

22/07/2001 – This is a transcript of a talk given by Philip L. Powell in BRISBANE, Australia on Sunday July 22, 2001. It is available on a C90 audio as the last of four talks relating to modern false movements within Charismatic and Pentecostal Churches. The four talks are recorded on one audiotape and available for a cost of \$5 (Australian dollars) plus postage. They are also part of four video recordings, which feature messages by Jacob Prasch. This final talk in the series by Philip Powell is on the video entitled ¹“**STARS THAT SHINE**”, which is an Eschatological exhortation by Jacob Prasch based on the Resurrection from 1 Corinthians 15, Hosea 6 and Daniel 12. It is obtainable at a cost of \$25 (Australian dollars) plus postage. Orders to – Christian Witness Ministries (CWM), PO Box 353, LOCH SPORT VIC 3851 - fax +61 (0)3 5146 0270. You may fax or mail your Credit Card (Visa, Bankcard or Master Card only) details plus your full address and your order will be processed as promptly as possible.

Serving God or Mammon? Can a Gospel that is Free be Sold For Money?

Does the message of Hagin, Copeland, Hinn and Houston reflect true Christianity? Are their different gospel and another Jesus deceiving you?

“Many shall follow their pernicious ways; by reason of whom the way of truth shall be evil spoken of. And through covetousness shall they with feigned words make merchandise of you ...” **2 Peter 2: 2 & 3.**

Steve Penny in a recorded message that he gave to AoG leaders at the Queensland State Conference last year (2000) said and I quote: *“About five or seven years ago in the move of the Spirit that happened God spoke to me clearly and said for the next season of your life I want you to be a Prophet of Prosperity.”* He perverted the scripture in the worst manner I have ever encountered when he maintained that the word *“Well”* in the commendation of the five talented and two talented servants in Matt 25, *“Well Done Good and Faithful Servant”* signified that our Lord in His life on earth always chose the best. He actually said that Jesus ate at the best restaurants. The premise for such a claim was simply this word *“WELL”*, which Steve Penny interpreted as a sort of choice of EXCELLENCE and by that he means the highest and best standard in all things. So presumably the Lord who sovereignly chose the location and circumstances of Christ’s birth in a stinking stable, didn’t know what He was doing.

I presume that Steve Penny got his idea from John Avanzini who said that Jesus was very wealthy and that he owned a big house. In fact John Avanzini says that Jesus was so wealthy during His earthly life that He had a bag to hold the money

¹ Refer <http://www.christian-witness.org/pdf/briscovers.pdf>

in which there was so much that no one knew that Judas was pilfering from the bag. Sadly this is the pattern of the false teachers and false prophets of our time. They are sowing a con and thereby making themselves extremely wealthy – John Avinzini drips gold from both hands. Men like Steve Penny are not original thinkers. They get their ideas from other men, who like themselves are also false teachers. As Jacob Prasch points out the prophet Jeremiah refers to these men as thieves:

Jeremiah 23:30 – *“Therefore, behold, I am against the prophets, saith the LORD, that steal my words every one from his neighbour.”*

One of the hallmarks of a false prophet is that he echoes other men’s ideas. There are many pastors who simply preach the messages of other men. They actually steal their words. We know of one Bible School, which pilfered another Bible teacher’s notes and put them out as their own and then had the cheek to charge for something, which wasn’t theirs. In fact it’s done all the time by so many Pentecostal and Charismatic Bible Colleges in Australia. They don’t even have the honesty or decency to credit the source.

When these people try to be a little bit original they make a fool of themselves. Any school boy could tell Steve Penny that you can’t play around with words in the way that he does with Matthew 25:21 & 23 when he totally ignores the context of our Lord’s teaching, where very clearly the emphasis is not on the achievement but on FAITHFULNESS. In fact this is the whole point of the commendation, which is exactly the same in two cases, even though the returns were greater for the five talented servant than the two talented servant. If the one talented man had been faithful he too would have been commended. FAITHFULNESS not prosperity is the issue.

