

Lion and Lamb Apologetics'

Steven Furtick is the Most Dangerous Kind of False Teacher

GRAYSON GILBERT

1



Steven Furtick has long been a bane to the Evangelical church on the basis of his own self-admission: he's unqualified for the pastorate. He literally [wrote the book](#) on it in response to MacArthur's one word answer when asked what his thoughts were on Furtick. Yet, rather than reassess whether or not he would be qualified per Scripture's own stance, Steven Furtick doubled down in his pride with a publishing deal.

While he may be unqualified in numerous areas, the key one that is readily apparent to those with an open bible is his striking inability to adequately teach (2 Tim. 2:15, 24). Regardless of his credentials, we know that any who teach shall incur stricter judgment than the standard Christian (Jam. 3:1). Indeed, we know that Steven Furtick wants to be a teacher, but he does not understand what he is saying or that which he so confidently asserts (1 Tim. 1:7).

If he is genuinely in Christ, the best he has to hope for on this trajectory is to be saved, but only as one being snatched from the fire; he will lose all he has built (1 Cor. 3:15). It is no small wonder Paul gently instructs young Timothy to pay *close* attention to his life and doctrine, for if he retained sound doctrine, he would ensure salvation for both his hearers and himself. The issue here stems from the fact that Steven Furtick is not qualified to teach in *any* capacity, nor does he heed the harsh warnings for teachers. With respect to this, one can only conclude he willingly embraces his role as a false teacher.

Lion and Lamb Apologetics'

Thus, I write this not for Steven Furtick – it is doubtful it would reach him, more doubtful he'd read it, and even more doubtful it would change his mind if he did so. I write to the fan of Steven Furtick. *Flee from him, lest your soul also be ensnared to hell.* He is not a sound teacher. He is not the most obviously damning teacher, but he surely is one I'd say is the most cunning in his deception of the flock. If super soakers, Lego props, and the like were not clues enough – surely, the words of his mouth will serve as ample witness.

2

In a recent sermon by Steven Furtick, he proclaims:

“The power of God was in Jesus, the healing power of God, the restoring power of God, the same power that made demons flee was in Nazareth, but Jesus could not release it. Because it was trapped in their unbelief. And there's one thing that even Jesus can't do. One thing that even the son of God can't do. Even Jesus cannot override your unbelief. I see y'all looking at me like, 'Is that true? I thought He could do anything.' It said, 'He could not.' He wanted to. He was prepared to. He was able to. The power of God was in Nazareth, but it was trapped in their perspective.”

So why do I find this so particularly dangerous? Why write an entire blog post for 111 little words? He's a winsome speaker. He has a means of captivating the undiscerning through his inflection, repetition, and word-choice, meaning he's a good orator. This wouldn't be an issue in the slightest if the content of what he preached was adequate, but given the fact that heresy has escaped his lips without him batting an eye, it makes him particularly dangerous. Yet the other manner in which he is particularly dangerous is due to his inability to draw out the basic meaning of a text.

There are two possible ways Steven Furtick reached his conclusion for the passage: he either used the NLT (a paraphrastic translation) of Mark 6:5, or he intermingled the accounts of Mark 6:5 and Matthew 13:58. In either case, this is precisely at the heart of what I am speaking toward; it is literally the pastor's job to exegete the passage, that is, to draw its meaning out. When difficulties of interpretation arise in the biblical text, it is the pastor's job to clearly explain them, utilizing the tools necessary for the job. Instead of leaping to the conclusion that Christ was unable to perform the miraculous, the exegete ought to consider the internal red lights flashing. Even an atheist can spot the contradiction of terms: Christ cannot be fully God if He is thwarted by man's unbelief.

One of the best tools a pastor has at his disposal are the biblical languages. [The Reformers](#) highly prized the languages, for in them, they grammatically traced the doctrines of the Reformation back to the Early Church. In fact, the biblical languages were so important to [Martin Luther](#) that he wrote, “In proportion then as we value the gospel, let us zealously hold to the languages... We will not long preserve the gospel without the languages. The languages are the sheath in which this sword of the Spirit is contained; they are the casket in which this jewel is enshrined; they are the vessel in which this wine

Lion and Lamb Apologetics

is held; they are the larder in which this food is stored; and, as the gospel itself points out, they are the baskets in which are kept these loaves and fishes and fragments.”

Primarily, the concerns then here are driven by the grammar and syntax of the passages in question – so into the Greek we go. The languages inform the meaning of any given text simply because the construction of a sentence dictates its interpretation. The constituent parts of speech in the sentence, “Billy did not kick the ball” inform us that “Billy” is the subject, “did not” is a negation of the action of the verb, “kick” is the verb, and “ball” is the direct object. However, if the sentence read, “Billy did not kick the ball hard” we would rightly understand the difference from the last sentence. Billy *did* kick the ball – he just didn’t put much energy into doing so. In that sense, the negation modifies *how* he kicked the ball, rather than *if* he kicked it. More clearly, it no longer modifies the verb, but the adverb.

The usage of the negative particle οὐκ in combination with δύναμαι in Mark 6:5 occurs elsewhere within the New Testament and does not always dictate inability. Luke 14:20 demonstrates this within the context of the parable of the wedding feast; the man is not literally unable to come, he is unwilling. In similar fashion, Luke 11:7 exhibits a man who is unwilling to offer bread, not that he is literally prevented from doing so. In yet another example, 1 John 3:9, contrary to other poor teaching circling the web, does not indicate a Christian’s inability to sin as a result of becoming a child of God. The phrase then reflects a range of meaning, in this case, presenting the idiomatic expression that Christ is choosing not to do something, even though He retains the ability to do so.

