

Active Participation for Receiving the Word

James 1:21b

11/21/1999

Well let's turn in our Bibles, please, to the book of James, chapter 1. The book of James, the first chapter. We'll read together verses 18 through 25. James, chapter 1, verses 18 through 25. Speaking of the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness neither shadow of turning, verse 18 says:

“Of his own will begot he us with the word of truth, that we should be a kind of firstfruits of his creatures. Wherefore, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath: For the wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God. Wherefore lay apart all filthiness and superfluity of naughtiness, and receive with meekness the engrafted word, which is able to save your souls. But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves. For if any be a hearer of the word, and not a doer, he is like unto a man beholding his natural face in a glass: For he beholds himself, and goes his way, and straightway forgets what manner of man he was. But whoso looketh into the perfect law of liberty, and continueth therein, he being not a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the work, this man shall be blessed in his deed.”

The greatest privilege that humanity enjoys is that we possess a *written* communication from God. There is no greater *treasure* that we can possibly possess than the book of Scriptures that lies in your lap. To have a message from God is the *pinnacle* of blessing, because it is only *through* God that we can know the truth regarding *anything* with certainty. This is why James calls God's word, in verse 18, “the word of *truth*,” because it exposes and displays truth, it defines truth, it discovers and expresses truth. Therefore, when we hear God's words declared, we know that we are hearing the truth, and to *have* the truth is to have the greatest of all treasures.

Now if someone came to you and said, You know, I have some directions here as to how you can find a buried treasure of gold. How carefully would you listen if this person then proceeded to read to you a description of where you could find it? Well, I dare say, you would be all *ears*. You would have *totally* focused attention. You would strive to memorize *every* detail of what was said. And you would *immediately* go out to implement the instructions you received.

Well in God's word, we have instructions about how to find something *far* more valuable than gold. In God's word, we are told how to find eternal life. We are told how to escape the horrors of hell. We are told how to have fellowship with God. We are told how to have happy relationships here on earth. We are told how to live a life that is full of satisfaction and joy. We are told how we can be *certain* that we will live in heaven forever.

These things are all things that are *far* more valuable than finding a buried treasure of gold. And so, how much more *carefully* should we *listen* to such instructions? We should be *all ears* when someone is preaching to us the word of *God*. We should have totally focused attention. We

should strive to memorize every detail of what was said. We should immediately attempt to implement the instructions we have just received. We would *do* that if someone were telling us how to find buried treasure. But how much more valuable are the instructions that we receive regarding the salvation of our own souls. For what shall it profit a man if he gain *all* the gold in the world and lose his own soul?

Well, it is just this kind of receptivity, interest, and response to the word of God of which it is worthy that James speaks to us of. He is telling us that this is the truth. It is not only absolutely trustworthy and infallible, but conveys to us information that is infinitely valuable.

Now recognizing that *how* we listen to the message of the word of truth will have a large influence on the benefit we that *receive* from it, James is giving us instruction on what our conduct should be in relationship to the preaching of the word of truth that we hear each and every week. And he has given us three directives as to how we should conduct ourselves *before* the preaching of the word, *during* the preaching of the word, and *after* the preaching of the word.

And we looked at the first of these last Sunday evening. And we saw that there must be personal preparation *before* the preaching of the word. We must prepare our hearts, like a farmer prepares his fields, before the seed of the word of God is sown into them. We must *confess* and cast away our sins before we are ready to hear the preaching of the word. To that end, we ought to, on Saturday night and before the Sunday service, have a time of conscious selfexamination in which we repent and confess any sins that are brought to our attention by the Spirit of God working in our conscience. I hope that you all did that last Saturday evening. And if you forgot to do it, I would hope that you did it before the start of the Sunday morning and the Sunday evening service. You will recall that it was when Daniel confessed his sin that the Lord gave him *skill* in understanding the word of God.

Now today we want to consider together the second directive that James gives to us regarding our conduct in relationship to the preaching of the word of God. Having seen last Lord's Day evening that there must be personal preparation *before* the preaching of the word, that we must, as it says, lay apart all filthiness and superfluity of naughtiness, in the second place, we want to consider together this evening that there must be active participation *during* the preaching of the word of God. There must be *active* participation *during* the preaching of the word of God.

