

Sermons

Title:           **JOINTS AND MARROW SEVERED**

Text:            Hebrews 4:12

Subject:        *Dividing the Carnal from the Spiritual*

Introduction:

The title of my message is **JOINTS AND MARROW SEVERED**. My text is Hebrews 4:12

“For the word of God *is* quick, and powerful, and sharper than any twoedged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and *is* a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.” (Hebrews 4:12)

This 4<sup>th</sup> chapter of Hebrews tells us about the blessed rest that we have by faith in our Lord Jesus Christ, assuring us of that sweet Sabbath Rest that is ours in him, because we are made “*partakers of the Divine nature,*” made “*partakers of Christ*” in the new birth.

**THOSE WHO FELL**

The Spirit of God tells us about those Jews that Moses led

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Readings:       *Bob Poncer and Larry Brown*

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out of Egypt in the latter part of chapter 3. The Gospel was preached to them for forty years; but they hardened their hearts and would not believe. The Lord God was grieved with them for forty years. They could not enter into rest because they would not believe the Word of God. They could not discern between carnal things and spiritual things. So, judging God's Word by carnal judgment (by carnal reason), their carcasses fell in the wilderness in unbelief.

## **FAITH REST**

Then, we are told, in the first part of chapter 4 that we who believe do enter into rest, not a carnal Canaan rest, or even a carnal sabbath-day rest, but a rest that is compared to God's rest after he had finished his mighty works of creation, a blessed cessation from work, — not a carnal sabbath, but a spiritual sabbath, the sabbath of faith, a blessed cessation from works, ceasing from our own works we trust Christ, who is our Sabbath, and rest in him.

**Then we read about Joshua.** He was a great type of Christ. Joshua brought the children of Israel into the Land of Canaan, symbolizing the rest of faith in Christ; but the rest he gave, like all the types and shadows of the law was but a picture of rest. Joshua could no more give the children of Israel rest in the Land of Promise than Moses could give

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them rest in the wilderness. Read that for yourself. If Joshua could have given them rest, he would not have spoken about another day and another rest (vv. 8-11).

“For if Jesus had given them rest, then would he not afterward have spoken of another day. <sup>9</sup> There remaineth therefore a rest to the people of God. <sup>10</sup> For he that is entered into his rest, he also hath ceased from his own works, as God *did* from his. <sup>11</sup> ¶ Let us labour therefore to enter into that rest, lest any man fall after the same example of unbelief.” (Hebrews 4:8-11)

That is the background for our text.

“For the word of God *is* quick, and powerful, and sharper than any twoedged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and *is* a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.” (Hebrews 4:12)

The opening word of verse 12, “For,” refers us back to what we have just read.

**Proposition:** We who believe have entered into rest with Christ and in Christ because the Lord God has performed a mighty operation of grace upon us, in us and for us by his

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Word. — Just as our Lord Jesus, our Savior, our mighty Joshua entered into when once he had finished all the work appointed to him as our Surety and Mediator, trusting him we enter into rest with him, — because...

“The word of God *is* quick, and powerful, and sharper than any twoedged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and *is* a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.” (Hebrews 4:12)

Let’s look at this verse line by line. Oh, may God cause his Word to be quick and powerful in you and in me, cutting as a two-edged sword, severing and dividing asunder soul and spirit and joints and marrow, discerning the thoughts and intents of our hearts!

**“THE WORD OF GOD”**

Does the phrase, “*the Word of God*,” in the place, refer to the Scriptures (the written Word) or to the Lord Jesus Christ, the Incarnate Word? The best of the commentators are almost equally divided. Both Gill and Hawker tell us that this phrase refers to Christ, the Word. Calvin and Owen tell us that it refers to the written Word of God, the Holy Scriptures. But I do not understand why we should choose between the two. — It is impossible to separate

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Christ from his Word or his Word from him. The Scriptures are all about him.

Without question, **Christ is the Word of God** by whom and in whom God reveals himself, in and by whom we know the Triune God (John 1:1-3, 18). — Christ is the Living Word, the Word that is Life, “*the Word of Life*” and the Word by whom alone life is given.

