Greg Laurie promotes Furtick’s new book

From Berean Archives:

What in the world? As one who has been getting Pastor Steven Furtick’s promotional emails for awhile now, I had a chance to read a sample chapter the pastor is sharing, complete with direct extra-biblical revelations. Apparently Pastor Greg Laurie saw the same chapter I did but has come to a different conclusion. Much to the dismay of his followers, Laurie tweeted this:
Check out this new book from Steven Furtick. crashthechatterbox.com

2/11/14, 1:38 PM

6 RETWEETS 10 FAVORITES

Jenna K @Jennaontheair 18h
@greglaurie Seriously? Do you know anything about him? Uber disappointed that you would encourage anyone to read his book. #Nauseated

dcromps @dcromps 17h
@greglaurie Raffled and disappointed

Reply to Greg Laurie
So what is in this book?

In the introductory chapter of Steven Furtick’s new book, he assures us that God speaks to us outside of Scripture and gives an example of an encouraging “word” that assured Furtick that God had given Charlotte to him.

At least, that’s what he thinks God said, and he qualifies the example with this telling passage:

I’m sure my translation of this conversation isn’t word perfect, because you know how tricky cross-cultural communication with God can be. Plus, I can’t find the notebook where I frantically scribbled every word of those impressions.

The Chatterbox crashes before it gets out of Chapter One.

Oh, dear. For a book about how God speaks to us, Pastor Furtick reveals a flawed understanding of revelation. He asserts that these inaudible promptings of the Spirit are always in perfect harmony with Scripture, but his example fails that test in at least three disqualifying ways, and, in the meantime, undermines a conservative view of Biblical inspiration.

If a message is imperfect, it’s not from God

Pastor Furtick is confident enough that this is God’s voice to put it in the first chapter of his book, and we know it has guided his work in leading the church in the city that God “gave” him. Yet, we don’t know exactly what God said. Instead, we have an imperfect recollection of this fairly significant divine revelation.

If the perfect and all-powerful God is going to speak, why would he allow his speech to be recorded imperfectly? The Bible, which is the very expression of the Holy Spirit, emphatically insists on its perfection (see Psalm 119, for example). We’re even told that God’s revelation is perfect down to the smallest elements of punctuation.

Divine revelation is always significant because it is inherently Trinitarian. The Father gives impetus to the Holy Spirit’s expression of Jesus, the Word. The Holy Spirit never says anything that’s imperfect,
because he himself is perfect, as is his message. To suggest that he would say anything imperfectly is not only wrong, it’s blasphemous.

What does it matter? Not many people think Pastor Furtick actually speaks in the same way that the Biblical authors wrote, so it’s acceptable if his own personal revelations are slightly imperfect, you say. Assuming that God’s nature is unchanging, his communicative activity is never going to contradict that nature by finding it acceptable to communicate imperfectly. But, you counter, Furtick isn’t saying that God messed it up; he’s just saying that he got it slightly wrong.

And that’s the problem. By suggesting that the vessels of revelation can mar the message, he casts a cloud of doubt over all of Scripture, which was revealed to other humans no less fallible than Furtick himself. If Steven Furtick can’t quite be sure the he got it just right, how do we know that John or Paul or David or Isaiah got it exactly right, either? If we can’t be sure, we have no basis to refute the claims of the higher critics who point to the same human fallibility in the Biblical authors that Pastor Furtick acknowledges for himself.

The miracle of God’s revelation is that his Spirit supernaturally guided the writers so that they wrote the message in exactly the way the Holy Spirit intended it. In the writing of their books, the Biblical authors were miraculously and temporarily infallible, hence also inerrant. If God is the same, and if his communication methods remain the same, if he communicates imperfectly now, we must allow that he communicated imperfectly in the past as well. We’d have to grant the higher critics’ argument that the Bible is substantially correct but corrupted in a few places by human error.

Conservative Christians have long rejected that claim. Furtick’s Chatterbox echoes it.

If a god must communicate cross culturally, it’s not the Christian God

In what sense does God communicate with us cross culturally, as Furtick says? We’re supposed to know how tricky this is, but I have no idea what he’s talking about, though I suspect he’s forgotten about the Incarnation. God’s perfect expression is in Jesus, the incarnate Word, who joined our culture to speak to us in our own language and culture.
The wonder of inspiration is that God used human vessels who expressed God’s thoughts perfectly in specific cultures situated in particular times and places. God never speaks in a mystical God language that we could never access or comprehend; he always condescends to meet us in our cultures and uses our culturally shaped languages (Greek and Hebrew) to do so.

The irony here is that Pastor Furtick and pastors of his ilk tend to be deliberately culturally ignorant when reading Scripture. To interpret Scripture correctly, we must always remember that God spoke to cultures thousands of years and miles removed from us. Although the Bible was intended for us to read in 2014, it wasn't written to our culture. We are not free to ignore what the Bible meant to its first readers or listeners, yet stories are constantly allegorized to create the conceit that they’re all about us. The point of the sun standing still was not so that we could pray audacious prayers, for example. To his credit, Matt Chandler publicly chastised Pastor Furtick at his Code Orange conference for a solipsistic, it’s-all-about-me reading of Scripture. Then, as if to prove Chandler’s point, Noble followed him with a special sermon that God had revealed to him that seriously misinterpreted a verse that announces Christ’s messianic identity to describe Steven Furtick.

Steven Furtick and Perry Noble have trouble interpreting the clear historical and culturally situated messages in Scripture, so why should we have any confidence that they’ll do any better with their assertions that they hear and understand “tricky cross-cultural communication” from God now? We shouldn’t (and most PP readers don’t), yet they insist that tens of thousands of people dedicate their lives to the special visions God has given them.

If there’s no record of God’s communication, it should be rejected.

We are supposed to take Pastor Steven’s recent claim of a long-ago revelation at his word, even though he has no record of it. What kind of providence is that, that God would let his perfectly formed message get thrown out with the Neiman Marcus catalog?

God preserves his word, and we have confidence in Biblical revelation because it has been carefully preserved and passed down in a physical,
written form to us. One of the striking features of the gospels and epistles is the authors’ references to their writing process and to the particulars of their preservation and distribution (see Luke 1, John 21:25 and the end of most of Paul’s letters for examples). We are confident that the Bible that we have today is complete and is not lacking anything that the Holy Spirit intended to be Scripture.

When Steven Furtick retroactively claims lost documents as significant revelations of God’s will and direction — not just for Furtick, but for Elevation and the whole city of Charlotte –, who is he to deny that we should reopen the 66-book canon to admit new revelation? On what basis, if we allow for “lost” revelations to be published later, does Steven Furtick reject documents like the Gospel of Thomas or the Book of Mormon as God’s word? I’m sure that he does reject them, but it can’t be on the basis of a solid doctrine of Biblical inspiration.

So, in a book that promises to tell us what God says about how highly he thinks of us, in just a few introductory sentences the author reveals that he is unable to explain the difference between God’s perfect Word and error. Instead of calming our fears and quieting the so-called chatterbox, Furtick’s heavenly voices are inherently unreliable and deceitful.

Unlike the real Holy Spirit.