Now you would think it somewhat foolish for someone attending a football game to go to all the effort to get dressed, get in the car, travel to the stadium, pay for the tickets, find their seats, and then *sleep* through the entire game. You would ask, Why did they ever bother to *go*? And in the same way, it is just as foolish for someone to go to all the trouble to get dressed, travel to church, put money in the offering, sit in the pew for an hour and a half, and let their mind wander, their attention be unfocused, or go to sleep while the word of God is being preached.

Listening to preaching requires active participation. James makes it clear that when we come to hear the preaching of God's word, we are not to be passive, we are not be unfocused, we are not

to be distracted, we are not be oblivious when we are *hearing* the word preached. We are instead to be *active participants*, just as involved as listeners as the preacher is involved in preaching.

Well, we want to ask ourselves the question then, What does this active participation *during* the preaching that we are supposed to be *engaging* in consist of? Well, in the first place this evening, it consists of an attitude of *expectant receptivity*. It consists of an attitude of *expectant receptivity*.

Now usually the reason why we bother to go someplace is because you *expect* to experience something when you are there. People go to a football game because they *expect* to be entertained. They go to someone's house for dinner because they *expect* to enjoy some fellowship. Well in the same way, when we come to the preaching of the word of God, we should come *expecting* something. We should have an attitude of *expectant receptivity*. We would *expect* that God would be speaking to us through His word, and we should come with an attitude of interest in receiving that message.

Notice if you will, James, chapter 1 and verse 21. He says, "Wherefore lay apart all filthiness and superfluity of naughtiness," that's the personal preparation *before* the preaching of the word, and now notice the active participation *during* it. He says, "and receive with meekness the engrafted word, which is able to save your souls." Now the word here "receive," which is the dominant verb that describes what it is that we're supposed to be doing when the preaching is going on, this word "receive" means to deliberately welcome. It means to eagerly accept what it is that is being offered *to* us.

Now you can receive a traffic ticket. Or, you can receive a paycheck. And the attitude with which you receive those things—the *difference* in the attitude with which you receive those things—is *enormous*. When a police officer hands you a traffic ticket, you receive it very begrudgingly, and you really don't want it. And you do everything you can to avoid it. On the other hand, when your employer hands you your paycheck, you're reaching out there, and you're willing to meet him more than halfway in order to *get* that thing.

And it is this latter form of receptivity that is being spoken of here. It's not an attitude of, Oh, do I *have* to receive this, but, Oh, I *want* to receive this. I *get* to receive this. The idea here is to deliberately welcome, and to eagerly accept, to change the metaphor, like a *receiver* at a football game reaches out to receive the pass from the quarterback. When the ball is thrown and he's running, he's straining every nerve he can and every fiber of his muscle to reach out and to grab that thing that's being passed to him.

And so it is when we come to the hearing of the preaching of the word of God. We must come with an attitude of *expectant receptivity*, having an attitude of deliberate welcome and *eager* acceptance of what it is that is being *passed* to us in the preaching of the word of God.

Now one of the principles that we *must* recognize at this point is that when we come to hear preaching, we are coming to hear God's word of truth to *us*, because God speaks His word of truth *to* us *through* His gifted and called ministers as they open the Bible *to* us. When you come

to hear preaching, and the preacher is one who is gifted by God, and called by God, and is teaching the word of God accurately, what is being given to you is *not* the word of *man*. It is in fact the word of God.

Notice several passages of Scripture. In Luke, chapter 10, Jesus sends out the seventy. And he says in Luke 10 and verse 1, “After these things the Lord appointed other seventy also, and sent them two and two before his face into every city and place, whither he himself would come. Therefore said he unto them, The harvest truly is great, but the laborers are few: pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he would send forth laborers into his harvest. Go your ways: behold, I send you forth as lambs among wolves.” Now here’s the key passage in verse 16 of Luke, chapter 10. He says to these seventy, “He that hears you hears *me*; and he that despises you despises me; and he that despises me despises him that sent me.”

And what Jesus was saying is that when His authorized spokesman and representative accurately conveyed His message to people, for people to be indifferent to that message and to reject that message was equivalent to them being indifferent to Christ and rejecting Christ. And so to fail to have an attitude of eager receptivity towards the message of the seventy was equivalent to having a failure to have an attitude of eager receptivity to the very words of Christ Himself. He that receives *you* receives *me*. He that hears *you*, hears me. He that despises you, despises me.

This same theme is picked up by the apostle Paul in Second Corinthians 5 and verse 20. Speaking of himself and Timothy, he says to the people at Corinth in Second Corinthians 5:20, “Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ’s stead, be ye reconciled to God.” And so what Paul is saying to the Corinthians is that when he and Timothy went to them and spoke to them, they were coming as representatives of Christ, with Christ’s message, and *their* message to the people of Corinth was as though God *Himself* was speaking to them. And so as they stood as representatives and ambassadors for Christ, their words were the words of Christ because they were not their *own* words.

