

XIV. Thy Word is Truth in Biblical Perspective  
*The Supremacy and Sufficiency of God's Word*  
“The Word of God in Portrait and Practice”

Hebrews 4:11–13

Dr. Harry L. Reeder III

November 8, 2015 – Morning sermon

In today's study our text is from Hebrews 4:11–13 with our primary focus on verse 12. This is God's Word and it's the truth. Hebrews 4:11–13 says [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, the flower fades, God's Word abides forever and by His grace and mercy may His Word be preached for you.

This is the last sermon I'm doing in our series of Thy Word is Truth, the Supremacy and Sufficiency of God's Word. The Word of God is infallible, inerrant and the final rule of what we believe and practice. It is the text that I have saved because there is one more issue I want to bring before you concerning our study and fulfilling our theme for the year. The theme for the year has been the sanctity of God's Word. Thy Word is truth. This theme was taken from the verse in John 17:17 which says [17] *Sanctify them in the truth; your word is truth.* The Word doesn't become truth or contain truth but it is the truth that God has given to us.

We have learned the origin of God's Word. It is inspired by God. God has breathed it out through the lips and pens of forty plus Prophets and Apostles to give us His Word over a 1600 year span. It is inspired and inerrant because it's God's Word. It is true because it's God's Word. It is infallible, dependable, unbreakable and understandable. You can never understand it exhaustively but you can understand it accurately. It is life transforming because it transforms what you believe and how you live. It is profitable for teaching, reproof, correction and training in righteousness. It is sufficient that the man of God may be adequate and equipped for every good work.

Here is the last thought for you in this series. The Word of God is not only supreme in its supremacy and sufficient in its sufficiency but it is proficient in its proficiency. That is what this text in Hebrews deals with. I have mentioned this before but you all came today with a library and it's the most majestic library possible for there are 66 books, making up the Scripture that has the truth of God revealed. It is an amazing library that you have. If you walked in today with Bible then you got passed our security with a lethal weapon. This weapon is not only lethal to kill but it can also give life. It is an amazing weapon that produces death and life. It kills in order to lead you to life. I want you to go through it with me by looking at this text.

Hebrews 4:11 says [11] *Let us therefore strive to enter that rest, so that no one may fall by the same sort of disobedience.* What is He talking about here? The first three chapters of the book of Hebrews has laid out for us the supremacy and sufficiency of Jesus that the Word of God which is supreme and sufficient points to and that Jesus is greater than Moses, the angels, Joshua, and all and He is the fulfilment of all in the Old Testament. And He stands supreme and sufficient as Savior but then they go back to that Old Testament and show that God's Word had

been abandoned by the people and they were not able to enter into the rest that God provides in redemption because they had dismissed the Word of God.

He says to us, you're on the fulfillment side. You're not in the Old Covenant anticipating with promises and prophecies. You're in the New Covenant with all the fulfillment of the prophecies and promises. You don't have the partial Word pointing to Christ but you have the full Word of God that expounds the Christ. So don't do that same sort of disobedience and to tell you how important that Word is so that you might enter into that rest He then says this about the Word. Hebrews 4:12 says *[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.*

What happens with this powerful Word that he has just described? Hebrews 4:13 says *[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.* This tells you that God is fully omnipotent, omniscient, and omnipresent and He knows your heart. We lay before Him naked and exposed and that's a colloquialism for vulnerable and helpless and accountable. This same epistle will tell us in Hebrews 9:27, *[27] And just as it is appointed for man to die once, and after that comes judgment.* When that day comes I want to be in Jesus with rest from my sins, emancipated from sin's guilt and power. How do I get into Jesus? It is by the Spirit of God who uses the Word of God.

So what is this Word of God? From Hebrews 4:12 He gives us five attributes of the Word of God. The first two deal with a portrait or a picture of the Word of God and then He takes it from picture to practice with the last three attributes. Hebrews 4:12 says *[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.* Do not dismiss that first phrase – the Word of God. The Bible is not the word of men about God. The Bible is the Word of God to men through men about God, who He is, what He does, who we are and why we need Him. The Bible is the Word of God.

I Thessalonians 2:13 says *[13] And we also thank God constantly for this, that when you received the word of God, which you heard from us, you accepted it not as the word of men but as what it really is, the word of God, which is at work in you believers.* The Word of God today is at work in you who believe because it is the Word of God and we accept it as the Word of God. It gives us all kinds of promises and the reason we know those promises that it states are true is not because they are in the Bible but it is because they are in there from God. It is the Word of God. He is the origin of His Word, the subject of His Word and He communicates to us through His Word. Because it is the Word of God that means five things are true about it.