It is equally obvious that that **the Word he declares, the Volume of Holy Scripture, is that by which he reveals himself to men.** — The Lord Jesus is revealed to chosen, redeemed sinners by the preaching of the Word, by the preaching of the Gospel (Romans 10:17; 1 Corinthians 1:17-2). — Gospel preaching is the means God has ordained to use for the salvation of his elect.

“For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved. <sup>14</sup> How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher? <sup>15</sup> And how shall they preach, except they be sent? as it is written, How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things! <sup>16</sup> But they have not all obeyed the gospel. For Esaias saith, Lord, who hath believed our report? <sup>17</sup> **So then faith**

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**cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.**” (Romans 10:13-17)

Let men say what they will, argue against it as they may, and denounce us for our insistence upon the importance of Gospel preaching, — the Lord God saves his people by the preaching of the Gospel.

“For **Christ sent me** not to baptize, but **to preach the gospel**: not with wisdom of words, lest the cross of Christ should be made of none effect. <sup>18</sup> For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us which are saved **it is the power of God**. <sup>19</sup> For it is written, I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and will bring to nothing the understanding of the prudent. <sup>20</sup> Where *is* the wise? where *is* the scribe? where *is* the disputer of this world? hath not God made foolish the wisdom of this world? <sup>21</sup> For after that in the wisdom of God the world by wisdom knew not God, **it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe.**” (1 Corinthians 1:17-21)

How we ought to cherish this blessed Book! “**Thy Word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path!**” Without this glorious revelation, I must have remained as I was born, a poor, helpless, hopeless and miserable sinner, lost

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and without Christ. Only by that which we read in this Book is it possible for a sinner to know...

- Ruin by the Fall.
- Redemption by the Blood.
- Regeneration by the Spirit.

Resting in Christ, and hoping to enter into that perfect rest which yet remains for the people of God, making our pilgrimage through the wilderness, we are guided by the Word of God we hold in our hands.

- This Book, and this Book alone, is inspired of God.
- This Book, and this Book alone, is able to make one wise unto salvation.
- This Book, and this Book alone, is our Rule of Faith and practice.

### **“QUICK AND POWERFUL”**

Next, we read that “the Word of God is quick and powerful.” The word “quick” means living or life-giving, life-conveying. The word “powerful” in this place means energetic or effectual. This Book, the Word of God, is the means by which God the Holy Spirit conveys spiritual life to chosen, redeemed sinners. — “Thy Word hath quickened me” (Psalm 119:50; John 6:63).

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“It is the spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing: the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life.” (John 6:63)

**The Word of God is preached to men by the Gospel; and when the Gospel is preached in the power of the Spirit the Word of God is quickening and effectual** (1 Peter 1:23-25; 2 Corinthians 10:3-6). — The Word of God is not preached until the Gospel is preached. — There is no preaching of the Word of God but the preaching of the Gospel.

“Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever. <sup>24</sup> ¶ For all flesh *is* as grass, and all the glory of man as the flower of grass. The grass withereth, and the flower thereof falleth away: <sup>25</sup> But the word of the Lord endureth for ever. And this is the word which by the gospel is preached unto you.”

(1 Peter 1:23-25)

**This Book is the only weapon of our warfare.** — Look at 2 Corinthians 10:3-6...

“For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war after the flesh: <sup>4</sup> (For the weapons of our warfare *are* not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of

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strong holds;) <sup>5</sup> Casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ; <sup>6</sup> And having in a readiness to revenge all disobedience, when your obedience is fulfilled.” (2 Corinthians 10:3-6)

**“SHARPER THAN ANY TWO-EDGED SWORD”**

Look at the next line of our text. — “The word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword!” The Word of God is a sword, not a scalpel, but a sword. The surgeon uses a scalpel to make very precise cuts. That’s not the way you use a sword, especially a sword with two edges, a sword that cuts both ways. A two-edged sword is used to hack, cut, pierce, divide and severe. — If you’re smart you don’t play with a sword! — And you don’t give a sword to a boy, a novice.

