

The Word of God in Biblical Perspective
The Word Of The Lord Is The Sword Of The Lord
Hebrews 4:12-13
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This is our third study on the divine majesty and sufficiency of God's Word and our text for this study is the book of Hebrews. I'm going to begin reading in verse 8. Hebrews 4:8-13 says,

8 For if Joshua had given them (God's Covenant people) rest, God would not have spoken of another day later on. 9 So then, there remains a Sabbath rest for the people of God, 10 for whoever has entered God's rest has also rested from his works as God did from his. 11 Let us therefore strive to enter that rest, so that no one may fall by the same sort of disobedience. 12 For the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and of spirit, of joints and of marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart. 13 And no creature is hidden from his sight, but all are naked and exposed to the eyes of him to whom we must give account. The grass withers and the flower fades. This is God's Word. It abides forever and by His grace and mercy may it be preached to you.

This is a series on the divine majesty and sufficiency of God's Word. Before I review my heart has been a little bit heavy as this is my last shot at the high school kids before they go away for college. I know many are leaving this week or next and we're going to miss you but praise the Lord the Spirit of God will go with you. The Word of God is for you and Christ is before you. I hope and pray this sermon today will be helpful for you as well. Do know that we are going to be praying for you, loving you, shepherding you, caring for you and available to you. Schools are starting back. In a couple of Sunday evenings from now we will have the Briarwood convocation for all who are apart of the school and public schools as well. It is also for our homeschoolers but what I want you to know is that education is committed supposedly to the appropriation and the understanding of truth and God's Word is Truth. The Spirit of God has given us the Word of God and as the Spirit of God has given us the Word of God then the Bible is Truth. All that is in the Bible is Truth and all the truth I need to know God for life and eternity is in the Bible and is true. That's why it's so important to know those things in mind, heart, and soul.

If I were Satan which I'm not, and which I'm very grateful but if I were there are many things that Satan does, has done and will do to hinder believers, to hinder people from coming to Christ, to hinder believers in their living for Christ, to hinder believers and the church in their serving Christ. There are a lot of things that Satan can and does do but this is the one thing I know he does. He would either want to distract you from the priority of God's Word in your life or he would want you to distrust the effectiveness of God's Word in your life. Churches today, I'm talking about well meaning, motivated churches, preaching, teaching, disciple making, have kind of been put on the back burner and been marginalized because we have a lot more confidence in our ingenuity, our creativity, our ideas and our programs than we have in the Word of God itself. Therefore we will tell everyone we believe the Bible is true but actually in practice we put a lot

more confidence in ourselves, our resolves, our thoughtfulness, our creativity and everything than we do in the Word of God itself.

For many this is a dead Book because it is never used. It's not only dead but it's considered impotent. There are a lot more things that are effective than this. It's dead, it's impotent and it's ineffective. This is not so according to the verse in the Bible I have asked you to look at with me in this study. Hebrews 4:12 says, *For the word of God is (dead?, no) **living** and (impotent?, no) **active**, (ineffective?, no) **sharper** than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and of spirit, of joints and of marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart.* It not only penetrates and pierces it allows us to even know the unknowable. It divides the indivisible and it allows you to know the thoughts and intentions of the heart, the unknowable. That's the Word of God that we have before us.

Now we come to this particular text. This verse that we are going to look at is like a stair step verse. We're going to climb three steps. I went to geometry in the tenth grade and remember getting the bad news that there were a bunch of axioms I had to learn but I also learned that you can learn axiom 5 until you learn axiom 4 and you can't learn 4 until you learn 3, etc. That's a little bit they way this verse is. You come to number 1 about the Word of God, then it takes you to step 2, then it takes you to step 3 and then he blossoms out step 3 for us in this text. But before we look at the text I want to look at the context because that's important.

The book of Hebrews is a wonderful book that I commend to your study. It's very difficult in this book to just jump in on one verse but if I could what the book of Hebrews is saying is that everything that God has said to His covenant people in the Old Testament was pointing to Christ, and not only was it pointing to Christ, the Christ that it points to is superior to everything in the Old Testament. So the book of Hebrews will say Christ is superior to Moses. Christ is superior to David. Christ is superior to Melchizedek. Christ is superior to Aaron. In this text Christ is superior to Joshua. That Joshua, that wonderful follower of Moses, who led them into the Promised Land and out of the bondage, the work, the slavery of Egypt, 40 years in the wilderness, now to the Promised Land, Christ is better than Joshua. Not only is He better than Joshua, but He is going to take you to a rest superior to what they had. That's why God didn't say, "In Joshua you have rest" but He said, "in Joshua you have a Sabbath rest in the land but you have a better day of rest that's coming down this. This is just a little taste of it."

