

THE POWER OF GOD'S WORD #8

"The Mirror of God's Word"

I. Introduction

We have spent many weeks on the "The Power of God's Word" and what it will do for us:

- **To give us faith**
- **To produce the new birth**
- **To feed our souls**
- **To give us victory over Satan and over sin**

In our last message, we learned how the power of God's word can supernaturally transform us into the image of Christ.

2 Corinthians 3:18 NKJV

But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as by the Spirit of the Lord.

When we look into the Word of God, we see the reflection of His glory and of Who He is; and the Holy Spirit gradually transforms us into that same image; As the English poet said...

"You become what you behold."

William Blake

1757-1827

The Word of God is the mirror that reflects God's glory; and as we behold Him we gradually become more like Him!

Now tonight and next week, we will look at a 2nd place in the New Testament where the Word of God is like a mirror; it's found in the 1st chapter of the Book of James.

But before we get into that, I want pause to answer a question that some of you may be asking. It's a question I have asked and that has been asked of me as a Pastor; "If there is so much power in God's word..."

“What’s Wrong When the Word Doesn’t Seem to Work?”

The answer is found in this 1st chapter of the Book of James, where we find a list of 4 preconditions required for seeing the power of God’s word in our lives.

We will take a good bit of time to look at the 1st 3 and then spend the rest of our time tonight and all of next week to look at the 4th.

Bear with me. It’s worth it.

II. 4 Preconditions for Releasing the Power of God’s Word in Our Lives

The 1st 3 are here:

James 1:19-21 ESV

Know this, my beloved brothers: (1) let every person be quick to hear, slow to speak, slow to anger; for the anger of man does not produce the righteousness that God requires. (2) Therefore put away all filthiness and rampant wickedness and (3) receive with meekness the implanted word, which is able to save your souls.

A. First: Quick to Hear/Slow to Speak/Slow to Anger

James 1:19-20

Know this, my beloved brothers: (1) let every person be quick to hear, slow to speak, slow to anger; for the anger of man does not produce the righteousness that God requires.

1. James says we must be “quick to hear, slow to speak”; but in my experience, many are the opposite; they are slow to hear and quick to speak; usually to give their opinion about the Bible or some pet doctrine they hold dear.

a. But a disciple is a “listener”; a “learner”; never forget that.

2. Then he adds “slow to anger”; again, in my experience, there are those who actually get angry when you preach the Word of God.

a. This has become more common in the culture wars of the past few years; more churchgoers than ever become angry if their Pastor preaches on politics or issues like abortion or homosexuality.

Matthew Henry

“It is our duty to hear God's word, and apply our minds to understand it, rather than to speak according to our own fancies or the opinions of men, and to run into heat and passion thereupon.”

3. Some are even angry at God! They believe God has treated them unfairly or hasn't answered their prayers. This is more common than you might think.

c. If you want to see the power of God's word at work in your life you must put away anger. God is not your problem.

B. Second Condition: Put Away Filthiness

James 1:21

Therefore put away all filthiness and rampant wickedness and receive with meekness the implanted word, which is able to save your souls.

1. The 2nd condition for experiencing the power of God is that we must “put away all filthiness and rampant wickedness”.

2. Remember that in v.19 James is speaking to “Brothers”; so he is speaking to Christians!

a. He is not referring here to simple, everyday sins! If we had to be sinless none of us could qualify.

3. He is calling on Christians to put away...

- **all filthiness and superfluity of naughtiness (KJV)**
- **all the filth and evil in your lives (NLT)**
- **all moral filth and the evil that is so prevalent (NIV)**

a. Bible scholars tell us this speaks of those who are engaging and continuing in wicked behavior; I believe this refers to things such as living in sin; or practicing pornography.

b. I say with some sadness, I have known men like this, and have been unable to help them because they were not willing to put away their filthiness.

Albert Barnes

“A corrupt mind, a mind full of sensuality and wickedness, is not favorable to the reception of the truth. It is not fitted to see its beauty, to appreciate its

value, or to welcome it to the soul. Purity of heart is always the best preparation for seeing the force of truth.”

4. The power of God’s word won’t work if we fail to put away filthiness and the practice of sinful behavior.

C. Third Condition: An Attitude of Humility

James 1:21

Therefore put away all filthiness and rampant wickedness and receive with meekness the implanted word, which is able to save your souls.

1. I personally believe that how much we get *out* of the Bible is determined by our attitude before we even get *into* the Bible.

2. James says we must “receive” the “implanted” (KJV “engrafted”) word.

a. **Jesus said the Word of God is like a “seed” (Mark4)**; and He spoke of the human heart as “soil”; so how the soil receives the seed determines how effective the seed is.

b. There’s nothing wrong with the Word; it’s how it’s *received*.

