

Feature Article: JAW455

## CHRISTIANITY STILL IN CRISIS: A WORD OF FAITH UPDATE

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### SYNOPSIS

Hank Hanegraaff wrote in his book *Christianity in Crisis* that because of the influence of the Word of Faith movement, the true Christ and true faith of the Bible were being replaced by diseased substitutes. This movement has continued to grow rapidly in the years following the book's release and several new teachers since have risen to prominence. Among them are Creflo Dollar, T. D. Jakes, Joyce Meyer, Joel Osteen, and Rod Parsley. Along with these new teachers, distortions of biblical truth have emerged. Word of Faith teachers have replaced the all-powerful God of the Bible with a god who has limited power, and have elevated humanity to the status of godhood, placing at its disposal seemingly unlimited power. These modern-day prophets of health and wealth believe that people can speak things into existence, thwart God's plans, and purchase salvation; that money is the root of all happiness; that Christians are not sinners; and that Jesus did not come into the world as God. Rather than saying to Christ, "Thine is the kingdom, and the power and the glory," today's self-absorbed brand of Christianity insists that ours is the kingdom and that we have all the power and the glory. Another gospel clearly is being preached in many of today's most prominent churches, and the prevention of its propagation demands our utmost attention.

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Hank Hanegraaff, president of the Christian Research Institute, wrote when his book *Christianity in Crisis*<sup>1</sup> first was published in 1993 that Christianity needed a "megashift." He warned, "[we need] to avert a very real and present crisis in Christianity. Without such a megashift in both perception and perspective, the church is in horrifying danger....The true Christ and the true faith of the Bible are being replaced rapidly with diseased substitutes offered by a group of teachers who belong to what has been labeled the 'Faith movement.'"<sup>2</sup>

More than a decade later, the church, for the most part, has ignored this warning and the movement has continued to grow rapidly. This article will examine in alphabetical order the teachings of five Word of Faith teachers who have come to the forefront in recent years: Creflo Dollar, T. D. Jakes, Joyce Meyer, Joel Osteen, and Rod Parsley.

### CREFLO DOLLAR

Creflo A. Dollar is the founder of the nearly 24,000-member World Changers Church International in College Park, Georgia.<sup>3</sup> The Trinity Broadcasting Network airs his *Changing Your World* television program worldwide. Dollar holds no degree in theology, and much of his prosperity message is based on the teachings of spiritual mentor Kenneth Copeland.<sup>4</sup>

It is common for teachers of false doctrine to redefine the nature of God. For example, a Jehovah's Witness denies the three-personed nature of the Godhead, considering Jesus to be the archangel Michael incarnate. A Mormon considers Jesus to be one of many gods and the spirit brother of Lucifer. It becomes

painfully apparent that without a correct understanding of the nature of the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, people find themselves worshipping a false god.

Creflo Dollar is typical of many Word of Faith teachers who redefine and re-create God in man's image. He teaches that "Jesus didn't come as God, He came as a man, and He did not come perfect."<sup>5</sup> Realizing how controversial this statement is, he then adds: "How many of you know the Bible says God never sleeps nor slumbers? And yet in the Book of Mark we see Jesus asleep in the back of the boat. This ain't no heresy. I'm not some false prophet. I'm just reading this thing to you out of the Bible."<sup>6</sup>

This teaching flatly contradicts John 1:14, which says "The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us."<sup>7</sup> The Word—God in Jesus Christ—became flesh, not the other way around, and to claim that God was anything less than perfect is heresy. Jesus was the God-Man and as such He had human limitations, such as having to eat and sleep like the rest of us. Carrying Dollar's teaching to its logical conclusion, Jesus must have been a sinner, given the fact that anything less than perfection involves sin. Such a Savior, however, would have been unable to rescue us from our sins.

Dollar's next strategy is to elevate man to the status of godhood. "I'm gonna say to you right now that you are gods, little 'g.' You are gods because you came from God and you are gods."<sup>8</sup> Isaiah rejects Dollar's claim when he writes, "'You are my witnesses,' declares the Lord, 'and my servant whom I have chosen, so that you may know and believe me and understand that I am he. Before me no god was formed, nor will there be one after me'" (Isa. 43:10).