I want to try to put it this way. Back in the book of Genesis, in God's creation, there were a lot of things God did in creation that show His glory to our benefit but He would do them, designing them for something even greater than the benefits that come to us in creation. For instance, He made marriage, right? Praise the Lord, one-man, one-woman, one life and when He made marriage He was actually making a temporary institution that had its fulfillment in Christ and his Church, the Bride of Christ. This mystery is great but I am speaking of Christ and his Church. When God creates the family and He promises blessings and multiplication, He is actually looking to the multiplication of His family from all the nations that are going to take place ultimately. When God points out the tree of life in the garden, that was only a taste which was pointing to Christ who is the Tree of Life. When there is the tree of the knowledge of good and evil that they are not to eat from it is because it is pointing them to Himself and

the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom. That's where our knowledge comes from, it's Him.

When God makes man, He makes man in His image. He labors six days and rests from His work on the seventh day and then God made us to function that way. He tells us to remember the Sabbath day so He gives us a day every week to rest on. He says work six days and rest on the seventh and in that rest worship Me and that's the way He has made us to live in His image but actually He is looking beyond that to a Sabbath rest of eternity where we rest from the labors of this world into the glory and majesty of eternity. There's another day coming that's greater than this Sabbath Day. So as they entered the Promised Land and rested from the bondage of Egypt He is actually pointing them to a much greater rest that takes place in One greater than Joshua. It is Christ.

How can I know this rest? How can I know about this forgiveness, this pardon, this joy, this everlasting blessing? God says, "I will tell you of it." The Word of God is living, active and sharper than any two-edged sword. It tells you of the rest that you have in Christ in One greater than Joshua and it warns you of the day that's coming. When in that day if you are in Christ you will enter into your final rest but if you are not, it is a terrifying thing to fall into the hands of the living God. For there is a day that is appointed unto men death, and then the judgment and do you remember the last verse in the text? Hebrews 4:13b, "...to whom (*Him*) we must give account." Do you want to give an account on that day or would you like to stand in that day with your account stamped "paid in full"? Paid in full.

Let's look a little bit closer and Hebrews 4:12; "*For the word of God...*" I need to stop right here. Some commentators say this is talking about Jesus and I don't think he's talking about Jesus here. I'll give you one simple reason. The Word of God there is obviously a title for Jesus according to the gospel of John but I don't think that's the context here. The reason why I don't think it's the context here is because it's talking about how the Word of God points you to one greater than Joshua and it's telling us something about the Word of God and that is, it "*is living and active, sharper...*" I already know that Christ is living, active and sharper but what about this Bible that I have. Is this merely a circumstantial collection of approximation of things that were written over 1400 years by 40+ authors and I happen to have it, but what I basically have is a relic of antiquity in my hands? Is that what I have in my hands here? Do I have in the Word of God something that is a dead letter or something that is a book that contains things that were written and somehow has made its way to my hands? There were these crazy people, literally thousands of them that died so that it could be in my hands. Is that what this is? He says, "Oh no, the Word of God is not a dead book of antiquity. It's not a relic from the past. It's not a museum piece. It is living. It is alive. It brings life. It brings dead sinners that are born-again by the Word of God. It nourishes sinners saved by grace. It is a lifeline from the living God. It is living, working and pulsating relentlessly throughout all of life and into every area of my life."

Secondly, now that I know it's living, what does it do? It's active relentlessly. It pulsates the truth that God has loved sinners and that Jesus Christ saves sinners. It declares the glory and majesty of Christ, the Redeemer and all that He is and all that He does. This isn't a magic word. This is a living active word. It's the Word of God that's alive and it's active.

