

THE POWER OF GOD'S WORD #10

We have been studying “The Power of God’s Word” and what God’s Word will do for us. In previous studies we have learned that there is power in God’s Word to...

Review

- Is how faith comes
 - It saves us
 - It feeds us
- It gives us victory over Satan
 - It gives us victory over sin
- It transforms us into the image of Christ

In our last 2 messages we learned how God’s Word is a spiritual mirror:

- It has the power to transform us into the image of Christ
- And last time, how God’s Word is the mirror that shows us our true self

In this message, we will learn how the power of God’s Word does 2 more things for us that that we have to have if we want to get to heaven...

Sanctification and Cleansing

I. First: Sanctification

A. What Does It Mean?

1. I’m sad to say that some churchgoers have no idea of what “sanctification” means or how important it is.

2. Most of us know by heart what’s commonly called the Lord’s Prayer; but that’s really the “Disciple’s Prayer” because it’s what He taught *us* to pray.

3. But the real “Lord’s Prayer” is in John 17, where Jesus is praying to His Father. In the middle of it we see His central request:

John 17:14-17

I have given them Your word; and the world has hated them because they are not of the world, just as I am not of the world. I do not pray that You should

take them out of the world, but that You should keep them from the evil one. They are not of the world, just as I am not of the world.

a. 2 things to notice here:

- The world will always hate true Christians because we are “not of this world”! We can never be friends with this world!

James 4:4

Whoever wants to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God.

- We should never be surprised to find ourselves in a war of worldviews!

F.B. Meyer

“The world has always been in collision with Christ, because His teaching reverses everything that the world prizes.”

- Also notice that Jesus did not ask His Father to take us out of this world!
- So what does He want? What is His prayer to the Father?

Sanctify them by Your truth. Your word is truth.

b. He does not pray for our *assimilation* into the world or our *evacuation* out of the world; He prays for our *sanctification* in the world!

4. If this is the central prayer request Jesus made to the Father we ought to know it is!

The Biblical Illustrator

Sanctification in its simplest meaning is the setting apart of a person or a thing from a common to a holy use. In relation to men it is the weaning from self, sense, and sin, and the devotion of head, heart, and hands to the service and glory of God.

a. Sanctification *begins* when we are saved; we are set apart from the world the moment we are born again; but it is also a *process*!

Nelson’s Illustrated Bible Dictionary

Sanctification is the process of God's grace by which the believer is separated from sin and becomes dedicated to God's righteousness.

Nelson's Illustrated Bible Dictionary

b. To “sanctify” means to “set apart” unto God; literally, to make holy.

Various Translations of John 17:17

Make them holy by your truth; teach them your word, which is truth. (NLT)

Make them holy by the true word: your word is the true word. (BBE)

Make them pure and holy through teaching them your words of truth. (TLB)

c. Notice that sanctification is the end goal; but the Word of God is the means to that end!

Albert Barnes

“God accomplishes our sanctification by the instrumentality of the truth—the Word of God. By that truth the whole work from the commencement to the close was to be done. It was not by external ceremonies, and not by any miraculous power on the heart, but by the faithful application of truth to the heart.”

d. The great Puritan Bible scholar agrees...

Matthew Henry

“This word of truth is the outward and ordinary means of our sanctification; it is the instrument which the Spirit commonly uses in beginning and carrying on that good work; it is the seed of the new birth and the food of the new life.”

7. There is no subject unaddressed by the Word of God. It contains all we need to know about life, death, eternity, marriage, sex, politics, morals and ethics:

Matthew Henry

“All needful truth is comprised and summed up in the word of God. Divine revelation, as it now stands in the written word, is not only pure truth without mixture, but entire truth without deficiency.”

8. So what have we said so far?

- Jesus primary prayer for His people is that we be sanctified, made holy and separated from the world unto God.
- This will be done by the truth of God's word, applied to our hearts by the Holy Spirit.

9. So we are sanctified by the power of God's word: but there is a second benefit...

II. Second: The Cleansing Power of God's Word

Ephesians 5:25-26 NKJV

25 Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her, 26 that He might sanctify and cleanse her with the washing of water by the word...

A. Why Jesus Went to the Cross

1. This verse tells us that Jesus loved us and died for us so that He might do 2 things for us: sanctify us and cleanse us.

a. He redeems us by His blood so that He can sanctify and cleanse us by His word.

Derek Prince

“There's a difference between the terms sanctify and cleanse: the letters ‘ify’ at the end of a word means to make something become that which is at the beginning of the word. To ‘purify’ means ‘to make pure’. To ‘sanctify’ means ‘to make holy’...”

Derek Prince

“God requires holiness and makes us holy through the provision of the washing of the water of the word.”

2. The next verse, Ephesians 5:27, gives us the purpose of sanctification and cleansing:

Ephesians 5:27

...that He might present to Himself the church in all her glory, having no spot or wrinkle or any such thing; but that she should be holy and without blemish.

3. Here is my understanding of what the Apostle Paul is saying:

a. In Jewish culture, to be engaged or betrothed was the same as being married, even though the wedding had not taken place.

b. This is why the Angel warned Joseph not to “divorce” Mary when she was discovered to be with child.

c. The Church is called the “Bride of Christ”; we are “married” to Jesus even though the wedding ceremony hasn’t happened yet. (It will in the “marriage supper of the Lamb” described in Revelation 19).

d. We are betrothed to Jesus awaiting the wedding; between now and then He is preparing us to present us to Himself a glorious Bride, having no spot or wrinkle or any such thing; He is washing us with the water of the Word so that we might be “holy and without blemish.”!

