

Each of us has tools which are supposed to help make a certain job easier for us. In the kitchen, you probably have tools such as a sharp knife, a mixing bowl, and a frying pan. Each of those tools has a specific job which it does. If it does its job well, it becomes a tool which you will use as often as you need it. If it does not do its job well, it will probably be discarded or shoved to the back of the cupboard and forgotten. We also do not use a tool for a job for which it was not designed — it simply will not work well for that other job. You cannot use a good frying pan to cut up vegetables. Today, we will focus our attention on the tool which God uses both to create and to strengthen faith in our heart. It is a tool that God has designed to do its job very well — and there is no substitute for it. As we take a closer look at what Isaiah has written, we will learn that GOD’S WORD IS EFFECTIVE. It is effective 1) because it is HIS Word, and therefore, 2) it accomplishes His purpose.

The power of any word depends upon whose word it is. If students walk into school saying that they are going to call off school that day, they laugh and giggle as they go to their classroom. But if the principal announces that he is calling off school that day, the students are on their way out the door. The difference is that the principal has the power and authority to call off school. The words which we have in the Bible are God’s Word to us, so they have the power and authority of God Himself behind them. God put His words, His thoughts, into the mouths of His prophets, so that the words they spoke were the Word of God Himself. Since they are God’s Word, they must also be absolutely true — God cannot lie. So there is no doubt in our mind about those Words which we hear from God.

Also, when we have the Word of God, that Word is very powerful: *“I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes.”* (Romans 1:16) The power that is behind the Word of God is truly great — as great as God Himself is. The writer to the Hebrews reminds us: *For 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spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart.* (4:12) God’s Word does not expire or go out of date — it is just as applicable to us today as it was when God first gave it through His prophets. It is living and powerful because the God Who gave that Word to us is living and powerful.

So when God wants to touch our heart, He uses the tool which He has created for that purpose — and that tool is His Word. God has not given us any other tool to use for this purpose. You might enjoy the beauty of nature, you might fear the power of the summer storms, you might stand in awe of the majesty of the night sky, but none of that will bring you any closer to what God has revealed to us in His Word. It is only when we read or hear His Word that He will be able to bring about a change in our heart.

So when we consider the empty seats in churches around the country (including ours) and wonder what we can do to change that, the answer is quite simple — we need to proclaim God’s Word faithfully. He has given us that Word as His tool to use to create faith, as well as to sustain faith in our hearts. Any time that someone thinks that they can create faith, or even sustain faith in a way other than that, they are sadly mistaken — Satan has deceived them. The same goes for our own heart — the only way that our faith grows stronger is through that same Word. That is why we not only need to be in the Lord’s house each week, we also need to be reading it on our own, and gathering together to study it in Bible Study along with our fellow believers. We know that it is God’s Word, and therefore it has God’s power behind it.

This is the point that Isaiah is making in the Word which is before us — because it is God’s Word, it will accomplish His purpose. In order to help us to understand that, God uses an illustration: **As the rain and the snow come down from heaven, and do not return to it without watering the earth and making it bud and flourish, so that it yields seed for the sower and bread for the eater.** (10) I saw a news report this week that said we are in an area that is unusually dry. That is why the lawns are getting brown and the corn crops are curling. They need rain. A nice rain, and everything will green up very quickly. That is what happens when God sends rain upon the earth — things grow and flourish. It is just that natural.

Isaiah continues by telling us that it is just as natural for God's Word to produce His intended results. **So is my word that goes out from my mouth: It will not return to me empty, but will accomplish what I desire and achieve the purpose for which I sent it.** (11) Just as rain causes everything to green up, so when God's Word is read or proclaimed, it will also accomplish the job for which He sent it. The job for which God has given us His Word is to create faith, and strengthen faith, in the hearts of those who hear it.

The way that it does this is by first of all causing us to realize that we are not perfect — that we have sinned. Once we have realized that, then the gospel message comforts us with the knowledge of God's love for us in sending us a Savior from that sin. As we hear that wonderful message of love and forgiveness for all of our sins, we will truly desire to receive the blessings which God has promised us in that Word. It is just that natural that God's powerful Word will be able to affect our hearts and create and strengthen faith there, just as He has promised.

We may not understand how it works, but we can trust that it will work, just as He promised it will. It is for that reason that we need to make use of this one tool which God has given to us to nourish and strengthen our faith. If we ignore that Word, or think that our faith will continue strong without it, we will be sadly mistaken.

There is one other thing that we must also know about this powerful Word, which is also similar to the rain which God sends to us. Not all of the rain which falls to the earth nourishes and strengthens the crops on earth. Some of that rain falls on roofs and parking lots. That rain simply runs off and may fill our rivers and lakes. But it has also been sent by God for that purpose as well. So with His Word, not everyone who hears His Word is going to accept it in faith. For some, when they hear it, it hardens their heart in unbelief. It does not accomplish the good which is most intended by God when He sends it. So for us it is a warning to receive the Word with true hearts that strain to hear every last syllable of what God tells us, and then prayerfully meditate upon that Word so that we do receive the many blessings which God intends for us.

We all have tools which are very effective in carrying out the task for which they were designed. We appreciate that tool and use it in the way that it was intended to be used. God could have given us different tools to create and nourish faith in our hearts, but He did not — He gave us His Word, and has promised that it will be very effective whenever it is used. May we listen carefully to the Words which come from our Lord, and allow them to do their job of strengthening the faith has already been created in our heart, and then share that same Word with others so that it can affect their hearts as well.