3. I have preached the Word for many years; but...

a. I have met so many who judge the Bible instead of allowing the Bible to judge them.

b. I have met many who have their minds made up about a thing before they even hear what God has to say about it. (Healing, deliverance)

c. Some church people will even argue with the Word of God about things they do not agree on. (Abortion is murder; homosexuality is a sin; the death penalty is biblical)

4. Let’s call this what it really is; spiritual PRIDE; thinking that we know more than God!

5. A few years ago the Lord used a rather humorous way to show me what it means to receive the Word of God with meekness; I was reading one of those books for “Dummies”.

B. Make Like A Dummy

1. Most of us have gone to the bookstore and purchased one of the books in the “For Dummies” series.

a. These familiar manuals with the black and yellow covers are available on an almost endless array of subjects: Golf, Chess, PC’s/MACS, iPhones/Androids, Facebook, etc. There’s even a “Bible For Dummies” version!

2. When you think about it, it takes a certain amount of humility to buy a “Dummies” book! When you check out, the clerk knows:

- a. You are interested in the subject and want to learn about it
- b. You are looking for someone to make it simple to understand
- c. You are ready to start at the bottom
- d. You are willing to invest time and money to learn
- e. You willing to have faith in the author, (whose name you don’t know and really don’t care to know), as an *authority* on the subject!
- f. *Most importantly*, buying a Dummies book means that you are going to take what you learn and apply it to your life!

NO ONE BUYS A “DUMMIES” BOOK UNLESS THEY INTEND TO DO WHAT IT SAYS!

3. This is exactly how we should read the Word of God.

- Compared to God, I’m a “Dummy”
- I come to His Word in humility; to listen, to learn, and to do what it says

3. One day I was reading a Dummies book and realized that if I’m willing to trust someone I don’t even know to teach me how run a computer program, how much more should I be willing to trust God to teach me how to live!

a. If I could trust an author I didn’t even know and read his book fully intending to do whatever it said, how much more should I trust God and read His book full intending to do whatever it says?

4. And here’s a great secret: when I am willing to do God’s *will* I will understand God’s *Word*!

John 7:17 NASB

"If any man is willing to do His (God's) will, he shall know of the teaching, whether it is of God, or whether I speak from Myself.

5. The Word will not work for those who do not receive it with the full intention of doing what it says!

a. A Dummies book may help us run a computer system; but when we receive the Word of God in meekness it has the power to save our souls.

6. So what have we said so far? We have looked at 3 preconditions for releasing the power of God's word into our lives:

Review

- Be quick to hear, slow to speak, slow to anger
 - Put away the filthiness of our sin
 - Receive the Word with humility

7. And now we come to the 4th condition; which I believe to be the #1 reason we do not see the power of God's word more at work in our lives: self-deception.

James 1:22

But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves.

8. Here we have 2 kinds of Christians:

- Those who hear the Word and do not do the Word
- Those who hear the Word and do what it says
- The 1st group is "self-deceived"

8. And how do we know the difference?

III. The Word of God is Our Mirror

A. The 2nd Function of the Word as a Mirror

1. This is the 2nd time in the New Testament the Word is compared to a mirror; the 1st time showed us how the Word of God has the power to reveal God to us, but this 2nd time shows us how the Word of God has the power to reveal us to ourselves!

James 1:23

23 For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man observing his natural face in a mirror; for he observes himself, goes away, and immediately forgets what kind of man he was. But he who looks into the perfect law of liberty and continues in it, and is not a forgetful hearer but a doer of the work, this one will be blessed in what he does.

2. Here we have a meaningful metaphor anyone can understand because we are all familiar with the function of a mirror.

3. We never go a day without looking into a mirror; especially before we leave the house.

4. We go to a mirror to let it tell us what we look like; in a sense, the mirror “speaks” to us; the mirror shows us our physical condition:

- For men, you need a shave
- For women, you need some makeup
- For all of us, some changes need to be made

Charles Spurgeon

The best thing to do when you look into a glass, and spy a spot on your face, is to wash it off directly. The true use of hearing the Word, or reading it, is to amend one’s self at once in those points in which the Word discovers us to be faulty. To look in the glass, and not to wash off the spots, is but a piece of vanity; and to hear a sermon, or read a chapter, and not to put into practice what we are taught, is a sad waste of time.

5. This is the 4th, and main reason, why the power of God’s Word doesn’t seem to work in our lives; when we hear the Word and don’t do what it says.

Reverend Phillip Schaff

“So indeed the hearing is in order to the doing; if this be wanting, the hearing is of no value.”

6. The Word of God is like a mirror: it has the power to reveal God to us and it has the power to reveal us to ourselves; but it has no power to help us if we do not do what it says.

7. Part 2 of this study on “The Mirror of God’s Word” next week!