

## ***NOT TALK, BUT POWER!***

***On the last day of the feast, the great day, Jesus stood up and proclaimed, "If any one thirst, let him come to me and drink. He/She who believes in me, as the scripture has said, 'Out of their heart shall flow rivers of living water.'"***

***John 7:37-38***

The slave girl could tell your fortune for \$25.00. She could tell you things about yourself that nobody knows but you. But a weird thing happened when she saw Paul and Silas. She went crazy! She followed behind them crying, "These men are servants of the most-high God, who proclaim to you the way of salvation!" Over and over she cried these words.

The men who owned her were getting nervous. They couldn't shut her up. This was bad for business. Suddenly Paul turned around and said to her demon, "I charge you, in the name of Jesus Christ, come out of her!"

The young woman froze. A blood-curdling scream came up from the depths of her soul. Then peace. She turned to the men who had been exploiting her and said, "Get away from me, you fools, I don't belong to you any more." So the men turned on Paul and Silas and dragged them before the magistrates, while the young woman disappeared in the confusion.

The proof that Paul and Silas were in fact servants of the most high God was that when they spoke, things happened. Their words were not just talk, but power.

So how come we're not doing what they did? Our words don't seem to have that power. The demons don't tremble when we speak. The world pays no attention to our message -- because they're convinced that our message is nothing but talk.

Forty days after the resurrection Jesus, in his resurrection body, left this earth to return to the headquarters of the universe. According to Luke, these were Jesus' last words to his disciples:

***"...Behold, I send the promise of my Father upon you; but stay in the city, until you are clothed with power from on high."***

***Luke 24:49***

Stay in Jerusalem. Don't go anywhere. Don't try to do anything, until you receive this power.

What kind of power? The kind of power that Paul had when he cast the demon out of the slave girl. The power that flowed from him wherever he went. Many years later Paul was having problems with some folks in the church at Corinth who were veering from the path. He sent Timothy to Corinth to help them find their way. But a few hard-headed souls refused to listen. So Paul wrote these words to the Corinthian fellowship:

***Therefore I sent you Timothy, my beloved and faithful child in the Lord, to remind you of my ways in Christ, as I teach them everywhere in every church. Some are arrogant, as though I were not coming to you. But I will come to you soon, if the Lord wills, and I will find out not the talk of these arrogant people but their power. For the kingdom of God does not consist in talk but in power.***

***I Corinthians 4:17-20***

The kingdom of God does not consist in talk but in power. Paul himself was not much of a talker. They used to say, "His speech is of no account." But when Paul commanded the demon to leave the slave girl, it obeyed.

Our Lord was a man of few words. He never took three paragraphs to say what could be said in a single sentence. But when he laid his hands on the sick, they were healed. When he spoke to the demons, they trembled.

The Kingdom of God is not talk, but power. So what kind of faith in Jesus do we have? Is it talk? Or is it Power?

In the kingdom, it seems, the more talk, the less power; the more power, the less talk. When our words are anointed with the Spirit's power, we don't have to do a lot of talking. We speak as the Spirit gives us utterance, and let the words do their work. We reach out with a helping hand, and let the Spirit impart life.

Interesting. Jesus never taught his disciples how to talk, preach, persuade. When he took leave of the disciples on Ascension Day, consider his instructions to the disciples according to Matthew. Jesus did not say,

"After I'm gone, the first thing I want you guys to do is start a seminary. Screen out the dummies, and develop an elite core of preachers. Show them how to preach and then ordain them --- now you've got yourselves a church you can be proud of!"

No, according to Matthew, this is what Jesus said:

***"All authority (all power) in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore (in this power) and make disciples of all nations."***

So they went and made disciples. And those disciples made disciples. And those disciples did the same, because the power of the Spirit was with these men and women. Not talk. Power.

Today our world is full of talk. Radio commercials. TV commercials. You can even buy birthday cards that talk.

Our church world is full of talk. If you don't believe it, just go to a church convention and listen to the endless flow of talk from people who butter their bread with talk.

But the kingdom of God is not talk, but power. If our words are not alive with the power of the Spirit of God, all we're doing is playing church.

And people are tired of playing church.

The church scene that most of us grew up with is on its way out. It's evaporating. The "church habit" is no longer part of our culture. The world in which we now live is openly pagan.

But human nature has not changed. People's need for God has not changed. When they hear a word that's alive with God's power, things happen!

And when we allow the power of God's Spirit to enter and rule our lives, things happen through us. We find ourselves talking less. But the words we speak are anointed with God's power. Here's how it all began --- on Ascension Day:

*So when they had come together, they asked him, "Lord, will you at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?" He said to them, "It is not for you to know times and seasons which the Father has fixed by his own authority. But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria and to the end of the earth."*

*Acts 1:6-8*

**"But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you."** The gift of the Spirit lifts us out of the kingdom of talk into the kingdom of power.

We ask for this gift. *(If you who are evil know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will the heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him?)*

We open our hearts to receive this gift, and here's what happens:

God works a miracle inside us, as the bitterness, the self-pity, the resentments, the grudges and attitudes, all begin to melt away --- as the Spirit turns these hearts of stone into hearts of flesh.....

.....as the Spirit puts God's love into our hearts.

That's our power.  
Our only power.

God's love.

To put it another way, the power of the Spirit will start flowing out of you when you allow the Spirit to do a work in you.

The real miracle is not that you lay hands on the sick and they recover. Not that you cast out demons.

The real miracle is that the Spirit of God has begun replacing your heart of stone with a heart of flesh, giving you a new heart.

God's love is shed abroad in your heart by the Holy Spirit.

That's your power.

When we allow the Spirit of God to begin changing our hearts—

---to repent of that grudge  
---to make right that wrong  
---to get reconciled with that person  
---to abandon that lazy habit,

that's when the power of the kingdom flows out of us.

Flows like a river, in simple, down-to-earth ways.

No trumpets sound, no lights flash, no bells ring, but demons tremble, and light from heaven invades the dark places with healing as we go about our daily lives.

Our job is not to try to make the power flow out of us. That's God's job.

Our job is to make sure that we're allowing the power of God's Spirit to flow in. To keep turning to the Lord. To keep clearing away the distractions. To keep walking in the light.

If we will do that, there will be power. Not talk. Power.

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Not rivers of talk. Words that heal. Words that wash the soul. Deeds that bring hope, and set the captives free, flowing out of your life and mine.

**The Lord Jesus is present as you read these words  
to give you this gift,  
if you're thirsty enough to come for it.**