**Jubilee CC October 26,2014 It’s Time to take a Stand!**

Last Sunday I promised you food that had no hormones, no steroids, no artificial sweeteners, no additives – only the pure Word of God. I think I delivered as promised. We covered the subject of being aware of the many deceptions floating around; many of the false and lying doctrines of man, seeking to deceive and turn us from the Way, Jesus Christ. We are to test all things and hold to that which is good and true. Test all manifestations. Are they Biblical? Is it in the Bible? If not, toss them out and stay away from false manifestations. Take your ‘angel’ feathers, gold dust etc. and go to VIU – prove they are indeed authentic – or not.

Current events of this world – ‘let not your heart be troubled.’ Don’t fear, don’t panic, don’t get caught up in this world’s sense of fear, don’t build an underground shelter or buy up thousands of gallons of water or generators etc etc. Rest comfortably in the Prince of Peace, looking to Him for your security. Take advantage of the climate of the times to reach out to those who are in fear and panic. What an opportunity to introduce them to the Prince of Peace, Jesus.

Emotions are many, Principles are few, Emotions will vary, Principles never do! I gave you the scripture of **Romans 14** as a principle to guide your life so you can decide what is permissible and what is not. Is it okay for my kids to go out trick or treating? **Romans 14** has the answer. Is it okay for me to go out dancing? Again, **Romans 14.** You have a conscience and you have the Holy Spirit living in you. Do you feel uneasy about doing a certain thing? That is the Holy Spirit restraining you. Do you feel comfortable doing a certain thing? That is the Holy Spirit releasing you. Is what you are about to do going to cause your brother or sister to stumble? Don’t do it. Should you see your brother or sister doing it, don’t judge them. If God has convicted you of doing something or not doing something, do not think that this is your opportunity to preach against whatever it is? (My example of God dealing with me about fishing.) Do not judge, lest you be judged. Show mercy and you will be shown mercy in your time of need. Amen?

**Moving on to another subject – The Prosperity Gospel**. Itching ears and deceived minds go together….. willingly. Let us read Paul’s final words to Timothy found in **11Timothy 4:1-5** Today we have heaps and heaps of teachers, full of itching ear powder they so capably sprinkle upon us, and we love to have it so. We have surefire formulas to get health and wealth, success, happiness and personal fulfillment. We don’t want to be reminded by the preacher that serving God will cost us our lives; that following Jesus requires sacrifice; that we must pick up our crosses and follow Jesus daily; that we must pay the price of persecution, pain and personal loss for our beliefs in Jesus. Yet we just read how Paul warned Timothy not to fall for teaching that caters to being comfortable or that encourages self-indulgence. We are so involved in worshipping the creature and caring for its every want and whim that we neglect to worship the Creator. Loving ourselves outranks every other relationship instead of God having first place in our lives. Jesus spoke of the narrow way that leads to life. I don’t think He was talking about narrow-mindedness, but rather the mid-line between two extremes - the built-in balance of correct Biblical doctrine. In other words, when we look into scripture, we see that faith is balanced by works; God’s love by His judgment; His mercy by His justice; man’s responsibility by His sovereignty; death to self by life in the Spirit; we are royal sons and daughters balanced by the knowledge that we are to be humble and obedient servants. In the same way, it is absolutely necessary to know the Biblical balance between poverty and prosperity. It is time to take a stand against fuzzy half-truths and murky renderings of scripture. Surely it is time that we let the light of God’s Word and the breath of the Holy Spirit penetrate and blow away the fog that has settled on the church, obscuring the ‘narrow way.’

Listen to what Charles Spurgeon, who lived over 100 years ago, in speaking to the then largest congregation of believers ever: ‘I believe it is anti-Christian and unholy for any Christian to live with the object of accumulating wealth. You will say, ‘Are we not to strive all we can to get all the money we can?’ You may do so. I cannot doubt but what, in so doing, you may do service to the cause of God. But what I said was to live with the object of accumulating wealth is anti-Christian.’ Over the years, however, the message being preached in some of the largest churches in the land has dramatically changed from the cross, the blood and forgiveness of sin through believing in Jesus Christ to a new, sweet sounding, ear tickling gospel – a gospel of riches, wealth, possessions, power, fame and personal fulfillment. It has been nick-named the ‘name it and claim it’ gospel; the ‘blab it and grab it’ gospel; the ‘health and wealth’ gospel; the ‘positive confession theology’ gospel; the ‘prosperity gospel’; the ‘feel good’ gospel, and many other names I’ve never heard of. It really does not matter what name you use in describing it, the message of this new, egocentric, it’s-all-about-me gospel is the same. God wants you rich; He wants every believer to be physically healthy, materially wealthy and personally happy. These preachers declare that it is God’s will for everyone to be wealthy and happy. They declare it is God who has given them the power to get wealth, when in fact it is all the gullible and foolish Christians who gave them their wealth. These teachers encourage their followers to pray for and even demand material blessings from God. Sow a seed of $1000 in my ministry and God will give you a harvest of $10,000! Etc etc ad nauseum. This modern age prosperity doctrine is full of errors, and it is important that we know what the lies are so we are not deceived by these wicked, deliberate liars, looking to profit from preaching. I want to expose 4 or 5 of these lies today.