The expressions which are used here of the word of God are all applicable to Christ Himself; for He is living, He is the power of God, He came for judgment into the world, He is the Searcher of hearts, His eyes are like a flame of fire; but every word in the text is equally applicable to the written Word, to the Word we preach. I repeat, you cannot divide the Eternal Word from the Written Word. The Son is the Word, the Revealer of God, the expression of His

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thought, the manifestation of His light and love. **Christ is the Word of God, and therefore Christ is the sum and substance of Scripture.**

- Of Him testify Moses and the prophets.
- The Spirit of Christ did signify, both in the types of the law and the prophecies, of His sufferings and the glory that should follow.
- The Scripture, is the written Word of God; and by it Christ is heard, received and formed in the soul.

**“All flesh is as grass, and all the glory of man as the flower of grass. The grass withereth, and the flower thereof falleth away; but the word of the Lord endureth forever. And this is the Word which by the gospel is preached unto you.”** — This Word of God, this sharp, two-edged Sword that goes forth out of the mouth of The Lord Jesus is a sword that both slaughters and makes alive. — The Word is also **compared to seed**, which appears insignificant; but when it is sewn in and received in good ground shows its vitality. Hence it is by this Word that souls are born again unto eternal life. They who receive the word of God (not texts, and sermons, and doctrines — but the Word of God) experience the Word!

- Life!
- Resurrection!
- Salvation!

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- Immortality!

**A DIVIDING SWORD**

But in our text, the Word of God is compared not to a seed, but to a sword, a sharp, two-edged sword, dividing and separating with piercing and painful sharpness that, which in our natural state is always mixed and confused. — **The Word of God is a dividing sword**. Bless God, it unites us to Christ and unites us to one another in Christ. But the first work of the Word is the work of a sword. It slays and divides. It is a fire to burn, a hammer to break and a sword to divide!

- When the world was in chaos, without form and void, it was the Word of God, by the moving of the Spirit, that brought order out of chaos and light out of darkness.
- The Word of God is that by which all things were called forth, divided and separated.
- The Word of God separated darkness from light, the waters above from the waters below and the dry land from the sea.
- The Word of God which came unto the fathers tried and proved them. — It was a heart-searching Word, which called forth conflict and commanded separation from things desired and people cherished.

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- The Word of God incarnate was, we are told, from His infancy set for the fall and rising again of many in Israel, that the thoughts of many hearts may be revealed.

Before the Triune God gives life to the sinner dead in trespasses and sins, everything is darkness and chaos, without form and void. But when that Eternal Life that God gives by the saving operations of his grace enters the soul of a lost sinner a separation is made, a violent division, a mighty severing is performed and an internal warfare begins that never ceases, until this body of flesh is dropped in the grave.

**SOUL AND SPIRIT** — The heaven born child of God has a new man in him, a new nature, a new creature. He is made partaker of the divine nature. He is created new in righteousness and true holiness.

**JOINTS AND MARROW** — The Word of God, when made effectual to our souls by the mighty Captain of our Salvation, severs the joints and the marrow. Marrow is the strength of life. The only way you can sever the joint from the marrow is to sever the joint and cripple the man. And when Christ comes to a chosen sinner, that is precisely what he does (Genesis 32:24-31).

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“And Jacob was left alone; and **there wrestled a man with him** until the breaking of the day. <sup>25</sup> And when he saw that he prevailed not against him, **he touched the hollow of his thigh; and the hollow of Jacob’s thigh was out of joint**, as he wrestled with him. <sup>26</sup> And he said, Let me go, for the day breaketh. And he said, I will not let thee go, except thou bless me. <sup>27</sup> And he said unto him, What *is* thy name? And he said, Jacob. <sup>28</sup> And he said, Thy name shall be called no more Jacob, but Israel: for as a prince hast thou power with God and with men, and hast prevailed. <sup>29</sup> And Jacob asked *him*, and said, Tell *me*, I pray thee, thy name. And he said, Wherefore *is* it *that* thou dost ask after my name? And he blessed him there. <sup>30</sup> And Jacob called the name of the place Peniel: for I have seen God face to face, and my life is preserved. <sup>31</sup> And as he passed over Penuel the sun rose upon him, and **he halted upon his thigh**.” (Genesis 32:24-31)

The man who halts upon his thigh must have someone, or something to lean upon. — That someone is Christ. He has fixed it so that we have to lean on him all the days of our lives.