Dollar attempted to prove while in conversation with Kenneth Copeland that we have equality with God:

In Philippians chapter 2, I want you to look at verse 5.... 'Let this mind, let this attitude be in you which was also in Christ Jesus.' So now, what mind, what attitude is it that you want me to make sure that this same attitude is in me?... 'Who being in the form of God thought it not robbery to be equal with God.'...Now, if I'm to take what he said here and put it on, then my whole attitude now should be I have equality with God....Now somebody says, well it's hard to think that way. Well, keep saying it....Talk yourself into it."<sup>9</sup>

God responds, "'To whom will you compare me? Or who is my equal?' says the Holy One. Lift your eyes and look to the heavens: Who created all these? He who brings out the starry host one by one, and calls them each by name" (Isa. 40:25–26b). It is nothing less than blasphemy to try and claim that we have equality with God.

Philippians 2:5-11, in context, tells us that just as Christ, who is greater than us, humbled Himself, so we are to humble ourselves in relation to each other. This is just the opposite of Dollar's explanation. He is asking his followers to exalt themselves, while Jesus makes it clear that "whoever exalts himself will be humbled" (Matt. 23:12).

Psalms 111:10a states, "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom." By treating God as an equal, however, Dollar doesn't appear to exhibit any reverential fear of Him whatsoever. Having led his followers to believe that they are little gods who have equality with God, it follows that they should have everything their hearts desire. They thus believe that they simply *can't* be happy without money. "See, there are some people that believe not in prosperity....They don't want to hear about that God is a God that wants to put money in your hand....Well, you need to hear about money, because you ain't gonna have no love and joy and peace until you get some money!"<sup>10</sup>

This teaching inevitably leads to a different gospel than the one in the Bible. Dollar questions: "What's the Gospel to those who are poor? Prosperity! What's the Gospel to those who lack? Prosperity! And if you don't preach it, then you won't be able to do anything about the poverty situation."<sup>11</sup>

Jesus often healed the blind and the lame, but the Gospels fail to give us a single example of Jesus bestowing riches on the poor. Dollar maintains that material possessions are important for preaching the gospel "because you have a world of people out there that don't know your Jesus, but when they start seeing you with their stuff, they're going to want to know how you got it and they'll want you to introduce them to the Jesus that's able to open doors up without the college degree."<sup>12</sup> Dollar's gospel has people coming to Jesus for material gain instead of forgiveness of sins.

Scripture clearly teaches us not to labor for earthly goods. Matthew 6:19–20 says, “Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moth and rust do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal.”

Scripture promises that trials will come “so that your faith—of greater worth than gold, which perishes even though refined by fire—may be proved genuine and may result in praise, glory and honor when Jesus Christ is revealed” (1 Pet. 1:7). The church ignores Christ’s words at its own peril.

### T. D. JAKES

T. D. Jakes was the subject of a Christian Research Journal cover story in 1999.<sup>13</sup> His aberrant Word of Faith doctrine and his denial of the trinity<sup>14</sup> continue to the present. Not content with his modalist view that God is only one person who manifests Himself as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, he now takes the heretical view that God manifests Himself in other ways as well. Jakes says:

When God says ‘I AM that I AM,’ He says, ‘I can become whatever,’ and He showed off from that point on all through the wilderness. He just kept turning into stuff....They said ‘We want meat.’ He became quail and started flying through the air. They said ‘What are we going to do for water?’ He became water, came gushing out of a rock....They said ‘We can’t drink this bitter water.’ He became a tree and turned the bitter water sweet. I mean, He just kept turning into stuff! One God manifesting in a multiplicity of ways. One God. Now, you don’t divide all of those manifestations into different Gods, the God of Bread, the God of Quail, the God of Water, the God of Tree, the God of Cloud, the God of Fire. Just one God Who manifests Himself in many different ways....Your God is multifaceted, manifold, many shades.<sup>15</sup>

