

SERMON STARTERS

BENEFITING FROM THE BIBLE

”Therefore lay aside all filthiness and overflow of wickedness, and receive with meekness the implanted word, which is able to save your souls. But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves” (James 1:21, 22).

On television and printed media we see and hear manufacturers extolling the benefits of their products. From cosmetics to clothing; from fast foods to fast automobiles; from vitamins to vacation destinations. For a price, they guarantee that we will benefit from their products.

However, the most beneficial product that we can acquire is free! What is it? It is truth – truth in a blessed Book, the Holy Word of God! The benefits that it provides are innumerable and eternal. Although free, there are requirements to be met by those who want to benefit from its blessings. How can I benefit from the Bible? There are three ways:

THE TRUTH MUST BE ACCEPTED

“receive with meekness the implanted word”

The sinful nature of humankind is averse to God’s truth. The inclination of the darkened heart is to reject the light of truth when it invades the soul. James writes that we are to receive the Word of God with meekness. We are by nature proud. When God’s Word comes to us as sinners, there is a reaction, a defense mechanism that rejects the assault of truth invading the average person’s mind. We need to humble ourselves and “receive with meekness the implanted word.”

The psalmist said, “The entrance of Your words gives light” (Psalm 119:130). When the light of truth breaks in upon the sinner’s darkened heart, there is a reaction. Why? Jesus explains: “This is the condemnation, that the light has come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. For everyone practicing evil hates the light and does not come to the light, lest his deeds should be exposed. But he who does the truth comes to the light, that his deeds may be clearly seen, that they have been done in God” (John 3:19-21).

When God’s written revelation enters and finds place in our lives, it brings illumination. The Word is no longer mere information but instead it becomes illumination. But it must be willingly received to have its enlightening effect within us. Merely hearing the Word preached or taught and giving casual consent to what it is saying is not actively receiving the Word.

Paul commended the Thessalonian Christians for the way in which they received the Word of God which he preached saying: “When you received the word of God which you heard from us, you welcomed it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God, which also effectively works in you who believe” (1Thessalonians 2:13).

Alexander MacLaren said: “Rejected light is the parent of the densest darkness, and the man

who, having the light, does not trust it, piles around himself thick clouds of obscurity and gloom." "Receive with meekness the ... word."

THE TRUTH MUST BE ASSIMILATED

"the implanted word"

God's Word, when received and believed, should be assimilated into every part of our being. When it is implanted, that is, has a permanent place in our lives, our total lifestyle will be affected.

Illust. Heart, liver, etc. transplants. Sometimes the body rejects these organs. When God's truth invades our minds we must assimilate—that is, appropriate it if we want the benefits of it. Paul counseled the Colossian Christians to "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly..." (Colossians 3:16). If it is not assimilated then it will not touch every area of our lives. We will have only a head knowledge of truth, "a form of godliness but denying its power... always learning and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth" (2 Timothy 3:5, 7).

Illust. A preacher and a soap manufacturer were walking down the street one day. As they walked they notice how wrongly people were treating each other. The street were filled with corruption. The soap manufacturer looked at the preacher and said, " Preacher, that bible you preach must not be any good, it's not helping anyone. Look at all the filth and corruption." The preacher didn't say anything, he just kept walking. After awhile they came up on some children that were dirty and nasty. It look as though they hadn't taken a bath in weeks. The preacher looked at the soap manufacturer and said, " That soap you make must not be any good. Look how filthy and dirty these children are." The soap manufacturer replied, "Soap doesn't work unless you use it and apply it." "That's right," said the preacher, "it's the same way with the Bible. The Bible will not work unless people apply it to their lives."

THE TRUTH MUST BE ACTIVATED

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

James says that the person who only hears the Word but does not heed the Word, is self-deceived. I must venture a comment regarding many church-going Christians and the comment is this: After over 50 years of preaching ministry, it is my firm belief that the majority of church-going Christians are self-deceived. Why? They hear but do not practice—the truth just never seems to penetrate the cranium and get dispersed to their mouths, hands and feet! Their conversations are so carnal and their conduct so worldly that one wonders if they have ever been born again.

In Matthew 13 Jesus told the parable of the sower and the seed. Jesus said, the Word of God is the seed and the soil is the heart. In this parable Jesus gives us three conditions of the heart that will hinder the effectiveness of God's Word in our lives. And then He tells us about the right heart condition.

The Closed heart.

This type of heart is not receptive to it. They hear the Word with the appendages on the sides of their heads but do not believe it. The devil robs them by distractions, doubts and

deception - stealing it away.

The Casual heart.

He hears the word and receives the word with joy. But it doesn't last long for when trouble comes he is offended because of the word. This reveals a lack of commitment to stand when faced with trouble.

The Crowded heart.

The cares of this world and the deceitfulness of riches choke the effectiveness of God's word in our lives. The word of God is crowded out. This person is too busy trying to gain the wealth and prosperity of the world and has no time for God's Word.

The Compliant heart.

This is the person who "hears the word and understands it, who indeed bears fruit and produces: some a hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty" (Matthew 13:23).

Any response to the Word of God that does not produce a lifestyle of obedience is insincere. If we are not doing what the Word says we are deceiving ourselves. Truth must be activated in the life of the one who professes to believe the truth. It must be verbalized in our talk and visualized in our walk else we are deceiving ourselves.

Author Pink wrote on this subject as follows: "In their zeal to tell men how to escape from Hell and make sure of Heaven, many evangelical preachers have had all too little to say upon our conduct on earth, and consequently many who entertain no doubt whatever that they will inhabit a mansion in the Father's house, are not nearly so much concerned about their present walk and warfare as they should be; and even though they reach their desired haven, such slackness results in great loss to them now and will do so for ever. The teaching of Holy Writ is the very reverse of the plan followed by many an "orthodox pulpit": it not only gives much prominence to, but in Old and New Testament alike its main emphasis is on, our life in this world, giving instruction how we are to conduct ourselves here now." (Practical Christianity – chapter 13)

The benefits of the Bible in the individual life are in exact proportion to how readily one accepts the Word, assimilates the Word and Activates the Word in their daily life.

JdonJ