

## The Word-Faith Movement

- I. This study compares some key teachings of the Word-Faith Movement with Scripture.
  - A. As with most errors, there are elements of truth.
  - B. Mind that the Holy Bible is all truth yet it may be wrested to destructive ends. **2PE 3:16.**
  - C. Remember that there are two kinds of false teachers.
    1. Some with a good conscience ignorantly advance a false position. **ACT 23:1; 26:9.**
    2. Some knowingly advance false positions with intent. **EPH 4:14.**
    3. How a false teacher reacts to truth is a good gauge of his heart.
    4. Similar observations may be made about adherents to false teaching.
- II. Other names: Word of Faith, Faith movement, positive confession, “health and wealth” gospel.
- III. Notable players:
  - A. E. W. Kenyon (1867-1948), considered by some as the grandfather of the theology.
  - B. Kenneth Hagin (1917-2003), considered by some as the modern father of the theology.
  - C. Kenneth Copeland, widely regarded as the second most important teacher after Hagin.
  - D. Joyce Meyer.
  - E. Joel Osteen.
  - F. Creflo Dollar.
  - G. Paul Crouch (Trinity Broadcasting Network).
  - H. Benny Hinn.
- IV. Organizations: The International Convention of Faith Ministries (Arlington, Texas), Kenneth Hagin Ministries, RHEMA Bible Training Center, Faith Library Publications.
- V. Overview.
  - A. Christians can access the power of *faith* or *fear* through *speech*. Christians should speak the promises and provisions that they want as an act of faith and agreement with God's plans and purposes.
  - B. Christians are the heirs by faith of the covenant promises made to Abraham which included pledges of protection from violence, sickness and poverty to Abraham's descendants (Israel) in passages like **DEU 7:15; 28:1-14.**
  - C. Word-Faith theology bears similarities to Positive Thinking teaching of Norman Vincent Peale but with a focus on “positive confession” of perceived promises in Scripture rather than having “faith in oneself.”
  - D. God speaks words of faith with His mouth and makes things be. Man is made in God's image and should be able to do likewise. Faith is like a “force.” Verbalizing a promise of Scripture generates power which causes things to be.
  - E. Positive confession of select promises of Scripture prevents or cures illness and brings material prosperity. It is for lack of such positive confession of words of faith that believers suffer from sickness or bad relationships or do not financially prosper.
  - F. God does not use suffering for our benefit: such an idea is a deception of Satan.
  - G. Jesus and His disciples were financially wealthy.
  - H. Little of the benefits of Christ's work are exclusive to the future state; Christians should now be living all such benefits rather than patiently awaiting the future state.
  - I. Common supporting verses are **ROM 10:8; ISA 53:5 c/w MAT 8:17; MAR 11:22-23; HEB 11:3; 3JO 1:2; PRO 18:21.**

- VI. Following are doctrines affirmed by “full-strength” Word-Faith teachers like Kenneth Hagin and Kenneth Copeland.
- A. There are “anointed” apostles and prophets today who receive divine revelations that may not have the same authority as Scripture but nonetheless dare not be gainsaid. Benny Hinn once claimed, “The day is coming when those that attack us will drop dead.” (Miracle Vision rally, Nov. 22, 1991)
1. The office of an apostle is restricted by **ACT 1:21-22**.
  2. The office of prophet was limited to the same period of time as the sign gifts which were given to confirm prophecy: 40 years. **MIC 7:15 c/w ACT 7:36; JOH 2:11**.
  3. Christ's apostles declared their revelation the standard of conduct and creed. **GAL 1:8-9; 1JO 4:6**.
  4. Later N.T. writings urged believers to heed what the apostles said, not to heed what future apostles would say. **2PE 2:1 c/w 2PE 3:1-2; JUDE 1:3-4, 17**.
- B. Human beings were created to be gods: man is a spirit-being that possesses a soul and lives in a body. Since God and human beings are spirits, humans were created in God's “class” or “after His kind.” Adam was created as *the god of this world* but legally transferred that status to Satan when he sinned. Scriptures used in support of this are **GEN 1:26-27; PSA 82:6; JOH 4:24; 2CO 4:4**.
1. Hagin described man's original status as “equality with God.” (*The God Kind of Life*, p. 35)
  2. Copeland once said that Adam was “God manifested in the flesh.” (*Following the Faith of Abraham*, tape #01-3001 [1989])
  3. Hagin also said, “The believer is as much an incarnation as was Jesus of Nazareth.” (*The Incarnation in The Word of Faith*, Dec. 1980)
  4. Copeland said, “When I read in the Bible where He says, 'I am,' I just smile and say, 'Yes, I am too.’” (recorded on TBN, Aug. 9, 1987)
  5. Creflo Dollar, in advancing the notion that man was created after God's kind (God made a 'mini-me') and therefore a god, said to his congregation that they were, “...gods. Little 'g' gods. You're not human. Only human part of you is this flesh you're wearing.” (*Suffer The Children*, documentary, 2006)
  6. Refutation:
    - a. Man is not essentially a spirit being but a material being (**GEN 2:7; 3:19; ISA 31:3; 1CO 15:47-49**) existing in a duality of body and soul, flesh and spirit. **MAT 10:28; 1TH 5:23**.
    - b. God never formed a God. **ISA 43:10**.
    - c. Humans were never gods (divinity) and never will be gods. If Adam and Eve were gods, then they had a ready answer to Satan's offer, “...ye shall be as gods...”(**GEN 3:5**).
      - (1) Scripture says nothing about Adam being the “god of this world.”
      - (2) Since Adam was not the “god of this world” he could not legally transfer title to Satan. Adam transferred dominion, not god-ness, to Satan. **LUK 4:6 c/w JOH 12:31**.
      - (3) Satan is the “god of this world” in that he is honored by default by all actions of disobedient men.
    - d. **PSA 82:6** refers to the unjust judges / rulers in Israel (v. 1) who were called *gods* in **EXO 22:28**.

