We begin our time today in a way with a different direction of our work. We have thus far argued this, that the origins of the charismatic movements are found in Methodism, ideologically; it is found in American Methodism; they are found in the rise of the Holiness Movement, which was fragmented and separated out of the mainline denominational stem in the late nineteenth century; and in the beginning of this current century, you have the birth of the charismatic movements. And I have tried to argue, as the course has evolved, that there are three phases or sometimes in current nomenclature three waves or three manifestations of the Latter Rain Movement. This fulfillment of Joel 2 in shadow form came wonderfully in Acts 2 but awaits its ultimate fulfillment in the end time.

The first phase or wave, of course, was classical Pentecostalism, and we tried to summarize the structure, innuendos, history of that first wave of the Latter Rain or Apostolic Faith Movement. As that movement declined in the 1940s, early 1950s, through the rise of deliverance evangelism, some of those deliverance evangelists, principally Oral Roberts, was able through the Full Gospel Businessmen’s Fellowship and other factors to create the neo-Pentecostal movement, which is a movement in which the charismatic movement or the charismatic impulse is found not so much in denominational separatism as in denominational affiliation.

There are two phases to the neo-Pentecostal or as I have tried to call it renewalist movement. One phase is that it spread beginning with Dennis Bennett, Harold Bredesen, and others into the mainline traditional denominations in the 1960s causing quite a large movement. In the late 1960s it was seen in the Roman Catholic Church beginning at Duquesne University in 1967, and accordingly it spread to very large numbers as the 1970s and 1980s came upon us. That’s called the second wave.
The third wave is where we are now. And that wave is much more scattered into individualistic movements than the other two as you look back upon it. So what I would like to do today is to begin our discussion of what was commonly called third wave; it’s received other names, but perhaps that’s the best. And there are many movements within third wave charismatic movements today, and what I’d like to do in the few moments we have is to discuss what is called the prosperity movements, sometimes called health and wealth, sometimes called the positive confessional movement, sometimes simply called prosperity theology.

The advocates of this movement are seen in their literature. They are seen more clearly, I think, in their ability to present their views very attractively on television. They’ve discovered the satellite dish, whatever. So in our time today, the gospels of health and wealth or prosperity theology, sometimes called the positive confession movement.

First, let us begin by answering the question, Who are the advocates of this movement? And these are common, current names. I think one exciting thing about a course like this is when you come to the latter phases of it, you are talking about an extremely contemporary issue. It’s no longer past history, it’s contemporary history. So you have a lot of people that you can turn on your radio, turn on your TV, and see these people any day through their various broadcasting endeavors, so it becomes a very contemporary thing. We launch out today on health and wealth, positive confessionalism, sometimes called the prosperity movement.

Here are some of the advocates; of course, we cannot do them all, but at least to put some big names in your mind. The first that would come to my mind are Kenneth and Gloria Copeland. A bit about them. Kenneth Copeland was a commercial pilot, nightclub singer, who came to Christ in 1962 and was baptized some months later in the Holy Spirit. After five years of instability, he says, “Nothing permanent worked out for us; we changed jobs frequently.” He enrolled in Oral Roberts University in 1967 for one semester before becoming Roberts’s personal pilot. Gloria commented, “In the spring of 1967, the Lord spoke to Kenneth and commissioned him into the ministry of deliverance.” After studying Kenneth Hagin’s tapes, the Copelands formed their own evangelistic association in Fort Worth, Texas. The work expanded into radio in 1975, television in 1979, satellite production in 1982.
In addition, Kenneth Copeland Ministries has a large cassette-tape ministry and a circulation of well over hundreds of thousands of their monthly newsletter.

While Kenneth Copeland stresses how the believer’s rights and privileges make it possible to live a victorious and successful life, Gloria, his wife, teaches primarily on healing. Both have been heavily influenced by E. W. Kenyon. Accessing their books is relatively easy. Gloria Copeland, for instance, has written a little publication called *God’s Will for You*, and in it she says that there are thirty-two thousand promises in the Bible that God wants you to be illness free. Kenneth Copeland has written the book, *The Laws of Prosperity*, and from these titles and from their teachings we get the title prosperity theology or health and wealth gospel.