Thirdly, it's living, it's active and as it lives and as it acts and as it is working, how does it act and work? There were two things. Here's how it lives and acts. It lives and acts in such a manner that the only way I can describe it to you is to borrow a word picture. It is sharper than *any* possible two-edged sword. I want to give your description of a Roman soldier so you know what he's talking about. Here's a Roman soldier fully armed, every part of his armor and all of his arms are designed to function together. One of the things that he has is a sword, designed by the Romans to win the victory as quickly as possible. So what they learned to do was how to design and fabricate a sword that was double edged. It was two-edged. Harry, what does that mean? When it comes out from behind that shield and hits the enemy, it's two edged. It cuts going in and it is so sharpened that it cuts again coming out. It cuts both ways. The Bible is *sharper than any two edged sword* (Hebrews 4:12).

How does that sharpness seem? It pierces. He then takes a physical picture and a spiritual picture. Hebrews 4:12 goes on to say, "... *piercing to the division of soul and of spirit, of joints and of marrow...*" He takes what seemingly to the eye, is indivisible and this Word of God that is living, active and so sharp that the indivisible is divided. It just cuts right through. We would probably use the phrase today to say it is "laser like" today. It goes right where you think there is no place to go but it goes. So he takes a physical picture and a spiritual picture and what seemingly is indivisible, soul and spirit, two terms that refer to the same thing. Joint and marrow, is something that describes a bone that you are looking at, and he takes those two things and says, "those two things give you a picture of what seemingly is indivisible but My Word won't be stopped. My Word is relentless, living, and active. It pulsates, it penetrates and pierces even the indivisible. What you think can't be divided, it can and will."

Secondly, this two edged sword is not only sharp to the piercing but it is sharp to give you discernment. Hebrews 4:12 goes on to say, "... *discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart.*" Here's a question. Do you know your heart? No. You don't know my heart. I don't know your heart. I don't even know my own heart. I'm glad you don't know my heart. I'm glad I don't know your heart. Who knows the heart? God knows the heart and He has designed one instrument in His hands to give us discernment from time to time of what is really in our heart and what we really need in our heart even down to the thoughts and intentions of our heart. His Word when I read it, when it is shared, when it is discussed, when it is sung, penetrates and pierces. Not only does it pierce the indivisible but it reveals the unknowable, what's in my heart. God begins to unfold it in my life. That's the Scripture that is before us.

Is it dead? No, it's living. Is it impotent? No, it's active. Is it ineffective? No, it's sharper than any two edged sword. It cuts as it goes in and it cuts as it comes out. It's doing it right now. I'm preaching it. It's working. You have heard it. You sung it. It's working. For some of you as it has gone forward its cut, life unto life. For some of you it's cut the other way, death unto death, saying "when will this vain babblers cease? How long will I have to endure this Bible stuff?" It sits upon a hard heart soon to be plucked away. Paul says it this way in 2 Corinthians 2:14-16, **14** *But thanks be to God, who in Christ always leads us in triumphal procession, and through us spreads the fragrance of the knowledge of him everywhere. 15 For we are the aroma of Christ to God among those who are being saved and among those who are perishing, 16 to one a fragrance from death to death, to the other a fragrance from life to life.* In other words,

when we preach for some, one edge is an aroma from life unto life, for others death unto death. It's still working. God is going to get glorified.

Those of you who know Jesus as your Lord and Savior, it does its double edged work. Praise the Lord for that! It convicts us of our sin and then it consoles us with our forgiveness. It exposes my sin and it exalts my Savior in whom I have life. It convicts me in thought, word and deed. Then it comforts me with the balm of Gilead upon my soul. It hammers at my hardness of heart and it soothes my troubled heart. It's absolutely amazing in moments like this how God's Word is accomplishing so many things all at the same time. Why? It is because it's God's Word, not man's word. It's living, active and sharper than any two edged sword.

So what does this mean in our life? I want to give you three things. I'm going to phrase these in such a way that you may think, "Harry this is very obvious" and I am going to agree with you. This is the Word of God. It's not dead. It's living. It's not impotent. It's active. It's not ineffective. It's sharper. So Christian, I need it. Church, it's wonderful to be creative and thoughtful but our confidence is in the Word of God. The Word of God exalts the God of the Word. God will get His work done through His people. That's where our confidence is so what would that mean?

