

THE POWER OF GOD - AND THE CHRISTIAN

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And, behold, there was a man which had his hand withered . . . Then said He (the Lord Jesus) to the man, Stretch forth thine hand. And he stretched it forth; and it was restored whole, like as the other.

Matthew 12:10-13

A withered hand I Can you put yourself in the place of this man? Go back in your mind to the time when he was a child. Think of how he must have felt the very first day he realized that one hand was different from the other. That was the day he learned a new word. His mother explained it to him, he was a "cripple." He had a withered hand! Go with this little boy to school. See him trying to hide his hand in his pocket. How would you have felt if you were never chosen on the softball team? Who Wants a "cripple" on their team? He was a marked boy. He was different from everybody else.

Years of hurt later he fell in love with a girl. He wanted to marry her. Nothing came of it because her father kept asking the question, "How can a 'cripple' care for my daughter?" She married a man with two good hands.

Finally he found a girl he could marry. She accepted him - withered hand and all. But then the hurt seemed to start all over again when the man at the employment agency looked at him in a hard way and said, "We only recommend able-bodied men here. "

All became different one day however. He met the Lord Jesus Christ in the synagogue. In an act of loving-kindness the Lord Jesus looked upon him and simply said, "Stretch forth thine hand." The man obeyed and stretched forth his hand - and it was restored whole, like his other hand! He was no longer a "cripple.

Have you ever asked why this story is in the Bible? There are at least two reasons. First of all, God included this in the inspired Scripture to remind us that He cares for us as persons. The heart of the Lord Jesus Christ was touched by the hurt and the need of this man. The Son of God cared for him, and He cares for us!

The second reason why this story is in the Bible is to teach us the relationship between the power of God and the Word of God. This is a most amazing truth. When the Lord Jesus Christ spoke the command to this man, the power of God accompanied the Word of God. Think of what that means. The man had the ability to stretch forth his hand simply because the Lord Jesus commanded him to do so. He responded to the command and was healed.

This great truth is a Biblical principle which we tend to overlook. The commands and promises of God are filled with power. They have not been given to mock us but to encourage, teach and instruct us. If we will accept the truth - that the power of God accompanies the Word of God - then our dally lives can be amazingly different.

Let me illustrate this truth from the Bible. In Colossians 1: 10,11 we have the principle stated.

That ye might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God, strengthened with all might, according to His glorious power, unto all patience and longsuffering with joyfulness.

The power of God accompanies this exhortation and promise. What must I do in order to have the power of God flow into my life ? I must respond to God on the basis of the Word of God by making a decision of faith to obey. In this case I must honestly choose to live worthy of God, seek to please Him, endeavor to be fruitful, and sincerely attempt to grow in the knowledge of God. The promise is that when I make these decisions of faith to obey God, His power will flow into my life with divine enablement. God cares for us as He did for the man with the withered hand. He has made the same kind of provision for us in His Word.

Is it possible that someone may be saying in their heart, "Well, anyone would be glad to get rid of a withered hand"? Does this mean that we count the divine provision in this verse to be less valuable than physical healing? How important is walking worthy, pleasing God, being fruitful and growing in the knowledge of God? It is evident that for many of us these are not important or we would be characterized by these divine graces. We read the Bible, we hear the message, but there is no obedience of faith. We are in a far sadder plight than the man with the withered hand. God has spoken His Word of power to us, but often there is little response.

Allow me to give one more illustration. It is found in Ephesians 3:20.

Now unto Him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us.

The principle here is the same. God has made it possible for us to talk with Him and to be involved in His work as intercessors. This is a great promise. When we understand that the power of God accompanies the Word of God this truth will revolutionize our daily lives.

Again I ask the question. "What must I do to have the power of God in my daily life?" The answer is the same as stated above. We must simply respond to God as the man with the withered hand. In harmony with the verse before us, the obedience of faith would be to pray. When we obey God and pray then we can expect the power of God to be operating in our lives and in the lives of those for whom we are praying. The promises of God do not fail. He will do what He has said in His Word. He has said He will do " . . . *exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think . . .* " Our part is to pray and His part is to answer with power.

From this story of the man with the withered hand and these great promises which we have read, we have been brought face to face with an important truth. God's power accompanies God's Word. We need only respond to God as the man with the withered hand in order to have the power of God in our daily lives.