And so just like when we send an ambassador to another country to represent America, that ambassador doesn’t just invent his own message; rather, he gets the message from the President, and he carries that message and represents it to the nation to whom he is bringing his ambassadorship. And so when he speaks, it is just the same as if the President himself had spoken, because he is conveying accurately the President’s message and the President’s mind on the subject which is at hand. And this is the whole concept of ambassadorship.

And then this same concept is further reinforced in First Thessalonians 2 and verse 13, in which it says, “For this cause also thank we God without ceasing, because, when you received the word of God which you heard of us, you received it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God, which effectually works also in you that believe.”

So when Paul went to the Thessalonians and he preached to them, Paul and Silvanus and Timotheus, he said, When we came to you and we preached to you the word of God, you didn’t just say, Oh, this is the word of these three guys—we don’t have to listen to that. But rather, they

recognized that what these three men were saying were in fact the words of God. And in saying and in recognizing that as Paul and Silvanus and Timothy spoke, he said that these people counted what they were saying as the word of God to them.

Now I think these three passages establish a principle, and the principle is this: When the man of God teaches the word of God *accurately*, then this is the way that God conveys His word of truth to us. Therefore, when the word of truth is *preached*, we must listen, not with an attitude that says, Oh, it's only a mere man speaking. I may take it or leave it, as I wish. But rather, we should come with a receptive attitude that says, God is speaking *through* His servant *to* my heart. I must reach out and *grasp* that message.

And so when a human who is gifted and called by God accurately represents the word of God to the people of God through the preaching, that is *not* just the words of a mere man. Those are the words of God; it is the message of God. Now I am not claiming an equivalency between my preaching and the inspiration and authority of Scripture. What I *am* saying is that as I accurately *convey* to you the Scriptures—because *they* are infallible and authoritative—then the preaching becomes infallible and authoritative too, to the extent that it *accurately* reflects what the Bible teaches.

Now I know there've been all kinds of abuses of this principle, where men have in essence demanded of people an implicit trust in everything that they *say*, and have discouraged people from having a Berean spirit and searching the Scriptures and seeing whether these things are *so*. But when the preaching *does* reflect those things that are so, then that preaching is an ambassage from God in which the message that is conveyed is a message that should be seen as God's own word of truth to us.

And so when we come to the preaching of God's word, assuming it is a proper, biblical, right, and accurate preaching, we should come with an attitude of *expectant receptivity*, and we should have the attitude that Samuel did in First Samuel 3 and verse 10, when he said, Speak, Lord, for thy servant heareth. And so when we come to sit under the preaching of the word of God, we should have a prayer to God, Lord, *speak* to me through the preaching of your word. Show me and open my eyes to the truth that you have for me.

Now notice, if you will, just an example of just such an attitude of receptivity in Acts, chapter 10. Acts, chapter 10, verses 30 through 33. In Acts, chapter 10, verses 30 through 33, we have Peter coming to Cornelius's household after Cornelius has sent for him in response to a message from God to do so. And when Peter shows up, Cornelius has this to say to Peter. Acts 10 and verse 30:

“And Cornelius said,” speaking to Peter, “Four days ago I was fasting until this hour; and at the ninth hour I prayed in my house, and, behold, a man stood before me in bright clothing, And said, Cornelius, thy prayer is heard, and thine alms are had in remembrance in the sight of God. Send therefore to Joppa, and call hither Simon, whose surname is Peter; he is lodged in the house of one Simon a tanner by the sea side: who, when he comes, shall *speak* unto thee. Immediately therefore I sent to thee; and thou hast well done that thou art come.” Now notice the next sentence: “Now therefore are we all here present before God, to hear all things that are commanded thee of God.”

Now *that's* an attitude of *expectant* receptivity. He's saying, Peter, I know you're just a man. But we also know you have a message from God, and we're now seated here in the presence of God, ready to hear from *you* what God has to say to us. And that is precisely the attitude that we should have when we come to hear the preaching of the word of God.

