

Week 13 Pauline Theology and the Critique of Prosperity Gospel

Title: Pauline Theology and the Critique of Prosperity Gospel

1. What is the Prosperity Gospel?

- 1) A belief system that treats God as a means to obtain health, wealth, and success.
- 2) Equates blessing with material prosperity.
- 3) Commonly cited verses: 3 John 1:2, Malachi 3:10 (often misused out of context and without canonical interpretation).

2. Pauline Understanding of the Gospel

- 1) Central themes: the cross, the righteousness of God, justification by grace, and new life in the Spirit.
- 2) Embraces suffering as part of union with Christ (Rom 8:17; Phil 3:10).
- 3) Blessings are understood as spiritual blessings in the heavenly realms (Eph 1:3).
- 4) Pursues transformation and union with God, not worldly success (2 Cor 5:17).

3. Contrast Between Prosperity Gospel and Paul's Gospel

Category	Prosperity Gospel	Paul's Gospel
Concept of Blessing	Material wealth, health, success	Spiritual blessings, relationship with God
View on Suffering	To be avoided or denied	Interpreted as union with Christ
Center of Faith	Man-centered (fulfilling personal needs)	God-centered (Christ's lordship and grace)
Purpose of Blessing	Earthly satisfaction	Fulfillment of God's will, sanctification, redemption

4. Theological Problems with the Prosperity Gospel

- 1) Anthropocentric thinking
- 2) Distortion of Scripture
- 3) Loss of the gospel's core: Denial of "deny yourself and take up your cross"
- 4) Human desire becomes the center rather than God's sovereignty

5. Manifestations in the Modern Church

- 1) Popularity of books, sermons, and media promoting prosperity theology
- 2) Practices like "seed offerings" and "prayer for business success"
- 3) Churches turning the gospel into a product of success and healing

6. Paul's Warnings and the True Gospel

- 1) 1 Timothy 6:5–10: “Supposing that godliness is a means of gain”
- 2) Galatians 1:6–9: Warning against preaching a different gospel
- 3) Paul rejoiced and found contentment even in hunger, suffering, and imprisonment (Phil 4:11–13)

7. Conclusion & Application

- 1) Pauline theology emphasizes the essence of the gospel in suffering, the cross, grace, and the righteousness of God.
- 2) Prosperity gospel seeks glory without the cross—a false gospel.
- 3) Today's believers must return to a faith that serves God rather than uses God.

8. Key Scripture References

- 1) Ephesians 1:3
- 2) Philippians 3:7–10
- 3) Galatians 1:6–9
- 4) 1 Timothy 6:5–10
- 5) Romans 8:17
- 6) 2 Corinthians 12:9–10