Of the FIVE talented man who gained five we read in -

Matt 25:21 – *“His lord said unto him, Well done, good and faithful servant: you have been faithful over a few things, I will make you ruler over many things: enter into the joy of your lord.”*

Precisely the same is written of the two talented man who gained only two -

Matt 25:23 – *“His lord said unto him, Well done, good and faithful servant: you have been faithful over a few things, I will make you ruler over many things: enter into the joy of your lord.”*

These men really need to go back to Bible School to learn to correctly divide the Word of God, but sadly in today’s Pentecostal and Charismatic environment one finds it almost impossible to locate a reasonable Bible College that can be recommended. Most of them are “Mickey-mouse” outfits.

The Greek word rendered “*pernicious*” in **2 Peter 2: 2 & 3** signifies utter destruction, which in some contexts consists of eternal misery in hell. Eight times in the KJV it is translated *PERDITION*. We need to look at Peter’s statement in context:

2 Peter 2: 1-4: *“But there were false prophets also among the people, even as there shall be false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction. (2) And many shall follow their pernicious ways; by reason of whom the way of truth shall be evil spoken of. (3) And through covetousness shall they with feigned words make merchandise of you: whose judgment now of a long time lingers not, and their damnation slumbers not. (4) For if God spared not the angels that sinned, ...”*

I would like to read the whole chapter and comment on the full context but time doesn’t allow. Suffice it to point out:

- 1) These false Teachers are within the Church – *AMONG YOU*;
- 2) They Replace the Lord with Mammon – *“denying the Lord that bought them”*

The damnable heresy of the Faith Prosperity teaching is an attack on the gospel from two perspectives. **FIRSTLY** in what it offers. It’s like a carrot in front of the donkey’s nose. The donkey never gets it no matter how far he reaches out. In the gospel setting this ultimately **UNDERMINES** the faith of the donkey. (YES they must be *donkeys*” if they fall for this stuff!)

SECONDLY in what it replaces. Christ died for our sins not for our health, wealth or wisdom. The Gospel is good news but it’s not good news about any old thing – For example I once drew along side of a Kentucky Fried Chicken place. I was musing on what the real Gospel is when my eyes lighted upon the sign – *“The Good News is ...”* Ah here then is the gospel for the gospel is Good News. *“The GOOD NEWS is Kentucky Fried Chicken is open for breakfast every day at 7 a.m.”* No THE GOSPEL is Good News about Christ dying for my sins. Not to feed me breakfast or to make me **HEALTHY WEALTHY & WISE**. They **DENY THE LORD THAT BOUGHT THEM**.

Note – 1 Peter 1:18-19 – *“Forasmuch as you know that you were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers; (19) But with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot:”*

Matthew 6:24 – *“No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon.”*

Luke 16:13 – “No servant can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon.”

3) Thirdly, they discredit the Gospel “.. *the Way of Truth is evil spoken of ...*”

This is happening increasingly in our world. The secular media is judging the Church and ultimately the privileges that Christianity has enjoyed under western governments will be removed because of the con that is being sold, especially by the televangelists like Hinn and Houston.

4) Fourthly, they Rip Off Their Listeners and Readers – “..*through covetousness shall they with feigned words make merchandise of you:*”

FEIGNED = Greek – “*plasters*” (Eng “*plastic*”) signifies “*moulded*” or “*formed*” as from clay, wax, or stone. They mould and shape their words to manipulate their audience.

They *MAKE MERCHANDISE* of you i.e. they “*traffic or trade*”. The word means, “*to use a person or a thing for gain*”

One of these men is alleged to have said: “*Use people then spit them out!*”

Peter says they will do this “*through covetousness*”. That is the basis of it all. The Bible says, “*You shall not COVET*” but Yongi Cho says, “*If you want a car or a husband you must picture in your mind exactly what you want and INCUBATE.*” Sounds mighty like COVETING to me. Worse it’s a procedure right out of Buddhism. It’s not even Christian.