And so therefore, we need to recognize the reality of what is happening when a true minister of God is accurately preaching the Scriptures to us—God is *speaking* to us. And so therefore, we need to give that message a *deliberate* welcome and a *glad* acceptance, reaching out to receive it with your mind and heart, just like a receiver will towards a pass that was thrown by the quarterback, doing so with focused attention, blocking out anything that might distract you from the reception of that message. When the quarterback goes out to receive a pass, he's not thinking about the new lawnmower he's going to buy next week at Sears. He has one thing on his mind, and one thing only, and that's to get that pass in his hands and do the right thing with it, namely, get it across the goal line.

And in the same way, when we hear the preaching of the word of God, we should have one thing on our mind—What is God saying to me? How can I grasp that message? And how can I do with it what I am supposed to do with it? Now the reason why most people don't approach preaching that way is because most preaching is so lousy and so inaccurate that it can hardly be said to be a message of ambassage from *God*. But we try to do a better job than that here. And so there should be an attitude of *expectant* receptivity.

And in the second place this evening, there should not only be an attitude of expectant receptivity, there should also be an attitude of humble submission. There should be an attitude of *humble* submission.

Now we're not only told to *receive* the word of God, but we're told to receive it with a particular disposition and attitude. It says, "receive with *meekness* the engrafted word." That is, we are to receive the word of God without an attitude of argumentation, *disputation*, or resistance. When the clear command of Scripture is impressed upon our hearts in the course of the preaching of the word of God, then we must express the attitude that Christ did in Hebrews 10 and verse 7, "I come...to do *thy* will, O God."

A meek person is one who does not demand his own way. He is one who is willing to yield to the desires of another. When Jesus said, "I am meek and lowly in heart," what he meant by that is that He was one who *Himself* was given over to doing the will of another. He had come to do *God's* will, not His own will. And in that sense, our Savior was meek.

And so a meek person is one who does not demand his own way, he is willing to yield to the desires of another. And one who receives the word of *God* with meekness, then, is one who allows his will to be determined and directed by the Scriptures. He says, I have no mind of my own. I have no will of my own. I have no desires of my own. All of my thoughts and all of my choices and all of my desires are *dictated* by the word of God.

This attitude of meekness is expressed by the commitment of the children of Israel in Exodus 24 and verse 7, when it says, and Moses “took the book of the covenant, and read in the audience of the people.” Here’s Moses, a man of God. And he’s giving to the people the word of God. And what is the attitude of the people? It says, and the people said, “All that the Lord hath said will we do, and be obedient.”

You know, as I was preparing this message, I thought, you know, that would really be a good response on our part as a church of verbally and in unison, after the reading of the Scriptures—when the Scriptures are done being read—we all need to say, All that the Lord has said, will we do and be obedient. But be that as it may, notice the attitude of *meekness*. We’re not going to just do *some* of the things the Lord has said. We’re going to do *all* of them. And we’re not going to just *think* about it, but we’re going to carry it *out*.

And so the children of Israel, by this commitment, gave up their own will and determined to do God’s will. This attitude of meekness towards the word of God is something that is *especially* pleasing to God. He takes *note* of it, when in Isaiah, chapter 66, and in verse 1 and 2, He has this very interesting statement to say. He says to the nation of Israel, “Thus saith the Lord, The heaven is my throne, and the earth is my footstool: where is the house that you build unto me? and where is the place of my rest? For all those things hath mine hand made, and all those things have been, saith the Lord.” In other words, what God is saying here is that He’s not impressed with buildings, with ceremonies, or externals. He says, “but to this man will I look,” saith the Lord, “even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at my word.” God is not impressed, as I said, with buildings, ceremonies, or externals. But He *is* impressed by those who are meek before His word. And the word of God comes, these people *tremble* and *fear* before it, and make every effort to carry it out.

When we come to hear the preaching of the word of God, do we come with an attitude of humble submission, seeking to ensure that in every way, whatever God’s word said is *seized* upon with the utmost concern and sought to be carried out with the greatest of diligence? That’s what it means to tremble before His word—to so respect and honor that word that we are *anxious* to carry it out.

God promises in Psalm 25 and verse 9, this promise. It says, “The meek will he guide in judgment: and the meek will he teach his way.” If we ever want to know the way of God, we’ve got to be meek people. Stubborn people, proud people, hardhearted people, indifferent people, people with no attitude of active, expectant receptivity—such people never learn the ways of God. They sit under preaching for years, and ten years later they don’t know any more than they day they *started*. The only way we’re going to grow in understanding and learning God’s way is by being *meek people*. It is the *meek* who God teaches through the preaching of the word. *They* learn the ways of the Lord, while the proud learn nothing. And so, there must be this attitude of humble submission. We must *receive* with *meekness*.

