

The “Poverty Gospel”

Legion are those who properly lambaste the shameless “prophets of profit.” These charlatans beguile unsuspecting and gullible listeners by promising financial harvests to those who “plant a seed” by sending a donation to their organizations. Scripture speaks about “men of corrupt minds, and destitute of the truth, supposing that gain is godliness: from such withdraw thyself” (1 Tim. 6:5). The dangers of greed, as well as the obvious errors of the “Prosperity Gospel,” are plainly declared in the Bible.

However, the flaws underlying the “Poverty Gospel” are less evident, but just as real. How is it that many who would criticize the excesses of some T.V. evangelists are unable to trust God to meet their personal needs?

Recently I sat in a Pastor’s Conference where one of the speakers referenced a Christian leader who postponed a much needed surgery because he did not want to “be a burden” to the ministry that employed him. Out of consideration for the ministry he waited until he was on “Medicaid” to have the operation. How is it that such men have no qualms about “becoming a burden” to their fellow taxpayers?

A pastor dies unexpectedly leaving his wife and children with nothing but bills. It is likely he would have said he was “trusting God” to provide for his family in the event of his untimely death.

An associate pastor is prosecuted for child molestation. Rather than financially assisting the incarcerated staff member’s wife and children, the tiny congregation employs another staff member.

How many churches, with sufficient resources, refuse to adequately compensate their pastors so their wives could be “keepers at home” if they chose to do so?

All of these examples are from the “Bible-believing, right-wing” strata of Christianity. It occurs to me something is amiss when our crowd may be rivaling the Obama voters in producing “wards of the state!”

What about that verse, “If any provide not for his own, and specially for those of his own house, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel” (1 Tim. 5:8)? It seems clear to me that Christians should be the first to care for their own.

Men with God-given abilities should exercise initiative to support those for whom they are responsible. “Work” is the means whereby means are acquired. Able-bodied men, as well as ministries, who neglect to plan, prepare, and provide have in effect “denied the faith.”

The Psalmist stated, “I have been young, and *now* am old; yet have I not seen the righteous forsaken, nor his seed begging bread” (Psalm 37:25). I know these are hard times, but what kind of testimony does the watching world see when the “righteous” have their hands out toward Washington instead of toward heaven?

Those who are handicapped or experience sudden tragedy are indeed candidates for mercy and whatever “safety net” may be available. Those who experience calamity should be cared for. Philippians 4:19 says, “My God shall supply all your need.” A dependency mentality, as far as “Caesar” is concerned, is foreign to the teachings of Scripture. Should not Christians seek to “provide for their own?”

Some of the godliest people in the Bible were very wealthy. Poverty is not piety and wealth is not wickedness. Proverbs says, “A good man leaveth an inheritance to his children’s children” (13:22). Financial independence is a virtue worthy of pursuit. When it comes to finances, a biblical outlook is imperative: “If riches increase, set not your heart upon them” (Psalm 62:10).

It is conceivable that some proponents of the “Prosperity Gospel” are truly deceived. But those who espouse the “Poverty Gospel” are without excuse, because they say they believe the Bible, and should know better!

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