Another charismatic figure is Kenneth Hagin. Kenneth Hagin was raised in McKinney, Texas, during the Depression era within Baptist circles. After his conversion in 1933 and a miraculous healing from heart difficulties in 1934, he began to preach. In the midst of his sickness, an inner voice said to him, “You believe that you are healed. If you are healed, then you should be up and out of bed.” In affiliating with Pentecostals, Hagin was Spirit baptized in 1937 and pastored several Assemblies of God churches in the Southwest until 1949, when he began his career as an itinerant evangelist. In 1963, he began producing books, books with such titles as *How to Turn Your Faith Loose* and *Redeemed from Poverty, Sickness, and Death*.

He moved to Tulsa, Oklahoma, in 1966. In 1968, he began distributing his *Word of Faith* newsletter, became a well-recognized Bible teacher in Pentecostal circles in the 1970s, pastored Rhema Bible Church in Tulsa, and founded the Rhema Bible Training Center in 1974. By 1988, more than ten thousand students had graduated from his school, and his daily radio program, *Faith Seminar of the Air*, was being broadcasts on more than 180 stations in thirty-nine states.

Another figure is Robert Tilton. After involvement in drugs and the occult, a devotee of Edward Casey, Bob was converted through charismatic young people. Demons were exorcised. After his Spirit baptism, he was called to preach, becoming a tent evangelist. Being influenced by John Osteen and the Copelands, he later received a vision to build a Full Gospel Church in Farmers Branch, Texas. This came in 1979. Word of Faith World Outreach Center reached an apex in the 1980s with over eight thousand members,
a Bible school, a Christian academy, a daily television program, seminar ministry, and the Word of Faith Satellite Network that linked seventeen hundred churches in America. Recent events have brought a crumbling of his prominence.

There John Hillery Osteen, a disciple of William Branham, pastor of the Lakewood Church, Houston, Texas, educated at John Brown University and Northern Baptist Theological Seminary. He was ordained a Southern Baptist in 1942. In 1958, at the Hibbard Memorial Baptist Church in Houston, Texas, he was baptized in the Spirit. He later established Lakewood Church, now with several thousand members, and publishes a newsletter called Manna.

Jerry Savelle, perhaps one of the lesser known prosperity advocates within the broader charismatic movements today, was personally revivified by Kenneth Copeland in 1969. He founded a faith church in Kenya and later served as an associate evangelist with Kenneth Copeland Ministries before forming his own organization, also in Fort Worth, Texas. His ministry reports that it distributes hundreds of thousands of copies of his books and tapes annually.

There’s also Charles Edward and Frances Fuller Hunter, or the Hunters. They are faith healers, founders of the City of Light in Kingwood, Texas. The Hunters used physical objects as channels of divine power, claiming to have power to create, predict the future, and believed the Holy Spirit communicates through their dreams and visions. An example of Hunter’s work is a little book called The Faith to Heal or commonly called To Heal the Sick would be a capsulation of their views.

There’s Charles Emmitt Capps, an Arkansas farmer who was retrieved from financial ruin by reading Kenneth Hagin’s book Right and Wrong Thinking. In 1973, he embarked on his own teaching ministry. This Oklahoma pastor’s Tongues: A Creative Force has sold over half a million copies. In 1980, he was ordained by Kenneth Copeland and became a minister in the International Convention of Faith Churches.

There are others that you can mention, Charles C. Price, who founded the Crenshaw Christian Center in Los Angeles, California. He began a national television ministry in 1978 called Ever-Increasing Faith. Tommy Lee Osborn has had an international ministry with headquarters in Tulsa, Oklahoma, through the Osborn Association.
Donald Lee Stewart, a disciple of A. A. Allen, who took over Allen’s ministry after Allen died and is now known as the Don Stewart Evangelistic Association.

You can multiply the names, but I thought what I should do as we begin the study of prosperity theology or positive confessionalism is to present to you their names. Kenneth and Gloria Copeland—these are the big ones—Kenneth Hagin, Robert Tilton, John Osteen, Jerry Savelle, Charles Edward and Frances Fuller Hunter (the Hunters), Charles Capps, Price, Osborn, Stewart, and many others.

