

The Prosperity Gospel

How much is one plus one? It's not a trick question. The answer is, of course, two. How do you know? It's obvious, right? Anybody can see that if you have one and you add one more then you have two. Okay, good. Now, from what direction does the sun rise? From the east. How do you know? It's obvious. We can see it if we get up early enough, right? It's obvious. If I throw this ball straight up in the air, where will it land? It will come straight back down, right? How do you know? It's obvious. We can see it. It's easily provable.

Now, does God love you? Of course He does. How do you know? We can see it. It's obvious. We can read **John 3:16** and it says it plainly but all you have to do is look around. It's obvious. Plus, He has to love us because we are so lovable, right? Wink, wink, nudge, nudge. Is God, our Heavenly Father, wealthy? Yes. How do you know? It's obvious but **Psalms 50** tells us He owns everything. **Genesis** says He is the Creator. Everything we have is a gift from Him. We can see that.

So, if our Heavenly Father loves us and is inconceivably wealthy then He obviously wants us to be wealthy as well, right? He wants us to be rich. He wants us to be healthy and it just makes sense that the better life we live, the more health and wealth we will get. Isn't that right? No??? Well, you love your kids and if they were good to you, then one of them asked you for something, you would give it to them, wouldn't you?

If your seven-year old asked you, *"Daddy, I want a new car"* then you would get it for him, wouldn't you? If you had the money, surely you would buy him a nice, shiny new chainsaw if he asked nicely, wouldn't you? *"Daddy, I've been good. Can I have a 30.06?"* You surely wouldn't deny your precious seven-year old, would you? Why not?

"Why not?" is because it doesn't make sense. Everybody knows you don't buy that kind of stuff for a little kid. It wouldn't be good for them and yet, so many people believe that if we live a good life – you know, at least better than that other guy – that God will give us good things like health and wealth. I mean, it just makes sense.

So, what's the problem with that line of thinking? Well, first of all, it's not truthful and so when somebody has something bad happen in their life, their first thought is that they must be doing something that displeases God and that may or may not be the case. The problem is, you can't associate one with the other. Jesus said in **Matthew 5** that God causes his sun to rise on the evil and the good and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous.

It's sort of the converse of thinking that since your neighbor never goes to church and doesn't claim to be a Christian and, yet, he has the nicest house and a new car and a nice boat and a pretty wife and his life is way better than yours so obviously God doesn't care how we live or the neighbor would be punished. That is all incorrect thinking and is exactly what Satan wants you to think. Satan wants you to parallel God's physical and material blessings with good, moral living. And that just makes sense to us. That's how we would do it if we were God, isn't it?

If I had to come up with a way to get to Heaven, my logic would say that you have to deserve it. Your good deeds have to outweigh your bad deeds. You have to work your way into Heaven. That is what every other religion says because every other religion is man's logic and man's thinking. Every other religion started with some guy sitting under a tree trying to figure out what he would do if he were God and it just makes sense to correlate good deeds with God's physical blessings and if you do enough good deeds, you get into Heaven.

Let's go to Job chapter one this morning and I want you to see that is exactly what Satan wants you to think. He wants you and expects you to think that this life is all about works and rewards. In Job chapter one, which we read last week, it's just another day in the office for God as He has a meeting with all His angels and the deceiver, the liar, the accuser, Satan, also shows up.

It is my opinion, from reading **Revelation chapter 12** that Satan and all his demons were kicked out of Heaven when Jesus was resurrected and so Satan no longer has access to God like he did back then but in the old, old, old days of Job,

evidently Satan could come and go like the other angels. You know the story. God asks Satan what he thinks about Job and this is the response found in **Job chapter one, verses 9-11**.

"Does Job fear God for nothing?" Satan replied. 10"Have you not put a hedge around him and his household and everything he has? You have blessed the work of his hands, so that his flocks and herds are spread throughout the land. 11But now stretch out your hand and strike everything he has, and he will surely curse you to your face."

Do you see that? Satan assumes and expects Job to be into this whole "God thing" for what he can get out of it materially. It makes sense to Satan. We'll see that it also makes sense to Job's friends but what's scary is that it makes sense to a lot of preachers nowadays.

Hang on just a second while I try to find in scripture where "God promises to pay you back double for every unfair situation." I want you to know that I watched quite a bit more of that because I wanted to make sure I wasn't taking him out of context. I am not. Now, what he and many others like him are saying is that if you will just hang in there through the difficult times, that no matter what you lose, God will pay you back. Well, that sounds like a pretty good deal to me. And Job is a great example of that actually happening, so it has to be true, right?

In the book of Job, Job rants and raves for chapter after chapter about how innocent and upright he is and how he doesn't deserve for God to do this to him so he obviously believes that good works equal God's material blessings and sin leads to God's anger. And his friends respond to every monologue of Job with each one in turn having their own monologue trying to convince Job that the only reason God would do this to him is because there is sin in his life.

