

HEBREWS 4:12-13

The Living Word

Last week we celebrated the Resurrection of Jesus as the account is recorded in the Bible, the Word of God.

This week we return to the letter or sermon letter to the Hebrews and our text tells us something about the vitality of the scripture itself.

I think it is safe to say that no other book has sold more copies or had more written about it- positively and negatively- than the Bible, the Word of God.

People who were not known for their attachment or affection for the Bible have spoken about it. Here are a few quotes from folks that you may have heard of, or not.

<https://www.tentmaker.org/Quotes/biblequotes.htm>

- ❖ Most people are bothered by those passages of Scripture they do not understand, but the passages that bother me are those I do understand. --Mark Twain
- ❖ The Bible is worth all other books which have ever been printed. --Patrick Henry
- ❖ You may as well quit reading and hearing the Word of God, and give it to the devil, if you do not desire to live according to it. -- Martin Luther
- ❖ The word of God hidden in the heart is a stubborn voice to suppress.--Billy Graham
- ❖ The New Testament is the very best book that ever was or ever will be known in the world. -- Charles Dickens
- ❖ The Bible is no mere book, but a Living Creature, with a power that conquers all that oppose it. --Napoleon
- ❖ The Bible is not an end in itself, but a means to bring men to an intimate and satisfying knowledge of God, that they may enter into Him, that they may delight in His Presence, may taste and know the inner sweetness of the very God Himself in the core and center of their hearts.-- A. W. Tozer
- ❖ The greatest proof that the Bible is inspired is that it has withstood so much bad preaching. --A.T. Robertson

Before we jump into the text for today I want to make sure you get this point...

THE LIVING WORD IS SOMEONE YOU MEET through the written Word.

We worship Christ, not the Bible.

That in no way detracts from the importance of the Bible, which is the word of God written, but it is given to teach us about and point us to the Triune God of salvation.

Hebrews 4:11 Therefore let us be diligent to enter that rest, so that no one will fall, through *following* the same example of disobedience.

12 For the word of God is living and active and sharper than any two-edged sword, and piercing as far as the division of soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow, and able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart. 13 And there is no creature hidden from His sight, but all things are open and laid bare to the eyes of Him with whom we have to do.

Jesus is the Living Word who has given us the written word.

The words that Jesus spoke acted as is described in v.12

His word exposes us and energizes us.

It is how we keep the resurrection flame burning in our hearts.

It is how we escape the disobedience of unbelief which keeps us from not entering the "rest" of God.

4:2 they heard the word, but it did not profit them – unbelief

A Review of The thread of Hebrews 3-4:

The goal is to hold fast to Christ and enter the Rest

We do that by trusting God

The focus of the trust is the Good News, The Word that we have heard 4:2

To keep on believing we need to be diligent to hear the Word so that our hearts don't get hardened by unbelief.

MUCH IS AT STAKE WHEN IT COMES TO BEING DILIGENT IN THE WORD

I've met people who read and analyze the Word who do not profit from it or grow spiritually because their reading or study is not united with faith.

I've NEVER met a believer who was growing in maturity and fruitfulness who was not getting a regular steady intake of the Word.

Death to self and life to God happen through tiny cuts of the sword.

Verse 12 gives a reason for the diligence called for in v. 11 – The Word is active, sharp and alive.

In our Protestant tradition we understand that scripture is central to our knowledge of God and His work through Christ.

When we lose sight of the Word, we wander from the Gospel.

The words of Martin Luther at the Diet of Worms were a key moment when he proclaimed, “My conscience is bound by the Word of God.”

The final authority for the people of God is the Holy Spirit speaking through scripture. WCF

MARTIN LUTHER “I simply taught, preached, and wrote God's Word; otherwise I did nothing. ... I did nothing; I let the Word do its work.

No book has seen so many who have tried to discredit it or destroy it, yet, like Jesus on Resurrection morning, it continues to live.

EX: Voltaire - In 1776 the French atheist philosopher Voltaire said, ‘A hundred years from my death the Bible will be a museum piece.’

A hundred years after his death a Bible Society set up its headquarters in Voltaire's old home Geneva.

What makes the bible so unique – it is the Word of God written

Three features in Heb 4:12-13

#1 The Word reflects God's own nature – v. 12 it is “living” = effective; it has a vitality in itself. Not because of magic words or phrases, but an animating feature that no other book has – an extension of God's own nature 3:12- the living God, not a static idol that we have created with our own hands. He is active. He is the source of life.

1 Pet 1 born again by the living word of God

23 For you have been born again not of seed which is perishable but imperishable, that is, through the living and enduring word of God. 24

For,

“ALL FLESH IS LIKE GRASS,

AND ALL ITS GLORY LIKE THE FLOWER OF GRASS.

THE GRASS WITHERS,

AND THE FLOWER FALLS OFF,

25BUT THE WORD OF THE LORD ENDURES FOREVER.”

2 tim 3:16 – God breathed

Heb 1:1 – God spoke – v. 5-7; Heb 2: 10-13 Words’ from Psalms and Isaiah that are put into the mouth of God

3:7 Holy Spirt says, “... Psalm 95

Hebrews shows how the scriptures come from God. When the Bible speaks, God speaks.

The truth given about the Word and God himself is itself a double-edged sword.

It is a good thing because it means that all of the bad done to us, in open or secret, is known by God and will be dealt with one day.

It is a sobering truth that cuts the other way because it means that all of the bad that we’ve done or even thought about is known by God as well. We are open and laid bare to His eyes.