Before we get into their specific teaching, that is readily, I think, discernable, and that is that God wants the faithful Christian to be without health problems, He wants them to be well-to-do, and that a lack of health is a sign that one is not walking with God and a lack of financial support is also a sign of one’s private sinfulness.

But first a history of the origins or a brief one of the origins of the positive confession movement, sometimes called name it claim it, that if we believe God enough, if we're walking uprightly enough, we should be without need physically or materially. The background, I think, of the origins of the positive confession movement is found in Edward Irving and Mary Campbell. We talked about them in the founding of the Catholic Apostolic Church in London in 1830 and the healing of Mary Campbell. The second link seems to be a Dorothea Trudel, a Swiss peasant girl who received a remarkable success in praying for the sick. She seems to have influenced a Lutheran pastor by the name of Otto Stockmayer. Stockmayer earned himself the title “Theologian of the Doctrine of Healing by Faith” by promoting divine healing in the atonement in Isaiah 53, “by His stripes you are healed.” Trudel’s biography came to the attention of Charles Cullis, a Boston physician, who shared it with A. J. Gordon, and Gordon, the famous Boston pastor at the turn of the century, became a follower of Stockmayer and Trudel.

A. B. Simpson, the founder of the Christian and Missionary Alliance, followed Gordon and Stockmayer. In the book *The Gospel of Healing*, he says, “We believe that God is healing before any evidence is given. It is to be believed as a present reality and then ventured on. We are to act as if it were already there.” The link between healing and positive confession, sometimes called name it claim it, is the work of E. William Kenyon, born in 1867, died in 1948.
Kenyon founded a Bible school in Massachusetts, later pastored in Seattle. His impact seemed to have been through his books, which contain numerous quotable comments, such as, “Our faith is measured by our confessions.” “Faith counts the thing done before God has acted.” That compels God’s action. Kenyon influenced F. F. Bosworth, T. L. Osborn, Kenneth Hagin, and Kenneth Copeland.

Now, what is exactly the teaching of the prosperity or positive confessional movement, and I’m using as my source of information the work of Gordon Fee, a scholar of classical Pentecostal background and persuasion. Gordon Fee in an article entitled “The Disease of the Health and Wealth Gospels,” spring 1985, speaking of the gospel of prosperity, says, “The fundamental thought with the Gospel of Prosperity lies with one central affirmation. God wills the financial prosperity of every one of His children. Therefore, for a Christian to be in poverty is to be outside God's intended will. It is to be living a Satan-defeated life.” Tucked away in this affirmation, says Gordon Fee, is a second: “That we are God's children. We should always go first class. We should have the biggest and the best. This alone brings glory to God.”

So there are two assumptions, says Gordon Fee, in the gospel of prosperity. One, that God wills for his children to be rich, and to have anything less than the cultural affirmations of Western culture is to lead a Satan-defeated life. The second assumption tucked away in it is that going first class, having the best, is the primary way of bringing glory to God.

If I could camp on the work of Gordon Fee of the Assemblies of God, you can know by his criticism that within the charismatic movements today, it’s not a unified movement, there are serious disagreements between advocates of various phases or parts of the charismatic movements that are rather strident. He says, for instance, that such a teaching is often founded or rooted in misuse of Scripture texts.

When Gloria Copeland finds thirty-two promises of prosperity, Gordon Fee would argue that they’re often not contextually rooted so that a verse out of context is ultimately a proof text. They use such texts as 1 John 2, which is simply a standard second-century greeting. John 10:10, the reference to abundant life, but it doesn’t refer to healing, it refers to redemption. Isaiah 53:5, peace and well-being, again it refers to redemption.
And Gordon Fee would find physical healing in the atonement, but he is saying that that’s not the primary point of those texts. And other passages often used are Proverbs 10:22, Proverbs 6:30–31.

He then says, second, that such a teaching that God wants you always to be healthy is often rooted in a misunderstanding of theology. It’s a distortion of the Abrahamic covenant. It’s a distortion of the old covenant. It’s a distortion of the meaning of faith; for instance, Hebrews 11 is a delineation of what faith does, not what faith is. Faith is not a contract. It’s not a bargaining piece. It is a covenant with God, and obviously in Hebrews 11, some chose not prosperity in the will of God, but some chose to be sawn asunder. And Gordon Fee goes on to say that it’s a distortion of the word *prosper*. In the Joseph story, for instance, of Genesis, he prospered though he chose privation.

