

The Gospel to the Poor

by Kenneth Copeland

Is prosperity a blessing God intends for all of us to have? Is it truly His will for every one of His children to prosper?

A great many people would tell you the answer to that question is “No.” Bless their hearts! Not one of them realizes that the greatest prosperity preacher of all was the Lord Jesus Himself:

“...And when he had opened the book, he found the place where it was written, The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, To preach the acceptable year of the Lord” (Luke 4:17-19).

Let's look at each point Jesus said He was anointed to preach:

- To the captives, deliverance
- To the brokenhearted, healing
- To the blind, recovery of sight
- To the poor, the gospel (or the good news that He was anointed)

Too often, we just skim over that last point, assuming that when the scripture says Jesus preached “the gospel” to the poor, it means He preached the new birth to them. But that's not what's really being said there.

In this scripture, we see Jesus speaking to specific groups about their specific needs and His Anointing to change their situation with the power of God (Acts 10:34-38).

He was telling blind people they didn't have to be blind anymore. He was bringing healing to the brokenhearted. He was telling captives they could finally be free.

So what good news do you think He was telling the poor?

He was telling them they didn't have to be poor anymore!

We've preached the new birth to the poor. We've preached the Baptism in the Holy Spirit to the poor. Recently, we've even begun to preach healing to the poor. But we haven't told them they don't have to be poor anymore!

Please understand me. I am not saying the poor need to hear that God is able to prosper them. What they need to hear is that God will prosper them. That's a whole different message. It takes faith to believe that one. And there's only one place to get that kind of faith: from the Word of God.

Before any of us will truly believe that God is willing to pull us out of our poverty and into prosperity, we must understand: God's will, God's why and God's way.

God's Will

Throughout the Scriptures, God has shown us that it is His will to prosper His people. He demonstrated it in the Garden of Eden when He placed Adam there and surrounded him with every material blessing he could possibly need. He proved it again when He prospered Abraham almost beyond belief.

God's desire to prosper His people is repeatedly evident in His dealings with the nation of Israel. Just read what God said to them in Deuteronomy 8:6-18 as they entered the Promised Land:

Thou shalt keep the commandments of the Lord thy God, to walk in his ways, and to fear him. For the Lord thy God bringeth thee into a good land, a land of brooks of water, of fountains and depths that spring out of valleys and hills; A land of wheat, and barley, and vines, and fig trees, and pomegranates; a land of oil olive, and honey; A land wherein thou shalt eat bread without scarceness, thou shalt not lack any thing in it; a land whose stones are iron, and out of whose

hills thou mayest dig brass. When thou hast eaten and art full, then thou shalt bless the Lord thy God for the good land which he hath given thee.... remember the Lord thy God: for it is he that giveth thee power to get wealth, that he may establish his covenant which he sware unto thy fathers..."

Obviously at that time it was God's will to prosper His people in every possible way. Has God changed since then? No! The Bible says He and His Anointing are the same yesterday, today and forever.

In Psalm 35:27, the Lord gives us further proof that it is His will to prosper His people. He tells us outright that the "Lord...hath pleasure in the prosperity of his servant."

If you want still more scriptural evidence that God's will for us is prosperity, look at 3 John 2: "Beloved, I wish above all things that thou mayest prosper and be in health, even as thy soul prospereth."

It IS God's will for you to prosper! That's why Paul said in Ephesians 1:3, God has "...blessed us in Christ (the Anointed One and His anointing) with every spiritual (Holy Spirit-given) blessing in the heavenly realm!" (*The Amplified Bible*).

Some people have let the word "spiritual" in that verse throw them. "God's not talking about material blessings," they say, "just spiritual." But let me tell you something: You can't separate those two. That's why Jesus says, "But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you" (Matthew 6:33). He knows the spiritual realm will bring blessing in the material realm.