- (1) These were failing in their God-ordained duties. **vs. 2-5.**
  - (2) They would "...die like men..." (v. 7).
  - (3) Jesus used **PSA 82:6** to contrast those unjust judges with Himself as a just judge and the true son of God. **JOH 10:34-36.**
- e. Jesus Christ is uniquely God Incarnate, the begotten Son, not begotten God.
- (1) The virgin-born son of God is uniquely Immanuel (God with us). **MAT 1:23.**
  - (2) Jesus Christ is the *only* begotten Son of God. **JOH 1:14-18.**
  - (3) Jesus Christ alone did what only God can do. **JOH 5:17-23.**
- C. A corresponding position of the spirit-being relationship of God and man is that the knowledge of God can come only through our spirits, not our mind and senses.
1. This is partially true. Natural man cannot receive the things of the Spirit. **1CO 2:14.**
  2. But God through grace in a new birth has given us a *sound mind*. **HEB 8:10; 2TI 1:7.**
  3. Paul described the good part of his personal dichotomy as serving God with his *mind*. **ROM 7:22-25.**
  4. With this spiritually renewed faculty of mind, we can reason from the Scripture to a valid conclusion. **ACT 17:2; ROM 3:28.**
  5. The unstated implication of the position that the knowledge of God is independent of our mind and senses is that there is a communication link between God and the believer that is superior to a rational conclusion from the declared words of Scripture and it is beyond challenge.
  6. Here is a reasonable question for our minds to consider: If believers are gods, should a god be poor, unhealthy, or suffering?
- D. Another common doctrine of Word-Faith teaching is that Jesus died not only physically but spiritually and was born again. His spiritual death consisted of being separated from God, becoming sin, and suffering in hell (per **ACT 2:27, 31**). Jesus was born again in hell and then rose from the dead (per **COL 1:18**).
1. "Why did he need to be begotten, or born? Because He became like we are, separated from God. Because He tasted spiritual death for every man. His spirit, His inner man, went to hell in our place....Jesus is the first person ever to be born again." (*Name of Jesus* [1979], Kenneth Hagin, pp. 29-30)
  2. Joyce Meyer, in the 1993 edition of her book, *The Most Important Decision You Will Ever Make*, held to this position (including that demons tortured Jesus there), but has gradually evolved away from it.
  3. Jesus' sojourn in hell was the *torments of hell* His soul experienced BEFORE He died, which included the curse, torment, anguish, grief, darkness, separation from God.
    - a. Christ's inner man would be in paradise upon death. **LUK 23:43.**
    - b. paradise: 1. a. The garden of Eden. Also called earthly paradise, to distinguish it from the heavenly paradise. 2. a. Heaven, the abode of God and his angels and the final abode of the righteous.
    - c. The entire penalty which sin demanded was finished with His physical death. **JOH 19:30.**
  4. References to Christ being the *firstborn from the dead* (**COL 1:18**) or the *first begotten of the dead* (**REV 1:5**) pertain to His bodily resurrection as the "...firstfruits of them that slept" (**1CO 15:20**).

