' Glory to God. I'm coveting to the need meter, I'm coveting to the I am, hallelujah, and I say this with all respect so that it don't upset you too bad, but I say it anyway. When I read in the Bible where He says I am, I just smile and say, yes, I am too." End quote.

That is so blasphemous it ought to make every true child of God cringe, yet it is typical of word faith teaching. For any human being to call himself the I am, Yahweh, the eternal, saving, sovereign God, is blasphemy. In the face of criticism for some of his statements about the deity of the believer, Copeland appeared with Paul and Jan Crouch on Trinity Broadcasting Network's program "Praise the Lord," and he was there to defend his teaching. This is the following conversation that ensued.

Paul Crouch said: "God doesn't even draw a distinction between Himself and us." Kenneth Copeland said, "Never, never, you never can do that in a covenant relationship." Paul Crouch, "Do you know what else that has settled then tonight? This hue and cry and controversy that has been spawned by the devil to try and bring dissension within the Body of Christ that we are gods; I am a little god." Kenneth Copeland, "Yes, yes." Jan Crouch, "Absolutely. He gave us His Name." Kenneth Copeland, "The reason we are." Paul Crouch, "I have His Name. I'm one with Him. I'm in covenant relations. I am a little god. Critics be gone." Kenneth Copeland, "You are anything that He is." Paul Crouch, "Yes."

Paul Crouch, head and on-air host of Trinity Broadcasting Network and therefore one of the most powerful influential people in the religious broadcasting today, has reaffirmed repeatedly his commitment to the little gods doctrine of word faith. Quoting him, "That new creation that comes in the new birth is created in His image. It is joined then with Jesus Christ. Is that correct? So, in that sense, I saw this many years ago, whatever that union is that unites Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, He says, 'Father, I want them to be one with Me, even as You and I are one in us.' So, apparently what He does, He opens up that union of the very Godhead and brings us into it."

We become part of the Trinity in that view. Other word faith teachers have reiterated the heresy. Charles Capps writes, "I have heard people say, those who confess God's Word and say the promises of God over and over are just trying to act like God. Yes, that's exactly what we are trying to do, act as God would in a similar situation. What did He do? He spoke the thing desired."

Earl Paulk, another of them, wrote, quote, "Until we comprehend that we are little gods and we begin to act like little gods, we cannot manifest the Kingdom of God." End quote. Robert Tilton also calls the believer, quote, "A god kind of creature designed to be as a god in this world. Designed and created by God to be the god of this world." Another of their popular preachers, Morris Cerullo, had this televised conversation with Dwight Thompson. You see him on Channel 40 frequently. Morris Cerullo, "See, when God created us in His image He didn't put any strings on us, did He? He didn't make us puppets." Dwight Thompson, "No, not at all." Morris Cerullo, "He didn't say, 'Morris, raise your hand,' 'raise your' - you know, and then here we are. We have no absolute, no control over us." Dwight Thompson, "No, no, no." Morris Cerullo, "He made Dwight Thompson; he made Morris Cerullo a small miniature god. Of course. The Bible says we're created in the image of God, His likeness. Where is that godlikeness? He gave us power, He gave us authority, He gave us dominion. He didn't tell us to act like a man, He told us to act like a god." End quote.

Benny Hinn adds, quote, "The new creation is created after God in righteousness and true holiness. The new man is after God, like God, godlike, complete in Jesus Christ. The new creation is just like God. May I say it like this? You are a little god on earth running around." And then Hinn responded to criticism of such teaching this way: he said, "Now, are you ready for some real revelation knowledge? Okay, now watch this. He laid aside His divine form so one day I would be clothed on earth with the divine form. Kenneth Hagin has a teaching; a lot of people have problems with it, yet it is absolute truth. Kenneth Copeland has a teaching; many Christians have put holes in it, but it's divine truth. Hagin and Copeland say, 'You are god, you are gods.' 'Oh, I can't be God.' Hold it. Let's bring balance to this teaching. The balance is being taught by Hagin; it's those who repeat him that mess it up. The balance is being taught by Copeland, who's my dear friend; but it's those who repeat what he says that are messing it up. You see there, brother? When Jesus was on earth, the Bible says 'He first disrobed Himself of the divine form.' He, the limitless God, became a man that we men may become as He is." End quote.

You'll notice in this that they land on the verses that indicate that we enter in and participate in some of the things that are true about God, but they take it to the extreme where we become God. We do participate in the love of God, don't we? And in the righteousness of God, and enjoy the grace of God, but are not God. Hagin says, quote, "If we ever wake up and realize who we are, we'll start doing the work that we're supposed to do, because the church hasn't realized yet that they are Christ. That's who they are. They are Christ." Now, we're not only God, we're Christ. Thus have the word faith teachers agreed to depose God and put us in His place.

