

The Word of God
Hebrews 4:12-13
Reading: Psalm 119:9-16

Bethany Baptist Church
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...pray...

I love the Bible!

I can say **w/o** exaggeration that from the time I was a *young adult*, my goal has been for God to *shape* me & *guide* me through His Scriptures.

Faith, marriage, parenting, work, finances, priorities, values, world-view...
The Bible has **never** *let me down!*

As a pastor, I've taught, time & again, that Gods' Word is *inspired, inerrant, clear, sufficient & authoritative.*

It's *inspired*. That word lit. means *God-breathed*. Which means God is the Bible's ultimate *author*.

Which means the Bible is *inerrant*. God doesn't make mistakes or He isn't God.

The Bible is *clear*. You can *read* it & *get* it.

The Bible is *sufficient*. The Apostle Peter said it contains all things *pertaining to life & godliness*. The psalmist wrote that *the sum of Thy word is truth*.

And because the Bible is *God breathed, w/o error, inexcusably clear & always sufficient*, God's word is *authoritative*. It is *morally binding*. You *ignore* God's word to your *peril!*

Let's return to Hebrews 4:11-13 (focus on vv.12-13).

You've probably read **v.12** *all by itself* in a lesson about the Bible.

But you need to see that **vv. 12 & 13** are tightly bound together and they come at the end of a long *warning* that began like this in **3:7** – *Therefore, just as the Holy Spirit says, “Today if you **hear His voice**, do not **harden** your **hearts**.”*

And today we will see that if you *harden* your heart, that *voice* you hear will *cut* you to the quick, *lay open* your sin, & bring you to *justice*.

This verse is not simply about **God's Word**, it's about the *futility* of **rejecting** **God's word**.

A warning to those who think they can ignore God forever.

- 1. The *penetrating power* of God's word (v.12).**
- 2. The *unmasking power* of God's gaze (v.13).**

If you've been *ignoring* God, consider the *penetrating power* of His word(v.12).

1. I love this saying: “*God has **spoken**, and He hasn't **mumbled!**” God speaks in every *place* and to every *generation*.

 - a. He speaks thru *nature*, thru *conscience*, thru *Scripture* & thru His *Son*.
 - i. God speaks thru **nature: Psa 19:1&2** – *The heavens are telling of the glory of God; and their expanse is declaring the work of His hands; day to day pours forth speech, and night to night reveals knowledge.*
 - ii. God speaks thru your **conscience: Rom 2:15** – [The Gentiles] ... *show the work of the Law written in their hearts, their conscience bearing witness and their thoughts alternately accusing or else defending them.*
 - iii. God speaks thru **Scripture: Psa 19:7** – *The Law of the Lord is perfect, restoring the soul.*
 - iv. And the *Letter to the Hebrews* begins like this: God speaks thru His Son, **Jesus Christ: Heb 1:1&2** – *God, after He **spoke** long ago to the fathers in the prophets in many portions and in many ways, in these last days has **spoken** to us in His **Son**, whom He appointed heir of all things, thru whom also He made the world.*
 - b. God *spoke* to ancient Israel with a command to *enter* the Promised Land. They *ignored* Him and wandered in the wilderness!
 - c. He *spoke* in in David's day, He *spoke* to these churches in the **1st** century, and He is **still** *speaking* to the church – including *our* church – today. Here in Hebrews, God is *particularly* concerned w/*spiritual procrastinators* (those of you *who* listen to the *Gospel* but won't *commit* to the *Gospel*).
 - d. The Holy Spirit's *warning* in every generation is this (**3:7, 15; 4:7**): “*Today, if you **hear** His voice, do not **harden** your heart.*”*

2. So here (12) we read **four** compelling truths about God's *word of warning*; His word is *living, active, piercing & judging*.