Takeaway number one is, in light of this text, the Word of God is the Word from God. Did He use men? Yes. Did He use them as they would think through things, work through things in all of their humanity? Absolutely yes, but the Author, through the authors is God Himself. Therefore what I have, notice the definite article, *the* Word of God which means I have a Word from God. I have the Word from God Himself. It is His sword. It is His instrument. It has been designed by Him and He uses it. He owns it and He applies it. Here's what I'm trying to say. We're not talking about magic. Why is it living, active and sharper? It is because it is not just a book. It's not just a word. It is the Word of God. God is living. God is active. God is sharper therefore because God is active, living and sharper, He pierces to my heart and this His Word is His instrument. He designed it to use it in my life.

Without it I can't be born again. I'm dead. I need the Word of God living and working within me. Peter says in 1 Peter 1:23, "*you have been born again, not of perishable seed but of imperishable, through the living and abiding word of God.*" I need it to nourish me. I need to long for it like a baby longs to nurse from the pure milk from the mother. I need to have it as meat in my life, as milk in my life because without it I don't have any life. It is Christ's lifeline to me. It's God's Word from Him to me and God Himself has designed it and is using it in my life therefore when I open it I don't meet dry, philosophical, religious concepts. I meet God Himself speaking to me. Romans 10:13-15, 17 says, **13** *For "everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved."* **14** *How then will they call on him in whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in him of whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without someone preaching?* **15** *And how are they to preach unless they are sent?* **17** *So faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ.* My sheep know My voice and they follow Me (John 10:27).

My friends, tomorrow morning the most important decision that you make is not bran flakes or eggs but God's Word that He might speak to you and you might hear Him that you might know Him and what He has designed for you. Elders, deacons, and pastors

our people need us but they need us to bring the Word to them for when we bring the Word we bring the Savior to them.

Do you know what box ball is? A theologian was the one who got box ball going and he was also a medical doctor. He was on the board of the YMCA back before the turn of the century and he decided that the wintertime was a hard time to reach boys. The motto for the YMCA was train up a young boy in spirit, mind, and body. So this man decided to invent a game that would attract the young boys in the wintertime to come to the YMCA and he would also have a Bible study with them. Today we call this sports outreach ministry. This man had already thought about it. So he finally found something that a soccer ball was good for. That's just for my son-in-law. So he got his soccer ball and two boxes and wrote up 13 rules. He put one box on one wall and one box on the other wall and he told them abiding by these 13 rules we're going to throw this ball into the boxes and he called that box ball. When they would finish playing the game he would do Bible studies with them. You are probably thinking ahead of me. One day he got tired of the boxes and so he found a peach basket. So he replaced the boxes with peach baskets and after a while some of the boys said, "I'm a little tired of climbing up that ladder to get the ball out of the basket" so they then took a knife and cut the bottom of the peach basket out. So that is how we ended up with basketball. We get about basketball. Naismith got excited about bringing the boys to the Bible so he could get them to God through Christ their Savior.

The second take away is the Word of God is the Word *of* God. Notice how in the text it doesn't say the words of God. It says the Word of God. In other words, and that Old Testament through to the New Testament God is not giving us multiple words, philosophically designed or religiously applied. He is giving us a word. He uses parables, signs, prophecies, promises, types, symbols and historical events that He has produced by His providence. Everything that He is doing and saying, all that He is putting there, designed in the Word of God to bring you to the Word of God, Jesus Christ. That's why He has put it there. Yes Joshua is back there, why? It is to bring you the One greater. Yes Moses is back there, why? It is to bring you the One greater. Yes David is back there, why? It is to bring you the One greater. Yes the offerings are there, why? It is to bring you to the One who would offer Himself. The priests are there, why? It is to bring you to the Priest who now stands, intercedes and pleads for you with a sure and strong plea. All of this is there in this magnificent tapestry of drama, of historical events, of parables, of teaching, of symbols, of signs, of prophecies. It's all there pointing to Christ therefore don't take the majesty and sufficiency of the Scripture to worship the Bible. Take the majesty and sufficiency of the Scripture to come to the living Christ. That's why it's there.

One of my great fears who will defend the majesty and sufficiency of the Scripture, actually become Bible worshippers and become enamored with the Bible thinking that our relationship with the Bible is what gives us life, instead of the purpose of the Bible which is for us to have a relationship with Christ. That's what gives us life. The Pharisees were like that. Here's what Jesus said to them. It's a powerful passage. It's found in John 5:36-40; **36** *But the testimony that I have is greater than that of John. For the works that the Father has given me to accomplish, the very works that I am doing, bear witness about me that the Father has sent me. 37 And the Father who sent me has himself borne witness about me. His voice you have never heard, his form you have never seen, 38 and you do not have his word abiding in you, for you do not believe the one*

whom he has sent. **39 You search the Scriptures** (they had their Bible studies, they listened to the teaching of the Bible) **because you think that in them you have eternal life; and it is they that bear witness about me, 40 yet you refuse to come to me that you may have life.** The Pharisees thought that they would get eternal life by searching the Scriptures. Jesus is the purpose of the Bible being given.