From that basic error flow all the fallacies. Why do they teach that health and prosperity are every Christian's divine right? Because we're God; we deserve it. Right? If I'm God, I deserve prosperity. Why do they teach that a believer's words have creative and determinative force? Because in their system, we're God, and God could speak things into creation, and we're God so we can speak them into creation. They have bought Satan's original lie. "The serpent said to the woman, 'You surely shall not die, for God knows that in the day you eat from this fruit, your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God.'" That was a lie. Man will never be like God. We will be a glorified man, not God. The idea that man can be like God is, and always has been, the satanic lie. It was the very lie that - Listen to this - brought the devil himself down. He said, "I will be like God."

Two proof-texts are often used by the word faith teachers to support their teaching. In Psalm - You need to listen to this; this is their case here - in Psalm 82:6, God says to the rulers of earth, "You are gods and all of you are sons of the Most High." They quote that all of the time, Psalm 82:6; you might want to turn to it, and we'll close with just a look at the two texts they use. And we're going to take it up next week. Psalm 82:6, God says to the rulers of earth, "You are gods, and all of you are sons of the Most High." And so they say, "See? God says we're gods."

A simple reading of the psalm, however, says something very, very, different than that. If you look at the psalm, it will reveal to you that those words were spoken to ungodly rulers who were on the brink of judgment, ungodly rulers on the brink of judgment. Look at verse 7. They never want to read verse 7. "Nevertheless, you will die like men, and fall like any one of the princes. Arise, O God, judge the earth." What is this? There's a note of irony. God looks at these rulers, and they have been rendering unjust judgments. Back in verse 2 they have been judging unjustly. They have been showing partiality to the wicked. They have been, rather, doing injustice than justice and He says, "Look, in your own eyes you think you're gods, but you're going to die like," - What? - "men." How could you ever rip that sixth verse out of that context and make it an affirmation that a Christian has become a god? Far from confirming their godhood, God is condemning them for thinking they were gods.

Word faith teachers will immediately turn to their other favorite proof-text, John 10:33 and 34. Guess what? This is where Jesus quotes Psalm 82:6; so if you understand Psalm 82:6, you don't have a problem understanding John 10. "The Jews answered Him, 'For a good work we do not stone you, but for blasphemy and because you being a man make yourself out to be God.' Then Jesus answered them, 'Has it not been written in your Law, "I said you are gods?"'" Don't fail to notice Jesus' purpose for choosing that verse. It would have been a very familiar one to the scribes and Pharisees. They would have understood that that verse was a condemnation of wicked rulers, and Jesus is simply echoing the irony of the original psalm.

Walter Martin wrote an excellent comment on this. He said, "Jesus mocks the people as if to say,

'You all think you're gods yourselves. What's one more god among you?' Ooh, the irony. You're going to stone Me for claiming to be God? You're all claiming the same thing. What's one more god? The sarcasm." Walter Martin says, "Irony is used to provoke us, not to inform us. It is not a basis for building a theology." Further, he says, "It is also pertinent to an understanding of John 10 that we remember that Satan is called the 'ruler of this world' by no less an authority than the Lord Jesus Christ, and Paul reinforces this by calling the 'god of this age.' We can make a god out of anything: money, power, status, position, sex, patriotism, family, or, as in Lucifer's case, an angel. We can be our own god; but to call something deity or to worship it, or to treat it as divine is quite another thing than its being, by nature and in essence, deity. Jesus is not calling them 'God' in the true sense; He is saying you have made a god out of yourselves, just like the people in Psalm 82 who felt the blast of God's judgment."

God said to the rebellious Israelites in Isaiah 29:16, "You turn things around. Shall the potter be considered equal with the clay," Isaiah 29:16. Does the clay think it is equal to the potter? According to the word faith movement, what's the answer? Yes, if not superior. They have the wrong god.

Well, they have some other things that are wrong, and I'll tell you what they are next Sunday night, and we'll start with the fact that they have the wrong Jesus.

Father, even as we talk about these things, we are thrown almost into disbelief, not because we're not used to error, but we're not used to error being received by people who say they belong to the truth. We are shocked that so many Christians who would affirm their belief in the truth will identify with the terrible heresies of this movement. We feel like evangelical Christianity has become absolutely undefinable. It is so amorphous. It has no boundaries. It is inexplicable. We almost feel like we have to pull out of the whole thing and start all over again. Lord, so many are confused, so many led astray. We just pray that somehow Your truth will reach them and that they will worship You as the sovereign God and not turn You into their valet, but fall on their face in Your presence and plead for the privilege to suffer, if need be, for Your sake - sickness, poverty, or death, if You so will. That, like the apostle Paul, they would rejoice to suffer; they would be thankful for persecutions, distresses, deprivation, if it's Your will, because You are sovereign.

Father, help us to know that we are, at best, men, and no more. Men who have been touched with the transforming grace of Christ. Men in whom the Holy Spirit lives, but we are men and no more; redeemed men. And as men, we must be humbled before God. We grieve, Father, Fther that You have been so dishonored, so humiliated, that such a terrible reproach has come on Your holy name from those who teach and believe such foolish things. And we ask that You would be exalted and bring a halt to this degrading teaching. For the Savior's sake we ask. Amen.

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