Jakes places great emphasis on the power of words, making the incredible claim that “it’s the Word of God that makes the difference, so powerful that as long as Jesus was talking on the cross He couldn’t die. It was only when He shut His mouth and hung His head in the locks of His shoulder that death could come and take Him, because He had so much life in His mouth that as long as He was talking death couldn’t get near Him.”<sup>16</sup>

We too, according to Jakes, can exercise the power of words to get whatever we want from God. Jakes, in relating the story of the blind man, Bartimaeus, said:

But it was not what was in Christ’s mouth that got him healed. The power was in Bartimaeus’ mouth. He would have whatever he said. And Jesus was saying ‘My hands are tied because I can’t do any more for you than what you say.’...If the power of life and death is in the tongue and you can have whatever you say and if you’ve been praying and praying and praying and you finally got God’s attention and now He’s looking at you and saying ‘What do you want?’...What do you want? Name it, baby, name it ....Declare it! Speak it! Confess it! Get your list out!<sup>17</sup>

Jakes warns of the power of the tongue when he says, “That Word of God is how God procreates. It’s how God regenerates. It’s the Word of God that does it every time. And that’s why once you get in the Word of God you gotta be careful what you speak to, because the power of life and death is in your tongue.”<sup>18</sup>

Jakes and other proponents of such teaching refer to Proverbs 18:21, “The tongue has the power of life and death, and those who love it will eat its fruit.” Proverbs isn’t teaching that when you speak a limited God has to give you whatever you say. *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary’s* explanation of this passage is that “those who enjoy talking, i.e., indulging in it, must bear its fruit, whether good or bad. The lesson is to be warned, especially if you love to talk.”<sup>19</sup> The New Testament book of James devotes chapter three to warnings of the dangers of the tongue—perhaps a chapter Jakes would do well to read before opening his mouth to teach these kinds of false doctrines.

Jakes, instead of teaching that the reason for giving to the Lord is to further the spread of the gospel, espouses an extremely selfish reason for giving to the Lord—giving in order to receive more:

I want to pray over your seed, and it would be ridiculous for me to pray that God would give it back to you, because if all He was going to do was give it back to you, you ought to keep it and let you just have it....If you get a hundred dollars or a thousand dollars and you were going to give a thousand dollars, I tell you what, God is just going to give that thousand dollars back, well you just

broke even. You could have kept that thousand dollars and not gone through the trouble. Come on, church folks! But God is going to give you some more on top of that.<sup>20</sup>

Jakes says that if you want something from God, you must invest something. “Many people do not understand, if you are going to receive something from the Lord you have to be prepared to invest something. So many times people want things out of life without any kind of investment. You can’t in the natural, in the stock market, you can’t get a return on a stock where you have not bought shares.”<sup>21</sup>

Would Jakes not give things to his children unless they gave him something first? Of course not! Likewise, God provides us with all of our needs—food, clothing, home, and all other necessities of life, and He does this out of His goodness and mercy, without any merit or worthiness on our part.

## JOYCE MEYER

Joyce Meyer was named one of the top 25 evangelical leaders in the United States in 2005.<sup>22</sup> Based in St. Louis, Missouri, she is best known for her personal testimony of abuse as a child by her father and her struggles in subsequent years. She has authored more than 70 books and hosts a daily television and radio show called *Enjoying Everyday Life*.<sup>23</sup>

Meyer holds an honorary doctorate of divinity degree from Oral Roberts University in Tulsa, Oklahoma, and a PhD in theology from Life Christian University in Tampa, Florida,<sup>24</sup> a university and seminary that has given degrees in theology to Benny Hinn, Rodney Howard-Browne, and Kenneth Copeland.<sup>25</sup>

She undoubtedly has helped many who have suffered the abuse she did; still, there is great danger in her Word of Faith teachings. For example, she holds to the popular Word of Faith belief that faith is a force: “Unto every man is given the measure of faith, and faith is a powerful force....And the two greatest ways that we release our faith...is through sincere, heartfelt prayer and through the words of your mouth.”<sup>26</sup>

Faith is described in Scripture as trust in God’s promises, not as a tangible force. Hebrews 11:1 clearly states, “Now faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see.”