Number one is it is living. The word of men is not living, it's dead. The Word of God is alive. When I became a Christian the Lord used an evangelist that came to the church I started attending. His name was Kyle Thurman from Texas who was a street preacher. He gave this illustration of how he gets a crowd when he is preaching on the street. He did this by putting his hat on the ground and run around it in a circle while people were walking by and then he'd start shouting 'It's alive! I'm telling you its alive, come here and see!' After a while a crowd would gather. Then he would pick up his hat and underneath it was his Bible. He'd pick up his Bible and say "It's living, active and sharper than any two-edged sword. Now let me tell you what it says." I'm not necessarily recommending that as our evangelistic method here but every time I read this I think of what he did.

The Word is living. The Greek word for living declares it is a unique book and that this book is alive. Peter says in I Peter 1:23 [23] *since you have been born again, not of perishable seed but of imperishable, through the living and abiding word of God.* It's also why He says the grass withers, the flower fades but the Word of the Lord abides forever. It is a book that lives forever. It will never fade away. The pages that it is written on might but the Word of God itself will never fade away for it is a living Word. It is unlike the word of men for it is alive.

Secondly, it is powerful. Another translation says active here for powerful. The Greek word here is *enérgeia* and we get the word energy from that. It is energetic. It has the power to bring you from the trash heap of sin to a Savior who went to the cross and died for you that you could have eternal life. It has the power to keep growing you in the grace and knowledge of Christ after you're converted, born again. It helps you and grows you in the maturity of Him in the hands of the Spirit of God. It has the power to calm you when the fears of this world would come upon you. It has the power to counsel you when you have lost your way. It has the power to convict you when you have started making peace treaties with sin. It has the power to console you and work within your life so that it is constantly bringing you from death unto life and keeping you in the pathway of life. It has the power to be a light unto your feet and a lamp unto your life.

Thirdly, it is not just sharp but sharper. So now we go from the portrait of this Word being living and active to the practice. It is sharper than any two-edged sword. When I was in the third grade I was called to the office and for me that was not an unusual occurrence when I was growing up. There was my dad and granddaddy in the principal's office and I thought 'I'm a dead man.' My dad never sided with me on issues of school for it was always the teacher is right and I'm wrong. This happened in the Spring and the principal told me I had been checked out for the day. After Spring training was over in baseball, teams would come back for an exhibition game and Charlotte, North Carolina was the farm team for the Washington Senators at the time and then became the Minnesota Twins. They had come to play the Boston Red Sox for an exhibition game and I was getting to go to that game instead of being in school.

The reason I was able to go was because my granddaddy was a scout for the Washington Senators and my dad was also in minor league baseball. We walked right into the stadium, passed the turn styles, right down to the box seats behind third base. I'm in awe looking at all these incredible, famous baseball players at the time. I also saw my number one baseball player of all times whose baseball card was in my pocket who was the greatest hitter that has ever lived and that was Ted Williams. My dad and granddaddy picked me up and put me over the wall and I'm on the field. My dad says "Meet Ted Williams son." I don't think I washed my hands for about three years after that.

I had this picture, this portrait of Ted Williams and copied it my whole life growing up. I wore number nine whenever I could. That baseball card cost me a whole penny to get. The picture of him on this card was him swinging the bat, with his cap tipped just a little bit and he is watching the ball go out of the ballpark. You can just see how he finishes his swing high and strong and I used to copy that as much as I could all the time as a hitter. That day I was at the game I got to watch him. It was the fourth inning and he had a two one count. The pitcher tried to sneak a low inside curve ball and that ball was still rising when it went over the right field fence. I am cheering, watching, excited because I didn't just have the portrait, I had the practice. I saw it in life.

The evangelical church still has the portrait of what the Word of God is and any of them would tell me that the Word is living and active but are we putting it into practice? Here is

what you find out. In practice it is sharper than any two edged sword and it's nothing but blade. Here they are talking about that weapon that Roman soldiers used in a close up battle. It was a short two edged sword that was purposefully honed in order to do two things. When it was used in battle, it would cut going in and coming out. That is what your Bible is. It is a God honed blade. It has two edged. For those who believe it is life. For those who don't believe it is death. This Word points from the Word Incarnate who went to the cross to die for our sins and for many reading this you are drawn to Him, from death unto life. For some of you it is hard to hear and that is not an incidental response, for that is putting hardness upon the heart.

There is never a neutral moment when you are handling God's Word. It is cutting both ways. If you know Christ or want to know Christ it cuts first of all to show you your sin. You are helpless, exposed, naked under the eye of God and accountable to Him. Then it has another blade that exalts God's solution to your problem, His Son Jesus Christ. It exposes sin and exalts the Savior. It cuts in with one blade of law that shows us were sinners and we can't save ourselves and it cuts out with another blade of Good News where God has given you salvation freely because His Son paid for it at the cross. As it works in our life it is sharper than any other instrument – it is the sword of the Lord that is sharp to convict and to console, to show us our guilt and shame and then to show us the One who removes all guilt and shame because of His redeeming work on the cross.

