

Kingdom of God

Part 22

Power or Wisdom

1. Review

- a. The Kingdom of Heaven is not about where we are to live, but where God is to live. It is about which domain we live under, and what world is our top priority.
- b. Materialism is what it is called when we make the material world as our top priority of existence.
 - i. Some of us are materialists – in a practical way.
 - ii. We live as though this world is most or all of what there is.
- c. The Kingdom of Heaven is a greater reality than the material world.
 - i. It is why a child of God, living under the Dominion of Christ, cannot be content to live as a materialist.
 - ii. We come into agreement with the Kingdom of God which is greater than this material kingdom!
 - iii. This world is important to God...do not become an anti-materialist. It is just that this world is secondary to a greater world. This world is so important to God that He sent His Son to redeem it, to purchase it back, to retake it from the dominion of Satan. And you are so important to God that He considers your life, body and soul to be of value.

2. I would like us to take a journey into the Corinthian church, where a religious spirit was taking over. Corinth was a hotbed of religion, both for Jews as well as Gentiles. These folks had been introduced to Jesus Christ and had their lives changed. Yet, some false teachers were trying to hijack the church. They were seeking to make followers of their own. They were trying to sidetrack the believers by showy displays of wisdom and knowledge and splashy speech. They were watering down the gospel and making it about wisdom and human knowledge instead of what Paul had originally proclaimed it to be.

- a. So Paul wrote to the Corinthians, and warned them severely.
- b. *“I do not write these things to shame you, but as my beloved children I warn you. For though you might have ten thousand instructors in Christ, yet you do not have many fathers; for in Christ Jesus I have begotten you through the gospel. Therefore I urge you, imitate me. (imitate me how?) For this reason I have sent Timothy to you, who is my beloved and faithful son in the Lord, (here is how) who will remind you of my ways in Christ, as I teach everywhere in every church. Now some are puffed up, as though I were not coming to you. But I will come to you shortly, if the Lord wills, and I will know, not the word of those who are puffed up, but the power. For the kingdom of God is not in word but in power.”* 1 Corinthians 4:14-20
- c. Again and again, Paul will speak of the Kingdom of God and the Gospel of the Kingdom being about the Power of God.
 - i. We have distilled that down over the ages to mean, “the power of God to change someone’s life.” Which it is...but it is so much more.
 - ii. The gospel of the Kingdom is the intrusion of God’s Presence and Kingdom into this material, fallen world to restore that which was broken by the fall, and to take back what was stolen by the devil. **The Gospel of the Kingdom isn’t as much about “getting into heaven” but rather it is about getting heaven back into us!**
- d. There were those among the Corinthian Christians who loved big words and flowery talk. They liked good sermons, good public speakers and smart, educated pastors.
 - i. And yet Paul concludes his statement, *“For the kingdom of God is not in word but in power.”*
 - ii. There are too many preachers who can say many words. You can hear a good sermon anywhere you turn. You can hear good expositions of the bible. You can hear great talks

on how to be a successful Christian. You can learn more and more and more and go to conference after conference.

- iii. The problem is that we have made the gospel about head knowledge.
 1. Agree with these facts and you will be saved.
 2. Agree with my doctrine and you will be “in.”
 3. That isn’t biblical.
 4. **Belief is not just about agreeing with something.** Contrary to the way the world operates – when it says, “the sky is blue” ok, I believe it! That isn’t belief. It is agreement.
 5. You can argue a person into agreement. But you cannot argue a person into belief.
 - a. Agreement is the intellectual affirmation of a fact or opinion.
 - b. Belief is so much more. Belief requires a shift in a person’s heart.
 6. Not too long ago, I read a story of a young man who was a homosexual. He had become a Christian and gave up his sinful lifestyle. But along his journey toward Christ, people were constantly trying to convince him that his lifestyle was wrong. They would argue with him and beat him over the head with bible verses. Those things only hardened his heart. One day he was befriended by a Christian who simply got to know him and who understood his painful journey of life. What ended up changing his life wasn’t the arguments of opponents, but his encounter with God’s love. Later he said, “I don’t know of anyone who gave up homosexuality because someone argued them out of it.”
 7. **Belief is the result of an encounter with God’s love and power** – resulting in the action of placing your trust, your entire weight, the fullness of your future, past and present upon its message and to trust nothing else.

3. *For the kingdom of God is not a matter of talk but of power.* (NIV)

- a. I believe that God delights in confirming His word with power.
 - i. Look at example after example in the bible: Everywhere Jesus went, he exerted the power of God, through healing, miracles, deliverances.
 - ii. Then Peter and the apostles, everywhere they go, God confirms His word with powerful signs and wonders. The Presence of God goes wherever the Gospel is preached...and **the Presence of God changes everything He touches.**
 - iii. Peter knew this when he prayed for boldness in his preaching, expecting that God would respond by “extending His hand to heal, and signs and wonders would be done in the name of His holy servant Jesus.” (Acts 4 – I will read this to you later)
 - iv. **God has promised to back up our message with power if our message is the gospel of His kingdom.**
- b. The reason the apostle Paul had such concern for the Corinthian church, is that they were being enticed/seduced by a gospel that was without power.
 - i. And that is the gospel that has been preached for years: A gospel of a loving God who will let you come to heaven is you will agree with His plan of salvation.
 - ii. Folks, that is selling God, His Kingdom and His love far too short and far too cheap.
 - iii. The gospel of the Kingdom is the gospel of power – of an encounter with the Living God who not only confronts our sin but overwhelms us with His love, power and presence!

