II Chronicles 20:20 teaches us that if we trust the prophet, we will prosper. You don’t have to hang around those who have a negative portrayal of churches and preachers very long to hear that old cliché: “All preachers want is your money.” What’s sad is that there are those who’s tactics and scam offerings have validated this statement in the lives of so many. But what is important for all believers to know is that God has given us many warnings in His Word to beware of false prophets who’s motive is money.

The Bible is filled with prosperity promises for the believer. 3 John 2 says, “Beloved, I wish above all things that thou mayest prosper and be in health, even as thy soul prospereth.” I will share more of those promises later in this article. I want to establish the point that God is not bothered with our prosperity. The truth is that it is His will for us. However, there are those in whom the Bible warns who will be moved and motivated by financial gain and they will use dishonorable means to get it.

As stewards of God, we desire to endorse His Kingdom and the ministry of the Gospel with our finances. To live without that desire is to not know Christ at all. When Jesus gave the parable of the sheep and the goats, it was the sheep that gave while the goats did not (Matthew 25:31-46). However, we must use wisdom and Biblical precedents while honoring God with our tithes and offerings. The reason being is that not all who call for an offering for the ministry truly have the ministry in mind and we have been warned of such in Scripture.

MOTIVES IN GIVING

In Luke 8:1-4, we see a great motive for giving. There were certain women who had been healed by the ministry of Jesus. The Bible says that afterwards they “ministered unto Him of their substance.” (v.3) They obviously wanted others to hear and receive what they had received, so they turned and supported His ministry. This is a pure motive in giving. When you see a ministry that is touching and changing lives, especially when it is your own life, you should have a willingness to support it.

I get letters frequently from those who are blessed by our radio ministry. Most of them send an offering of support and many become partners in regular support. They may not attend our church or even live in Shreveport, but they genuinely give so that others can receive what they have received. This is actually a covenant practice. God told Abraham that any one that would bless him, would in turn be blessed (Genesis 12:3). It is for the reason that God gives us power to get wealth – that this covenant of blessing might be established (Deuteronomy 8:18). As a result of Paul’s partners giving into his ministry, he said, “But my God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus.” (Philippians 4:19) This is what was said of their offering:
“an odour of a sweet smell, a sacrifice acceptable, well-pleasing to God.” (v.18) Why was their sacrifice called that of a sweet smell? I believe the answer is found in the previous verse. Paul said in response to their gift, “Not because I desired a gift: but I desire fruit that may abound to your account.”

Paul’s motive for ministry was not the financial support he received. He did not demand nor manipulate his partners into giving – it was all based on free-will and God totally blessed it! Sadly, there are some ministers who don’t trust God to move on the people to give and use various gimmicks, tactics and other influences to stimulate giving. Such pressures bring a reproach on the ministry and, too often, cause people to get hurt.

FALSE PROPHETS

In II Peter 2, the Word of God exposes false prophets and their motives. Notice what Verse 3 says about these “false teachers”: “And through covetousness shall they with feigned (false) words make merchandise of you:” Covetousness is defined basically as “greed.” Verse 18 says that they use “great swelling words of vanity” to allure you through “much wantonness.” Notice the terms “covetousness”, “much wantonness” and “make merchandise of you?” The word merchandise is defined in this text as tradesman. The Bible is giving the picture of the saints being used for trade or financial gain. Jesus taught on the difference between a true shepherd and an hireling (John 10:11-13). Well, I am here to tell you that there are a lot of hirelings who couldn’t care less about the sheep. They are just looking for a pay-check! You’ve probably heard them speaking supposedly ‘prophetically’ over those who will send them a certain dollar amount.

To enter or use the ministry for financial gain is wrong according to Scripture. This isn’t to say that it is wrong for a preacher as well as any believer to prosper. God’s Word is filled with prosperity promises. Job 36:11 declares, “If they obey and serve Him, they shall spend their days in prosperity, and their years in pleasures.” Psalms 35:27 says that the Lord takes “pleasure in the prosperity of His servant.” God is not against wealth for He says in Deuteronomy 8:18 that it is He who gives us power to get wealth that He might establish His covenant in our lives. I am simply referring to motive for ministry. In 1 Timothy 3:1-7, Paul lists the requirements for those who seek the office of bishop or pastor (same word in the Greek). In Verse 3, the requirements include: “Not given to wine, nor combative but gentle and considerate, not quarrelsome but forbearing and peaceable, and not a lover of money [insatiable for wealth and ready to obtain it by questionable means].” AMP This Scripture makes it clear that if one who seeks the office of bishop and is a “lover of money” and is ready to obtain it “by questionable means”, he is not suitable for the office. Jesus said we would know them by their fruits. “Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep’s clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves. Ye shall know them by their fruits.” (Matthew 7:15-16) Jesus said that we would know the false prophet by what he gathered (vv. 16-20). When you hear a preacher that is constantly using tactics for financial gain; especially if his tactics are “questionable”, you need to beware.