Third, Gordon Fee says it results in errant theology. Prosperity offers a human-centered rather than a God-centered theology. God’s glory becomes man’s selfish ends. Second, it presents a totally false view of the basis of giving; that is, it seems to argue that we give as seed faith money in order to get a disproportionately larger amount back. Third, it ultimately oppresses the poor, because it takes money from them. And fourth, and very seriously, if not careful, it offers only a crown for the Christian and not a cross. It offers things but doesn’t teach privation. We are commanded to deny ourselves and talk up His cross. So I would say that the Scriptures warn us against the perils of being rich or poor. Read such passages as Deuteronomy 8:11–18; 1 Timothy 6:8, 6, and 17; and Proverbs 3:8. That’s prosperity theology. God wants you healthy.

The second is sometimes preached on television as the gospel of health and healing. The essential assumptions of health and healing advocates are that God’s will for every believer is constant and complete health, that God is obligated to maintain each believer in health, so long as the single prerequisite is met, that is, faith, and that faith guarantees healing. Confession brings possession.

Some of the salient axioms of the movement are these: because of our position in Christ, believers share all His absolute authority, the power of this age, sometimes called “throne rights” or “kingdom rights” by the more strident health and wealth gospel advocates.
Second, it is God’s will that all believers be physically well all the time (Matthew 8:17; Isaiah 53:4). Third, most if not all illnesses—physical, emotional, attitudinal—are demonic in origin. This leads to a phase within the charismatic movements called the curses movement in which it was an exorcism movement, casting out of demons. Demons as the cause of all health problems. Fourth, God’s common grace extended to His creatures, which includes the realm of medicine, is closely inferior to immediate and direct divine intervention. It is probably entirely unnecessary for those of sufficient faith. Let me hasten to add that not all within the charismatic movements would identify with the position of health and wealth advocates. It’s a diverse movement. So while I am describing this particular evidence or facet of the charismatic movement, I want to be abundantly understood that I am not saying that all would advocate this, certainly if you read the Vineyard man, Ken Blue, in his little book, Authority to Heal, 1987. It is a very balanced treatment of the miracle of healing as it works in today’s church. Fifth, those who deny health and healing syndrome are guilty of gross unbelief, possess a religion without power, teach the traditions of men rather than the Word of God, and are not unlike the scribes and Pharisees of Christ’s day. And finally, all of God’s gifts and all of God’s works are alike in every age. And the text would be Hebrews 13:8, “Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever.”

Gordon Fee’s response as an Assembly of God man to the health and wealth gospel is found in basically four points. He says this of the health gospel: “It is often rooted in a misuse of Scripture text,” like Galatians 3:13, “Redeemed from the curse of the law,” but obviously the context of that verse is redemptive not physical. Or of Isaiah 53:4, “by His stripes we are healed,” Gordon Fee rightly states that “there are no biblical texts that explicitly connect the atonement and healing. Healing may result from the application of the atonement, a result or fruit, but healing is not the essence of the atonement.” Or texts like Mark 11 and James 5, “Whatever you ask.” These texts need to be applied with care. God’s mercy is not limited either by faith or knowledge. Fortunately, God does not grant everything we ask.

His second criticism is that it is rooted in a misunderstanding of basic theological ideas. It’s a misunderstanding of the old and new covenants. If God’s work is the same in all ages, then the new covenant is not superior to the old covenant (Hebrews 9). Also, if true, then circumcision is valid, as is animal sacrifice and the minutest feature of the Mosaic code.
The Scriptures nowhere equate illness and demonism. The two are differentiated (Matthew 8:16; Matthew 10:1; Mark 3:15). Sickness is never attributed to a lack of faith in the New Testament, nor recovery to great faith.