The best way to “defend” the truth of scripture is to ask people to read it and it will have its effect. The bible will defend itself.

#2 The Word is an instrument that effectually accomplishes God’s purpose –

“energes”= energy. It works.

It accomplishes what it sets out to do.

God spoke the Word and the world came into being. His word is effective for creation and for the ongoing order of things. He sustains by His word; he gives the new birth by His Word. It is the instrument by which he brings the dead to life James 1:18, 1 Pet 1:23 .

It is the agent of and power of God for salvation – Rom 1:17

John 17- it is the power for sanctification

The word is not God, but it is the sword of the Spirit. Eph 6:17

It accomplishes its purpose, no matter what the response of the hearer.

I only say this because God said it -

2 Cor 2:14 But thanks be to God, who always leads us in triumph in Christ, and manifests through us the sweet aroma of the knowledge of Him in every place. 15 For we are a fragrance of Christ to God among those who are being saved and among those who are perishing; 16 to the one an aroma from death to death, to the other an aroma from life to life.

God’s word has the effect of being an aroma of life or an aroma of death. Either way, it accomplishes what God intends.

**Our confidence for spiritual work must be placed in the Word.

EX: evangelism – share the Gospel in the power of the holy spirit and leave the results to God.

We don’t know the purpose of God in each instance, but we know that God will work through his word. God will use it to save or to condemn; to sanctify or to confirm in guilt.

The confirming in guilt may lead to conviction but that is part of God’s process of bringing us to salvation. It usually happens that way.

EX: “I don’t want to offend anyone” – Then no one will be saved. The good news of the gospel carries with it an offense to human merit, goodness, and self-righteousness. The good news of a savior comes in contrast to the truth of the bad news that we are bigger sinners than we dare admit.....but more loved and forgiven in Christ than we dare imagine.

When the truth of the gospel is proclaimed religious people will be offended. Secular people will be offended. **Jesus was an equal opportunity offender, and His salvation is equal to all who come to him in repentant faith.** You're not more saved if you've been a nice person all your life. You're not more saved if you've turned from a life of hard core sin.

All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, Rom 3:23-24

3 The Word penetrates and exposes our hearts

Double edged sword – not the norm in ancient world, but regarded as sharpest weapon in any arsenal

Not precise language of psychology or physiology, but used to express that the Word cuts through all to the heart. It exposes the deepest issues of our hearts.

The take away is that we should have a healthy sober appreciation of God's word in a positive way. It is living and active. God will use it to pierce us and change us. He doesn't just discern and expose our hearts to say that He's done it, but to change us.

The double-edged sword of the spirit is a weapon of rescue for our hearts.

Do you want to be rescued? Do you see your need for rescue? Either way, read the Word. It shows us our need and our Rescuer.

**Application –

To penetrate our hearts, it must pass through our ears or our eyes. (i.e. through our mind)

The heart is not changed by a Word we don't hear or read. To shield your heart from the sword of the spirit, then don't open the Bible. Studies, surveys and behaviors indicate that the American Church understands this.

When our walk isn't informed by God's talk, then non-believers balk at believing the gospel.

Our witness is not credible when our life doesn't match what the Word says, yet the Word is still at work.

- When you are in a knot and don't know what to do, go to and listen to the word. Let it pierce your heart.

You may not fully understand the Word, but it understands you to the core.

You don't have to understand all of it to believe some of it and to be changed by it.

EX: conversion comes as we make small sword cuts through hearing the Word, even if we don't believe it at first.

God's word can get to where no ultrasound or MRI can penetrate- our very thoughts, feelings, intentions of the heart.

Heb 3:11-13 speaks of the evil and deceit of sin. We need something sharp to cut off the mask of deception.

APPLICATION The principle of FOUR

Read, memorize, listen to, pray through scripture (have a QT) at least 4 days a week (7 is better).

MY GUESS is that getting to four would be a big improvement for most people in the church. FOUR is crucial because it is more than half and it is the first step toward making it a habit. IT IS A FREE FORM OF SELF-CARE.

13 And there is no creature hidden from His sight, but all things are open and laid bare to the eyes of Him with whom we have to do.

EX: word picture of the neck being exposed

Every detail of what you think and feel is laid bare before God. Let that sink in – every jealousy, every thought of ungodly anger, lust, greed, malice, every unkind thought or unspoken word is before His eyes. Every sense of pride and superiority towards others is exposed. Every secret is known to God.

Ps. 44:21 – He knows the secrets of our hearts
Do you see why we need a Savior?

If we have any sense of self-awareness this should make us shudder from our head to our toes. If we have a sense of Christ awareness we can rejoice and be glad and be changed.

If you've ever had the sense that the preacher was speaking directly to you, it's not the talent or giftedness of the preacher. It is the Word of God doing its work.

Your heart and mine is as exposed to God as Adam and Eve were in the garden. Our hearts are laid bare before God even as Christ was on the cross.

He endured that because of the sinful thoughts and intentions of our hearts and our actions that flowed from them.

The word is a double-edged sword- handle with care. Don't be nonchalant with the Word. Don't go through life with a "whatever" attitude about the Word. It is living and it will rise up at the last day to expose us.

When that happens, our only hope is in Christ. Our only hope is that God plunged the sword of judgement into Christ who died for us.

It is because of Him and His willingness to be laid bare before God and the world that we now have hope. (preview of next week...)

14 Therefore, since we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession. 15 For we do not have a high priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but One who has been tempted in all things as we are, yet without sin. 16 Therefore let us draw near with confidence to the throne of grace, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.

COME TO THE TABLE

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