

“But He knows the way I take;
When He has tried me, I shall come forth as gold.”

Job 23:10



THOUGH IT CAN BE EASILY DEBUNKED with only nominal effort, sadly the “Prosperity Gospel” remains with us. From time to time this spurious teaching remakes itself under the dynamism of a new, charismatic teacher, but it has been with us in one form or another ever since Judas Iscariot turned his back on the cross.

I suppose it is in our DNA to think that God wants all His people to be healthy, happy and wealthy. After all, if God is indeed good—*only* He, as Jesus pointed out—it makes perfect sense that He would also want good for His followers. The problem does not lie with that assumption, however; it lies with our definition of “good.”



That which is good from the earthly perspective is subjective: for the lazy, leisure is good; for the greedy, wealth is good; for the vain, beauty is good. Good is defined by our fleshly desires, and is different for each person.

That which is good from the heavenly perspective, however, is objective: God Himself has defined it based on His will for His kingdom, and that which brings Him glory. Thus in most instances we—the shortsighted still trudging through the muck of this world’s soil—are incapable of knowing what is truly good.

To put it in base, simplified terms, the Prosperity Gospel assumes that when we enjoy good health, plenty of money, and are happy, these blessings prove that God is pleased with us. Conversely, when we *don’t* enjoy these blessings, it marks God’s displeasure, and/or that Satan has been given too much free rein in our lives. Trials, sickness and disease, poverty, chronic unhappiness—all are signs that something is amiss in our relationship with God.

There is an ancient Greek term for that philosophy: twaddle.



Beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery ordeal among you, which comes upon you for your testing, as though some strange thing were happening to you; but to the degree that you share the sufferings of Christ, keep on rejoicing, so that also at the revelation of His glory you may rejoice with exultation. If you are reviled for the name of Christ, you are blessed, because the Spirit of glory and of God rests on you.

1 Peter 4:12-14

Adherents to the Prosperity Gospel have it backwards: the very trials and testing the Lord puts us through *prove* His love for us; the hard times, the unhappy times, the times of struggle prove that He, just like any attentive parent, is working on us for good—*His* definition of good.

Members of His family are precious to God—as precious as a bar of gold. Sanctification is the process in which corrupted, impure gold is placed in the hands of the great Smelter, and, over time, He purifies and refines that metal so that it becomes increasingly pure—and useful to Him.

In this you rejoice, though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been grieved by various trials, so that the tested genuineness of your faith—more precious than gold that perishes though it is tested by fire—may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ.

1 Peter 1:6-7 ESV

We typically do not have much regard for parents who spoil their children, who spare no effort to keep them from anything that might cause them discomfort. And does anyone want to be around for any length of time the products of such rearing?

Our God is a good parent. His love for His children is deep and profound—and everlasting. He does not spoil His children, but wants them to grow up to be mature, responsible adults. To that end He refines and purifies them by testing and fire.

All for His glory and praise.