Meyer also believes that people can speak things into existence: “It says in Romans 4:17 that....we have a God who gives life to the dead and He calls things that be not as though they already existed....If there’s something in your way, speak to it.”<sup>27</sup> Yes, God can call things that do not exist as though they do, and He does give life to the dead, but Scripture does not say that *people* can.

Meyer embraces the “give-to-get” message espoused by her close friend Oral Roberts. “When I talked with Dr. Roberts today and we talked about this seed-faith thing, he said...when you give you get a receipt in heaven that when you have a need you can then go with your receipt and say ‘You see, God, I have got my receipt from my sowing and now I have a need and I’m cashing in my receipt.’”<sup>28</sup>

Meyer undoubtedly doesn’t intend to encourage people to come to the Master for the love of what is on the Master’s table, but that is the result of this mindset. The apostle John described true biblical love in 1 John 4:16–21 as love that we have “because Christ first loved us,” and, as Galatians 2:20 says, “gave himself for us.” We are to love sacrificially, as Christ did. Selfish love is interested only in what it can get for itself; that type of love is what results when people embrace the philosophy of the Faith movement.

It is Meyer’s contention that Jesus died to bestow, among other things, financial blessings on us:

He has unbelievably wonderful, awesome, radical blessings.... Every blessing is not just a financial blessing, but yes, financial blessings....And I really would like to just claim and use and enjoy as many of my blessings and as much of my inheritance as I possibly can, for two reasons: one, we all want to enjoy life, and second, I believe Jesus died for this purpose and I believe it brings Him joy when we mature enough to be able to receive the fullness of what He has for us.”<sup>29</sup>

Jesus died to pay the price for our sins. If we say that He died for any other reason, we detract from the central message of Scripture.

Finally, Meyer makes the startling claim that she is not a sinner: “I didn’t stop sinning until I finally got it through my thick head I wasn’t a sinner anymore. And the religious world thinks that’s heresy and they want to hang you for it. But the Bible says that I’m righteous, and I can’t be righteous and a sinner at the same time.”<sup>30</sup>

Meyer elaborated during an interview on KFYO radio in St. Louis, Missouri: "I know that I sin all the time and when I say that I'm not a sinner, I don't mean that I don't sin. I just mean that I'm not going to go around all the time identifying myself as a sinner, because that gives me the mentality then that that's all I am."<sup>31</sup>

Martin Luther addressed this concept and summed up the danger of this type of thinking superbly:

The saints at the same time as they are righteous are also sinners; righteous because they believe in Christ, whose righteousness covers them and is imputed to them, but sinners because they do not fulfill the Law, are not without concupiscence, and are like sick men under the care of a physician; they are sick in fact but healthy in hope and in the fact that they are beginning to be healthy, that is, they are 'being healed.' They are people for whom the worst possible thing is the presumption that they are healthy, because they suffer a worse relapse.<sup>32</sup>

## JOEL OSTEEN

Joel Osteen took over as pastor of Lakewood Church in Houston, Texas, following the death of his father, John Osteen, in 1999. He has little theological training, having dropped out of Oral Roberts University in 1982 to run his father's television ministry.<sup>33</sup> Despite this lack of training, Lakewood Church has grown enormously, from a congregation of 6,000 in 1999 to one of 30,000 today,<sup>34</sup> thanks largely to his gospel of self-esteem. His best-selling book *Your Best Life Now* has sold more than three million copies in hardback and has led to a multimillion-dollar contract for another book with Free Press, a division of Simon and Shuster, slated for publication in 2007.<sup>35</sup>

In addition to his gospel of self-esteem, Osteen also preaches the Word of Faith theology that his father taught. He says, for example, that words have creative power: "Our words are vital in bringing our dreams to pass. It's not enough to simply see it by faith or in your imagination. You have to begin speaking words of faith over your life. Your words have enormous creative power. The moment you speak something out, you give birth to it."<sup>36</sup>