**1) They (prosperity doctrine perpetrators) try to use the Abrahamic covenant as a means to ‘material entitlement.’**

The covenant God made with Abraham to bless and multiply him is found in **Genesis 12, 15, 17 and 22,** is extended to us and is ours today because we are the branches that have been grafted into the Vine, Christ Jesus. We say thank you Jesus for your wonderful work at Calvary, and for the promises in your Word that include the Gentile nations.

They use this covenant as a theological base to their heresy. We recognize that much of scripture is a record of the fulfillment of the Abrahamic covenant, but it is wrong to take it out of context by holding an incorrect view concerning the application of the covenant. As Christians we are Abraham’s spiritual children and as such we are heirs to the blessings of faith. But we are not entitled to wealth and possessions as the primary purpose of the Abrahamic covenant. Their claim continues on to say that because as believer’s we are Abraham’s children it is our right to inherit incredible financial blessing. A well-known prosperity teacher has said, ‘Since God’s covenant has been established and prosperity is a provision of this covenant, you need to realize that prosperity belongs to you now.’ Sounds so logical and sweet – I like it, I want it. But wait, there is more. To further support this claim, these teachers turn to **Galatians 3:14,** which refers to ‘the blessings of Abraham might come upon the Gentiles in Christ Jesus,’ and **vs. 29** ‘And if you are Christ’s then you are Abraham’s seed, and heirs according to the promise.’ Conveniently forgotten is the last half of **vs. 14,** ‘that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith.’ God kept His promise to Abraham. **Genesis 17:7,8** It has not changed though thousands of years have passed. God saved Abraham because of his faith in believing God’s promises, none of which were about wealth and money. God has blessed the world through Abraham and his descendants by sending the Messiah, the Hope of the world and eternity. God does not break His promises, but we need to know exactly what it is God has promised us. He promised us salvation and eternal life through His Son, Jesus, and that is the greatest gift we could ever hope to have, not money or wealth. Back to verse **14 – Paul was clearly reminding the Galatians of the spiritual blessings of salvation, not the material blessings of wealth.** Clear enough?

**2) Prosperity teachers say that Jesus’ atonement extends to the ‘sin’ of material** **poverty.** They hold a faulty view of the atonement. Jesus’ life, death and resurrection was not so we could be financially rich, but so that our sins might be removed from us and a right relationship with the Father could be re-established. The prosperity gospel claims that both physical healing and financial prosperity have been provided for in the atonement. At the outset that would appear to be an accurate observation. The basic principle of the Christian life is to know that God put our sin, sickness, disease, sorrow, grief (and poverty) on Jesus at Calvary. This is where a misunderstanding of the atonement begins. Where in the Word can you find prosperity lumped into the atonement of Christ? I have tried to find it and have failed. It’s not there. We also have been taught misconceptions of Christ while He lived on earth. There are those who teach Jesus was wealthy. As a baby loads of gold, frankincense and myrrh were given to Him – great wealth was His, and this paid for the trips His family was forced to make to save His life. There are teachers who say Jesus had a house, a big house, and Jesus was handling big money. Jesus even wore designer clothes. These are warped misconceptions and lies. We know what Jesus said. Foxes have holes etc, but He had no-where to lay His head. He was born in a cattle manger or feeder. Women followed Jesus around and gave their money to support Him. These are indisputable facts. He was poor and came from a poor family. Prosperity teachers cite **11Corinthians 8:9**, which reads, ‘For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor, that you through His poverty might become rich.’ At first glance this verse may lead you to believe that Paul was teaching about an increase in material wealth, but reading this verse in context reveals Paul was teaching the exact opposite principle. He was saying that since Christ had provided so much for them through the atonement, that they should empty themselves of their physical riches as service to their Savior. In **vs. 14** Paul admonishes them to give their wealth away to their needy brothers. He was taking up an offering for the poor and persecuted believer’s in Jerusalem, not telling them how they should be rich because Jesus was. Get it straight.

