

“Not In Word, But In Power”

Paul faced constant criticism about his work among churches. Some of his detractors would travel to cities such as Corinth and speak extensively about all that Paul was doing wrong. At times, people in the churches were enticed to believe the slanderous criticisms against the apostle.

He wrote in 1 Corinthians 4:20, "*For the kingdom of God is not in word, but in power.*" This was a reminder that the test of a Christian was not the persuasiveness of his words, but the spiritual power of his life. Paul candidly acknowledged that some did not find him eloquent in speech (2 Corinthians 10:10). Yet they could not question the power of the gospel in his life (cf. 1 Timothy 1:15). He had seen many people converted, and many churches were started through his work. He had been used to heal the sick and raise the dead through the power of God. Regardless of whether his words were eloquent, they carried spiritual power and authority that came from God.

You will encounter many people who seek to convince you of their thoughts on the kingdom of God, but the test of the validity of their words is the spiritual power of their lives. If a person speaks forcefully about a point of doctrine but is habitually sinning, his words are discredited by his life. If a person talks of the power of God but gives no evidence of victory over sin, his words are empty. It is much easier to talk about a victorious life in Christ than it is to live it. If you only have the appearance of godliness without any corresponding spiritual power (2 Timothy 3:5; Romans 1:16), then repent and obey the true gospel so that your life will be characterized by power over sin.

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