

The Implanted Word

James 1:19-21

19 Know this, my beloved brothers: let every person be quick to hear, slow to speak, slow to anger; 20 for the anger of man does not produce the righteousness of God. 21 Therefore put away all filthiness and rampant wickedness and receive with meekness the implanted word, which is able to save your souls. (James 1:19-21 (ESV))

As we begin our thoughts today, may we reset the stage that we have been studying regarding these precious words, that of our generation being a generation of “angry people”. And we, you and me, are a part of the culture of this generation. We have been born into it and have fully developed ourselves into a people who, too often, are exactly opposite from the counsel that these verses give. We are “slow to hear, but quick to speak, and quick to anger. We are, by nature, an impatient people, accustomed to having instant access, instant service and instant answers to our questions, needing only to speak into our handheld devices to access all the “wisdom of the world”, and always expecting the perfect answers to all our questions and dilemmas.

And in describing us here in these words in verse 21, we can see that God truly does “know our frame”. Here we are told to

21 . . . put away all filthiness and rampant wickedness and receive with meekness the implanted word, which is able to save your souls.
(James 1:21 (ESV))

These words “filthiness and rampant wickedness” have an intensity about them that we can clearly see taking place all around us. The “filthiness” is one that is specific to “immorality”. There is a “moral filth” present and well demonstrated within every fiber of daily life. It seems that every conversation, every song, every news report, every comic joke is laced with depravity and immoral content.

And the “wickedness” spoken about here is truly “rampant”. The Greek words here describe not just an “abundance” of wickedness, but an “over-flowing abundance”.

And so it is with this generation of people and this culture that we live within. But again folks, God is not just saying that it is all around us. He is saying to you and me that it is within us. We have become a part of it and it has become a part of us. And we must “put it away”, “rid ourselves of it” personally. Yes, we will continue to live amongst it. But we must stop being a part of it and letting it be a part of us.

And the cleansing from that “moral filth and rampant wickedness can come from only one source, the “implanted word” of God.

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

(James 1:21 (ESV))

I confess to you that this sounds much too “mystical”, and not at all the usual “practical” and “method-filled” solution that we are accustomed to pursuing and practicing. Yes, there will be some “practical” things that we must do, above all else being, “repentance” and the changes that repentance will bring.

But this solution that God is telling us about here, the receiving of the implanted word, is a special foundation that must first be laid, before any of the “practical” behaviors can begin to be practiced.

How does this “implanted word” accomplish its work? It begins first by “cleansing” our souls. I’m reminded of some of the simple words of Jesus, as He spoke to His disciple there in John chapter 15. He said in verses 3 and 4,

3 You are already clean because of the word which I have spoken to you. 4 Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in Me. (John 15:3-4 (NKJV))

This is truly mysterious. Jesus said that His disciples then, and you and me now, are “already clean because of the word which I have spoken to you”. What can that possibly mean for us?

Those words have a similarity to the words of Romans 1:16 concerning the gospel.

16 For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes. (Romans 1:16 (NKJV))

And then also, here in our scripture text in verse 21, we read a similar thing,

21 . . . receive with meekness the implanted word, which is able to save your souls. (James 1:21 (ESV))

The “mystery” that’s being presented to us is that of how these “words” are a unique and different kind of words, words that are able to do things that the ordinary spoken words that we are accustomed to hearing cannot do, that these “words” have “power” resident within them, “power” beyond our ability to comprehend, power that is able to cleanse us from our sin and save our souls.

And Jesus' words there in John 15, give us further insight into the mystery. There we read,

3 You are already clean because of the word which I have spoken to you. 4 Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in Me. (John 15:3-4 (NKJV))

Here, and all throughout the 15th chapter of John, Jesus tells us over and over again that "words truly are more than just words", that there is so much more within them, a "presence" and "power" that is beyond our understanding. But He also says to us that for us to ever begin to grasp such a thought, such a concept, we must first have "eyes to see and ears to hear".

A question . . . Do you, right now, have "eyes to see and ears to hear" the mysteries of God, the mysterious presence and power that resides within both the "Word of God" and "the words of God"? You must, else all the other things that I will say to you today will fall on deaf ears and blind eyes.

How can our deaf ears and our blind eyes be opened to the precious truths of God? It is only by the personal intervention of God's Holy Spirit. He alone can give us the ability to hear and to see and to discern the "deep and spiritual things of God".