**3) Prosperity teachers say we are to give in order to gain material compensation** **from God. This is the ‘give to get’ equation.** And the more you give, the more they get and the less you have. Of course they don’t tell you that.

This is the third major error they propound – Christians should give in order to get money and possessions from God. Prosperity teachers are totally focused and fixated on your act of giving; your money; your resources and what you should do with it. They urge all to give generously and we are confronted with such statements as: ‘True prosperity is the ability to use God’s power to meet the needs of mankind in every realm of life.’ ‘We have been called to finance the gospel to the world.’ While these and other statements would seem to be praiseworthy, this emphasis on giving is built on motives that are anything but praiseworthy. The driving force behind this teaching on giving is what prosperity teachers are now calling the ‘Law of Compensation or Reciprocity’. According to this man-made law based on **Mark 10:29,30**, Christians need to give generously to others, because when they do, God gives back more in return – much more! This, of course, leads to a cycle of ever-increasing prosperity! It is evident that the prosperity gospel is built on false and greedy motives. Let me say in balance, that God is not opposed to us having material prosperity, but He is opposed to material prosperity taking over and controlling our lives. We are to trust in God not our possessions or bank accounts. Jesus taught to give, hoping for nothing in return. Luke 10:35 James 1:27 Prosperity theologians teach their disciples to give because they will get a great return. I am trying to un-muddy the water. I understand the principle of sowing and reaping – and it works. But here we are exposing some underlying wrong motives and warping of the truth. And there are so many other blessings we receive when we sow into others lives, and there are so many other things other than money we can sow – Amen?

**4) Faith is a self-generated spiritual force that will lead to prosperity.** Let me explain. We understand that our faith is placed in and based on a total trust in the person of Jesus Christ and His promises. Prosperity teachers teach a different man-made doctrine and call it Biblical. It is heretical, the furthest thing from the truth found in God’s Word. They state: ‘Faith is a spiritual force, a spiritual energy, a spiritual power. It is this force of faith which makes the laws of the spirit world function. There are certain laws governing prosperity revealed in God’s Word, and faith causes them to function.’ This is a totally false misrepresentation of faith as we know it. Faith is the confident expectation that what God has said and promised in His Word will happen; it will come to pass. It is not the above…… According to their false theology, faith is a self-generated act of the will - it is a humanly conjured spiritual force directed at God, when in fact faith is a God-generated and God-centered act of the will. Any theology that views faith solely as a means to financial gain rather than as justification before God is faulty, inadequate and all about greed, not need.

**5) Our prayers to God are a tool to force God to grant prosperity.** Prosperity preachers often refer to **James 4:2,** noting that ‘we have not because we ask not.’ Yet if you continue reading, **vs.3** says, ‘You ask and do not receive, because you ask amiss, that you may spend it on your own pleasures.’ Advocates of the prosperity gospel teach believers to pray for success in every area of life. They say, ‘When we pray, believing that we have already received what we are praying for, God has no choice but to make our prayers come to pass….it is a key to getting results as a Christian.’ They have reduced God to a faucet that must produce when turned on; to a bag boy who is at our every beck and call; and if He’s good to us, we’ll give Him a tip. No one is complaining about God supplying all our needs, and even some of our wants, but the prosperity gospel over-emphasis is on man (his faith) and money (possessions). Prayer is not a tool to be used to force God to provide my every whim or desire. We are to enquire of God; ask God; not demand or command God to do what we want. God does not honor selfish requests that bring dishonor His name. Our prayers will become powerful when we allow God to change our desires so that they perfectly line up to His will for us. **1John 3:21,22** Who does the created being think he is – telling the great Creator how to answer his prayers, and with how much money?

Certainly all our requests should be made known to God. **Philippians 4:6** but the prosperity gospel focuses so much on man’s desires that it will lead people to pray selfish, shallow, superficial prayers that do not bring God glory. Further, when joined with the prosperity doctrine of faith, people will be led to attempt to manipulate God to get what they want – a useless and futile effort for sure. This is far from praying as we should – that God’s will be done. It is prayer that my will be done.

I think it is clear that the prosperity doctrine is a lying doctrine of demons and a man-made effort to coerce money from you and me. It is a heretic and totally unbiblical view of what our relationship with God should be. Let us have a clear understanding of what is false doctrine and what is true – the Bible is true, Jesus is Truth. Do not listen to man’s voice but listen to Jesus’ voice. **‘My sheep know** **my voice and they follow me.’** Amen!