4. 1 Corinthians 4:20 *For the kingdom of God is not a matter of talk but of power.*

- a. Paul earlier explains to the Corinthians in 1 Cor 2:1-5 *And when I came to you, brethren, I did not come with superiority of speech or of wisdom, proclaiming to you the testimony of God. 2 For I determined to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ, and Him crucified. 3 I was with you in weakness and in fear and in much trembling, 4 and my message and my preaching were not in persuasive words of wisdom, but in demonstration* (apodexis – to make clear, exhibit,

manifestation) *of the Spirit and of power, 5 so that your faith would not rest on the wisdom of men, but on the power of God.*”

- i. Wisdom of man or the power of God. Which is it? Which does God desire we have? Which one transforms us? Which one is catalytic? The power of God is.
- ii. Paul wanted his hearers to place their faith and belief in the power of God and not the good speech and wisdom of men.
 1. Does everyone know what apologetics is? It is the explanation of things spiritual so that the mind can understand them. Apologetics can only go so far in persuading people. In fact, apologetics won't win someone to Christ, but it may lower their barriers toward God.
- b. Romans 15:18-19 *“I will not venture to speak of anything except what Christ has accomplished through me in leading the Gentiles to obey God by what I have said and done by the power of signs and miracles, through the power of the Spirit. So from Jerusalem all the way around to Illyricum, I have fully proclaimed the gospel of Christ.”*
 - i. Did you notice in the same breath, Paul says *“by what I have said and done by the power of signs and miracles, through the power of the Spirit.”*?
 - ii. So, what constitutes “fully proclaiming the gospel” to the Apostle Paul?
 - iii. It is the *“demonstration of the Spirit and of power”* and *“the power of signs and miracles through the power of the Spirit.”*
 1. There is a gap, sometimes bigger than we want to admit, between what we say we believe about God and what our experience is. Many of us say we believe God heals, but our experience falls short of it. And so we develop a personal “theology” of why God doesn't heal.
 2. But if when we teach, preach, or witness and nothing happens, (both in conversions and divine manifestations of power), then we must go back to the drawing board—our knees.
- iv. **We cannot divorce the Gospel of the Kingdom from the power of God.**
 1. We have tried to do it by explaining away that God only did those things in the first century.
 - a. Do not make excuses for powerlessness.
 - b. Well, I guess God doesn't want to heal that person.
 - c. Folks, if we think we can tell God to heal a person and do it based upon 5 minutes of quiet time a day, without heart rending, life changing times before the face of God, we are sadly mistaken.
 - d. We make excuses for our own spiritual laziness and blame the shortcoming on God.
 - e. **For decades the Church has been guilty of creating doctrine to justify their lack of power, instead of crying out to God until He changed them.**
- c. The Word must go forth with power. Power is the realm of the Spirit. The early church was persecuted, the apostles beaten because they healed a man in the name of Jesus – and so what do the church do? They run back into the resistance with MORE power! (most of us run away from pressure because we figure God sent it).
- d. It is why Peter cried out in the 4th chapter of Acts for more power and signs and wonders. (READ ALOUD)
 - i. Acts 4:29-30 *“Now, Lord, consider their threats and enable your servants to speak your word with great boldness. Stretch out your hand to heal and perform miraculous signs and wonders through the name of your holy servant Jesus. After they prayed, the place where they were meeting was shaken. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and spoke the word of God boldly.”*
 1. A powerless Word is the letter not the Spirit.
 2. And we all know “The letter kills, but the Spirit gives life.”

- ii. Lives must be changed in our ministry of the Word.
 - 1. Keep in mind that conversion is the greatest and most precious miracle of all.
 - iii. Randy Clark, while he was pasturing a SBC church, had several seminary students who had intellectual faith visit his church. A man was in their service who manifested the demonic and these two students didn't believe in that "stuff." Randy spoke words of deliverance and power in the name of Christ and the man was set free. These two intellectual Christians had a powerful transformation take place in their lives as they witnessed the power of God at work. No longer was their faith an intellectual faith!
 - iv. **If the gospel is powerless, it is because human wisdom has had its influence.**
5. I read a letter in response to people who were critical of a healing wave that broke out at Disneyland: :
- “God put the power of Life and Death in the tongue meaning He gave us the responsibility to go out and demonstrate His love. We can't expect to give a pitch on Christianity without Demonstrating the love of God. Unfortunately people have been told God doesn't heal anymore which is a lie. Many people in the church believe His greatest miracles were in the bible and that's it. It still happens and it's not a psyched up thing. He's waiting for people to go pray for the sick.”
- a. Folks, will you choose this day to begin to press in, dig in deeper, seek God more fully and with greater hunger until you get to see and be a part of the power He promised His church and His children?
 - b. We all want superpowers but we don't want to pay the price of intimacy. There is no other way. Intimacy with Jesus is the only path to the Power of the Holy Spirit. It is why naysayers have discounted power...because they can't get the Power cheaply. So they say it doesn't work at all.
 - c. The gospel of the Kingdom is a gospel of power, not of words. Press in?