

The Epistle of James

Sermon #5

Scripture Reading: James 1:18-25

The Word Of Truth

May

21, 2017

James 1:18 and 21

Born Again By The Word of Truth

We begin by returning to verse 18 of James chapter 1 to lay the foundation for this morning, “Of his own will he brought us forth by the word of truth, that we should be a kind of firstfruits of his creatures.” Please focus in on the words “brought us forth,” this is referring to God’s action of bringing to life our soul or spiritually giving us a new birth. The verse begins with “Of his own will he brought us forth.” This is not referring to our first creation or physical birth, but to our new creation or new spiritual birth or as we say being born again. We understand this by the process James says we are given new birth. James says we are given new birth “by the word of truth.” By God’s “own will he brought us forth by the **word of truth**.” This is a clear reference to the Gospel. Paul made this clear in his letter to believers in Colossi, “...you have heard before in the **word of the truth**, the gospel.” (Colossians 1:5) He wrote in Ephesians, “In ~~him~~ *Christ* you also, when you heard the **word of truth**, the gospel of your salvation, and believed in him, were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit.” (Ephesians 1:13) Paul adds another dimension in his letter to Timothy, “Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a worker who has no need to be ashamed, rightly handling the **word of truth**.” (2 Timothy 2:15) We are to know the gospel well, in order to be approved workers, evangelizing and who are not ashamed because we are able to “rightly handle the **word of truth**.” Rightly handling the word of truth enables us to share the gospel with both believers and non-believers. The gospel is the only eternal truth for mankind and God has called us, you and me, to take His eternal truth to the lost world. Just like our salvation came when the “**word of truth**”, the gospel of Christ,

penetrated our hearts and we experience our second birth and we were spiritually born and we are to take the “[word of truth](#)” to the lost.

Peter makes the very same point that James does here in chapter 1 in his first letter. Peter says, “...[you have been born again ... through the living and abiding word of God ...](#) ²⁵ [the word of the Lord remains forever.](#)” (1 Peter 1:23 & 25) So in order for verse 18 of James chapter 1 to be true, verse 21 needs to take place, “[Therefore put away all filthiness and rampant wickedness and receive with meekness the implanted word, which is able to save your souls.](#)” This is my focus this morning, verse 21 - the implanting of the word of truth received with meekness.

Implanting The Word Of Truth

However, this assumes that the word of truth has been *implanted*. “[Receive with meekness the implanted word.](#)” This is what happened in verse 18, God “[brought us forth by the word of truth.](#)” We were going about living our lives, but spiritually dead. We had no place for the word of God because our souls were stone cold dead. Therefore we were unable to desire or understand or love the word of God, the word of truth. Jesus said to the Jewish leaders plotting and attempting to kill him, “[I know that you are offspring of Abraham; yet you seek to kill me because my word finds no place in you.](#)” ³⁸ [I speak of what I have seen with my Father, and you do what you have heard from your father.](#)” (John 8:37-38) These men simply could not understand because they were spiritually dead. Verse 38 says they hear from their father, who is that? Right, when one is spiritually dead or unregenerated or unsaved they belong to the prince of this world and are separated from God by their sin. Now let me ask, where these men not the most learned? Did they not study the scriptures and claim to speak to Israel for God? The answer is “yes” and yet, the word of God found no place in them. Before we are saved our hearts are full of the things of this world and we made no room for the word of truth. We feed on the

world's tidbits and desserts to the point when the feast of God's word comes we are stuffed with the sugar of the world and have no desire for the meat of God. Unregenerated people do not see a need for the word of truth and the word of truth is not implanted in them.

The Gospel Is The Word Of Truth

So verse 18 tells us that the way God causes the new birth in people is by the word of God, which is the gospel. The Holy Spirit carries the word into our dead hearts and causes us to see the truth of Christ as we never have. We are given new life through the word of truth — the word of God, the gospel — new life that reconciles to God.

Verse 21 does not say that the word of God comes and goes, but that it is implanted. It takes root. It is in us and is part of us and it is infused into who we are and who we are becoming. Isn't this amazing! I pray the Lord causes this truth to sink in and grip you and cause to go to your knees in gratitude. We are born again by God's Spirit and his word and it roots itself into our very being. Indeed, verse 21 says that this implanted word "[is able to save your souls.](#)" My beloved, don't underestimate the power and the importance of the word of God, for it is the foundation on which the Holy Spirit grows us. God's word is the only word of truth.