Osteen, like Meyer and others, believes that every day "you should declare good things. Just look in the mirror and say 'I am strong, I am healthy, I'm rising to new levels, I'm excited about my future.' When you say that, it may not be true. You may not be very healthy today, or maybe you don't have a lot of things to look forward to, but the Scripture tells us in Romans we have to call the things that are not as if they already were."<sup>37</sup>

Osteen allots so much power to our words that they can even thwart God's plans, as nearly happened, he claims, at the angel's announcement of the birth of John the Baptist:

[Zechariah] was so surprised because he and his wife Elizabeth were well up there in years. He said to the angel, "Are you really sure this is going to happen? Do you see how old we are? I just don't think this could be possible."...The angel went on to say "But, Zechariah, because you didn't believe, because you questioned God, you shall remain silent and not be able to speak until the baby is born."...Well, why did God shut his mouth?...He knew Zechariah would go out and start talking to his friends. "Well, they said we're gonna have a baby, but they must have gotten the wrong person. Man, we're way too old!" See, God knows the power of our words. He knows we prophesy our future, and He knew Zechariah's own negative words would stop His plan.<sup>38</sup>

Acknowledging that we may have negative thoughts, he adds, "But let me encourage you: don't make the mistake of verbalizing those thoughts. The moment you speak something out it takes on a whole new meaning. See, one of the main ways we release our faith is through our words. That's how we give life to our faith."<sup>39</sup>

Osteen is giving more power to the creature—us—than to the Creator. As sons and daughters of God, we reflect the communicable attributes of God, such as love and intelligence, but we don't reflect His incommunicable attributes, such as omnipotence. Our words don't contain any magical power that can upset God's plans.

Osteen promises that we can expect to receive preferential treatment in life from God:

I know when Victoria and I used to travel with my father overseas, a lot of times we would go over a few days early, and it was amazing how many times we would get upgraded to first class. When I'd go up to that counter I'd kid with Victoria and I'd say 'Watch this! We're going to get upgraded.' And

I'd go up there expecting to get preferential treatment. I'd go up there knowing that I have an advantage, I've got the favor of God....when I'd go up there I'd just smile real big and be real friendly and that whole time under my breath I'd be saying 'Father, I thank you that I have your favor. I thank you that you're causing me to stand out in the crowd. I thank you that your light is shining down on me.' And Victoria will tell you time after time, for no reason at all, they'd bump us up to first class. See, that's the favor of God....That's God's favor giving us preferential treatment.<sup>40</sup>

God isn't inclined to fall for flattery, resulting in preferential treatment being given to some Christians over other people. If He were, He certainly has been falling asleep at the wheel when it comes to the persecuted Christians in the Sudan. This type of thinking is a trait of the North American church, which, for too many years, has expected God to serve it rather than expecting itself to serve God.

Lastly, Osteen holds to the popularly held Word of Faith error that Jesus did battle with Satan in hell. "For three days Jesus fought with the enemy. It was the battle of the ages, light versus darkness, good versus evil. But thank God Satan was no match for Jesus."<sup>41</sup>

Osteen elaborates, "He grabbed Satan by the nap [sic] of his neck and He began to slowly drag him down the corridors of hell. All beat up and bruised because He wanted to make sure that every single demon saw very clearly that Jesus was indeed the undisputed Champion of all time!"<sup>42</sup>

In addition to the fact that Satan isn't in hell, Jesus didn't partially succeed on the cross and then finish the work in hell. He completed the work on the cross and pronounced that the debt had been paid (see, e.g., Rom. 6:10; John 19:30).