Secondly, another concern is simply that his interpretation is not in concord with other passages of Scripture. There are several notable examples within the Scriptures that demonstrate faith had no bearing upon the recipient of Christ’s miracles. It should obviously be stated that a corpse cannot retain faith (Luke 7:1-16). Pretend the aforementioned objection of a corpse’s faith is a strawman and that Christ must simply have the faith of *someone* in order to perform the miraculous.

John 11 utterly refutes this notion as well, for both Mary and Martha conceived of His ability in proximity (vv. 21, 32). Martha confuses Christ’s promise to raise Lazarus as an eschatological promise (v. 24) and still objected to Him rolling the stone away after He corrects her (v. 39). Combine this with other instances of healing the multitudes and demoniacs who were restored without even the prior ability to ask, and we see faith is not a prerequisite for Christ’s miracles.

Furthermore, we know that the Lord does as He pleases – and people throughout the span of the Scripture acknowledge this without hesitancy (Psalm 115:3, 135:6; Daniel 4:35; Jonah 1:14). It is God who will specifically violate one’s unbelief; if this were not so, why would any individual cry out to the Lord, “Help my unbelief!” (Mark 9:24). Furthermore, there would be no hope for any sinner if Christ could not override unbelief, for we know

Lion and Lamb Apologetics

that Satan has blinded the minds of unbelievers so that they cannot see the glorious gospel (2 Cor. 4:4). Are we so foolish to assume a puny God, bested by Satan and humanity? As a general, hermeneutical rule of thumb, if your interpretation of a passage contradicts other passages in Scripture, and basic lines of philosophical reasoning, you've yet to reach the proper conclusion.

Finally, preachers must have a concern for clarity. If the result of one's sermon is a misunderstanding of the text, you've failed to do your primary task. If the result is confusion, it may not necessarily be tied to poor exegetical work, but poor presentation. The reason for this lengthy excursus is simply to highlight the pastor's role as teacher. It involves a tremendous amount of work to dig out the meaning of the text and it is for an explicit purpose: to feed His sheep. Yet this brings us full-circle in understanding *how* one must feed His sheep. According to Titus 2:1, pastors are to speak the things which are fitting for sound doctrine. Steven Furtick butchered the meaning of the text in order to suit his own purposes, which at this point, are a quasi-form of Word of Faith *light*.

The point of the narrative, however, has nothing to do with you somehow containing the power to override the miraculous due to unbelief. It is that in Christ's own home town, he did not receive honor as the Son of God (Matt. 13:57; Mark 6:4; John 4:44). They did not believe He was the Christ and they would not, unless they would see signs and wonders (John 4:48). It was not that Christ *could not* perform the miraculous as a result of their unbelief, but that He *would not* because they did not believe. Both show cause, but drastically different purposes.

Thus, what we see is an intentional withholding of the miraculous due to their hardened hearts; the miraculous was not conditioned, *per se*, to their unbelief (read: they did not limit Christ's *ability* to do the miraculous due to their lack of faith). Rather, he withheld the miraculous as a result of their unbelief; it was not within His [divine will](#) to heal them. Those two statements are radically different and depict a radically different Jesus, as different a Jesus as those in Nazareth perceived, for though they acknowledged His ability to do the miraculous and to instruct with incredible wisdom, they did not acknowledge the authority by which He did so.

By Christ's own admission in John 4:48, they would have believed had they seen signs and wonders. The emphatic negation οὐ μή (a double negative, which in the Greek serves to strengthen the negation, not nullify as in English) is used to show the certainty of their unbelief in Him as a result of not seeing signs and miracles. Yet instead of relenting and demonstrating His authority and power, Christ withheld these as an act of judgment upon them. It was an at-will decision, not of man, but of God, to deny them the very thing they desired as validation to His claims to divinity.

The teaching of the passage is far more frightening than a preacher like Steven Furtick can endure. Surely, the possibility that not only can the God of this universe do as He

Lion and Lamb Apologetics'

pleases with respect to your unbelief – but also intentionally withhold the very means of your deliverance by His sovereign choosing, is a terrifying notion. Yet this is the God of the Bible. This is the dangerous God we serve, whom we are called to fear and revere. This is the God who conceals Himself in parables and as He chooses, does the one thing Furtick can't imagine Him being capable of doing: He overrides your unbelief. Does not the potter have right over the lump, o' man? Does not the Lord do with His creation as He pleases?

5

For the one following Steven Furtick – flee. Flee from him as fast as you can and surround yourself with those who preach sound doctrine. The only means by which you will begin to discern the true from the false will be to study the Scriptures routinely. The beautiful thing is that you don't need the Greek to understand when a teacher has uttered blasphemies. It would be worthwhile if you learned Greek and Hebrew at one point, but it is not entirely necessary for you to discern truth from error. Simply take the time to read the Scriptures, book by book and verse by verse, and then read through them again, and again, and again. Seek Him by prayer and through the aide of the Holy Spirit, and you will undoubtedly begin to see where teachings such as these land in comparison to His Word.

Now, I do believe Steven Furtick is genuine, meaning that he legitimately believes he is doing well by his people – but of particular importance to note is that genuineness is not a biblical qualification for an elder. It is this flavor of “helpfulness” that makes him all the more dangerous to the sheep. Couple this with his inability to exegete a simple passage and draw out its focus, and you're in for a bumpy, blasphemous ride such as this.

© The Chorus in the Chaos: Relevant and Reformed, August 22, 2018. Retrieved November 15, 2023.
<https://www.patheos.com/blogs/chorusinthechaos/steven-furtick-false-teacher/>

NOTE: This post is in compliance with the Fair Use clause of the US Copyright Act of 1976 (17 U.S. Code § 107). The US Supreme Court has issued several major decisions clarifying and reaffirming the fair use doctrine since the 1980s, most recently in the 2021 decision *Google LLC v. Oracle America, Inc.*