

The Active Word

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In Hebrews 4:12, the inspired writer tells us that God's Word is not only living but "active" (powerful—KJV). *Energes* is the Greek word here used. It is rendered "effectual" in Philemon 6 and 1 Corinthians 16:9. Harper's Lexicon defines *energes* as follows: "Active, ...efficient, energetic ...adapted to accomplish a thing." From this definition it is apparent that it carries the idea not only of being active and working, but capable or powerful enough to do what it is designed to do. Our English word *energy* is based on this word. William Barclay comments on the family of words of which *energes* is a member, as follows:

The more we study this group of words, the more the same idea keeps recurring, the idea of action, strong and powerful and above all, effective. Again and again, the idea of power and the idea of purpose achieved meet in these words. And that is most suggestive when we go on to see that in the New Testament these are the characteristic words for the action of God (New Testament Words, p. 81).

God's Word is powerful with the sense of raw force or ability; this seems to be Paul's meaning in his reference to the power of the Gospel in Romans 1:16. However, it is more than raw force. It is force and ability with an end and with the capability of accomplishing its design. What is the aim or design of God's Word? There are actually several aims for God's revealed Truth.

Direction. "O Jehovah, I know that the way of man is not in himself: it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps" (Jer. 10:23). Since man does not know innately how he should live, God gave His Word to direct us: "Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and light unto my path" (Psa. 119:105).

Prevention of sin. "Thy word have I laid up in my heart, that I might not sin against thee." (Psa. 119:11). The person who feeds on God's Word and constantly adds to the treasure-store of that Truth will be saved many grievous and painful faults.

Correction of sin. Despite the best we can do, we will still sin and stand in need of correction. God's Word is to be preached in such a way that it will "reprove, rebuke, exhort, with all longsuffering and teaching" (2 Tim. 4:2). Scripture is profitable "for reproof" and "for correction" (2 Tim. 2:16).

Sanctification and cleansing from sin. The means by which the church is sanctified and cleansed is by its members having received the "washing of water with the word" (Eph. 5:26).

The Word is the means by which men are taught to be baptized in water for their cleansing and sanctification in the blood of Christ. Jesus' own words on this subject are, "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved" (Mark 16:16).

Salvation. Paul wrote, "I am not ashamed of the Gospel: for it is the power of God unto salvation to everyone that believeth" (Rom. 1:16). The Gospel is the medium through which man is instructed in the means of appropriating the redeeming blood of Christ to his sinfulness. If we had not had its instructions, we would have no means of knowing how our sins could be forgiven.

Spiritual Maturity. I believe Peter has God's Word in view when he refers to the "spiritual milk" which will enable us to "grow thereby into salvation" (1 Pet. 2:2). The writer to the Hebrews also relates the spiritual diet of God's Word to spiritual growth, discernment, and maturity (Heb. 5:14-14).

Fight the enemies of Truth. "The sword of the Spirit which is the Word of God" (Eph. 6:17), is to be used in fighting the "good fight of faith" (1 Tim. 6:12) as faithful soldiers of the cross. The Word of God is our only weapon in this spiritual struggle for the minds and lives of men. "For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh (for the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh, but mighty before God to the casting down of strongholds" (2 Cor. 10:3-4).

God's Word has the energy, the capability, and the effectiveness to accomplish all these things He has designed It to do. However, It cannot do Its work if It is not allowed to. To say such implies that there are certain things which may destroy the power and effectiveness of God's Word.

Ungodly influence. Our lives should "adorn the doctrine of God our Savior in all things" (Tit. 2:10). Our behavior day by day will either make the Gospel more attractive to others or it will cause men to despise it. If we live in ungodliness and worldly lusts (Tit. 2:12), we are destroying the power and effectiveness of the Truth among those who know us. We are to live such pure lives that the doctrine and Word of God will not be blasphemed because of us (1 Tim. 6:1; Tit. 2:5).

Silence. It matters not how good the salt may be; if it is left in the shaker, it will not enhance the flavor of food – its effectiveness is neutralized. It matters not how potent a medicine may be; if it is never ingested or applied, its remedial power is wasted. Likewise, with

all the power the Gospel has, if we keep it hidden by our silence, we rob it of its potential and prevent its effectual work. We must use every honorable medium at our disposal to publish and proclaim the blessed Gospel. We must speak to one at a time or to 1,000 at a time, whichever opportunities are ours, so that the Gospel can work, be activated, and have its mighty power unleashed on the hearts of men.

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