

Accessing God's Power

Part 4 – The Power of God's Word

ILLUS – Scientists are very curious people. They always want to know what it is that makes things tick. And as they've looked further and further into the microscopic world, they've discovered a little mystery. They've discovered that atoms contain a nucleus, and that the nucleus of every atom except hydrogen has two or more protons, and that the proton has a positive charge. So what happens when you get two or more things together that have a positive charge? They push each other away. Because positive charges repel each other. So then: Why doesn't the nucleus of an atom fly apart, since the protons should repel each other? Scientists have decided that there's a mysterious but very powerful force holding them together and they've invented a special technical term for it: They call it "the strong force".¹

That's really interesting.

Heb 1:3 who being the brightness of His glory and the express image of His person, and upholding all things by the word of His power, when He had by Himself purged our sins, sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high,

The word "upholding" means sustaining and maintaining².

So what is the strong force that holds atoms together?

It's "the word of His power".

What would happen if God removed His power which holds everything together?

2 Pet 3:11-12 Therefore, since all these things will be dissolved, what manner of persons ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness, (12) looking for and hastening the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be dissolved, being on fire, and the elements will melt with fervent heat?

You have there as good a description of a nuclear explosion as any.

The most massive nuclear explosion possible as all the elements in the universe fly apart.

What's stopping that from happening? The power of God's Word.

This is the same power that brought the universe into existence in the first place.

Heb 11:3 By faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that the things which are seen were not made of things which are visible.

Obviously, he was thinking back to Gen 1, when nine times it says, "God said", and every time God spoke, it came to pass.

This is the immensity of the power of God's Word.

This is now our fourth message in our series Accessing God's Power.

So far we've looked at the power of the name of Jesus, the power of praise and worship, and the power of the blood of Jesus.

In this message, we're looking at The Power of God's Word.

If God's Word has so much power, what does it have the power to do, and how do we access that power?

1. God's Word has the power to transform

ILLUS – My mother-in-law hates mangos, right from when she was a little girl. And the reason is that she was brought up on a dairy farm. And instead of buying milk from the shop, they kept a house cow in a shed next to the house and the cow provided milk for the family. Now here's what happened: The property next door had a mango tree which hung over the fence, and mangos dropped on the property. And if there was something the cow loved to eat, it was mangos. And the result – believe it or not – was mango-flavoured milk – all the time. So to this day, she can't stand mangos. She was about 12 years old before discovered that milk wasn't normally mango flavoured.

But nobody knows better than that cow that what you eat flavours what you produce.

You are what you eat.

This also applies to spiritual food – God's Word.

2 Pet 1:4 by which have been given to us exceedingly great and precious promises, that through these you may be partakers of the divine nature...

It's partaking of the promises of His Word that makes us like Jesus.

It changes us from the inside out, transforms us.

ILLUS – In 1945, when American troops were on Okinawa, they found a tiny village named Shimabuku. Thirty years previously, a missionary on his way to mainland Japan had stopped long enough to make two converts. He taught them a couple of hymns, gave them a Bible in Japanese, and encouraged them to live by it. The villagers patterned their lives on Jesus, took the Ten Commandments as their legal code, and the Sermon on the Mount became their guide to social conduct. The Bible was the main literature in school. The result was that for years they'd had no jail, no brothel, no drunkenness, no divorce, and there was a high level of health and happiness.³

The Word of God transforms.

1 Pet 2:2 as newborn babes, desire the pure milk of the word, that you may grow thereby,

2. God's Word has the power to bring faith

Rom 10:17 So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.

There are two things here.

First there's God's Word.

Obviously, if God's Word produces faith, then a person has to be regularly exposed to the Word if they want to be strong in faith.

Anybody who is serious about spiritual growth has to be a person of the Word.

But the second factor is hearing.

Did you know that it is actually possible to hear God's Word and not hear God's Word both at the same time.

We can hear with our physical ears and yet not hear with our spiritual ears.