Fourthly, it is piercing. It penetrates. He uses two illustrations to get our attention. We are made up of two parts – physical and spiritual. Made in the image of God we have a spirit also called a soul, mind, and heart which are different terms to look at different aspects of our spiritual being, our immaterial being that makes us in the image of God. This is so living, so powerful, so sharp that it can even divide soul and spirit. Then he goes to the physical picture where it can even divide joints and marrow. He is telling us the Word of God is alive, powerful and sharper than any two edged sword.

The Bible is full of word pictures like that in Jeremiah 23:29 that says [29] *Is not my word like fire, declares the LORD, and like a hammer that breaks the rock in pieces?* The Word of God is like fire to burn away the dross and a hammer to break away the heart. The Word of God is like the bread of life from which we live. Man does not live by bread alone but by every Word that proceeds out of the mouth of God. The Word of God is like living water that cleanses us and refreshes us. I could go on and on with these Biblical word pictures but the one from this text is that it is sharper than a two edged sword and when it is used it pierces what seems to be impenetrable. Where? It penetrates to the heart. God is not interested in any white washing tombs. God cleans them out for He goes to the thoughts and intentions of our heart.

Fifthly it is judging. It is discerning of the thoughts and intentions of the heart. Why? That is where everything in life comes from. The mouth speaks from what fills the heart. The life is transformed because the heart is renewed. The heart of the problem is the problem with the heart. So God goes right to the problem and He sends the Word of God in the hands of the Spirit of God buttressed by the prayers of God's people, right to our heart. What is our heart thinking? What is motivating it? The Word of God lays bare the motives and thoughts of our hearts.

I don't know your heart and you don't know my heart. I really don't want to know your heart and I don't want you to know my heart. Who knows my heart? It is God. I know my heart better than you know my heart but I don't know my heart like God knows my heart. I have the Word of God that is able to give me clarity concerning my heart if I use it. What am I thinking in my heart? What is motivating me in my heart? So here is the Word of God.

Do you see how these five things about the Word of God are building? It goes from the picture to the practice. Because it is living and powerful it is sharper than any two edged sword. What God has designed is sharper than what any man can design. It is also penetrating and pierces in as well as it is discerning for it brings judgment so that you can look not simply at the outside but you can look at what is producing the outside, that which is happening in my heart. All of this is just a reflection of God. Who is God? He is the One true and living God. God is true. His Word is true. God is living and so is His Word. God is powerful and so is His Word. God is sharper, penetrating and so is His Word. God pierces where the issues are and so does His Word. God reveals to us who we are, who He is and what we can be when we surrender to Him and put our trust in Him alone. He loves to make all things new to forgive us and transform us and grow us in the grace and knowledge of Christ.

Here is the takeaway on the proficiency of Scripture. How is this Word pictured, rightly practiced? The Scripture is the instrument of God's mighty acts which is more powerful, more precise and more penetrating than any and all of the instruments of men or Satan. How did God create? He did it by speaking His Word. How did God save us? He did it by sending the Word, Christ Incarnate. How do we know our Creator and Redeemer? It is by giving us the Word Inscripturated that we might know the God of glory. God's Word is without error. It is unfailing, relentless, and unstoppable to accomplish the purposes of the God who originated it, the God whom it reveals and to those whom it is applied.

God's Word has the power to break the heart for it's like a hammer that can break the heart. It is also like a scalpel that can cut out an old heart and give it a new heart. It penetrates to the depths of our life all the way to the thoughts and intentions of our life and reveals our life. Again the heart of the problem is the problem with the heart but the glorious thing is that when you get converted you get a new heart. We also have an enemy outside and inside. The enemy outside is Satan and the enemy inside is the old man. There are pockets of poison of that old way of thinking and feeling in our life.

Where does sin come from? James 1:13 says [13] *Let no one say when he is tempted, "I am being tempted by God," for God cannot be tempted with evil, and he himself tempts no one.* God tests you to reveal who you are but God doesn't tempt you to sin. Man sins when the external temptation is married to the lust of the heart and what is produced causes sin and death. God is telling you that He sent His Word to those who know Christ and convicted you of your sin. He showed you a Savior and you came to Him. You are born again with a new heart and a new record in Jesus Christ but you still have that old man and that old man keeps wanting to get back on the throne of that heart. Satan outside and the old man inside, will give you every possible rationalization why this sin is okay – in front of the computer, at the office in secret. The first thing God has given you to deal with this is His Word – preached faithfully, read under the eye of God. When you read God's Word it can expose those first stirrings of the thoughts and intentions of your heart that if not dealt with will lead to the despair of sin in our life.