**DISCERNES ALL THINGS**

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When the Word of God comes into the soul, severing the joints and marrow, separating the soul and the spirit, the heaven-born child of God now sees and enters the kingdom of God, discerning all things (1 Corinthians 2:14-16; Isaiah 29:9-24).

“But as it is written, Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him. <sup>10</sup> But God hath revealed *them* unto us by his Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God. <sup>11</sup> For what man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of man which is in him? even so the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God. <sup>12</sup> Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God. <sup>13</sup> Which things also we speak, not in the words which man’s wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth; comparing spiritual things with spiritual. <sup>14</sup> But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know *them*, because they are spiritually discerned. <sup>15</sup> But he that is spiritual judgeth all things, yet he himself is judged of no man. <sup>16</sup> For who hath known the mind of the Lord, that he may instruct him? But we have the mind of Christ.” (1 Corinthians 2:9-16)

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(Isaiah 29:9-24) “Stay yourselves, and wonder; cry ye out, and cry: they are drunken, but not with wine; they stagger, but not with strong drink. <sup>10</sup> For the LORD hath poured out upon you the spirit of deep sleep, and hath closed your eyes: the prophets and your rulers, the seers hath he covered. <sup>11</sup> And the vision of all is become unto you as the words of a book that is sealed, which *men* deliver to one that is learned, saying, Read this, I pray thee: and he saith, I cannot; for it *is* sealed:” (Isaiah 29:9-11)

“Therefore, behold, I will proceed to do a marvellous work among this people, *even* a marvellous work and a wonder: for the wisdom of their wise *men* shall perish, and the understanding of their prudent *men* shall be hid.” (Isaiah 29:14)

“And in that day shall the deaf hear the words of the book, and the eyes of the blind shall see out of obscurity, and out of darkness.” (Isaiah 29:18)

“They also that erred in spirit shall come to understanding, and they that murmured shall learn doctrine.” (Isaiah 29:24)

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We now live in the Spirit. Though we carry about this body of flesh, this body of death, we are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit. And all who are born of God discern the difference.

(Romans 7:14-8:12) “For we know that the law is spiritual: but I am carnal, sold under sin. <sup>15</sup> For that which I do I allow not: for what I would, that do I not; but what I hate, that do I. <sup>16</sup> If then I do that which I would not, I consent unto the law that it is good. <sup>17</sup> Now then it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me. <sup>18</sup> For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing: for to will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not. <sup>19</sup> For the good that I would I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I do. <sup>20</sup> Now if I do that I would not, it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me. <sup>21</sup> I find then a law, that, when I would do good, evil is present with me. <sup>22</sup> For I delight in the law of God after the inward man: <sup>23</sup> But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members. <sup>24</sup> O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death? <sup>25</sup> I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord. So then with the mind I myself serve the law of God; but with the flesh the law of sin.

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8:1 There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. 2 For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death. 3 For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh: 4 That the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. 5 For they that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh; but they that are after the Spirit the things of the Spirit. 6 For to be carnally minded is death; but to be spiritually minded is life and peace. 7 Because the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be. 8 So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God. 9 But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his. 10 ¶ And if Christ be in you, the body is dead because of sin; but the Spirit is life because of righteousness. 11 But if the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, he that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by his Spirit that dwelleth in you. 12

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Therefore, brethren, we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live after the flesh.” (Romans 7:14-8:12)

(Hebrews 4:12-16) “For the word of God *is* quick, and powerful, and sharper than any twoedged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and *is* a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart. <sup>13</sup> Neither is there any creature that is not manifest in his sight: but all things *are* naked and opened unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do. <sup>14</sup> Seeing then that we have a great high priest, that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast *our* profession. <sup>15</sup> For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as *we are*, yet without sin. <sup>16</sup> Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.” (Hebrews 4:12-16 )

Amen.