Jesus highlighted this when he said, "He who has ears to hear, let him hear!" (Mat 11:15)

To have ears to hear means that we must have hearts that are soft and pliable and teachable, willing to hear what God wants to say to us, not just what we want to hear.

It's that kind of hearing heart that becomes rich in faith.

3. God's Word has the power to heal

Ps 107:19-20 Then they cried out to the LORD in their trouble, and He saved them out of their distresses. (20) He sent His word and healed them, and delivered them from their destructions.

Jesus did exactly that during His ministry.

ILLUS – Matt 8:5-13 – Jesus heals a centurion's servant.

The centurion said, “only speak a word, and my servant will be healed”. [vs. 8]

He understood that it only took a word from Jesus to heal.

And so, Jesus spoke the Word and the servant was healed.

How? Surely the same God who framed the worlds by His Word and holds all things together by that same power can heal a person’s body by the power of the same Word.

4. Power to fight the enemy

Eph 6:17 And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God;

I wonder how many Christians go out to war, are confronted by the enemy, and say, “Oh, yeah? Well you can just ...”, and reach for their sword, but there’s nothing there. “Where’s my sword?” they say in surprise. And the enemy smirks.

It’s been said, “If our people don’t have the Word of God in their hearts, they’re leaving the Holy Spirit without a weapon.”⁴

It’s true, because God’s Word is the sword of the Spirit.

Look how Jesus defeated the enemy: (Mat 8:16) When evening had come, they brought to Him many who were demon-possessed. And He cast out the spirits with a word, and healed all who were sick,

In Matt 4, He defeated Satan’s temptations by quoting God’s Word.

It’s God’s Word that transforms us from defenceless ordinary people into powerful warriors, armed and dangerous.

How can we access the power of God’s Word?

1. We have to do what it says

ILLUS – 2 Kings 5:1-14

There are lots of principles in this story:

1. God doesn’t always use the most important people.
2. Pride can rob you of God’s blessings.
3. Obedience produces blessing.

But the principle that I want to focus on right now is that if we want to receive what God has for us, we have to follow His instructions.

It’s like God was saying to Naaman, “Naaman, I’ve given you My instructions, told you what to do, told you what will happen when you’ve done it, now it’s over to you.”

Obedience is one of the crucial principles of living as a child of God.

James 1:23-25 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; (24) for he observes himself, goes away, and immediately forgets what kind of man he was. (25) 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.

Be honest: If I had a mirror with special powers, one where you could reach into it, and if you touched any part of your face you could change whatever you want, make your nose shorter, remove the lump in your nose, flatten your ears, straighten your teeth, smooth wrinkles, change the shape of you face, remove pimples.

Who would buy one of those for \$200?

A lot of people would, but what would be the point of owning such a mirror, if you never used it?

James likens the Word of God to a mirror that reveals the problem areas and then gives the power to change them.

But the key to using that mirror is putting God's Word into practice.

That's the only way it works.

2. Read God's Word

This might seem really obvious, but if we're going to obey God's Word, we must first know what it says.

ILLUS – It's a little like a man who goes to the doctor. "Doctor, I'm coughing my heart out. It feels like my lungs are burning up." "Let's have a look." So the doctor examines him. "It's not looking good. But you're in luck. I've got a bottle of medicine here. The instructions are on the bottle. It'll clear this up in three days." Five days later the man returns. "Doctor, you told me this stuff would cure me in three days. I'm not getting better. I'm getting worse." "Did you read the instructions?" "Of course I read the instructions. It says ..." The doctor snatches it out of his hand. "Gimme that bottle. This bottle is unopened." "You didn't say I had to open it." "Listen you turkey, you came to see me, I examined you. I diagnosed your problem. I gave you the medicine. Now it's over to you."

How many Christians have I seen over the years, they know God's Word has power to transform their lives, to heal, to deliver, to give wisdom, to counsel, but they just never seem to get around to reading it on a regular basis?

