



Spirit of Grace Herald

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Are Jesus' Teachings IRRELEVANT?

The other day I read a comment underneath one of my Bible teaching videos that really floored me. Until then I thought I had seen it all, but this one was so brazen and so radically opposed to what Christians have always believed that it nearly took my breath away. Here is what the man had to say: **“The teachings of Jesus have nothing to do with modern Christianity. Wake up!”**

I knew where he was coming from. I had heard from his group before, quite a number of times. But until then no one had ever had the audacity to put it as boldly and as unapologetically as he did: *“The teachings of Jesus have nothing to do with Christianity.”*

So where was this guy coming from? There are professing Christians these days who have decided that Jesus preached law and Paul preached grace. Since everyone agrees that Christianity all about grace, they have decided that Paul must be followed (theologically) and Jesus essentially ignored, believing that Jesus was speaking only to the Jews of His day, and not to us.

How this works out in practical terms is that these folks see any charge to people to forsake their sins and live godly lives, either directed at Christians or those considering becoming Christians, as “legalistic.” And since Jesus was *always* calling people to live godly lives, this must mean that His teachings don't mean anything to us today. When Jesus said things like “love your enemies,” and when He announced that those who are not willing to put Him above father, mother wife, and children are not worthy to be His disciples, this cannot apply to us. After all, according to Paul (in their minds) all you have to do is believe on Jesus and you'll be saved, regardless of how you live or intend to live. Since Jesus had so much to say about how we are to live, He must not be talking to us at all.

This radically unbiblical idea is so riddled with error, so entirely out of left field, I hardly know where to begin to refute it. First, the gospels of Jesus are saturated with the teachings of Jesus. If these mean nothing to Christians, and only relate to the Jews of AD 30-33, the Holy Spirit sure wasted a lot of time and space in the Bible to move Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John to faithfully record these words and instructions. The entire sermon on the mount – meaningless, Jesus' teachings about the kingdom of heaven – a waste of time to read, His strong statements about what it takes to be His disciple and follower – nonsense for us today, turn the other cheek, nope, love one another, negative, His stern warning to those who will call Him Lord, Lord, on the day of judgment after having lived a lawless life – foolishness. Apparently,



Jesus never got the memo from Paul that behavior means nothing. Jesus should have stuck to healing the sick and kept His mouth shut, and let Paul do all the talking.

A second glaring problem with this insane idea is that Paul himself could be just as tough and just as insistent that Christians live godly lives as Jesus. It was Paul who warned, *“Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived.”* Paul both preached grace through faith in Jesus and demanded godly living once that grace had been received.

Are Jesus' Teachings IRRELEVANT?

I sometimes wonder, "What is the appeal of this teaching?" Why would men and women be so motivated and so eager to believe something that entirely contradicts both the Bible and two thousand years of Christianity? Imagine going to Martin Luther, or John Wesley, or George Whitefield, or D. L. Moody or any of the great reformers and revivalists and saying, "So if I receive Jesus by faith, then I can live any way I like, right? I mean, I'm not expected to give up my adultery, or stop stealing from my employer, or quit beating my wife – right? I mean if salvation is by faith, then what I do doesn't matter. So I can ignore Jesus' teachings to forsake all and follow Him, to forgive those who sin against me, to love my neighbor and so forth? Those things don't apply to me, right?" You know what their answer would be!

So why do people believe a doctrine so entirely ridiculous and unbiblical? I'm sure there are numerous reasons for this, but here is one: Many people love the idea that change is entirely unnecessary. It takes all the pressure off. They can carry on with their ungodly lives and still profess Jesus, and still believe that heaven is in their future with no need to overcome their sins. If they have an ugly temper, no big deal, and there is certainly no need to fight it. After all, they're just sinners saved by grace. No reason to feel guilty for their lying, their constant anger, their miserable marriage, their sexual indiscretions, their impatience, their stinginess, their lack of concern for the poor... Works don't count, behavior doesn't matter, and all those uncomfortable teachings of Jesus don't apply to them. Life is good!

Let me be clear that salvation *is* totally by faith, but the faith that saves us is a faith that changes us. The apostle James makes this clear, writing: "**But someone will say, "You have faith, and I have works. Show me your faith without your works, and I will show you my faith by my works. You believe that there is one God. You do well. Even the demons believe—and tremble!"**" (James 2:18-19).

Are the teachings of Jesus Christ relevant to us today? You bet they are. It was not a waste for the Holy Spirit to include the precious teachings of Jesus in the gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. And it is not a mistake for you to read and heed them. Indeed, you would be most foolish not to.

MISSION NIGERIA/KENYA HAPPENING NOW!



We are in the process of a unique mission in four cities in Nigeria and Kenya at this time. We are providing badly needed foods to orphans, widows, and poverty-stricken families in these areas. Since we cannot go there ourselves, due to the coronavirus, we are sending money to our friends there for distribution to the poorest people in these communities. Be-

cause we are committed to minister spiritually as well as physically, we will be giving each individual or family a gospel of John, that they may learn about Jesus who is our "Bread of Life." We hope to minister by Zoom meeting in at least one of these cities to those who gather, and we will also have local pastors preach to them.

The pictures you see represent one of these missions, just completed, in Kenya, supervised by our good friend and frequent interpreter, Harun Musungu.

