

Power for Reform from Scripture

Thomas Robinson, October 24, 2010

Heb 4:12-13

¹² For the **word** (*logos*) of **God** is **alive** 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**.

¹³ **Nothing in all creation is hidden from God's sight**. Everything is uncovered and laid bare before the eyes of him to whom we must give account.

Acts 2:36-47 (Peter speaking to people on Pentecost)

³⁶ *"Therefore let all Israel be assured of this: God has made this **Jesus**, whom you crucified, both **Lord and Messiah**."*

³⁷ When the people heard this, they were cut to the heart and said to Peter and the other apostles, *"Brothers, **what shall we do?**"*

³⁸ Peter replied, *"**Repent and be baptized**, every one of you, in the **name of Jesus Messiah** for the **forgiveness of your sins**. And you will receive the **gift of the Holy Spirit**."*

³⁹ *The **promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off – for all whom the Lord our God will call**."*

⁴⁰ With many other words he warned them; and he pleaded with them, *"**Save yourselves from this corrupt generation**."*

⁴¹ Those who accepted his message were baptized, and about three thousand were added to their number that day. ⁴² **They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer**.

⁴³ Everyone was filled with awe at the many wonders and signs performed by the apostles. ⁴⁴ All the believers were together and had everything in common. ⁴⁵ They sold property and possessions to give to anyone who had need.

⁴⁶ Every day **they continued** to meet together in the temple courts. They **broke bread** in their **homes** and ate together with **glad and sincere hearts**, ⁴⁷ praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. And the **Lord added** to their number daily those who were being saved.

2 Timothy 3:14-17

¹⁴ But as for you, **continue in what you have learned** and have firmly **believed**, knowing from whom you learned it ¹⁵ and how from childhood you have been acquainted with **the sacred writings**, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. ¹⁶ **All Scripture is breathed out by God** and **profitable** for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, ¹⁷ that the man of God may be competent, equipped for every good work.

200 Years, 500 Years, 2,000 Years – Always Reforming

We are celebrating 200 years of the Church of Christ in NYC since Oct. 1810. Near 500 years since Martin Luther began the great Reformation. Near 2000 years since first Pentecost.

When true transformation and reform take place, the living Word of God is always present.

Pentecost: Scripture interpretation and proclamation. Luther and others: *Sola Scriptura* (Scripture alone). Restoration movement: “Back to the Bible.” “Speak where the Bible speaks.” Here in NYC they called for a return to Acts 2 and the authority of scripture.

They experienced the living power of the word as a knife that prunes and allows new growth.

Power for Transformation: Face to Face with Jesus

The Word lives as a vision of Jesus – what Peter gave them. Knowing that he is Lord, God’s Messiah. Seeing him on the cross. Knowing that he is there is to show God’s love for us in the midst of our sins. The depth of our sin was why he had to go so far to show God’s love.

That vision seized them, cut through their defenses and opened them to the creation of new life.

People Respond to Jesus’ Love and Lordship

Seeing Jesus brought about a change of mind and heart (*metanoia*, repentance) as a new vision of reality opened before them. A new vision of God – who he is and what he wants.

They felt the pain of personal and corporate sin – lives going down the wrong track even when they thought they were doing right. Only Jesus is the lens to see ourselves clearly.

The Word led to willing submission in trust/faith to Jesus – being plunged into water as a sign of that trust and complete surrender to his Love and Grace. Knowing that only he can bring reconciliation to God and forgiveness of sins. The Word helped them open to receive God’s presence and power in their lives – the Holy Spirit – giving the future to God. This was not a momentary decision; it was a revolution of individual lives and history.

Becoming the Family/People of God

Transformation began as the rule of God – God’s kingdom – swept through their lives.

Welcoming it. Celebrating new life, an escape from the values of “this corrupt generation.” Opening their lives to the continual process of renewal and change wanting to experience God’s rule. Devotion to learning the apostles’ teaching. Continually focusing on the cross in the breaking of bread. Lives open to God in prayer. The living, active, creative Word.

Isolated individuals became community and family. “All who believed were together.” They spent time with each other. They learned to be real with each other. They opened their lives to each other. They ate together. They celebrated together. What God had done for them transformed their hearts, filled them with joy and generosity.

They had come from across the Roman empire. They broke down language, cultural, socio-economic differences. A transcending unity of Christ allowed their individualities to link. They shared their needs and resources together. Nothing remained abstract and theoretical. If we love God and God has brought us together, we care for each other’s needs, even if it means selling things we own so as to help. Living the Word practically in real lives.

They were attractive (not argumentative). People were in awe when they saw the changed lives and the wonderful things God was doing among them. They experienced a new life, new hope, new joy now. Both future hope and present transformation. It was real. It is real. The authentic power of the living Word to cut and heal to transform and grow continues.