God is a spirit and He created the material world. Since the moment God spoke it into existence, the world has been governed by spiritual forces. The physical world cannot operate independently from the spiritual world. What happens in the one is simply a reflection of what happens in the other.

Look at Psalm 112:1 and 3 and you'll see what I mean: "Praise ye the Lord. Blessed is the man that feareth the Lord, that delighteth greatly in his commandments.... Wealth and riches shall be in his house: and his righteousness endureth for ever."

Your spiritual standing profoundly affects your financial standing. That's why, when you get hold of the gospel and begin to prosper spiritually, you can begin to prosper physically and materially as well.

According to the Word of God, we not only have hope through Jesus in the kingdom to come, but also we have hope in the here and now. So many believers don't understand that. They continue to make some kind of artificial separation, putting material things on one side and spiritual things on the other.

Certainly God wants to save people from hell and get them into heaven, but He also wants to save them from the hell the devil has created right here on this earth. In fact, the word *soteria* (translated "salvation" in English) literally means deliverance from temporary evils.

God wants people to have that deliverance now! That's why He's instructed me to take this message to the poorest people in the world.

There have been some who've tried to discourage me from obeying that instruction. "You can preach that prosperity stuff in the United States, but don't you preach it over here," they said. "It won't work. Our people are too poor."

But I'm doing it anyway, and it's working in the most poverty-stricken nations in the world, just like God said it would. As a matter of fact, most of the time it works better there than it does in America.

The reason is simple. In many "less civilized" countries, people still realize how closely physical things and spiritual things are related. When someone stands up in front of an African tribesman, for example, and says that through Jesus he has a blood covenant with Almighty God, he knows

far more about what that means than the average American ever will. He's been cutting covenants for years with the blood of chickens and goats. So when he finds out God's blood has been shed for him, he is immediately interested and very excited.

For example, if a man from a country in Africa goes to a tent meeting and is saved, it's the first time in his life he's had any hope. He gets baptized. Next thing you know someone's showing him how to pray in the Name of Jesus according to the covenant of blood. Glory to God, he's so excited he can hardly stand it.

Then, on top of it all, you tell him God wants to prosper him!

Prosperity doesn't mean a Cadillac to this guy. It means God will show him how to get some water on his scorched village. It means God will do something about the alkaline poison that's ruined his land. It means God will show him how to grow crops so his family can prosper instead of starve to death.

Should you really tell a man like that, a man in one of the poorest countries in the world, a man with no natural hope at all, that God wants to prosper His people? You bet you should! Then you should tell him why.

God's Why

What is God's reason for prospering His people? Is it so we can be more comfortable? So we can buy bigger cars and finer houses? Be honest now. Our ideas about money have been shaped by a world that pursues prosperity strictly for reasons of selfishness and greed.

But the Word of God provides us with two entirely different purposes. Look again at Deuteronomy 8:18, and you'll see the first one: "But thou shalt remember the Lord thy God: for it is he that giveth thee power to get wealth, that he may establish his covenant..."

God intends for us to use the wealth He gives us to help establish His covenant on the earth. Jesus told us to go into all the world and preach the gospel, and that takes money, whether you're

preaching it from the pulpit of a local church, beneath a tent in Africa or on national television.

You'll find God's second purpose for prosperity in Ephesians 4:28. "Let him that stole steal no more: but rather let him labour, working with his hands the thing which is good, that he may have to give to him that needeth."

+ Establishing God's covenant on the earth

+ Giving to those in need

That's what prosperity is really all about.

It's tragic how foreign that is to most people's thinking. I've actually heard people say, "I don't need much prosperity. I'm a simple person with a simple life. So I just ask God for enough to meet my needs."

They think that's humility, but it's not. It's selfishness! They could ask God for a million dollars, take out just enough to meet their simple needs, and give the rest away. But that doesn't even occur to them because, when it comes to money, they've been brainwashed by a world that says if you have it, you have to keep it!

