

An Increasingly Devitalized (False & Gutted) “Gospel”

Most people today (even professing Christians) would be greatly surprised to know that a great and important *Bible* theme is:

“The kingdom of God is not a matter of talk but of **power**.” 1Co 4:20

“You will be baptized with the Holy Spirit . . . **you will receive power** when the Holy Spirit comes on you.” Acts 1:8

Jesus said, “You are in error because you do not know the Scriptures or the **power** of God.” Mt 22:29

Jesus said, “I tell you the truth, anyone who has faith in me will do what I have been doing. He will do even greater things than these” Jn 14:12

“Whoever lives by the truth comes into the light, so that it may be seen plainly that what he has done has been done through God.” Jn 3:21

In other words: no imparted Divine power • no indwelling Holy Spirit • no eternal salvation.

The Church and Its “Flight” from Verbs

We would not know it, by listening to most sermons in the vast majority of churches today, that the *Bible* contains many verbs (other than “do not . . .”, which is not a verb in most cases, but rather a call to inaction and passivity). Most sermons are filled with calls to think differently or to learn something – both oriented towards our (also contemporary) bias of learning our way to success (which explains why we seldom flourish in much of anything).

We see the same is true outside the *Bible* – for example:

- Discussions about health made from the standpoint of what we can learn to supposedly be healthier (with little if any emphasis on activity as the great agent of improving health), or
- Moaning and groaning about the serious issue of debt (public, student . . .) as all areas of debt continue to skyrocket.
- We listen to our commentator of choice drone on and on about how bad the “opposition” is without making, or even seemingly considering what changes we personally can do, apart from voting to win the next election (which has changed little in recent years). And in any case, why should people who think differently be considered and treated as adversaries anyway?

Returning to the Church, fewer and fewer people read the *Bible* on a regular basis because people are provided more than enough in the way of verbless, devitalized, preaching and teaching to hold their interest for an hour or two a week. And when preaching and teaching is largely gutted of verbs our “natural” inclination, if we

occasionally read the *Bible* in passing, is to read it in the manner we have been taught – as a means of learning about God and Jesus, with the thought this learning will lead to faith as the *Bible* explains. But it doesn't.

We are certainly and rightly told:

Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Ro 12:2

But, this renewing of our minds is greatly and necessarily accompanied by our doing what we are told.

For, as James warns:

Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says. Jas :22

Faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead. But someone will say, "You have faith; I have deeds." Show me your faith without deeds, and I will show you my faith by what I do. You believe that there is one God. Good! Even the demons believe that – and shudder . . . faith without deeds is useless?" Jas 2:17-20

Historically, we know from the *Bible* that there are many deceived (all the while sincere and confident) people in the Church with demon-faith, not God's Grace-faith. Both saints and demons believe there is only one God; what separates the saints from demons is that saints believe in what Christ tells us to do, by His Grace – as empowered and evidenced by His indwelling Holy Spirit.

As Jesus rhetorically warned about a verbal, verbless, "faith:"

"I have spoken to you of earthly things and you do not believe [beyond verbal assent]; how then will you believe if I speak of heavenly things?" Jn 3:12

Case in Point – Just One Example

Nothing like a good example to provide form and a very practical illustration of the dangers of an increasingly devitalized (false) "Gospel."

We find an excellent illustration in one short passage of the *Bible* where Jesus provides more practical and comprehensive teaching about personal finances and money than all the world's wisdom (if we could combine its best in a single write-up) throughout all of history. To keep this explanation short (so as not to miss our main point in an example), we will be brief – a recent Blog Post compared the current devitalized "interpretation" of these verses with their true *Bible* verb-centered meaning – we won't repeat this here, but it can be found at the following link:

<https://789graceplace.com/blog/item/proven-biblical-money-principles-really>.

Earning money is, for most people, a 40+ hours a week effort, so we know it is an important subject. We also have to admit, as a rule, we are not doing a very good job with it (if we won't admit this about ourselves, we should be able to see this on an over-all basis in others).

Very early (15 minutes or so) into the *New Testament*, in His great *Sermon on the Mount* teaching, Jesus 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. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also . . .

“**No one can serve two masters.** Either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and Money.

“Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or drink; or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more important than food, and the body more important than clothes? . . . For the pagans run after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them. But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.” Mt 6: 19-33

The Great Misunderstanding & Seldom Taught Foundational Truth

“No one can serve two masters. Either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and Money.” Mt 6:24

Jesus selects and uses the master/servant wording very precisely and carefully as a clear theme picture of life – we ignore it (or it is not clearly taught in churches - which is almost the universal case today) to our peril with the result being we fail to understand whatever Jesus, and other *Bible* writers (all ultimately at the direction of God) tell us related to this paradigm – and they tell us much!

The bottom-line meaning, in the use of the Master/servant “picture,” is that if we are to be servants to God (versus being servants to money and all we do to get and use it for – which is the obvious focus of the vast majority of people in and out of the church), is that being a servant of God is a full-time “job” with His servanthood gift/demand (depending on our viewpoint) as a good or unrealistic and, therefore, bad thing.

Again, any fair and straightforward reading of the *Bible* makes this clear – to be “saved,” as Jesus made it crystal clear, the Master/servant relationship is required, it is not optional. But we will only understand this if we let a verb be a verb – if, on the other hand, we devitalize and spiritualize what He says in *Matthew 6*, we can make what He says anything we want it to be – and we have. In other words, “serve” in this verse is a verb (what we do), that will mirror what we believe – it is NOT what we say we think and live differently! Sadly, if even taught today, being a servant of God generally means nothing!

“This is all very confusing to me,” most people will certainly say and object, “What I have heard has generally been about all we have to do to provide for ourselves and

then sacrifice and do to please God (work hard, take care of my family, give to the church and be generous with others . . . – in some sense, all my duties).” Agreed, this is what we too often hear, leaving us with the only option of reading closely, again and again, *Matthew 6* to see what Jesus says.

The Clear Bottom-Line?

We know this from both the *Old* and *New Testament*, the Master/servant relationship is without question a requirement for eternal salvation:

The First Commandment:

“You shall have no other gods besides me.” Ex 20:3

And a key Master/servant New Testament foundational theme stated from a slightly different perspective:

“Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but **only he who does the will of my Father** [servants of God!] who is in heaven. Many will say to me on that day, ‘Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and in your name drive out demons and perform many miracles?’ Then I will tell them plainly, ‘I never knew you. Away from me, you evildoers!’” Mt 7:21-23

“He who is not with me is against me, and he who does not gather with me scatters. And so I tell you, every sin and blasphemy will be forgiven men, but the blasphemy against the Spirit will not be forgiven.” Mt 12:30-31

The reality is that we are simply incapable, no matter how smart or how hard we work, of reaching the heights to which only Grace can take us. To be saved eternally we must seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, thankfully under a great Master with unlimited Grace.

Ensuring We Keep the Chief Point the Main and First Point

Servants must listen to and obey their Masters. Only if God is our Master can we hope to hear when He speaks to us, thus explaining why many people do not feel like God speaks to them – they have not submitted (have hardened their hearts) to God as their Master, they are instead serving another master. We are told 4 times in the *Bible*:

“Today, if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts.”

Leading us to fear, if we are not hearing His voice today, how can He be our Master!

AND THIS IS JUST ONE, ALBEIT IMPORTANT, EXAMPLE of how we have devitalized the Gospel and, as a result, often FULLY missed its truth and saving power. We could, and the Church should teach and, say much much more related to these important verses, but **we are here simply trying to make the point that within the first few minutes of the New Testament we find great truths taught that have been devitalized into oblivion as what Jesus says is distorted by**

replacing His clear verbs with limp-wristed appeals to think (neglecting any thought of doing) differently.

Don't read the *Bible* and exclude the verbs, it isn't of any use to us to do so – in fact, it will be eternally detrimental!

Bonus and Related Thoughts Related to Our *Matthew 6* Illustration

A Few Statements Wise Servant Don't Say

“Master, your promise of ‘all things’ is not enough for me! I am going to look for a part-time job to make up the difference.”

“I am going borrow on my credit card, and pay the usurious interest rates, so I can get _____ RIGHT NOW!”

“I tell you what, Master, I will agree to tithe, I think that is fair: 10% to you and the rest for me. Of course, this means that if I get into financial trouble you also must agree to bail me out – deal?”

“I am going to go looking for good works to do that I prefer over what you have prepared for me to do.”

“I have been calculating how much I must have each month (what other people say we need “to get by”) - I MUST have \$x a month. If you don't give it to me, I am going elsewhere!”