**Word and Spirit**

Based on [Luke 10:23-37](https://biblia.com/books/esv/Lk10.23-37)

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For any type of vehicle for transportation you need two things. You need a motor and you need a steering mechanism. For a car, that is the engine and the steering wheel, for a boat the engine and the rudder, for a bicycle you need pedals and handlebars. Now you can add gears to make your speed more efficient, brakes are good to slow down. But you need something to move you and some way to direct that movement.

When we translate that to people, we can see the same thing. In a market economy, the idea is that people are motivated--notice the word “motor” is included there--”motivated” to seek their own profit, and if that is allowed society will produce more and more. But what should they produce? Well the consumers do the steering. They buy products they like and refuse products they don’t. To put it crudely, all people are by nature sinful and curved inward seeking their own good. Classical liberal economics uses that sin as a motivator for production and a way to steer the economy.

And when you are dealing with people in a sinful world, it is prudent to count on their selfishness, rather than their charity. Governments exist to reward good and punish evil. The carrot and the stick, which appeal to man’s sinful nature. But for the christian, there is another motivator another motor, and it is a person, God, the Holy Spirit, who dwells in the hearts of believers, makes them new people who want to do good, even if they get punished by the world for it, even if they lose worldly profit and gain.

For the Christian, the Word and Commands of God are the steering wheel, and the Spirit is our motor. A good example is John the Baptist. August 29th is annual the festival of the martyrdom of St. John the Baptist...and look at his life. He was not a man dressed in soft clothing, but camel’s hair. He preached God’s word and ended up beheaded for it at the hands of a harlot. He was motivated, not by seeking his own pleasure or avoiding pain, but by the spirit of the living God. His actions were steered and directed, not by personal gain or avoiding loss, but by the laws and commands of the Lord. John the Baptist would not be a good consumer in the capitalist economy, because his life is a command economy, pre directed by the eternal and changeless Word of the living God, regardless of his own welfare in the world. John’s treasure is in heaven, as is his reward.

With this understanding, we can see the message Christ is preaching in the story of the Good Samaritan. He is preaching how we christians receive the power to fulfill the law and commands of God. By nature the only power we have is sin, the power to seek our own good. But we are commanded to love our neighbor as ourself...that is our steering wheel. But the priest and the levite can only steer around the neighbor in need.

But for the new man in christ, our motor is the will to do good created and sustained by the Holy Spirit who dwells in us. Without the spirit, the christian would be like a car without a motor. Without the word, the chistian would be like a boat without a rudder. But equipped with the Spirit and the Word, we can and do what the unbeliever cannot...we can selflessly seek and provide for the good of our neighbor.

“A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and he fell among robbers, who stripped him and beat him and departed, leaving him half dead. 31 Now by chance a priest was going down that road, and when he saw him he passed by on the other side. 32 So likewise a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side. 33 But a Samaritan, as he journeyed, came to where he was, and when he saw him, he had compassion…”

The word for this compassion that the Samaritan has refers to his inner parts...and what it literally means is that “his guts hurt”. In this we have the perfect example of having the power to love your neighbor as yourself. The Samaritan, when he sees his neighbor suffering, literally feels the pain himself. But it is not the sort of queasiness that would have him look away and avoid the scene altogether. His compassion drives him to help his neighbor, dress his wounds and provide for his care...and he is no less inclined to ignore the man and his wounds than to ignore his own.

So too, Jesus famously has compassion on the crowds when he sees they are hungry and he feeds them. In perceiving their suffering, he suffers. He is the Good Samaritan. He cannot simply pursue his own good because his spirit is wrapped up in the good of his neighbor. It is like a parent who cannot stand to see their children suffer, or a man who lays down his life for his friend. St. Paul’s guts hurt so much because of the faithlessness of his people the Jews, that he says he would exchange his own salvation for theirs if it was possible. With motivations of the same Spirit, Jesus cannot stand to see people suffering, so he stops what he’s doing to help them immediately.

The priest and the levite do not help. They are all of mankind without the Gospel and the Spirit. They lack the power of the new covenant, established by Jesus Christ in his blood. And so they are like children under a guardians and managers until faith comes. They are directed by bedtimes and curfews...new moons and sabbaths, because they haven’t been given the spirit of Compassion. But through Christ, faith has come with the new birth of Water and Spirit. And that faith is a new motor, a new spirit that speed their craft towards their ailing neighbor, rather than navigate around him.

This new motivation is the knowledge that we already have been given the kingdom of God. Jesus paid the debt of our sin so that we no longer owe our neighbor anything except love. And we have true compassion to motivate us. Because our salvation is secure we can busy ourselves and our lives with seeking the good of others. We still have our sin, but having been set free by the son, we have the power steer our craft away from it and towards the Good Works God has prepared beforehand that we should walk in them. Equipped with the gospel, you are empowered to truly love your neighbor as yourself.