

God's Powerful Word

God makes contact with sinners through His Word. The Word comes from God, who authors it and sends it across time and space to the sinner. God assures us in Isaiah 55:10-11 that His Word is effective. He says, *"For, as the rain and the snow come down from the sky and do not go back there without watering the earth and causing it to bring forth and to sprout, so that it gives seed to the sower and bread to the eater, ¹¹ so My Word will be, which goes out of My mouth. It will not return to Me without results but will accomplish what I desire and be successful in what I have sent it to do."* It is His Word because it goes out of His mouth and returns to Him. As His Word, it is powerful. The writer to the Hebrews reminds us, *"The word of God is living and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart"* (4:12).

We also say that His Word is true because it comes from God. God has given His Word by inspiration, and His Word cannot lie because God cannot lie. As we read the words written by Isaiah, we can be confident that they are the very words of God. Throughout the prophecy, Isaiah noted that what he wrote had been revealed to him and that he had received his revelation from God (for example, 1:1; 2:1; 5:9; 6:1; 8:11). Jeremiah and the other prophets made the same claim. The apostle Paul wrote, *"This is what we speak, not in words taught us by human wisdom but in words taught by the Spirit"* (1 Corinthians 2:13), and Peter summarised the centuries of God's proclamation by reminding us, *"Prophecy never had its origin in the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit"* (2 Peter 1:21).

Isaiah introduces us to a precious truth concerning the Word of God. Through His prophet, God tells us how His Word works. Clearly and simply, God presents a striking comparison. His Word comes from Him like the rain and snow from heaven. When rain and snow come down, they water the ground and make it bud and flourish. When God's Word comes to sinners, it too works. Paul told Timothy what the Word could do: *"All Scripture is inspired by God and is useful for teaching, for rebuking, for correcting and for training in righteousness, ¹⁷ that the man of God may be proficient and thoroughly equipped for every good work"* (2 Timothy 3:16-17). God can also use His Word to bring judgment. Isaiah had the difficult task of proclaiming God's Word and watching as it made the hearts of his listeners calloused and their ears dull. God told Him, *"Go and tell this people: 'Keep on listening but do not understand, and keep on seeing but do not perceive!'¹⁰ Make the heart of this people insensitive, make their ears dull and seal their eyes shut, that they may not see with their eyes or hear with their ears and that their hearts may not understand, so that they should not turn back and find healing for themselves!"* (6:9-10). In this section, however, the great accomplishment of the Word is to convert and draw the nations to God.

God has promised to work through the external Word. God has simply chosen the Word as the means through which He has promised to work. Of course, he could work through other means, but the entire Scripture maintains that God works through the Word. These verses only emphasise the encouragement He gave earlier in verses 2 and 3, namely, *"Why do you spend money for what is not bread and your labour for what does not satisfy? Listen carefully to Me! Eat what is good and enjoy rich food! ³ Turn your ears toward Me and come to Me! Listen, that your souls may stay alive! I shall establish an eternal Covenant with you, the long-lasting mercies shown to David."* There God invited sinners to listen – to listen carefully and turn their ears toward Him. The phrase "turn your ears toward Me" means to stretch out the ears, to strain them to catch the words. None of this should surprise us when we realise what God's Word can do. Whenever anyone thinks that he or she can do without hearing the Word, such a person discards the way God works within us. We may behold the beauties of God's created world and wonder at God's glory and majesty, but those insights will not bring us to Christ. Only His Word can do that.