Do we Christians have time to eat daily, but no time to get into the Word? Do we have time to read the newspaper every day, but not the Bible? Time enough to glue ourselves to the TV set, but no time for the Scriptures? What does all of this say about our values?⁵

The more Word you have in you, the more Word-like, the more Christ-like, you become. The Word must be acquired in spirit. The less Word, the less Word-like, the less Christ-like, you become. It's an elementary formula, but it separates the men from the boys.⁶

I have a great desire to see a church full of self-feeders.

ILLUS – Imagine a couple getting married; they're in love. Then their first child comes along and they're so excited. They don't mind feeding their beautiful baby. But what if that child had to be fed right into his forties? What a disappointment it would be if their child never learned to feed himself.

Mark 4:2-8 – Parable of the sower, then the explanation in vs. 13-14

This parable is all about sowing God's Word into people's lives.

The problem is, we seem to always think of it in terms of someone else's life.

ILLUS – Think of Zeb and Lurlene out on the farm. Zeb looks out the window: "Hey, Lurlene, ain't nothin' growin' out there." "What you expectin', Zeb?" "I was expectin' someone from Chuckie's farm to come and plant some corn fer me." "Zeb, honey-chile, sugar-lips, you're a bona fide idiot. You want corn, you gotta plant it yerself."

Many Christians are like farmers standing around waiting for somebody else to sow their field: They think it's the preacher's job, or some guy on the radio, or a writer in a devotional book.

There's no doubt that it is God who has established the ministry of teaching and preaching in the church.

But we can, and should, sow the Word of God into our own lives too.

Each of us is a sower and has the responsibility to sow God's Word into our own lives – that's self-feeding.

The problem is that most people want instant results – like instant cake mix, or instant potatoes, or instant coffee.

We've got this concept that all we have to do is get the Word of God and go cram, cram, cram, cram – add a little water, then phht pop – we have fruit.

But unfortunately, it doesn't work that way.

Sowing and reaping take time.

Imagine someone planting the seed, watering it and then the next day they go out and there are oranges (or whatever) lying on the ground.

Is that how it really happens?

What comes before the fruit? The seedling, then the sapling, then the tree.

That's why Jesus said (vs8), "But other seed fell on good ground and yielded a crop that sprang up, increased and produced: some thirty-fold, some sixty, and some a hundred."

It sprang up, increased and produced fruit.

Many people give up before the Word produces fruit in their lives.

They try for a couple of days or weeks, don't see fruit, so they give up, "It doesn't work."

Gal 6:9 And let us not grow weary while doing good, for in due season we shall reap if we do not lose heart.

Don't be discouraged – be patient.

Once God's Word is planted, we must water, tend, care for, protect it, and do everything in our power to ensure that it grows.

3. Meditate on God's Word

Josh 1:8 (The Israelites are about to enter the promised land.) This Book of the Law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate in it day and night, that you may observe to do according to all that is written in it. For then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have good success.

Meditating in God's Word is the single most important key to a successful and prosperous life – as the Bible defines success and prosperity.

4. Let God's Word speak to you

If you regularly read and meditate on God's Word, it will speak to you.

Prov 6:20-23 My son, keep your father's command, and do not forsake the law of your mother. (21) Bind them continually upon your heart; tie them around your neck. (22) When you roam, they will lead you; when you sleep, they will keep you; and when you awake, they will speak with you. (23) For the commandment is a lamp, and the law a light; reproofs of instruction are the way of life,

Most of my sermons come from God's Word speaking to me. I regularly lie awake in the middle of the night, when my spirit is quiet, there's no hustle and bustle, and the Word just talks to me.

If you want God's Word to speak to you, you've got to make it a high priority in your life.

¹ www.webs.morningside.edu

² Wuest, Kenneth J. *Hebrews in the New Testament* p39

³ I got this from a Reader's Digest article called *The Village That Lives By The Bible*

⁴ Trevor Chandler

⁵ Earl D. Radmacher – *You And Your Thoughts*

⁶ Edwin Louis Cole *Maximised Manhood* p73