And that brings us to our third and final point this evening. Having seen that there must be an attitude of *expectant* receptivity and an attitude of *humble* submission, notice in the third place,

there must be an attitude of grateful recognition—an attitude of *grateful* recognition. That is, there should be a grateful recognition as we hear the preaching of the word that God has done marvelous things for us by means of that word.

In James 1, in verse 21, it says, “receive with meekness,” notice now, “the engrafted word, which is able to save your souls.” Now this word “engrafted” could also be translated “implanted,” and the idea here is that the word of God is that which is *implanted*, or engrafted *into* us at salvation, and is the means whereby we are *brought* to salvation.

Notice what has been done with the word of God in relationship to its *implantation* in our lives. In Jeremiah 31 and verse 33, describing the blessings of the new covenant, it says, “But this shall be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel; After those days, saith the Lord, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be my people.” In other words, in the process of salvation, God takes His very word and He writes it upon our hearts. That’s what it means when it talks here about “receive with meekness the *implanted word*.” It’s already been planted into your life at salvation. So when it *comes* to you in the preaching, we need to have an attitude of *expectant* receptivity and *humble* submission to that which is *already* written upon our hearts.

It goes on to say here that it is also able to save your souls. And of course, the word of God was not only implanted in our hearts at salvation, it was the very *means* that accomplished that salvation. You’ll recall in verse 18, it says, “Of his own will begot he *us* with the word of truth.” We were born *again* by the word of God, because that word of God was *implanted into* us. It was the *means* whereby our nature was changed.

In First Peter 1 and verse 23, it says we are “born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, *by the word of God.*” And so the *new* birth was brought to pass *by* the word of God. It was the instrument of our salvation.

And this is why First John 3:9 says, “Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin; for his seed remaineth *in* him: and he *cannot* sin, because he is born of God.” What is this seed that he is speaking of? Well, it’s the same seed that Peter spoke of. We were “born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God.” So it is the implanted word which is *in our* hearts and *written* on our hearts which was the instrument of our salvation by being the *means* of our regeneration that now dwells within us and *keeps* us from going on in a life of sin.

Now when we realize the word of God did all of that, it makes that word awfully important and awfully precious to the people of God. Each time we come to hear the word preached, we should thank God again and again that He used His word to regenerate our natures and to transform our hearts, and we should never cease to wonder and marvel at the power and the preciousness of that word and its operation upon our *lives*.

The consideration that the word preached was the means God used to our salvation and transformation should fill us with both a thankfulness and an excitement each time we come to

hear the preaching of that word, knowing what it *has* done, knowing what it is *doing*, and knowing what it *can do*, both in *our* lives and in the lives of other people. You are not coming to a mere lecture of a mildly interesting subject. You are coming to hear the living word of God, which is sharp and powerful, and is able to convert souls, and to transform hearts, and to change people into the image of Christ.

It is the word that has saved our souls that continues to transform and sanctify our souls, and that *can* and *will* save the souls of *others*. And should we not be thankful for such a gift that has such a power to convey such blessings? We should come with an attitude of grateful recognition. It was this word that I'm listening to now that was implanted in my heart that brought about my new birth. Thank God for the preaching of the word!

This is why we as people should *highly value* preaching. It is how God *speaks* to us. It is that which molds and shapes our wills and our lives, and it is the very thing that God used to convert us, and to save us, and to transform us.

Well, for these reasons, there must be an active participation during the preaching of the word. What does an active participation consist of? Four simple reminders. First of all, to be actively participating during the preaching of the word means we should have an *attentive* mind. We should have an *attentive* mind. And what that means is that we should have a *focused* attention which *refuses* distractions and stays *glued* to the subject at *hand*.

Many times I have seen people, for example, during the service get up and go out, for whatever reason. And ten or fifteen other people go [visuals given]*, and you *know* that they haven't heard a word that's been spoken the whole time, because they're watching this person march in and march out. Now, if you're a parent, you need to try and minimize that as much as possible. Have your children go to the bathroom before they come so they *won't* be distraction to people. But if those things happen, don't let them distract you. *Ignore* them. If someone in front of you is doing something they shouldn't be doing, *block* it out. Don't let someone else's inattentiveness be a source of *your* inattentiveness. And so we need to refuse consciously and willfully whatever distractions may tend to turn our minds away from the word of God.