It reminds me of the passage in **John 9** with the blind man. Y'all remember this passage. It's one of our favorites around here where the man says to the Pharisees, *"I don't know. All I know is I was blind but now I see."* But that passage started out with the disciples asking Jesus when they saw the blind man, *"Who sinned, this man or his parents that he was born blind?"*

They just assumed that sin was the cause of the blindness. Now, I have to say that this could also sound similar to what I preach a lot around here about BOOCOD (Blessings of Obedience and Consequences of Disobedience). Is that true? Are there really blessings when we are obedient and consequences when we are disobedient? Absolutely there are blessings and consequences.

The problem comes with a twisting of scripture that comes from a twisted way of thinking. So many people, including Brother Osteen there, as well as Job and his friends and even Satan himself have a view of God that is not quite correct. They take scripture and they take their view of God and mash them up to fit into a nice, pretty, manageable package that they can understand and when God doesn't fit into that package, what happens? They blame God.

They take the verse in **Genesis 1** that says we are made in God's image and think that means that God is really, really smart but if we try hard enough, we can pretty much figure Him out. When God said in **Isaiah 55** that, *"my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways,"* that means He will always and continually blow your mind. You will never understand Him completely and I have found that the more that I try to understand Him in scripture and in prayer, the more that I need to understand.

Here is what I do know. What God promises is not health and wealth. He never promises that if you are a good boy or girl that He will give you stuff. He never promises that you will never get sick and He doesn't promise that if you have enough faith that He will heal you when you are sick. I'm sorry but He doesn't.

And when you think you have found a verse or passage that does promise those things then just ask the Apostle Paul why he prayed three times and wasn't healed. Ask the disciples where their big houses and fancy chariots were. Ask Jesus Himself why He had no place to lay His divine head at night. No, God never promises that but here is what else I know. He does make some wonderful promises.

2 Peter 1:4 says, *“And because of his glory and excellence, he has given us great and precious promises. These are the promises that enable you to share his divine nature and escape the world’s corruption caused by human desires.”*

“To share his divine nature”? That sounds pretty good! What does that mean? Well, what is God’s divine nature? He is loving and forgiving, merciful and gracious, tender, compassionate and always there for us. I want some of that because that is not my natural self. That sounds like a good promise.

How about **Matthew 11:28-29**?

“Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls.” Rest for your souls! What’s that worth? I’ll take some of that.

Oh! Here goes with **Philippians 4**! That Paul knew what to say! *“And this same God who takes care of me will supply all your needs from his glorious riches, which have been given to us in Christ Jesus.”*

The Bible is full of God’s promises but let me give you just one more. One of the last things Jesus said to His disciples and to us before He left this earth is found in **John 14**. *“Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid.”*

Peace! What a great promise! Thank you, Lord, for peace in a world that does not know it. When we talk about BOOCOD and the blessings of obedience, peace is the blessing of obedience. It’s not health and wealth. It’s not even understanding. God gives peace when the world around you falls apart and it will fall apart for you and for everybody at one time or another.

Do you know what the main theme of the book of Job is? Do you want to know what God wanted Job to learn more than anything else? “Quit trying to figure me out and just trust me. And when you do that, I will give you peace.”

Jesus said in **John 15**, *“Abide in Me. Remain in Me. Hang out with Me.”* God wants you to know Him and to be more like Him. He wants to reveal Himself to you but you will never understand Him completely. He doesn’t expect that or promise that. What He wants is just for you to know Him better and better every day.

Years ago, I went with my family to New Braunfels to Schlitterbahn Water Park. Has anybody ever been there? Have you ever been to any kind of water park or even a public swimming pool? If you have, you know it can be kind of scary, not because of the wild rides but because there are some people...let’s just say, who need to cover up a little more than what they are covering. Know what I mean?

I was probably 30-40 pounds lighter back then but I would normally never take my shirt off even then. I’m sure not doing it now for any reason. But as we walked around, I started to feel a little better about myself physically as I compared myself to some of the other people walking around.

Let me just say that just because a bathing suit will physically go on your body, DOES NOT mean you should wear it. And you can’t go wrong with a dark t-shirt over whatever you wear. But I started to feel better about myself as I compared myself to others. The problem is, there’s always that one guy. Right? There is always the body-builder who shows up with his supermodel girlfriend to ruin the day because compared to him...where’s my shirt?

It’s the same way when I compare myself to other people spiritually. You know, compared to some people, I look pretty good. Even when I don’t do well at all, there’s always Hitler, right? I’m a superstar compared to him. I don’t feel so bad when I compare myself to Hitler or murderers or people who do mean things to dogs. God must really love me compared to those people!

But when I see God and see who He really is and compare myself to Him and I see who I really am, I am embarrassed. I’m ashamed. I pull my shirt over my head, wishing He couldn’t see me and I don’t understand how He could love me at

all. The good news is that I don't have to understand. I don't have to understand Him at all. I don't have to feel lovable. I just have to trust Him and He gives me peace.

I may go through great difficulties. In fact, I will and you will go through great difficulties and maybe God will answer your "Why?" question but maybe not. He doesn't promise to make you understand. He promises to be with you and to bring you peace as you abide, trust, obey and follow Him and make Him look good.

Trust Him today. Ask Him to forgive your sins. Repent of those sins and allow Him to change your life, not just once, but continually, as He makes you more like Him. Do that right now.

Prayer

- -----Mom's Bible: My goal in life should not be to be happy or free from pain but to make God look good.