James treats the word of truth in same way the Bible teaches about the Spirit of God. John records Jesus' words showing they are both essential, "**It is the Spirit who gives life; (to be born again) the flesh is no help at all. The words that I have spoken to you are spirit and life.**" (John 6:63) God uses both his Spirit and his word to give us spiritual birth; one does not work without the other. God sends his Spirit to dwell in us and his word is implanted in us. The indwelling of His Spirit happens because we are his adopted children. The implanting of the word of truth is God's

way of preserving and saving our souls to the end of our mortal lives and we enter heaven. The word is as essential to our spiritual lives as air is to our physical lives.

Power and Importance Of The Word Of Truth

Paul talks about this implanted saving word. In 1 Thessalonians 2:13 Paul writes, “... when you received the word of God, which you heard from us, you accepted it not as the word of men but as what it really is, the word of God, **which is at work in you believers.**”

The word of God did not come and at times go. It did not leave these believers. The word is “**at work in you.**” It is, as we read in Hebrews, “**The word of God is living and active...**” (Hebrews 4:12) John wrote in his first letter concerning God’s implanted, active and saving word, “**I write to you, young men, because you are strong, and the word of God abides in you, and because the word of God abides in you, you have overcome the evil one.**” (1 John 2:14) The word of God does not come and leave in ones life. The Spirit and the Word work together and create spiritual life and faith and the word “abides” in us.

This brings us to the clear understanding the Word of God, the word of truth, is “**implanted**” and “**is at work**” and “**abides**” and as James says in verse 21 it “**saves**” us. I cannot tell you strongly enough how profound and powerful and important the word of God is in a believer’s life. My beloved if the Word of God, the word of truth is not one of the most cherished possessions you have, well then, you need to sit back and take a reality check on you life. Apart from God, nothing is more important and more creational in a believer’s life than His Spirit and His Word. I remember the joy my wife had the day when she was no longer number 3 or 5 or 10th in my life, but she was number 2 only because of my love God above all else.

Receive The Word Of Truth

Now here is the amazing part that makes this text so relevant. Verse 21, look right in the middle of the verse, says, “[receive with meekness the implanted word.](#)”

Receive the word of truth and when you receive it – it will be implanted to grow in you. In other words, if you treat the Word of God like your liver, you are making a big mistake. Your liver was implanted in you while you were in your mother’s womb. As you grew you did not go on “receiving” so your liver would continue to grow. Your liver just sits inside you doing its work and unless it develops a problem you rarely think about it. You certainly don’t continue to “receive” more liver. It is already there — firmly implanted.

But James says, “[receive with meekness the implanted word.](#)” It is already in you and you have to receive it and now it is working in your life. God planted and rooted the word of truth in you. It brings you life. It is in sustaining the spiritual life in you by feeding your faith in Christ. But it is not there like the liver – you have what you need. It is more like oxygen. It gives life and in giving life, it makes you breathe, and in breathing you receive oxygen. No one says: “I have oxygen; look how well it is working in me; it makes me alive; I don’t need to receive any more oxygen.”

The implanted word of God and the external word of God are so united that we live by having it already implanted and we live by receiving it and continuing to receive it. The word of truth is “[implanted](#)” and “[is at work](#)” and “[abides](#)” and “[saves](#)” us. The work it does in us is it makes us want to receive it and it makes want more. Receiving the external word replenishes the power of the implanted word and the implanted word creates the hunger to receive the external word. Then to make us very serious about this process, James adds at the end of verse 21 “[which is able to](#)

[save your souls.](#)” What saves our souls? When we receive the implanted word of truth into our heart and soul it should naturally make us desire more of God’s word.

In other words, our souls depend on the implanted word and our souls depend on receiving the word. If you decide that you don’t need to receive the external word, you are like a person who decides he doesn’t need to breathe. If you are spiritually dead, you can carry through that decision to not breathe spiritually. But if you are spiritually alive, you can’t. The implanted word is powerful; it produces life and breathing. It takes over the spiritual diaphragm and demands oxygen. It demands the life-giving external word. If the word is implanted in you, you can’t hold your breath forever. The implanted word will sooner or later conquer and be replenished. You will receive the word again and you will love it as much as we humans are able to love anything.