3. *The word of God is living.*
 - a. Scholars sometimes classify **OT Hebrew & NT Greek** as *dead languages*. **Not** according to **v.12!** ☺
 - i. Our author is using *present language* – God's *promises & His warnings* are currently & continuously *alive!* As in...*right now.*
 - ii. And God's word will be *alive* tomorrow! We read in **Isa 40:8** – *the grass withers, the flower fades, but the word of our God stands forever.*
 - b. And because His word is *alive*, it *gives life*. All the way back in **Gen 1** we read that *living things* produce **more living things!**
 - c. Be careful who you *listen* to! Is someone encouraging you to *put off* doing business with God...?
 - i. Jesus said: "*the words that I have spoken to you are spirit and are life.*"
 - ii. *The living God speaks living words. Dead men speak dead words.*

4. *The word of God is active.* God's word doesn't *wait* for you, it **comes** to you!
 - a. And because it's *active* it's *effective*. It's so *completely & perfectly effective*, some the Bible "*self-fulfilling.*" God's word *does* what God *intends* for it to do...!
 - b. **Isa 55:11** – "*So will My word be which goes forth from My mouth; It will not return to Me empty, without accomplishing what I desire, and without succeeding in the matter for which I sent it.*"
 - c. Friend, here is a sobering example of God's *active, self-fulfilling word*: when God says (Heb 3&4) that the *hard-hearted & unbelieving* "*will not enter My rest,*" ... you can take *that* to the bank!

5. *The word of God is **piercing**. More than the sharpest of blades...*

- a. Our verse uses a term that also found in the Apostle Paul's inventory of *spiritual armor* in **Eph 6**. Roman soldiers carried a short *sword* for close fighting. It was called a "*gladius*," and was one of *many* types of *swords* on the **1st** century battlefield.
 - i. Its *blade* was about **2"** wide & **2'** long, sharpened on *both edges*, weighing in at upwards of **2 lbs**.
 - ii. The sword was worn on the *right*, secured by the same *belt* that *girded their loins & secured their tunic*.
 - iii. The *two-edged sword* was primarily an **offensive** weapon. And the language here claims that it is (lit.) *the sharpest of swords*.

- b. What do you *do* with a sword? You cut things *open & apart!* The *language* of **v.12** is *graphic* – it begins w/ a *spiritual wound* & illustrates it w/ a *physical* one.
 - i. God's *truth* – God's *warnings* – cut deep & true. Peter may have *missed his mark* in *Gethsemane* (& Malchus was *glad he did!*), but *God's word* never cuts *wide* or *stops short!*
 - ii. Let's take a *theological excursion* here. **V.12** refers to our *spirit* & our *soul*.
 1. Theologians debate whether the Bible teaches that man is **dichotomis** (**two essential** parts – *body & soul*) or **trichotomos** (**three** parts – *body & soul & spirit*).
 2. Although, on face value, our verse seems to support the **trichotomos** perspective (a **3-part** person), I don't think the author is teaching *theology!* I think he's simply trying to impress on you just how *deep* & how *precise* the *piercing power* of God's word is!

iii. And so his claim is *reinforced* w/ this *graphic* picture of the *sword* of God's *word* laying open the most *stubborn procrastinator* or *scoffer* – all the way to the *bone*...all the way to his *spirit*!

1. Elsewhere, the Apostle Paul has written (**1 Cor 4:5**) – [the Lord] *will both bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and make manifest the counsels of the hearts.*

c. You get the *point* – *right!*?! When God *speaks*, His words *cut* deep & true. The verb is “*piercing/penetrating*” & (again) it's in the *present tense*. I.e., it cuts *now*–today, and keeps on *cutting* til its work is done.

6. *Add* them all up (*living, active, piercing*) and what's the *sum*...?

a. God's words *judge*. He doesn't simple *expose*, He *indicts*.

b. Men know your *actions*, God knows your *thoughts*. But beyond that, God knows the *motives* of your *heart* (in the Bible, your *heart* is the “*real, inner you*” that *defines & drives* who you *really are*).

i. What are you *hiding* in your heart? *Impurity, lust, anger, unforgiveness, greed, envy*...?

ii. What are you *hiding* in your heart...? **Nothing!** God's word *exposes* it all & *judges* it all.