In seeking to justify his book – YOU NEED MORE MONEY – Brian Houston wrote in response to a critical letter from a pastor in Sydney, which we published, that the person had missed the whole point, which is GENEROSITY. But it’s GREED not GENEROSITY that is the underlying premise of the book. It’s just like Peter says “*through covetousness they make merchandise of you*”. The Faith Prosperity teaching is not based on GENEROSITY. You don’t need MORE MONEY to be generous. In fact the Widow Woman in the gospels proves that. Jesus said she was more generous than any of those who gave of their abundance, BECAUSE she gave out of her penury – POVERTY and she gave more than all of them.² GENEROSITY is based not on how much you give but on how much you have left over when you have given. The whole thing is FALSE.

Brian HOUSTON'S theology – he really doesn’t have any true theology – is false for two reasons:

1) It confuses the Old Covenant with the New Covenant.

² Luke 21:4

Hank Hanegraff author of *Christianity in Crisis*, paraphrases C. H. Spurgeon's summary of the difference between the two covenants in his famous "A Sermon from a Rush" in the following words: "*The old covenant was a covenant of prosperity. The new covenant is a covenant of adversity whereby we are being weaned from this present world and made fit for the world to come.*"³

AND

- 2) Secondly it misunderstands the message of Ecclesiastes, which is dealing not with spiritual issues but with matters "*under the sun*" c/f Eccl 1:3, 9, 14 etc.⁴

Brian Houston says MONEY is the bottom line because ECCLESIASTES 10:19 says – "*A feast is made for laughter, and wine maketh merry: but money answers all things.*"

He ignores context, perverts the Scripture and is selective in his illustrations about money. Some time ago there was a TV programme about wealthy people. One was so rich that he replaced some of his dog's fangs with gold. The dog actually had solid gold teeth. How did this man get his money? He got it from peddling pornography.

MONEY answers nothing in the Kingdom of God. Jesus said, "*You can't serve God and mammon (wealth).*" The history of mankind proves that He was right.

In 1923 a very important meeting was held at the Edgewater Beach Hotel in Chicago. Attending this meeting were nine of the world's most successful financiers. Those present were:

The president of the largest independent steel company; the president of the largest utility company; the president of the largest gas company; the greatest wheat speculator; the president of the New York Stock Exchange (NYSE); a member of the American President's Cabinet; the greatest "bear" on Wall Street, head of the world's greatest monopoly; the president of the bank of international settlements. It was quite a gathering of impressive financiers – men who certainly knew the secret of making money.

Just 25 years later the president of the largest steel company, Charles Schwab had died bankrupt. He lived on borrowed money for the last 5 years of his life. The president of the greatest utility company, Samuel Insull died a fugitive from justice and penniless in a foreign land. The president of the largest gas company, Howard Hopson went insane. The greatest wheat speculator, author Cutton went

³ *Christianity In Crisis* Harvest House Publishers © 1993 Page 215 Original source *Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit* vol 11 page 537

⁴ The phrase "*under the sun*" appears 27 times in the book.

insolvent and died overseas. The president of the New York Stock Exchange, Richard Whitney served time at the Sing Sing Penitentiary. The member of the President's Cabinet, Albert Fall, was pardoned from prison so that he could die at home. The greatest Bear on Wall Street, Jesse Livermore committed suicide. The head of the greatest monopoly, Ivar Kreuger committed suicide. The president of the bank of International Settlement, Leon Fraser also committed suicide.

All of these men knew how to make money but they didn't know how to live. Jesus said, "For what shall it profit a man if he gains the whole world and loses his own soul. Or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?" – **Matt 19:26.**

When I was in my late teens I read of a man named Jay Gould who was a multi-millionaire in America. Despite his huge wealth this man wrote, "*I am the most miserable devil in the world.*" Jean Paul Getty one time richest man in the world said, "*I would gladly trade my millions for marital happiness.*" He was divorced and remarried several times. During those teenage years when I was pondering the issues of life and what to do with my life I met a bank manager who told me I was foolish going into the ministry. I should take up banking or some money based pursuit. I decided to serve the Lord and live for eternal not temporal things. In today's climate when preachers like Brian Houston and Steve Penny put so much emphasis on money I think about those comments that helped shape my life. If Brian Houston is right then I was wrong and I am still wrong.

