

Salvation not for Sale

“God’s promises and human prosperity”

My Reaction:

1. I am grateful for the interesting, informative and critical article on the “theology of prosperity ” by Sarah Hinlicky Wilson.

It is very good analysis from a Trinitarian approach and “law and gospel ”. Luther may have said that under this “theology “one may be confused heaven and earth. She prepares and elaborates a curious mix between the spiritual and the material, eschatological promise confused with acquisition and temporary possession. One could also say that she mixed the "already" and the "not yet" of salvation and the Kingdom of God. She promotes a - miraculous - materialistic - magical faith!

I appreciate the observation that although it is easy and obvious for us to criticize this theology, "a word of caution must be spoken"; especially when one considers the fragile and precarious context and suffering by thousands of marginalized people caused by the prevailing social and cultural systems. I saddened by the people who this theology leaves on the roadside, disappointed and disillusioned, because the promises and the expectations could never be accomplished. They were deceived!!

In our criticisms we must also ask a self - critical question:

Why is it that our healthy and liberating Lutheran theology of " Free by grace " and " salvation is not sold " fails to capture the hearts of thousands who themselves are seduced by such misleading messages?

2. The Chilean Context

a)

Also in Chile the "theology of prosperity/glory" is spreading. There is a " Universal Church of the Kingdom of God " with its slogan " Stop suffering " your "universal radio" with a signal 24 hours, a temple to 1.5 thousand people, a pretty website with amazing testimonials of people from all parts of Chile, emotional music and photos of their social actions with captions like :

“in hostile nights of Santiago the Universal Church of the Kingdom of God brings hope to those living in pain "and" The Universal Church of the Kingdom of God was present at Camp San Francisco, located within the boundaries of the commune of the Pintana and San Bernardo, in the city of Santiago, realizing his call. " Because the Lord has anointed me; He has sent me to preach good news to the poor, to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison inmates “Isaiah 61:1

What does not come out on the website: How does" The Universal Church of the Kingdom of God" manage the money? How and by whom is it administered, and financed? Is it really a non-profit organization? More than a theological criticism, I wish that a side of the State would make more demands on the economic balances be transparency of religious organizations...

b)

But that "church" acts in social contexts that are not my context. So I do not want to deepen the criticism of her.

My context leads me to another question more fundamental:

When we speak of SALVATION, ¿What SALVATION are we speaking of?

What salvation is by grace alone, by faith alone and only by the Word of God, made and given away in and for the gospel of Jesus Christ?

I imagine that Luther would have said: it is salvation through the sacrifice of Jesus Christ on the cross for our sins and his triumphant resurrection, his victory over death, hell and the devil. It is the salvation of our souls for eternal and heavenly life.

The experience of this salvation frees the human being to a life of service, love and hope in and for this earthly and lost world, until the Lord returns.

I realize the gap between this "celestial" vision and our / my secularized world:

I wonder if we're really interested in, or distressed or still impacted by this concept of eternal or "heavenly" salvation? Little are we scared by the "devil" "hell" and are quite "generous or liberal" with our human sinfulness. We do not necessarily expect the Lord to be back soon, but rather we tend to believe in an evolution of humanity in this world. Yes we are still afraid of death. But not for what comes next but for being aware of the end and the threat of our end or existence in this world.

When speaking of "salvation" in my context we speak of earthly and temporal salvation: "Let's save the forest, whales, air, water, democracy, etc."

And very often our church spends too much time on or is quick to address these temporary, earthly, social and political salvations or issues.

BUT: These earthly and temporal salvations are neither free, nor only by faith, not only by the Word. For those salvations you need rationality itself, money, laws and policies.. And I dare say that not necessarily the need for gospel of Jesus Christ to collaborate in the fight against for example the deterioration of the ecological system, corruption, AIDS, etc.

And I ask myself, all of us: If the dimension of ETERNAL SALVATION no longer has much weight, then what force does our message have?

How do we translate and interpret today the words of the Apostle Paul" (Romans 7:24)

"What a wretched man I am! Who will rescue me from this body that is subject to death?"

Only God to whom I give thanks through Christ Jesus