Without realizing it, they're actually saying, "All I care about is meeting my own needs. I have no ambition to help meet anyone else's." That philosophy has crippled the ministry of Jesus Christ on the earth today. It has caused preachers to set aside their calling and get secular jobs just to survive. It has handicapped churches and stunted the growth of ministries that could have reached thousands for the Lord.

On top of it all, those same folks who are aren't willing to ask God for money to give into the ministry will criticize the first sign of prosperity they see in the life of a preacher. "My heavens," they'll gasp, "that preacher has an airplane!"

It never occurs to them that he can reach more people for Jesus that way. That plane may have multiplied that preacher's capacity for ministry by 70 percent, but they'll never know it. They'll be too busy worrying and fussing over what could happen if the preacher gets too comfortable.

If you're wise, you'll want the ministers of God to be comfortable. One of them may run across your son or your daughter out there somewhere in need of spiritual help. When he does, you'd better hope he's not so uncomfortable that he can't think of anything to say to them.

Take care of the preachers who've blessed you. Take care of your pastor. He's the shepherd and the bishop of your soul. Don't make him work nights just to make ends meet. Pay him well so he'll have plenty of time to spend in prayer and in the Word. Your spiritual well-being is wrapped up in his!

Some people say, "Well, Jesus' ministry was poor and He got along just fine." That's ridiculous. It would have been impossible for Jesus to be poor! All the way through the Old Testament, God promised material blessings to anyone who would walk perfect and upright before Him. If God had failed to bless Jesus financially, He would have been breaking His own Word.

In Luke 8:3, the Word records that many people "...ministered to and provided for Him (Jesus) and them out of their property and personal belongings" (*The Amplified Bible*). Jesus had so much money coming in and going out through His ministry that He had to appoint a treasurer. That's what Judas was. There was enough money in that treasury for Judas to steal from it without the money being missed.

But Jesus didn't store up all that money for Himself. He gave it to meet the needs of those around Him. He had such a reputation for giving that on the night of that last Passover, when Judas left so abruptly, the disciples assumed that Jesus had sent him out to give to the poor.

Can you imagine how much and how often Jesus must have given to the poor for the disciples to make that assumption? Jesus never built a worldly empire for Himself. But that doesn't mean He was poor. It means He was the greatest giver Who ever walked the face of this earth. And it's time we started following in His footsteps.

It's time we stopped piously pretending that money isn't important. It is. You know it and God

knows it. Why do you think He said that where your money is, there will your heart be also? People's hearts are closely related to their pocketbooks.

In fact, if you'll start giving, if you'll start taking care of the needs in other people's pocketbooks, you'll be far more likely to win their hearts. You may not be able to use money to buy a fellow into the kingdom of God, but you can certainly get his attention with it.

What do you think will happen to the heart of a starving nation when you bring in a 747 full of medicine and clothes and food in the Name of Jesus? What will happen when you bring in doctors and nurses for them free of charge?

I'll tell you what will happen. The hearts of those people will soften. They will be willing to listen to what you have to say about Jesus. In fact, they'll let you preach about anyone you want to if you will just keep them from starving. Believe me, a planeload of goods will go a long way toward getting a country full of poor people born again.

I have a friend, Reinhard Bonnke, who has a wonderful ministry among the African people. Literally hundreds of thousands have been born again and baptized in the Holy Ghost in his meetings. A few years ago, he sat down and compared the number of people who'd been saved through that ministry with its expenses.

Do you know what he learned? He found it cost his ministry \$3 to win a soul for the Lord Jesus Christ on the African continent.

Three dollars a soul! Don't ever let anyone tell you it's wrong for you to want to prosper. It's wrong for you not to want to prosper when that prosperity can mean the difference between heaven and hell for millions of people.

Chances are, you've spent years learning the world's way of dealing with prosperity, so it may take you a while to turn your attitude around. But don't worry about it. Just get busy giving.

Renew your mind with the Word of God. Then the motivations will take care of themselves.