

# **Beware the Religious Word Game**

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I. Introduction. (Revelation 3:1)

II. Three texts.

A. The Gospel may come in word only (empty) or in moral power (effectiveness).

1. Paul knew that the gospel had come to the Thessalonians with moral power.

a. They had a strange and supernatural joy - the joy of the Holy Spirit.

b. They became a missionary church.

2. If it is true that this is what happens through moral power, then the opposite is also true.

a. They could be poor examples, lukewarm according to missionary zeal, and lacking joy if the gospel did not come in power.

B. The gospel received in power brings regeneration.

1. The first creation passes away and everything becomes new.

C. There are those who have heard the gospel in word only - they are Christians in name only.

1. There is no fundamental change.

2. The "Christian" is still dead.

3. Regeneration must occur because sin came and we died.

III. What it means to have the gospel to come in word.

A. It is possible for the gospel to come to us yet without power.

1. Jesus shared that men were dead in their sins, yet those men killed him.

B. Being aware of the religious word game.

1. The Holy Spirit is warning us about people who receive the gospel as a fact and only as a fact.

2. This is nothing more than a game - creating a problem for the sole end of solving it.

a. The problem never existed previously with games.

b. Nobody is ever better or worse off no matter what happens in a game.

3. When you are fighting a war, it does matter.
4. The temptation of those in religion is to take it as a word game.
  - a. The religious word game changes no one.
  - b. A survey found that the ethics of business men were not different for those who were religious.
5. Problems.
  - a. Egotism.
  - b. Selfishness.
  - c. The roots of the life have not been changed.
6. Christians are largely ineffective because they do not believe what they are doing.

IV. What it means to have the gospel come in power.

A. A man becomes born again.

1. The word is overused, but it is in the Book so it is important to use.

B. The things that occur.

1. A man is exchanged from the external to the internal.
  - a. The new man sees the transcendency of the things eternal.
  - b. There is a shift of interest into a new sphere.
2. There is a dedication to the honor of God.
  - a. The desire is to be approved by God and not by man.
  - b. We want to be popular with the Boss and not the crowd.
3. Proprietorship changes to stewardship.
  - a. We simply give back to God what was His in the first place.
  - b. As soon as we think we own anything, that thing becomes a curse to us.

C. Raising culture above the word of God.

1. Missionary dangers.
2. The example of Sodom and Gomorra.

D. If the gospel does not transform, it is not effective.

1. Our moral code comes from what Christ says, and not what others say.
2. In all what Jesus says, the Christian acts upon and lives by totally.
3. The Christian will take up His cross and follow Jesus no matter what the cost.

V. The danger that it should only come in word and what we should do about it.

A. There are millions that have a name to live but are dead.

1. Too few think this is true of themselves.
2. Everyone could use some heart searching.
3. The only thing left to do is to turn your life over to Jesus.

**Application questions.**

1. What is the distinction between the gospel shared in power and in word only? How might this look different, if at all?

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2. Describe the man changed by the gospel come in power. Why is a change so fundamental to the Christian life?

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3. Take a moment to reflect upon your own life. Have you been changed by the gospel? Is there a fundamental difference in the person that you have become? Pray to Christ that you may hold nothing back from Him.

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