Imagine some man sitting in a hotel room one night who turns on Christian television looking for answers with a small ray of hope. What he sees is a preacher saying that if he will just send
him $100 that he will receive a miraculous breakthrough in his life. He quickly turns the channel as he murmurs that old cliché: “All preachers want is your money!” This concept of preachers and money has been used by the devil to sway many from receiving the Gospel. I’m sure that this is the devil’s favorite quote. My conviction is that ministries should purchase airtime on radio and television for the preaching of the Jesus, not for financial gain. If you can’t afford to go on the air without begging for money to stay on—then don’t go on at all!

**WRONG MOTIVES**

Have you ever been to a church service where you were asked, “who can give an hundred, thousand, etc?” Or, have you ever seen the offering bucket passed more than once? Here again is an exposure of motive. As true ministers of faith, we preach that God is faithful and that if we honor Him, He will meet our needs and bless us abundantly. Yet, I have witnessed in some churches that when the offering wasn’t enough, the pastor would call for another one (in the same service). Where’s the faith in that! The member who works forty hours a week can’t ask his or her employer for another check if the first one wasn’t enough.

Notice what the Bible says about giving. “But this I say, He which soweth sparingly shall reap also sparingly; and he which soweth bountifully shall reap also bountifully. Every man according as he purposeth in his heart, so let him give; not grudgingly, or of necessity: for God loveth a cheerful giver.” (2 Corinthians 9:6-7) The Word of God is saying that offerings should be based on what the believer has purposed in his or her to give—not what the preacher decided they should give! I was in a conference once where the preacher asked those who could give $100 to stand and come forward to sow their seed. Supposedly there would be a special anointing for those who would give the hundred. If the hundred dollar call wasn’t enough—it was followed by a call for $500. The sad thing is that some people got in line again. Jesus said that hypocrites give in the synagogues “that they may be recognized and honored and praised by men. Truly I tell you, they have their reward in full already. But when you give charity, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, So that your deeds of charity may be in secret; and that your Father Who sees in secret; may reward you openly.” (Matthew 6:2-4, AMP) I don’t believe that those who got in the lines were hypocrites. I believe that were misguided by the one in the pulpit (to whom they trusted as leading them in the will of God). Why would any God-fearing minister want to conduct an offering in exact contrast to the teachings of Jesus? You decide. One point needs to be made in light of this. God has set the system of blessing based on percentage and not amount. The tithe, for an example, though not an offering, is based on percentage—not amount. I believe this is true with free-will offerings as well. Jesus said that the widow woman who gave two mites offered more than anyone else though a mite was the smallest of coins. She gave the most for she gave all she had, even though it was only worth a half-cent (Mark 12:41-43).

**TRUSTING THE PROPHET**

In 1 Kings 17:8-16, there was a widow woman who gave to the prophet Elijah. As a result, she experienced miracles in provision and her dead son was raised to life. The Bible teaches us of the power of sowing into a man of God’s life. One of many examples of this is located in Galatians 6:6-10. The enemy knows the end result of a believer who trusts his or her pastor,. It is sad that some
who have proven to be poor stewards of lives and money have negatively marked the ministry when it comes to money. For this cause, many have had their prosperity robbed from them in their unwillingness to sow into true ministries of integrity. 2 Chronicles 20:20 says, “Believe in the LORD your God, so shall ye be established; believe His prophets, so shall ye prosper.” Here, the Word of God directly connects your prosperity to trusting the prophet. I’ve seen it in my own ministry. I have had many members that were abused financially in other churches that when they came to Word of God Ministries it was very hard for them to give again financially. If you are in a church where you do not trust your man of God—then get out! It will damn up your prosperity. Trust begins with Truth and you cannot have trust without it! Tithes, offerings and alms need to be taught by the Word and ministered according to the Word. When Truth, God’s Word, is the foundation of giving, it will establish trust. Tactics and money scams are opportunities for Satan to bring reproach upon the church and they identify the motive and heart of the false prophet. MTW