

The Ability of God's Word

(by Pastor Bob Hoekstra, IPM Director)

*For the word of God is **living** and **powerful**, and **sharper** than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit . . . (Hebrews 4:12a)*

The Character of God's Word

Do you know that every time we come to the Scriptures, it can be as if we were sitting before the Creator-Redeemer Himself, allowing Him to express His very heart and mind to us? What God has to say to us this side of eternity has been wonderfully recorded in the written word of God. His Word is as relevant and powerful today as when it was first spoken, because His words have behind them all the nature and character of God. Because of the **character** of the Word of God, it has the **ability** to accomplish in our lives all that God desires for us.

God's Word is Living

One of the characteristics of the word of God is that it is **living**. God's word is not dead human literature. It is **alive**. Perhaps one of the sad abuses of the word of God in our land today occurs when colleges and universities use the Bible as just another textbook for religion classes. The instructors refer to it as if it were just another piece of ancient literature, reducing it to the level of dead human works that cannot give life. The word of God is **living**.

You may recall that great statement made in John 6:63b, in which Jesus said, *"The words that I speak to you are Spirit and they are **life**."* When Jesus went about teaching, the words He spoke were words of spiritual realities, and they were **life**. The very life of God was described and held forth through Jesus' words. Everything God has said, whether by God the Father or by God the Son through God the Holy Spirit - - every word is Spirit and **life**. This is the fundamental character of the word of God.

In Matthew 4:4, we see Jesus being tempted by the devil to turn stones into bread. Our Lord certainly could have turned those stones into bread with a single word. Instead He said, *"It is written, 'Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God'."* You and I are to live by every word God has spoken. We need to understand that as we receive the Word, we are receiving more than understanding and insight. We are receiving **life**. If we therefore want to be alive and spiritually vital, we must consistently be taking in the living word of God.

God's Word is Powerful

*"For the Word of God is living and **powerful**."* Something can be living, but not necessarily powerful. A turtle, for example, is living, but would not be considered powerful. But the word of God is both alive and **powerful**. It has a dynamic, heavenly force at work within it, the work of the Spirit of God. God's words have a life-giving

impact on the hearts and minds of man. Man's words lack this life-changing dynamic.

In 1 Thessalonians 2:13, this characteristic of life-giving power is brought out clearly: *"For this reason we also thank God without ceasing, because when you received the word of God which you heard from us, you welcomed it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God, which also effectively works in you who believe."* One of the great truths of the character of the word of God is that it **effectively works** in those who put their trust in it.

When the apostle Paul and his missionary team came to Thessalonica, they began to minister the word of truth from God. The wonderful response by the Thessalonians was that they received it not as just some interesting message that a man was bringing, but for what it actually was: *"the word of God which also effectively works in [those] who believe."* The Thessalonians received the message of the Lord, believing in it. The result was that it **effectively worked in them**. If we open ourselves up to the word of God, receive it, putting our trust and confidence in what God is telling us, then that word will **effectively work in us as well**.

Do you ever get frustrated, because you want to see a change in your life in some area or concerning some issue? Yet, the change seems elusive? Though you seriously work at it, the character trait or habit persists. Here is real encouragement from the Lord. The word of God working in us is our reliable hope. As we take in the word of God and put our trust in what He says, His word will work go to work in us, bringing about the changes that the Lord desires.

God's Word is Sharp

*"For the Word of God is living and powerful and **sharper** than any two-edged sword . . ."* Our text gives us another characteristic of the Word of God: it is **sharp**. In the first century world, a two-edged sword was an invaluable possession for men to have, because it was an effective instrument of war. The word of God is much sharper, more able, and more effective than even a two-edged sword was in battle back then. Just how deeply can the word of God cut into our lives? It penetrates as deeply as God intends: *"piercing even to the . . . soul and spirit."*

There is so much in human affairs that is shallow and superficial. We are inundated with anthropological, sociological, and psychological theories, along with general philosophical perspectives, that attempt to explain where mankind has been and where we are going. Various experts use these theories to try to determine what is going on in the mind of man and what we must do to bring the changes that are desired. All this analyzing and theorizing sounds as though it is cutting so deeply. However, when all is said and done, man's words are pathetically dull and ineffective. How different is the word of God! It is *"sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of the soul and spirit."*

Whether a person lives behind prison walls or out in the so-called free world, **only God's word is able to cut into the deepest places of human hearts** - - to

powerfully transform lives from the inside out!