And finally, like prosperity advocates, health teachers fail to distinguish the now not yet aspects of the kingdom; that is, they emphasize Christ as exalted but not as crucified. Third, says Gordon Fee, its rooted in a selective use or nonuse of Scripture texts. Romans 8, bondage to decay; 2 Kings 13:4, Elijah suffered from an illness unto death. Philippians 2, Epaphroditus; 2 Timothy 4, Trophimus's illness; 1 Timothy 5, Timothy’s stomach; 2 Corinthians 12, Paul’s thorn in the flesh, from which God did not grant healing, and then finally it can produce faulty theology. It can result in a concept of healing on demand, duty not grace. “God, you’ve got to heal me.” Second, God does not wait for a specific faith to heal. He often heals in the absence of faith. And I can certainly bear witness to that. Within our family we’ve had massive illnesses and almost lost a child. My faith failed, but God in His great grace, who looks beyond the frailty of fallen creatures, has mercy and grace. I would try not want to limit the ability of God to the strength of my faith.

Third, this teaching results in guilt. How much faith must I have? Fourth, it reduces God to manipulation. Fifth, it provides no comfort in sickness, victory in the face of death. Ken Blue, a Vineyard advocate, notes in his book, Authority to Heal, “Any gospel of healing which cannot be spoken with confidence and received as comfort at the death bed is not the gospel of Jesus Christ.” Sixth, it denies the mercies of God or of covenant and grace while asserting His favors or of contract and works. Seven, it can induce believers to shun modern medicine. Eight, believers who pray resist, bend, rebuke, anoint and who are not healed face two terrible alternatives: the loss of faith altogether, or they can become pathologically introspective and self-condemnatory, both of which are wrong. And finally, it tends to view those who do not accept the healer’s insights as pharisaical, unbelieving, satanically bound, arrogant, and ignorant.

Now, let me back up in our discussion of prosperity and health and wealth and make a point that I’ve made in passing and expound upon that point. Some would say that the reason we are not healthy, the reason we are not wealthy is that we have not claimed our throne rights, that there is a dominion that is available to us that we have forfeited by abdication.
Some advocates of modern confessionalism or positive confessionalism sometimes advocate what is called hyper faith or sometimes they are part of a hyper faith movement. And that can become fairly bizarre at times, and so what I think I’ll do for a moment is to describe the hyper faith movements. Some of the people we have talked about do advocate hyper faith, not all of them, so I’m not making universal statements, though I do not want to back down at this point and not be fair.

In a hyper faith movement, their understanding often of God is that He’s less than infinite. We would say He is infinite and transcendent. They would say that God is subject to universal law, so He can be bound by contract. Second, He is legally bound to the demands of the redeemed. While we would advocate that there is only one triune God, they would advocate that God is one among many lesser gods, and obviously we have the potential to be a god as well. Adam in his transgression, we would say that he rebelled against God. Hyper faith teachers argue that what Adam did is that he abdicated to Satan the certain dominion rights. He committed high treason. We would say the judgment on Satan for rebelling against God was spiritual and physical judgment. They would say in abdicating to Satan our dominion rights which we must get back, he lost dominion over the earth. Of man, we would say he is fallen. They would say he is fallen but capable of salvation by dominion faith. So what we have to do is to get back the dominion rights that we gave away to Satan, and if we do, then we can rule over the world. Man is finite, we would say; they would say, no, he’s more than finite, he’s an incarnation of God. We would say man is mortal; that is, subject to death. Hyper faith advocates seem to say at times that redeemed man is a god, and I’m talking specifically of the works of Kenneth Copeland and incarnation. We would say that Christ is God incarnate. Hyper faith advocates seem to say that Christ is a born-again man, a god, an incarnation.

Concerning salvation, this seems really bizarre to me, but we would say the fact of salvation is rooted in the substitutionary death of Christ, that He paid a debt, our debt to God in the form of our sins by making ransom. They would say that Christ paid a ransom not to God for our sins but to Satan in hell. The sphere of the redemption of Christ we would say is the human soul. They would say that when Christ went to hell and paid a ransom to the devil for our loss of dominion rights, that the sphere was rulership rights over the earth, so that you and I can get the rulership rights over the earth back.
The accomplishment of the atonement we would say is spiritual redemption. They would say a legal right to exercise dominion. So we lost the right to rule the earth, we lost health and wealth and power, this sounds so tritely American, that Christ’s redemption releases us from Satan’s power and we now have a legal right if we claim it to rule over the earth. We would say in salvation the sinner is granted justifying faith. Hyper faith advocates argue that the sinner is transformed into a god through an incarnation. The means of our salvation we would say subjectively is faith. Hyper faith advocates say it’s confession. I have to claim my dominion rights. I have to take them back. I’ve got to get back what Adam lost. Adam gained the right for me to get them back by going to hell and paying a ransom to Satan, and now I must claim it. Satan we would say is a fallen angel. Hyper faith advocates argue that Satan is a god who rules creation by legal right taken from Adam, and we must take it back. We must claim it and take it back.