Christianity is not proclaiming a salvation that is earned. It is a salvation that has been accomplished and then given. Christianity does not talk about a Jesus we have discovered. Christianity proclaims Christ who has been revealed to us. We didn't discover Jesus. He was revealed to us that we might have Him, know Him, love Him, trust Him and serve Him. In every possible way in the context of holiness and righteousness God has marshaled His wisdom in His Word to bring us to Christ. It is the Word from God. It is the Word of God. It is the Word of Christ. I wished I had written this but I didn't. I can still share with you: *The Word of God is like a glorious choir, loud may its anthem ring. Listen to the many parts and the tongues unite but it only has one song to sing and that is Christ your Savior.* So come listen to the love of God for you in Christ and His Word.

Cindy and I were cleaning out a closet and found a box with our old letters to each other when she was in college and I was in between colleges at the time. On numerous occasions I was in between colleges until I was converted. So we pulled out the letters that were rubber banded together and in stacks. They were letters that she had written to me and I had also written letters to her which were in there. So we pulled the rubber bands off and began to go through them. We hadn't seen them for years. Thankfully every single one had been opened. Can you imagine me getting to one of them and it wasn't opened? I can remember when they came. I would read through them fast just to find out everything she said. Then I would go back and think, "What is she really saying here?" You have 66 love letters from your Savior. Will you get to glory with any of them unopened? Read through it. Man, it's exciting and then go back and say, "Okay, what is He really saying in here. What is He really telling me here?" This is the lifeline of God to bring you to Christ who is your life and He speaks to you.

Thirdly, and finally here is the last take away. The Word of God is the Word *from* God. The Word of God is the Word *of* God. That is it brings you to Christ. Thirdly, the Word of God is the Word *to* God. You have yet to do with Him, we have yet to encounter Him. How many of you right now are alive? You're not getting out of this alive unless Jesus comes first, you will die. Then you will stand before the living God. Will you have heard the Word of God, been brought to the God of the Word, trusted in Christ, born-again, nourished and now step into eternity? Or will you stand under the judgment of God with your account unpaid and here from Him, "Depart from Me I never knew you"?

One lady came up to me after I preached this sermon the first time and said "B-I-B-L-E, basic instructions before leaving earth" and it's come to Christ. Christ is not revealed in the Bible to be an example for your faith. Christ is revealed in the Bible to be the Object of your faith. In Him alone I rest. Have you got something else? Is it your house? Will that get you to eternity? Is it your job? Is it your promotion? Is it your bank account? Is it a girl, boy, man, woman, husband or wife? No, there is only One. He has given you His Word. It's living, active and sharper. Come and meet Him. He has designed it to be at work in your heart and soul that you might trust Him alone.

When Voltaire died in 1789 he said Christianity has got some interesting things but it won't last long and certainly not that Bible, that collection of legends and myths

that only the deceived find some hope in. Fifty years later his home was the printing press that the Geneva Bible Society used to put Bibles all over Europe. The Word of God is living, active and sharper than any two edged sword. Come He will feed your heart. Let's pray.

Prayer:

Father, thank You for the time we could be together in Your Word. Thank You for the privilege to see the majesty and sufficiency of Christ from Your majestic and sufficient Word. Would You now work in our hearts and lives? Friend, if Christ has been an acquaintance or an example and today you want to come to Him as your Lord and Savior would you just simply pray, "Jesus, I come to You. I put my trust in You. Your Word has done its work. It's cut. I'm a sinner. It's cut again. I hear You're my Savior and now I trust You alone today." Father, for Your people who have already made that commitment may the Word that You have given them live actively with sharpness. Convict us and console us. May it expose our sin and exalt our Savior. May it nourish us as we have been born-again by it and may we live feasting upon it and then take us to glory to be with the One whom it has brought us to, Christ our Lord. In His Name I pray, Amen.