Brothers and sisters, this Word is not only used so that we can be born again but it is used so that we can grow in it. This Word was used by the Holy Spirit to convert us and this Word is used to keep us and grow us because it will expose those first stirrings and rationalizations as to why it is okay to do something we shouldn't. It will only do it if the Word is being used in your life. This is the Word of God and not the word of men. This is the instrument of God to bring you to Himself, to grow you in grace and to expose within your heart those places which will bring despair into your life as a Christian unless you kill sin. He has given you a double edged sword that allows you to kill sin in your life.

The church in this country needs revival. This nation doesn't so much need to be reclaimed but it needs to be claimed with the Gospel. This culture needs to be penetrated with truth and love. We are not waiting for a unique, exotic program that some Christian, some pastor or some church figures out. We are waiting to unsheathe the sword and wield it with those who march on their knees in prayer, surrendered to the Spirit of God. That is what is needed. I am not opposed to innovation. I was so intimidated to come to Briarwood in 1999 with all of these ministries that I had benefited from and try to imitate where I had been. I look at absolute amazement at all the ministries at this church but their success was not the uniqueness of the program. Their success had to do with each one of them being designed to unsheathe the sword. Is it outreach to a school, the business community, the statehouse?

The power is not in the uniqueness of what we have designed but that whatever we have designed has had one purpose which is to unsheathe the sword of truth so that it is being preached with two edges. It is being studied with two edges. It is doing its work in our life because it is living, powerful, sharper, piercing, penetrating and can show us our hearts and can point our hearts to the One who is Lord of the hearts so that nothing else and no one else can find a place in the throne room of our hearts, but Jesus Christ and Him alone. Since I've been at this church I have had the privilege to watch some of the most amazing minds and 17 more ministries like the ones that were already here have been developed over that last 14 to 15 years. It is amazing but they are only effective if they unsheathe the sword.

Our culture, the church, our nation, you, me, your marriage, my marriage, our parenting, our witness in this world is in desperate need of pastors making sure the sword is drawn. Draw the sword. Unsheathe the sword and take it out of the scabbard. God's Word has not been tried and found wanting. We have tried ourselves many times but we haven't tried God's Word so that pulpits again preach the double edged sword. Small groups again use the double edged sword. Families receive that double edged sword so that lives are transformed and growing in the grace and knowledge of Jesus Christ. This sword is what is needed.

Jesus in the wilderness when Satan comes upon Him to tempt Him what does He do? Jesus unsheathes the sword. Jesus says three times "It is written..." and Satan flees. Is there darkness coming in upon you? Light the light of the Word. Unsheathe the sword and darkness has to flee. Peter with 120 in an Upper Room walks out to temple mount and unsheathes the sword. He preaches the truth that Jesus Christ loves sinners, is risen and will save sinners and 120 become 3,000 and then 5,000. Paul unsheathes the sword and goes to governors, kings and even to a Caesar and his household, throughout seats of power and capitals and the world gets turned upside down because the Word was unsheathed and wielded and it wasn't put back in the scabbard. The scabbard is thrown away. We will use the sword of the Lord. Unsheathe it for God has given it to you and it's amazing weapon that will kill sin and give life to sinners who come to Christ. Let's pray.

Prayer:

Father, thank You for the moments we could be together in this wonderful, living, sharp, powerful, penetrating, piercing, exposing Word. I ask You to allow this church and pulpit to be faithful to Your Word, along with every small group, congregational community, outreach event and ministry. I am amazed Father at the unbelievable ingenuity and insights that these people here have in their heart to get people to know about Christ or to help them grow in Christ. Yet please remind us that it is not what we design and devise but the instrument You have designed and devised – the Word of God Inscripturated to reveal the glory of the Word of God Incarnate

that men and women might come to Him who came from heaven for them and at the cross saves us. Father, please keep us rightly focused and keep the sword active. May it pierce hearts to give new hearts and to grow men and women. Thank You that You don't do outside jobs but You do inside jobs. Work in our hearts, I pray Jesus, with Your Word by Your Spirit use with the prayers of Your people, in Jesus' Name, Amen.

### Power Point

#### FIVE ATTRIBUTES OF GOD'S WORD

- I. Living
- II. Powerful/Active
- III. Sharper
- IV. Piercing
- V. Judging/Discerning

#### LIFE TAKEAWAY

The Scripture is the instrument of God's mighty acts, which is more powerful, more precise, and more penetrating than any and all of the instruments of men or Satan.

Supremacy – Sufficiency – Proficiency