



12: Nothing Is Hidden

“For the word of God is living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart. And there is no creature hidden from His sight, but all things are naked and open to the eyes of Him to whom we must give account. Seeing then that we have a great High Priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession.”

Hebrews 4:12 – 14

In chapter 3 verse 7 the writer of the book of Hebrews set aside his main line of thought to warn us that we must persevere in following Jesus. He’s quoted part of Psalm 95, which holds the children of Israel up as an example of what can happen to those who don’t. He’s driven the point home with strong warnings. He’s told us what must be done to avoid the risk of giving up. He’s encouraged us to keep on by reminding us of what lies ahead: the rest that’s promised to those who are faithful. Now, in verses 12 to 14, he’s going to wind up this warning.

These are well-known words but, like many of the well-known verses in the Bible, they’re usually misunderstood and wrongly applied because, also like many of the well-known verses in the Bible, they’re usually looked at apart from the context in which they’re found.

- ◆ *What are some of the ways you have heard these verses taught and applied?*

Verses 12 to 14 are put forward as a reason to “be diligent to enter God’s rest” (Verse 11). We must be diligent “For (because) the word of God is living and powerful...” And, whilst what he says here is always true about the word of God, the writer is thinking specifically of the word he has just quoted from Psalm 95, the quote he summed up in the words, “they could not enter in because of unbelief.”

God’s Word Is Living

The Word of God is said to be living and active, effective or powerful. The words of Scripture (the writer isn’t talking about direct messages from God; he has a specific passage of Scripture in mind) are not dead words

that can't and don't do anything; they have the power to produce their intended effect. What's more (note his use of the present tense) that effect is not just a past effect over and done with: the word of God remains effective. God has sworn that those who are unbelieving will not enter His rest; that threat is not empty words, and it still holds true.

God's Word Is Sharp

God's word is said to be "sharper than any two edged sword." In other words whoever is exposed to it's threat is like someone who has a sharp double sided blade pressing into his flesh: he's in great danger.

These words are often understood to be referring to the ability of the word of God to penetrate to the inner depths of the hardened human heart and produce deep conviction and change. It's true, God's word does that and it's important to note; indeed it's what the writer will immediately go on to say, but viewed in context I think it's clear that what the writer intends to get across first is the need to take the threatenings of God's word very seriously. That, I think is confirmed when he tells us that the word of God is able to "pierce to the division of soul and spirit" and the division "of joints and marrow." When soul is separated from spirit and joints from marrow you're dead.

God's Word Is Searching

The Word of God is next said to be "able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart". It is a standard against which thoughts and intentions can be measured. It can expose whether or not those thoughts and intentions are believing or unbelieving And note, it takes account not only of external actions but also of thoughts (reflections and feelings) and intentions, and not just superficial thoughts and intentions; the thoughts and intentions of the heart. It is able to do that however hard the heart might be because it is living, effective and sharp. Nothing is hidden from God, "to whom we must give account."

- ◆ *In what way does the word of God discern the thoughts and intents of the heart?*
- ◆ *How could you rightly apply the words of Hebrews 4:12 – 13 when talking to someone who is not saved?*

So Hold Fast

Verses 12 and 13 then amounts to a very good reason to, "hold fast our confession" (verse 14).

- ◆ *How might you rightly use and apply the words of Hebrews 4:12 – 13 when, as the writer is here, addressing someone who professes to be saved?*

Back On Track

Verse 14 brings the writer's second warning to an end, but it's also a transition that brings us back to his main line of reasoning. When he left it he was writing about Jesus "the Apostle and High Priest of our confession" (Hebrews 3:1), now he returns to that thought cleverly giving us yet another reason to hold fast: "We have a great High Priest who has passed through the heavens." and at the same time setting us up to give more thought to the fact that Jesus is our better High Priest, a thought we shall return to in our next study.