The remainder of today’s message has two simple parts: One, **Receive the implanted word** and two, **Do it with meekness**. These two focuses come from the middle of James 1:21, “[receive with meekness the implanted word.](#)” These are my final two points.

Receive With Meekness The Word Of Truth

Let me try and define meekness. In this context of hearing the word of God, the word of truth, meekness surely means something like “teachability” or “readiness to submit” to God’s word. The opposite of receiving the word with meekness would be to receive it suspiciously, because you doubt that all of it is true or good for you; or to receive it partially because you want to reserve the right to pick and choose what parts of it you will follow; or to receive it with the arrogant self-assurance that you can understand it and apply it without God’s merciful help.

But James says receive it with meekness. When you open your Bible, say to God: I trust you, I submit to you, I need you to help me. Please God incline my heart to love your word. Open my eyes to see the greatness of what is really there. Satisfy my soul with the glory of Christ revealed in entirety of the Bible. God, I bow and yield to the supreme truth, and how it will change me into who you want me to be. In all meekness and lowliness, I look to you my God and I wait for you to reveal yourself. Come, oh God, come to me through your word, my Savior and my Lord and my God and my friend and my highest treasure. That would be a meek way of receiving the implanted word.

Finally, I would simply try to illustrate what it is to receive the implanted word, with the hope of inspiring you to do it every day, so that if you miss a day you will feel like your spiritual lungs are going to burst with desire for another breath.

Every Day – The Word Of Truth

When it says in verse 21 “[receive the implanted word](#),” I think there is an implication that the gospel remains the central word of truth that we need to receive every day. The Gospel’s message is that Christ died for our sins, rose again and gives eternal life. It is this gospel that took root in our hearts when we were born again. The gospel is implanted in us, and we need to breathe it in every day. You never outgrow your need for the good news of forgiven sin and imputed righteousness and eternal life and God being totally for you. Understanding all of this by grace alone, on the basis of Christ alone, through faith alone, to the glory of God alone. You never graduate to a class where that is not the center of the curriculum. I think this is saying that the word of truth that saved us and is implanted in us is what we should go on receiving every day.

But God’s word of truth, the Scripture, is more than just the gospel. Paul says, “[All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for](#)

correction, and for training in righteousness,¹⁷ that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work.” (2 Timothy 3:16-17)

The word of truth is a beautiful tapestry with the gloriously designed Gospel at its center. So my exhortation my brothers and sisters in Christ is to takes the time to receive the word of God with meekness every day. That is, every day be in the Bible. Breathe the Bible. Don't try to hold your breath from Monday to Friday. Breathe in the word of truth every day.

I don't want you to miss the implications of the word “receive”. It means welcome. It does not mean receive like you receive a blow on the head. It does mean receive the way you receive a feast or the way you receive a friend, or even the way you receive prostate surgery — some are quiet pleasant and some are not always pleasant, but they are always good for you and always life giving. That's how we receive the word every day.

So there is a way to read the Bible that receives and there is a way to read it that resents having to read it and does not receive it. Read the Bible and let your mind place you in what you are reading. Hear the sounds, smell the smells, be one that is there in the story experiencing and observing. This is the way I read a novel, letting my mind take me into the story. The Bible is a story, place yourself into the story. Read it with a passion to receive. Go to it with a cry to God that you will receive what you need from it. Make your time in the word a receiving time.

That happens, the Bible says, by meditating on the word. Listen to the way that you become like a tree taking in or receiving all that the word has to give. “Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the wicked, nor stands in the way of sinners, nor sits in the seat of scoffers;² but his delight is in the law of the LORD, and on his law he meditates day and night.³ He is like a tree planted by streams of water that yields its fruit in its season, and its leaf does not wither. In all that he does, he

prosper.” (Psalm 1:1-3) That’s the effect of the word when you receive it. This is what happens when you meditate on it and ponder it and mull it over and savor it. To receive the word of truth means take it in deeply, to take hold of it, and to not let it go until till it blesses you.