## ROD PARSLEY

Rod Parsley attended Circleville Bible College in Circleville, Ohio, but dropped out during his second year.<sup>43</sup> He began teaching a Bible study in 1977 that grew within two years into a church of 180 seats in Columbus, Ohio.<sup>44</sup> Under the mentoring of Word of Faith teacher Lester Sumrall,<sup>45</sup> Parsley opened the 5200-seat World Fellowship Church in Columbus in 1987. The relationship between Sumrall and Parsley, according to Parsley, was like that of Elijah and Elisha, and Parsley claims that in 1992 Sumrall passed his "sword of anointing" to him.<sup>46</sup> Today Parsley's television program, *Breakthrough*, is seen in 136 countries around the world.<sup>47</sup>

Like other Word of Faith teachers, Parsley greatly diminishes God's powers while elevating humanity's powers. He says, for example,

When you ask God what He wants, He only tells you one time in the whole 1,166 pages of your Bible....'Here's what I want: Ask of Me!' Why does He say that? Because He can't do it on His own. He can't get what He wants on His own because He placed you in authority on this earth. Did you hear me? So He has to compel you to ask Him so that then He can answer, because He said 'Call and I will answer.'<sup>48</sup>

1 Chronicles, in contrast to Parsley's statement, tells us just how powerful God is: "Yours, O Lord, is the greatness and the power and the glory and the majesty and the splendor, for everything in heaven and earth is yours. Yours, O Lord, is the kingdom; you are exalted as head over all" (1 Chron. 29:11; see also Gen. 18:14; Job 42:2). Does that sound like a helpless God who needs our permission to operate on earth?

Parsley, too, endorses the give-to-get philosophy, as seen when trying to explain Deuteronomy 14:26: "God is saying you can sow that money for whatever you want....Your job. For sheep. That's your covering and your food. How about for wine? That symbolizes to us fruit, joy, peace....You mean if you need some love you can sow money? Well, that's what it says."<sup>49</sup>

Salvation, too, is among the bounty. "Salvation for your family....Is that what you really want, to know that all of your children are saved, to pillow your head at night knowing if Jesus split the eastern sky, that your children are all within the ark of safety? Is that what you want? Then sow for it."<sup>50</sup>

Parsley, at the end of one broadcast, asked some of his followers to sow a gift of \$50, stating, "I believe God will give you a harvest of protection from deception and an uncommon ability to discern between truth and error in your life....First, God is going to release to you the ability to hear and recognize His

voice as never before. Second, protection over your decisions. I'm believing with you for one year of no bad choices in your life. Finally, thirdly, protection from the deception of the adversary."<sup>51</sup>

If doing this actually worked, I'd recommend that everyone send Parsley \$50, as that would end the deception the Faith movement has foisted on the church all these years! God never says, "Give me your money and I'll see to it that your family is saved, and that you'll become wealthy." Salvation is not for sale (see, e.g., Eph. 2:8–10).

Parsley also maintains that healing is guaranteed: "Don't you pray 'If it's Thy will.' Perfect faith cannot exist where the will of God is not known. Did you hear me? I said healing is not a promise, it's an established fact."<sup>52</sup> He takes Peter out of context to back up this teaching, stating, "First Peter 2:24 records that sickness was defeated as a result of the stripes Jesus bore on His back. When the Roman cat-of-nine-tails whistled through the air and stripped His back until His flesh hanged round His legs like ribbons, every lash laid on Him purchased healing for our sick bodies. Because Jesus bore those stripes you don't have to be sick anymore."<sup>53</sup>

What Peter actually says is that Christ "bore our sins in his body on the tree, so that we might die to sins and live for righteousness: by his wounds you have been healed." Note that Christ bore our sins—not our sicknesses—so that we could die to sins—not sicknesses. It is through His sacrifice on the tree that our sins have been removed, or healed.

Paul was never healed of the thorn in his flesh and he recommended wine, not healing, for Timothy's stomach problem. It's also worth noting that Rod Parsley's son has not been cured of Asperger syndrome, a form of autism.<sup>54</sup> Healing is provided for in the atonement, but it is never guaranteed.

