

FREE CHAPTER

A Familiar Sentence Can Still Be Wrong

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A Familiar Sentence Can Still Be Wrong

ALMOST ANYBODY CAN FINISH THIS SENTENCE: MONEY IS THE ROOT OF ALL evil. Ask where it comes from and most people will say the Bible. Some will say it with a little satisfaction, as if they caught the Bible being unfair to people who work for a living.

Here is the verse:

> For the love of money is the root of all evil: which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows.
>
> 1 TIMOTHY 6:10

Three words are missing from the version everybody knows, and those three words move the problem. The popular sentence blames an object. The verse blames a desire. A dollar bill sitting in a drawer is not the root of anything. A man who loves it has a root growing in him whether he has a dollar or not.

The verse before it says the same thing from another angle:

> But they that will be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition.
>
> 1 TIMOTHY 6:9

“They that will be rich.” The trap is in the will. That is a harder word than the slogan, because a slogan about money lets every poor man off the hook and every rich man feel persecuted. The verse lets nobody off. It goes looking for the love.

This is the first thing to learn about the words on the page. A sentence can be familiar, sound biblical, be repeated by preachers and skeptics alike, and still be wrong. Being familiar is not the same as being accurate. The only way to know is to go and read the page.

The First Misquotation in the Gospels

The most dangerous misquotation in the Bible is recorded in the Bible. The devil took Jesus to the pinnacle of the temple and quoted a Psalm at him.

Here is the Psalm:

> For he shall give his angels charge over thee, to keep thee in all thy ways.
>
> They shall bear thee up in their hands, lest thou dash thy foot against a stone.
>
> PSALM 91:11-12

Here is the devil’s use of it:

> Then the devil taketh him up into the holy city, and setteth him on a pinnacle of the temple,
>
> And saith unto him, If thou be the Son of God, cast thyself down: for it is written, He shall give his angels charge concerning thee: and in their hands they shall bear thee up, lest at any time thou dash thy foot against a stone.

> Jesus said unto him, It is written again, Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God.
>
> MATTHEW 4:5-7

Lay the two side by side and read slowly. The Psalm promises angels "to keep thee in all thy ways." In Matthew's account that whole clause is gone. Luke records the same moment and keeps "to keep thee" but not "in all thy ways" (Luke 4:10). Either way, the part of the promise that tied it to a road God had set is missing from the devil's mouth.

I don't want to build more on that omission than it will carry. Quoting a passage short is not automatically a crime; the Gospel writers and the apostles quote the Old Testament briefly all the time. The devil's real crime was what he did with the words he did quote. He took a promise of protection for a man walking in God's ways and turned it into a dare. Jump, and make God prove it.

But notice how easy the trick was. The quotation sounded right. It began with "it is written," the same words Jesus had used one temptation earlier. Somebody who knew the Psalm only by its sound would have heard a verse and nodded.

Why Jesus Answered With Another Verse

Jesus did not answer by saying the devil had a bad copy. He didn't argue about the wording at all. He said, "It is written again," and put Deuteronomy beside the Psalm.

That is the method for the rest of this book. A verse quoted alone can be bent. A verse read beside the rest of what God said stands up straight. The devil's quotation was not refuted by a feeling or by a scholar. It was refuted by more of the Bible.

This is also where confidence in Scripture comes from. Jesus prayed for his disciples in words that ought to settle the question of whether the Bible can be trusted:

> Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth.
>
> JOHN 17:17

And Proverbs gives the warning that goes with that confidence:

> Every word of God is pure: he is a shield unto them that put their trust in him.
>
> Add thou not unto his words, lest he reprove thee, and thou be found a liar.
>
> PROVERBS 30:5-6

Read those together and something becomes plain. Confidence in God's word is not the same thing as confidence in my memory of it. If every word is pure, then the words matter, which means I am obligated to know which words they are. The man who says "the Bible says" about a slogan he has never looked up is not honoring Scripture. He is borrowing its authority for something it never said.

A two-page checklist circulated among King James readers opens by pointing at Matthew 4:6 as the devil changing God's word.[1] The observation is sound, and it's a good place to start. As we'll see, the same sheet also shows how easy it is for a defender of the Bible to make the very mistake he is warning about.

Worked Case 1: Quoted Correctly, Used Wrongly

The claim: "It's in the Bible, so it settles the argument."

The evidence: Psalm 91:11-12 promises angelic keeping "in all thy ways." Matthew 4:6 quotes the promise without that clause, in the mouth of the devil, to push Jesus toward a test of God. Jesus answers with Deuteronomy, "It is written again" (Matthew 4:7). First Timothy 6:10 is routinely shortened into a slogan that changes its target.

The finding: A quotation can be real and still be used against the passage it comes from. The devil quoted a real verse. What he did with it was false: he omitted a qualifying phrase and changed a promise into a dare. Being “in the Bible” establishes that the words exist. It does not establish that they mean what the person quoting them wants.

The useful next step: Pick one sentence you have heard called “a Bible verse” in the last month. Find it. Copy the whole verse by hand, then the verse before and after it. Write one line on what the full verse says that the familiar version leaves out. If you can’t find it at all, you have learned something too.

NOTES & SOURCES

1. *Counterfeit ‘bibles’ - Checklist*, unsigned two-page sheet in the Time for Truth! collection, PDF p. 1 (unnumbered), introduction. Adapted with permission. The observation about Matthew 4:6 is the source’s; the comparison with Psalm 91:11-12 and Luke 4:10, and the distinction between omission and misuse, are new. ↩

An original Dead Hidden study collection. Time for Truth sources are credited in the chapter notes where used.

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