H.A. Ironside

“Jesus applied the water of the Word of His truth to us and we were sanctified by the truth. But if my hand becomes dirty, I wash it in water and the dirt disappears. So it is when my conscience, my heart, my life are all defiled, the Lord by the Holy Spirit applies the truth of His Word to me and thus makes me clean in His sight, and so fitted for union and communion with Him.”

4. He is cleansing us with the washing of the water of the Word because we need it!

a. When we sin we get our garments dirty: we need cleansing:

1 John 1:9

If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

b. But the Word also has the power to keep us from sinning:

Psalm 119:9-11

How can a young man keep his way pure? By keeping it according to Thy word. With my whole heart I seek you; let me not wander from your commandments. I have stored up (hidden, treasured) your Word in my heart that I might not sin against you.

c. The Word of God keeps us on the right road:

Psalm 17:4

By the word of your lips I have kept myself from the paths of the Destroyer.”

d. The Word keeps us from backsliding:

Psalm 37:30-31

**The mouth of the righteous speaks wisdom, and his tongue talks of justice.
The law of his God is in his heart; none of his steps shall slide.**

5. So we see that it is the washing of the water of the Word that both sanctifies us and cleanses us; it makes us holy and keeps us holy. This is God's will for our lives!

1 Thessalonians 4:3

For this is the will of God, even your sanctification...

a. And Paul's prayer proves this purity is for every part of our being:

1 Thessalonians 5:23 ESV

Now may the God of peace himself sanctify you completely, and may your whole spirit and soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.

6. As I prepared this study I realized how much I have prayed for God to give me things and how little I have asked Him to make me holy. Then I found this quote from the great devotional writer...

Oswald Chambers

"Sanctification is not my idea of what I want God to do for me. Sanctification is God's idea of what He wants to do for me."

7. We do not hear much on holiness in the modern church; I believe there are 2 reasons: misplaced purpose and damnable doctrines.

III. Close: 2 Points of Repentance for the Modern Church

A. Misplaced Purpose

1. I prepared this teaching in a season of some personal unhappiness and testing and this question bubbled up; **"What does God want *most* for me: for me to be happy or for me to be holy?"**

a. Of course He wants *both*; but which does He want *most*?

2. Jesus prayer to the Father was, “Make them holy”; there’s no place He ever prayed “Make them happy”. God is more interested in our holiness than our happiness.

3. We hear many sermons today about happiness; very few on holiness.

a. But happiness comes and goes; it depends on our circumstances.

4. I realized how much effort I put into being happy and how little effort I put into being holy. This is what I mean by “misplaced purpose”:

Hebrews 12:14 NIV

Make every effort to live in peace with all men and to be holy; *without holiness no one will see the Lord.*

a. It does not say “without happiness no one will see the Lord”

5. Somebody needs to remind God’s people you can get to heaven without being happy but you can never get to heaven without being holy!

6. A 2nd problem in the modern church is “damnable doctrines”; false teaching that does not result in holy living.

B. Damnable Doctrines

2 Peter 2:1-2

But there were false prophets also among the people, even as there shall be false teachers among you, who secretly shall bring in *damnable heresies*, even *denying the Lord* that bought them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction. And many shall follow *their pernicious ways*; by reason of whom the way of truth shall be evil spoken of.

1. Here is one way to know false teaching from true teaching is whether or not the teaching produces holy or unholy living.

a. Today we have some teaching on the subject of grace that is producing unholy lifestyles.

b. Entire denominations are now preaching that a woman has the right to abort her child or that homosexuality is an acceptable lifestyle.

c. Paul refers to this kind of teaching as “doctrines of demons” and a mark of the last days:

1 Timothy 4:1-2

Now the Spirit expressly says that in latter times some will depart from the faith, giving heed to deceiving spirits and doctrines of demons, speaking lies in hypocrisy, having their own conscience seared with a hot iron...

2. Loose doctrine leads to loose living!

Charles Spurgeon

“Loose living generally goes with loose doctrine. There never was an age in which the doctrines of grace were despised but, sooner or later, licentiousness prevailed. On the other hand, when we had Puritan teaching, we had also pure and holy living. This prayer is still needed for all Christ’s disciples, ‘Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth.’”

a. He continues...

Charles Spurgeon

“It is only the truth of God that can beget holiness; false doctrine is never the medium of sanctification. You can tell which are false doctrines, and which are the true, by our Lord’s own test: “By their fruits ye shall know them.” The same men who reject the old-fashioned doctrines also rebel against the old-fashioned doctrines also rebel against the old-fashioned style of (holy) living.

3. So what does the Word have to say to us today? Let me close with something from Peter and something from Paul. First....

1 Peter 1:13-16

13 Therefore gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and rest your hope fully upon the grace that is to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ; 14 as obedient children, not conforming yourselves to the former lusts, as in your ignorance; 15 but as He who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct, 16 because it is written, "Be holy, for I am holy."

2. And this from Paul:

2 Thessalonians 2:13 NIV

But we ought always to thank God for you, brothers loved by the Lord, because from the beginning God chose you to be saved through the sanctifying work of the Spirit and through belief in the truth.

Closing Prayer

Meditational Thought for Those Under Chastening

Hebrews 12:7-11

7 If you endure chastening, God deals with you as with sons; for what son is there whom a father does not chasten? 8 But if you are without chastening, of which all have become partakers, then you are illegitimate and not sons. 9 Furthermore, we have had human fathers who corrected us, and we paid them respect. Shall we not much more readily be in subjection to the Father of spirits and live? 10 For they (our earthly fathers) indeed for a few days chastened us as seemed best to them, but He for our profit, that we may be partakers of His holiness. 11 Now no chastening seems to be joyful for the present, but painful; nevertheless, afterward it yields the peaceable fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it.