Friend, God says *do not harden your heart, and God's word & warning is life giving, always active, soul piercing...& heart judging.*

But if you've been *hiding* from God, then consider the *unmasking* power of His gaze.

1. What was it the boxer **Joe Louis** said...? *You can run, but you can't... hide!*
 - a. Joe didn't know the *half* of it... **Read v.13.**
 - b. Our verse warns *spiritual fence-sitters* that God's gaze is *comprehensive, unmasking & perfectly holy.*

2. What does God *know*? Who does God *see*? *Everything! Everyone!*
 - a. Bible students call this God's *omniscience*. "*Omniscience*" (lit. *all knowing*) means that God *knows* everything. And consequently, He *sees* everyone, all the time. His understanding is *completely comprehensive.*
 - b. Pastor **Kent Hughes** writes that **Heb 4:13** is the most powerful statement about God's *omniscience* in the entire Bible...
 - c. Maybe so, but it's certainly not the *only* verse! **E.g.** ...
 - i. **Psa 90:8** – *You have set our iniquities before you, our secret sins in the light of Your presence.*
 - ii. **Prov 5:21** – *For the ways of a man are before the eyes of the Lord, and He watches all his paths.* (This was written as a warning to the *adulterer.*)
 - iii. **Turn w/ me to Mk 2:4-12 (read).** Don't you *love* this account!?! There is a lot here, but today I just want you to see **one truth**:
 1. **Vv.6-7** – The scribes are *down on Jesus*. But they are trying to *hide it* – at least *for now.*
 2. **V.8** – You can *run*, but you can't *hide!* **Not** when you are dealing with the Son of Man! *Immediately Jesus, aware in His spirit that they were reasoning that way w/in themselves...* This **reminds** us that God knows the *thoughts & intentions of our hearts* & so it **teaches** us that Jesus was *truly man & truly God.*

3. And God is **not** a *distant & indifferent* observer. Building on **v.12**, the tone in **v.13** is clearly one of *judgment*. God's holy gaze **unmasks sinners** & their *sins*.
- a. The key verb is (Gr.) **τραχηλιζω** – *laid bare (exposed)*. It has a couple of fascinating backgrounds:
 - i. The *first* is of a *wrestler* who grabs his opponent by the throat with the result that both men are *face to face*.
 - ii. The *second* background (same word) pictures an ancient courtroom practice in which a *condemned* man stands in court with a *dagger* bound beneath his *chin*, **point up**, forcing him to *look out at the court & at those he's wronged*.
 - b. The *point*, friend, is that God's holy gaze will bring every sin to light! *You will see it. God will see it. Your mask will be pulled off.*
4. God's gaze is a *holy gaze* because we are dealing with a *holy God* – the **one true God**. The writer draws our thoughts to **Him** *with whom we have to do*.
- a. Still *sitting* on that *Gospel fence*...?
 - b. Consider this: when you **hear** the *Gospel* and **reject** it, you are judging God! His *wisdom*, His *indictments*, His *warning*, His *plans*, His *promises*.
 - i. You've place them all in your *puny scale* & somehow found God wanting.
 - ii. But is that *smart*...?
 - c. My friend, this God, *with whom we have to do*, is your *Creator & Judge*.
 - i. **Heb 9:27** - *And inasmuch as it is appointed for men to die once and after this comes judgment,*
 - ii. **Heb 10:31** - *It is a terrifying thing to fall into the hands of the living God.*
 - iii. **Heb 12:29** - *for our God is a consuming fire.*

- d. This is the One *with whom we have to do* – if you are coming to church *carelessly*, if you are hearing His promises *casually*, be *careful* who you're *messing* with!

The *Word of God* is not simply a *leather-bound* book on your nightstand or a *techy app* on your smart phone.

God speaks to us with *instructions & promises*.

And if you *ignore* Him, He speaks with *warnings*.

He speaks in *judgment*.

And there is **no** escaping His *word* or His *gaze*.

Don't *harden you heart* against God's love & grace.

...pray...