While there is considerable wisdom and good instruction in Ecclesiastes the writer of the book makes a number of wrong conclusions simply because he is reasoning from "*under the sun*". For example he wrongly concludes that everything is vain and that the earth endures forever whereas Christ said it will pass away:

Ecclesiastes 1:2 & 4 – "*Vanity of vanities, saith the Preacher, vanity of vanities; all is vanity. (4) One generation passes away, and another generation comes: but the earth abides for ever.*"

Mark 13:31 – "*Heaven and earth shall pass away: but my words shall not pass away.*"

The premise of the book is human wisdom - "*under the sun*" – so the writer ignores the miraculous power of God and of the gospel of Christ in making crooked things and crooked people straight. He concludes: -

Ecc 1:15 – "*That which is crooked cannot be made straight: and that which is wanting cannot be numbered.*"

But a correct dividing of scripture will consider other passages such as: -

Isaiah 40:4 - *“Every valley shall be exalted, and every mountain and hill shall be made low: and the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough places plain:”*

This truth is emphasised in Isaiah 45 and repeated by Luke in the New Testament:

Isaiah 45:2 - *“I will go before thee, and make the crooked places straight: I will break in pieces the gates of brass, and cut in sunder the bars of iron:”*

Luke 3:5 - *“Every valley shall be filled, and every mountain and hill shall be brought low; and the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough ways shall be made smooth;”*

It is extremely dangerous to get your doctrine from Ecclesiastes let alone to build it as Brian Houston has on one text. It's not that the bible contradicts itself. If you rightly divide the Word of God, which both Brian Houston and Steve Penny fail to do, you won't come to these false and wrong conclusions. Two further glaring examples in Ecclesiastes are where the preacher concludes that there is nothing better than eating and drinking and that animals and humans die alike and go to the same place. These conclusions can only be justified so long as you accept the premise of reasoning from *“under the sun”*. The New Testament clearly tells us in several places that eating and drinking has nothing to do with Kingdom living and that men are not the same as animals:

We must compare Scripture with scripture otherwise we fall into serious error, as the following comparison of scripture will show.

Eccl 2:24 - *“There is nothing better for a man, than that he should eat and drink, and that he should make his soul enjoy good in his labour. This also I saw, that it was from the hand of God.”*

Romans 14:17 - *“For the kingdom of God is not meat and drink; but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit.”*

Eccl 3: 19-21 - *“For that which befalls the sons of men befalls beasts; even one thing befalls them: as the one dies, so dies the other; yea, they have all one breath; so that a man has no pre-eminence above a beast: for all is vanity. (20) All go unto one place; all are of the dust, and all turn to dust again. (21) Who knows whether the spirit of man that goes upward, and the spirit of the beast that goes downward to the earth?”*

1 Corinthians 15:32, 39, 42-44, 49 - *“If after the manner of men I have fought with beasts at Ephesus, what advantage is it to me, if the dead rise not? let us eat and drink; for to morrow we die. (39) All flesh is not the same flesh: but there is one kind of flesh of men, another flesh of beasts, another of fishes, and another of birds. (42) So also is the resurrection of the dead. It is sown in*

corruption; it is raised in incorrupt ion: (43) It is sown in dishonour; it is raised in glory: it is sown in weakness; it is raised in power: (44) It is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body. There is a natural body, and there is a spiritual body. (49) And as we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly.”

These men are jeopardising their own souls and they are playing around with the souls of all those who follow them. They are after your money but they will also jeopardise your soul. We implore you get and keep away from them.

Money is not the bottom line in the Kingdom of God and if you pursue it as Brian Houston subtly recommends you will end up serving mammon and not God. Brian Houston and Steve Penny are following the doctrines of Kenneth Hagin and Kenneth Copeland. The Assemblies of God in USA outlawed it years ago and now it is being embraced and promoted by the prominent leaders of AoG in Australia. It is false doctrine and they are false teachers.