- VII. The overall theme of the Word-Faith movement is that God wants us to be healthy and wealthy now, per the following:
- A. Christ by His atoning death freed us from the curse of the Law (**GAL 3:13**) and we are in principle now freed from all disease and poverty such as was threatened in the Law.
  - B. Healing from disease or illness is assured in the atonement.  
**ISA 53:4-5 c/w MAT 8:16-17; 1PE 2:24.**
  - C. It is only the lack of faith and a positive oral confession of health and wealth that forbids one's claim on them.
    1. "Jesus has already borne them [your diseases] and by His stripes 'ye were healed.' Get your believing in line with what God's word says."  
(*The Real Faith*, Kenneth Hagin, p. 25)
    2. Hagin claimed that when he had a headache, he would say, "In the name of Jesus...I do not have a headache." (*Name of Jesus*, Kenneth Hagin, p. 44)
    3. Joel Osteen credits his wife with "...speaking words of faith and victory" that led to their eventually building a large, elegant home. (*Your Best Life Now: 7 Steps to Living at Your Full Potential*, Joel Osteen, p. 7)
    4. "Maybe you need to get your checkbook out and say 'oh you checkbook, hear the word of the Lord, you are not going to stay empty all of your life...'"  
(*Enjoying Every Day Life*, Joyce Meyer TV show, 9-21-08)
  - D. So strong is the position on the creative energy of positive words that there is an assumption of the gift of prophecy: "We can speak positive thoughts about ourselves into the atmosphere and thereby prophesy our future."  
(*Your Mouth is a Weapon*, *Life in the Word*, Joyce Meyer, 3-3-97)
  - E. The Word-Faith movement's position on health actually presupposes that not only is healing guaranteed to the positive confessor, but also that the positive confessor should not henceforth ever be sick.
    1. The real test is when a sickness or disease does come upon the positive confessor. Was his faith weak or a sham? Had he been deficient in confessing health? Is this even a sickness?
    2. The Word-Faith position could easily mirror that of Christian Science which says that sickness is illusory and all in the mind.
    3. Kenneth Hagin's last days were spent in a Cardiac Intensive Care Unit.
  - F. Much of the positive confession theme concurs with the position that believers are "little gods."
    1. God calls "...those things which be not as though they were" (**ROM 4:17**) and those things shall certainly come to be. As little gods in His image, believers should do likewise.
    2. Need health? Don't dwell on present problems. Confess healing as a definite promise from God and claim it: you shall certainly receive.
    3. Want wealth? Don't dwell on present lack of it. Confess prosperity as a definite promise from God and claim it: you shall certainly receive.
- VIII. What does the Bible say about the health of the believer?
- A. There is indeed healing for the body in the atonement of Christ. It is guaranteed.
    1. The guarantee, though, is reserved for the resurrection.
    2. All, including believers, are currently under the bondage of corruption until the redemption of our bodies. **ROM 8:20-23 c/w PHIL 3:20-21.**

3. Our current state is described as being sown in corruption and weakness. **1CO 15:42-43.**
  4. The outward man perishes now. **2CO 4:16.**
- B. God is very able to heal the body now (**ISA 59:1**) by a sovereign act of mercy, or in answer to prayer, or by blessing men with wisdom, prudence and witty inventions.
- C. We do well to pray for our health and that of fellow believers (**JAM 5:13-16**). This is pleading for relief, not demanding it as a claim.
- D. Word-Faith theology assumes that poor health is owing to weak faith and/or lack of positive confession.
1. Paul struggled with weakness (**1CO 2:3**) and definite health issues (**GAL 4:13-15**) but not because of a lack of faith.
  2. Timothy was a man of God of unfeigned faith (**2TI 1:5**) whom Paul advised to "...use a little wine for thy stomach's sake and thine often infirmities" (**1TI 5:23**).
  3. Paul's weakness in the flesh disproves the notion that God does not use suffering for our benefit. **2CO 12:7-10.**
- IX. What does the Bible say about material wealth relative to the believer?
- A. Jesus Christ was not a man of great material wealth. **LUK 8:3; 9:58; 2CO 8:9.**
  - B. Lack of wealth certainly does not imply a lack of faith. **JAM 2:5.**
  - C. Clamor for wealth is an inroad to temptation and sin. **1TI 6:8-9.**
  - D. Paul found contentment in wealth and poverty. **PHIL 4:11-12.**
  - E. The true riches are not material. **LUK 16:11; REV 3:18.**
- X. What about **MAR 11:22-23**?
- A. This was a special gift of faith peculiar to only *some* in the apostolic era of the church that stood in contrast to the *common faith*. **1CO 12:8-10; TIT 1:4.**
  - B. Paul did not even claim to have this faith any more than he claimed to give his body to be burned. **1CO 13:1-3.**
- XI. What about **3JO 1:2**?
- A. It is not to be denied that prosperity and health are juxtaposed with soul prosperity here.
  - B. health: Soundness of body; that condition in which its functions are duly and efficiently discharged.
  - C. We ought to desire good health for our loved ones in Christ and pray for their healing where appropriate. **PHIL 2:25-27; JAM 5:14-16 ct/w 1JO 5:16.**
  - D. prosper: intr. Of a person, community, etc. : To be prosperous, fortunate, or successful; to flourish, thrive, succeed, do well.
    1. Prosperity may be financial but it is not limited to that. **GEN 24:40; ROM 1:10.**
    2. Prosperity destroys fools. **PRO 1:32.**
  - E. Prosperity and health are measured by "...even as thy soul prospereth" (**3JO 1:2**). If the soul be deficient, of what value are other benefits? **MAT 16:26.**
- XII. Our words cannot make things real except where we or others act upon them. **PRO 14:23; 18:21.**
- A. Only God's word always produces results. **ISA 55:6-11.**
  - B. What we confess may be boastful or false. **JAM 4:13; REV 3:17.**
- XI. Word-Faith theology has too much in common with magic and enchantments, wherein things are produced by the power of spoken words (incantations, etc.). **EXO 7:11 c/w 2TI 3:8.**