
Words of Truth

Hebrews 4:12

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Now we begin to see a change in the direction of the lessons in this epistle. We have been reading about how the failures of Israel of old prevented them from entering into the land God prepared for them (Hebrews 3:7-19). Then, the application for the saints this epistle was written to was not to have hardened hearts to fail in a similar way as their forefathers (Hebrews 4:1). As the word of God was mixed with faith in these saints, they needed to be reminded that the rest for the people of God is still to come after the work is done (Hebrews 4:2-11). Then this was written: *“For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any twoedged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart”* (Hebrews 4:12).

As we begin to break down this passage for closer examination, consider what the word translated quick means. Here is the definition: “to live (literally or figuratively): — life(-time), (a-)live(-ly), quick. To live, breathe, be among the living (not lifeless, not dead); to enjoy real life; to have true life and worthy of the name; active, blessed, endless in the kingdom of God. To live i.e. pass life, in the manner of the living and acting; of mortals or character; living water, having vital power in itself and exerting the same upon the soul. Metaph. to be in full vigor; to be fresh, strong, efficient. As adj. active, powerful, efficacious” (Strong’s # 2198). The most frequent translation of this Greek term in the KJV is “live” (117 times).

The word of God is very much alive. Peter wrote: *“Seeing ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit unto unfeigned love of the brethren, see that ye love one another with a pure heart fervently: Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever. For all flesh is as grass, and all the glory of man as the flower of grass. The grass withereth, and the flower thereof falleth away: But the word of the Lord endureth for ever. And this is the word which by the gospel is preached unto you”* (I Peter 1:22-25). Peter was not just being figurative either. Jesus taught that the word of God will live even after this physical world comes to an end (Matthew 24:35-36). Jesus also said: *“It is the spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing: the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life”* (John 6:63).

In addition to the word of God being alive, the Holy Spirit also revealed the word of God is powerful. These two points connect. Paul penned this: *“For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first,*

and also to the Greek. For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, The just shall live by faith” (Romans 1:16-17). The living word of God is powerful enough to produce life. The world and the life that is in this world was spoken into existence (Genesis 1:1-31, Psalms 33:6, and Hebrews 11:3). In a like manner, the things that were made by the word of God are sustained by the word of God (II Peter 3:5-7). Regarding things spiritual in nature, the word of God also brings to life that which would otherwise perish (Psalms 119:50, Psalms 119:93, and James 1:18-21). Even when miracles were being performed, the word of God was enough to calm the seas and raise the dead (Matthew 8:23-27 and John 11:1-44). Faith in the power of the word of God was shown when a centurion knew that all it would take to heal the sick was Jesus to speak the words (Matthew 8:5-13). Therefore, in many ways, the word of God is powerful and can bring to life that which did not exist, is ready to die, and has died.

The word of God is also sharper than any two edged sword. When John has his revelation he sees a vision of Christ with a sharp two edged sword coming out of His mouth (Revelation 1:9-20). The word of God is called the “sword of the Spirit” (Ephesians 6:17). So, we have two points in Hebrews 4:12 that draws our minds to the life giving power of the word of God. This language, along with other Scriptures, should also bring about the thoughts of the life taking power of the word of God. The church in Pergamos was warned in such a manner (Revelation 2:12-17). Remember, the word of our Lord is the standard of judgment (John 12:48 and Romans 2:16). That day, for those who are disobedient, will be a day of vengeance (II Thessalonians 1:7-9).

The imagery of the two edged sword doesn’t just bring about the destructive power of the word of our Lord. The sharpness also teaches us how the word of God can pierce us deeply. How we react to the penetrating power of the word of God is up to us. It can prick our hearts and bring about a good response (Acts 2:36-41). It can also cut to the heart and cause a terrible, rebellious response (Acts 5:17-33 and Acts 7:51-54).

Since the word of God can penetrate us so deeply, it can reveal our deepest thoughts and intents. Since the word of God is called a “discerner” we need to consider how the word of God is “fit for judging” (Strong’s # 2924) our innermost thoughts and intents. James wrote of the word of God being likened to a mirror (James 1:21-25). The question we all have to ask ourselves is this: What will the word of God reveal to me about myself? Then, once you come to an honest Scriptural conclusion, you have to decide what to do with that conclusion.

In our next study, we will consider how that God knows everything about us (Hebrews 4:13). If you want to see yourself the way He does, use His word for your own spiritual open heart surgery. Remember, obedience and disobedience are both matters of the heart (Romans 6:17 and Psalms 78:8). In consideration of all we have just read, how important is it that we be pure in heart (Matthew 5:8, I Timothy 1:5, and Hebrews 10:22)?