One of the offshoots of health and wealth, positive confessionalism, and the hyper faith movement was a movement of some proportion in the 1980s that is a subspecies of health and wealth called the curses movement or the curses syndrome, and in the few moments that we have left, I thought I would describe this phase of the movement. Who are its advocates, very briefly? Who were its advocates? It seems to be a movement that while it’s still within the exorcist community of doctrine, it’s not as popular as it once was. The first is Peter Derek Prince, seems to be the origin of the ideas. Born into a British military family in Bangaluru, India, and educated at Eton, Cambridge University, and Hebrew University, Israel. After founding a Pentecostal church in London and teaching in a school in Kenya and after a stay in Canada, he moved to Fort Lauderdale, Florida, in 1974 and established the Good News Church with Don Basham and Bob Mumford. Sometimes there are five key figures. They are sometimes called the Fort Lauderdale Five. The quasi-denomination emphasizes a shepherding ministry, the shepherd’s rod, which we’ll talk about later when we talk about the Kansas City Prophets. He separated from others in 1984 to be independent. Little is available in print. He claims to be a professor of philosophy or to have been at Cambridge, England. His fourteen-set tape series is a major source of curses teaching.

James Robinson, long-time Southern Baptist evangelist, is perhaps the most known former leader in this movement. In June 1982, he was introduced to Milton Green during an evangelistic campaign in Selma, Alabama.
Green prayed for Robinson, and he has testified, “I was released from an attack by Satan that I had been taught to ignore and it was about to destroy me. I want to tell you, the release that came to me was like taking a claw out of my mind.” Green joined James Robinson Evangelistic Association and labored with him.

The other figure is Milt Green, who came to Christ in 1973. After some time in India as a missionary, where he witnessed demonic possession deliverance, he started lay Bible studies in local churches. His ministry was largely deliverance, and the encounter with Robinson in 1982 brought him to prominence. Robinson began to sponsor Green’s Bible study seminars, three-day, thirty-hour marathon teaching. Green joined the late Country Baptist Church with Robinson. And the other figure is James Hilton, pastor of the late Country Baptist Church in Fort Worth.

So the key figures of this movement are Derek Prince, James Robinson, Milt Green, and James Hilton. The teachings of it boil down to this: it’s called the curses syndrome. The problem is this: that most if not all Christians labor under one or more curses which have come upon them. Unless these curses are broken, we can anticipate many serious problems of various kinds like mental and emotional breakdown, chronic illness, female problems, marriage/family problems, financial problems, and becoming accident prone.

The sources of the curse, so it’s an exorcism movement that finds all of your problems in something that needs to be exorcised. The sources are that curses can be spoken by God Himself, curses spoken by man on behalf of God, curses spoken by family members, so you may have problems in your family because somewhere genealogically someone has cursed your family. There are self-imposed curses. There’s curses invoking satanic power, including involvement with the occult, séances, horoscopes, forth-telling. These curses, if not broken, are passed down from generation to generation (Exodus 22:5–6, Deuteronomy 5) and the procedure for the breaking of the curse according to these advocates are these: Seek to establish the cause of the curse, and their central text is Proverbs 26:2. Recognize your position in Christ, dominion theology. Hyper faith. Confess your faith in Christ, commit yourself to Christ, confess your sins, forgive others, renounce all contact with the occult, and finally, release yourself in the name of Jesus (James 4:7). Now, health and wealth, hyper faith,
and curses theology all have a common characteristic, and they are bound with a form of the charismatic movement, and the common characteristic is God wants you healthy, victorious, out from under the dominion of Satan.