Finally, Parsley teaches that his viewers will receive luxury homes and cars from God:

Some of you better get ready to drive around in neighborhoods where you never thought you'd be able to afford to live. Some of you better go down to that Lexus and Mercedes dealership and just sit down in one of those things with that leather all over it. And when they say, 'what are you doing,' just say, 'well, I'm, I'm just feeling out what my Father is going to give me.' How's He gonna give it to you? 'Because I'm gonna be obedient. I heard a word from the man of God and when I obey that word, it unleashes that anointing into my life and I'm on my way to houses I didn't build, full of good things I didn't have to buy.'<sup>55</sup>

A year after making this statement he lamented, "Five years ago the number one request coming into prayer lines across America was 'Pray for my lost family and loved ones that they do not go to hell.' Number one request five years ago. It's number eight today. It has been replaced by—neck and neck—number one, 'Pray for my physical body,' number two, 'Pray for my financial prosperity.' This has become the cry of the church."<sup>56</sup>

It's little wonder the main requests today are for healing and prosperity considering the message he has been preaching all these years! He and other Word of Faith teachers have succeeded in taking peoples' eyes off of Jesus Christ and placing them on the things of this world.

## THE GOSPEL BEYOND CRISIS

There is a tendency in the church today to downplay the importance of doctrine. Scripture, however, places a great deal of emphasis not only on doctrine, but *correct* doctrine. Paul urged Timothy to "watch your life and doctrine closely. Persevere in them, because if you do, you will save both yourself and your hearers" (1 Tim. 4:16). He did this because "the time will come when men will not put up with sound doctrine. Instead, to suit their own desires, they will gather around them a great number of teachers to say what their itching ears want to hear" (2 Tim. 4:3).

The gospel we hear today appeals to those itching ears. It is appealing to think that you can order God around like a divine butler, or to think that you are equal with God. Who *wouldn't* be fascinated with the idea that they can speak things into existence, or that they're going to receive houses and cars they didn't work for? Who among us doesn't want to hear that they aren't sinners? The teachings of the Word of Faith movement are nothing more than an appeal to the flesh—thus their popularity.

Much of today's church is listening to a false gospel in which *we* are the center of attention instead of Christ. *We* have all the power and God is just a puppet. The result is that we end up like a spoiled child who thinks he knows what is best for him and who thinks he can manipulate his father into giving him anything he wants. Is this the kind of God we really need—a God who will give us our heart's desire, even if it will harm us?

We have shown with passages such as Isaiah 43:10, Matthew 6:19-20, and Romans 3:23 that Scripture disagrees with all of these assertions. Christ is the center of attention in the true gospel of the Bible. He holds all the power and authority. He knows what is best for us, and it isn't necessarily what we want that He offers us, but what we need. The gospel of the Bible focuses on one person, Jesus Christ, and what He did for us at Calvary—purchase our salvation. Many of today's most prominent churches and preachers clearly are preaching another gospel, a gospel that not only cannot save, but that is doing devastating damage to the souls of thousands of Christians every year.

## NOTES

1. *Christianity in Crisis* is Hank Hanegraaff's highly-regarded ECPA Gold Medallion award-winning book that exposes the cancer of the Word of Faith movement.
2. Hank Hanegraaff, *Christianity in Crisis* (1993; Eugene, OR: Harvest House Publishers, 1997), 10–11.
3. "Dr. Creflo A. Dollar Biography," About CDM, Creflo Dollar Ministries, [http://www.creflodollarministries.org/about/bio\\_t.html](http://www.creflodollarministries.org/about/bio_t.html).
4. John Blake, "Dollar and the Gospel," *The Atlanta Journal and Constitution*, March 5, 2000, 1G.
5. Creflo Dollar, *Changing Your World*, TBN, December 8, 2002.
6. Ibid.
7. All Bible quotations are from the New International Version.
8. Creflo Dollar, *Changing Your World*, TBN, September 15, 2002.
9. Creflo Dollar, conversation with Kenneth Copeland, *Believer's Voice of Victory*, TBN, May 23, 2002.
10. Creflo Dollar, *Praise the Lord*, TBN, June 20, 1999.
11. Ibid., April 1, 2004.
12. Ibid., April 6, 2000.
13. Jerry Buckner, "The Man, His Ministry, and His Movement: Concerns about the Teachings of T. D. Jakes," *Christian Research Journal* 22, 2 (1999): 12, <http://www.equip.org/DJ900.htm>.
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