That "deeper and mysterious truth" that's being given to us in these words that I have quoted for us here is that the "Word" and the "words of God" truly are far more than just spoken expressions from God's mind. Jesus Himself is the "Word" of God. And no, that does not make practical sense to our rational mind. But though it does not, Jesus still is the "Word" of God.

He is the "Spoken Expression" of the Trinity of God that made the universe and the earth and all that is on it come into existence. Everything that is and has ever been came from this "Spoken Word" of God, the earth, the angels, people, and all the concepts and ideas that govern our world, all came from and through and by "Spoken Word", the Person, the Lord Jesus.

And He, and all that He is, His presence, His power, His concepts, His eternal plan and purpose has all been "implanted", "engrafted" within every soul that has received Him as Savior and Lord. And no, we don't possess all of His power or understand all of His plans and purposes, but we do have some of it. Just as an earthly father and mother's DNA go to make up a son or daughter's being, so also now, the "Spiritual DNA" of the person and presence of Christ lives within each of us who have received Him.

And we are truly the sons and daughters of God. And that's not just a figurative expression. With the person of Christ and His Spirit abiding within us, we are truly God's "sons", and able to call His Abba, Father.

May I take a moment and go back a few steps and say again what has taken place within our souls? This phrase that's being used here, "the implanted word", or as another translation renders it, "the engrafted word", if read and comprehended by our own rationale, might be misunderstood to say that we might simply learn from reading or from someone's teaching.

While that can and does take place, that clearly is not the sense of these particular words. Here, we are being given the understanding of a "shoot" or "branch" that will produce fruit wholly of its own kind, being implanted, engrafted into our person and character and being. Just as when a branch from one tree is engrafted into another, with something that is very new and different coming from the character of the tree from which the branch comes, but is now producing a whole new fruit. So also it is with you and me, as the "Word of God" is engrafted into our souls.

Let me say it another way! Here, regardless of how corrupt and perverse our nature was, and may still be because of the effects of a lifetime of "moral filth" and "overflowing wickedness", through a mysterious interaction initiated and carried out by the Person of God, powerful and life-changing truths of the gospel are "implanted", "engrafted" into our soul and nature in such a way that it will cleanse us from our sins and then begin to produce fruits of righteousness in our souls.

And in these words, is also the precious reminder of how God is the "Author and Finisher of our faith". As the Author, He reached to us and "drew" us to Himself in faith and salvation. But He doesn't leave us there. Here, He is also graciously providing all that we will need to "complete the good work that He has begun in us". He has "implanted" His truth within our heart, soul and mind, guiding us and directing us along all the next steps of His "Plan" for us.

2 Peter 1,

3 His divine power has given us everything we need for life and godliness through our knowledge of him who called us by his own glory and goodness. 4 Through these he has given us his very great and precious promises, so that through them you may participate in the divine nature and escape the corruption in the world caused by evil desires. (2 Peter 1:3-4 (NIV))

This is the "power" of the "implanted word" working within us.

But with all this being said and these assurances guaranteed to us, from this same verse 21, we can also clearly see that God does have some requirements of you and me. Here, we are being told that we must exercise “our Will” to do “His Will” by “putting away the “moral filth” and “rampant wickedness” from our old life and “receive with meekness” the implanted word.

Folks, God has already “implanted” His powerful “word of truth” within our souls. He did that at the first moment we were saved. But listen, for us to fully realize and enjoy all of its blessings and benefits, we have to humble ourselves and “with meekness” receive it. His powerful “word” is here within us, but we can still prevent it from doing its work. We can “grieve” and we can “quench the Holy Spirit” by our not “stepping on forward” and “meekly receiving His implanted word”, along with all that He intends for His Word to do within our souls.

Unfortunately, sometimes, perhaps often, we have gotten too accustomed to those old ways. We might even still enjoy the “feelings” and the “fruits” and the “passions” of the moral filth and rampant wickedness that has lived within our soul for so long, so much so that we are reluctant to give it up.

And folks, “sin” is that way and it is powerful. It can plead for mercy within our soul, begging us to not send it into the outer darkness. But in the words of one of my favorite writers, Oswald Chambers, we must be “utterly ruthless” with our sin and not show it any mercy at all. If we do show it mercy, it will surely be the “snake” that will come back to bite us.

21 Therefore put away all filthiness and rampant wickedness and receive with meekness the implanted word, which is able to save your souls.
(James 1:21 (ESV))

May I close our time with the loving and gentle words of the Lord Jesus as He speaks of this meekness and calls us to receive Him. These words from Matthew 11. Listen!

28 Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.
29 Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. 30 For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light. (Matthew 11:28-30 (KJV))