You know, there are times when you hear preachers, and you can tune them out and five minutes later, tune them back in. You haven't missed a thing. But that's not the way we do it here. Everything we say is planned and purposeful and important. And so it is imperative that we continue to have focused attention from start to finish so we can *follow* the flow of thought, so we can *hear* the message of God, and so it can create a coherent whole in our minds. So have an attentive mind.

Secondly, have an *active* mind. Have an *active* mind. And what this means is that we shouldn't just pay attention, but we should *interact* with what we're *hearing*. And this is one of the reasons why I think we ought to take notes when we hear preaching of the word. Many of you do that, and I *commend* you for that, because it helps you to *follow* the flow of thought. It also helps you

to *interact* with what is going on, because if you have to *write* something down, it's because it went through your mind and you thought about it and *remembered* it.

When passages are cited and they don't just go by at 60 miles an hour, take time to look them *up*, and reflect on them and see where they are for yourself. Relate what you hear to other things you have learned, or to other passages that you know, and so as your mind is not only listening, but it's *interacting* with what is being said, both by way of reflection, by way of relating it to what you already know, and by way of recording it. This will be a means of active participation

And then thirdly, have not only an attentive mind and an active mind, have an obedient mind. Come with a disposition: Lord, what would you have me to do? Lord, where do I need to grow? Lord, what do I need to change? In other words, we need to have the disposition of Cornelius that says, We are now here to hear all those things that are commanded us of God, because *we* intend to carry them *out*. And so as I sit down to prepare these messages, and as I'm writing them, I'm saying to myself, Lord, what do you want me to do? What should I do as a result of this? What is it that you're trying to convey to me?

And then fourthly, we need to have a worshipful mind—a worshipful mind that lifts our heart to God in thanks and praise for the saving, transforming word that He has given to us. And you know, as we hear messages—like for example, we've heard this morning where we talked about how that Christ has made us free indeed—to just simply lift your heart to God in thanks. Thank you, Lord, that I'm no longer a servant to sin, that you've set me free from that. That's what it means to actively participate during the preaching of the word. Where as you hear the word of God, and the works of God, and the faithfulness of God, you take those things and you reflect them to God in an attitude of praise and worship.

And so there's so *much to do*. When we hear the preaching of the word, there's no time for sleeping. There's no time for distractions. There's no time for anything, other than having an attentive mind, an active mind, an obedient, and a worshipful mind. You know, if we came to every service with that disposition and attitude of *active* participation, how *much* would we profit from the word of God? We would profit *immensely*. We would grow in leaps and bounds.

You know, the Bible says that the slothful man does not *roast* that which he took in hunting. And I have been spending some time with my children hunting recently, and we've invested a lot of time, and how sad it would be after we got an animal to say, Well, it's too much work to actually interact with this thing. We'll just leave it out in the woods. What a *waste*!

And so when you come to all the effort to come to the preaching of the word of God, and it's presented to you, and there you have it in your hands—but, what are you going to do with it? I hope that you will process it and that you will consume it and that it will fill you with strength and vigor and love for God and a more Christlike character.

Well, that *will* be the result if we actively participate *during* the preaching of the word of God. When I preach, I put my whole heart and soul into it. I'm not thinking about anything *other* than

that, and that's the responsibility of each of you as you listen to it, as well. May the Lord help us, then, to *receive* with meekness the engrafted word.

Shall we pray together. Father, thank you so much that you have given us this word, that you have *implanted* it into our hearts. Lord, help us to have an attitude of expectant receptivity. Father, a *reaching out*, a *straining* of ourselves to grasp all that is being conveyed. Help us, Lord, to have a disposition of humble obedience, wanting to be shaped by the word and directed by it.

And Father, help us to have thankful hearts, knowing that it is that very word of God that redeemed us and saved us and transformed us. Lord, we pray that you might help us to recognize the significance and importance of hearing your voice through your servant. And Lord, I pray that we might recognize it as *God's message* to us, embrace it as such, and strive to carry it out. May we always recognize that the words of men have the capacity for fallibility, and may we have that Berean spirit that searches the Scriptures and see whether these things are so. But if they are, help us then to receive it, not as the word of men, but as the word of God.

Lord, thank you for that precious deposit. Lord, may we attentively dig it out and seize upon it as we would some earthly treasure. For Father, it is has far more value than any earthly treasure that there is. Father, we ask these things in Jesus' name. Amen.

Page 8, last full paragraph, second line: And ten or fifteen other people go [visuals given]*-- I guess you pantomimed their gawking. Maybe you want to change this.