

## The Living Word

*For the word of God is living and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart.*

Hebrews 4:12

Hello Dear Listeners;

Is it not strange that the most powerful, most profitable and precious book of incalculable value is considered a 'dead letter' by many? While comic books, and horoscopes ( though valueless ) enthrall millions?

The precious book I'm speaking about today is the Bible, God's own book, His self-revelation that is of infinite value to mortals such as you and me. It's a publication authored in heaven and "*breathed out*" by God, the Holy Spirit himself.

We're busy on this program to call attention to some of the claims the bible makes about itself. That we might benefit from its testimony and that our lives might be given God-pleasing structure and direction.

One of the passages I'd like you to contemplate with me today is Hebrews 4:12. There we read the following:

*For the word of God is living and active, sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow, it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart.*

These words are part of a letter written to Jewish Christians to help convince them to place their hope and trust in the Living God and in his Son, Jesus Christ. For this Christ had come to fulfil the promises concerning himself and his church, recorded in the Old Testament.

Prior to chapter four the author, had proclaimed the supremacy of Jesus Christ, “superior to angels”, yes, “*The radiance of God’s glory*” ( ch. 1: 3) He’d also written about Jesus’ flesh and blood birth. That he might bring “*many sons to glory*” ( ch. 2: 10). This by his death on a cross which satisfied the Father’s just demand that since sin was committed by a human being, a human should also pay for sin.

Yet the writer had also warned his readers against unbelief. They were reminded that because of unbelief their forefathers had died, by the thousands, in the desert. This while they were on the way to the “promised land!”

Did that mean there was no possibility of true and eternal rest for God’s people? O no! For God doesn’t go back on His Word. Though many who had formerly heard the gospel preached to them did not go in to God’s rest yet, said the writer emphatically, “There remains a Sabbath-rest for the people of God.” For those who believe. Yes for those who believe the living and abiding Word of God.

God’s people then and now must therefore persevere on life’s journey, in faith. Lest they, like the Jews of old, fall through unbelief. Unbelief that can lead to condemnation.

“*For the word of God is living and active...*” or, as we could also read, “quick and powerful..” Far from being a “dead letter” God’s Word, that is holy scripture, is alive, nimble, moving. “Quick” implies a “stirring characteristic”<sup>1</sup> such as causing another thing to stir , or move to action. We get such things as quick-silver ( which is mercury) and quick-sands, as well as “quick-spirited” from this word.

It is powerful as well. Romans 1:16 says the gospel “ *is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes...*” There the word for “power” is one from which we derive the word “dynamite” and “dynamic”.

God’s Word is so powerful, and so active that it can transform people who were dead and dull spiritually, into living, active, fruitful citizens of God’s kingdom. In many places the bible testifies to the fact that it can break into a person’s life with God’s own power. In doing so it can “*overcome every stronghold of sin and human opposition.*”<sup>2</sup>

In Hebrews 4: 12 we read that it is sharper than any double-edged sword.” It is “*double-edged*”, meaning it cuts both ways. It is “equally fit both to save or to judge.”<sup>3</sup> The Old Testament ( Isaiah 55: 11), testifies to the fact that God’s Word will not return to him, empty. It will accomplish whatever God desires and whatever He sends it to do.

True, careless unbelievers are greatly at risk in neglecting God’s Word and dismissing His precepts. After all God’s Word is a “sharp double-

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<sup>1</sup> W. Gouge in Commentary\_on Hebrews, p. 324

<sup>2</sup> Richard D. Phillips, Hebrews, p. 138

<sup>3</sup> Ibid, p. 138

edged sword.” If God should war against us with that sword, who could stand? Yet, God is gracious. When the Holy Spirit applies that Word to our lives, penetrating our hearts, or as our text says, “*Penetrating even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; (and) judging the thoughts and attitudes of the heart*”, wonderful things do happen.

Look what happened on the day of Pentecost, when the Holy Spirit had been poured out in abundance and Peter proclaimed the gospel of Jesus Christ. When the crowd heard Peter saying they had crucified this Jesus, who is both Lord and Christ “*they were cut to the heart*” ( Acts 2: 37). They cried out to Peter and the other apostles, saying, “*Brothers what shall we do?*”

And Peter replied, “ Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins.” ( Acts 2: 38).

That’s the power of God’s Word. When you hear it, it comes into us and discovers our attitude towards its sender. By God’s grace, when it is accompanied by the life-giving Spirit of God it convicts us of sin and our rebellion against the LORD. But then it also *humbles* us, and it causes us to come clean before the LORD. That in the way of true repentance we might receive comfort and life everlasting.

In the verses immediately following Hebrews 4:12 the author says that you really can’t hide from God. That penetrating Word of His uncovers everything and lays it all bare before the LORD and it is to Him that we must give an account.

Yet the writer didn't say this in order to cause us to shake in terror . You read on and there is this gracious testimony concerning Jesus, the Son of God, a high priest who is well-able to sympathize with our weaknesses ( ch 4: 15). One who was tempted “ In every way, just as we are - yet was without sin.” ( v. 15

It is the Word of God which tells me this, convinces me of this. It is this powerful, 'quick-silver' Word that came to those Hebrews. Christians who may very well have been in danger of giving up their new-born faith and returning to Jewish teachings and laws God did not sanction.

Dear Listeners, we are living in a land where we still have the opportunity to hear God's Word, to read it, and to acknowledge King Jesus, the *only Name given under heaven by which we can be saved.* ( Acts 4:12) <sup>4</sup> How important then to cherish, not just his memory, but his testimony. For the bible is His Word for all ages.

That fact is denied by many also in our beautiful country. Instead, there are many who are clinging to false hopes, misleading fables and the doctrines of fallible people instead of to God's Word. Since the early 1980's The Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms has for many become an 'infallible' word of sorts. Yet, though this Charter contains many worthwhile statements and militates against many abuses it is decidedly secular. It refuses to recognize the supremacy of God and it dares to turn His biblical statutes regarding marriage and the family, the protection of unborn babies as well as what constitutes morality, and immorality, *upside down!*

Would we do as Canada's national anthem directs us so that we "*Stand on guard for thee?*" We can do no better than to honor and embrace the One True God of the Bible. With a living, working, obedient faith. Praying there might come a return to God's rights, His Word, His double-edged sword. Before it is too late and our country ends up a wasteland where everyone does only what is right in his or her own eyes. *For in God alone my soul will find rest.* <sup>5</sup> *His Word is sure, His testimonies just.* So then, treasure that Word,..... and live!

Amen, and thank you so much for listening.

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<sup>5</sup> Psalm 62: 1, 5