

# Hebrews 4:12 Commentary

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CONSIDER JESUS OUR GREAT HIGH PRIEST

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The Epistle to the Hebrews				
INSTRUCTION Hebrews 1-10:18			EXHORTATION Hebrews 10:19-13:25	
Superior Person of Christ Hebrews 1:1-4:13	Superior Priest in Christ Hebrews 4:14-10:18			Superior Life In Christ Hebrews 10:19-13:25
BETTER THAN PERSON Hebrews 1:1-4:13	BETTER PRIESTHOOD Heb 4:14-7:28	BETTER COVENANT Heb 8:1-13	BETTER SACRIFICE Heb 9:1-10:18	BETTER LIFE
MAJESTY OF CHRIST	MINISTRY OF CHRIST			MINISTERS FOR CHRIST
DOCTRINE			DUTY	
DATE WRITTEN: ca. 64-68AD				

See [ESV Study Bible "Introduction to Hebrews"](#)  
(See also [MacArthur's Introduction to Hebrews](#))

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**Hebrews 4:12** For the word of God is living and active and sharper than any two-edged sword, and piercing as far as the division of soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow, and able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart. ([NASB](#):

**Greek:** [Zon \(PAPMSN\)](#) [gar o logos tou theou kai energeis kai tomoteros huper pasan machairan distomon kai diiknoumenos \(PMPMSN\)](#) [achri merismou psuches kai pneumatos, armon te kai muelon, kai kritikos enthumeseon kai ennoion kardias:](#)

**Amplified:** For the Word that God speaks is alive and full of power [making it active, operative, energizing, and effective]; it is sharper than any two-edged sword, penetrating to the dividing line of the breath of life (soul) and [the immortal] spirit, and of joints and marrow [of the deepest parts of our nature], exposing and sifting and analyzing and judging the very thoughts and purposes of the heart. ([Amplified Bible - Lockman](#))

**Barclay:** For the word of God is instinct with life; it is effective; it is sharper than a two-edged sword; it pierces right through to the very division of soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it scrutinizes the desires and intentions of the heart. ([Westminster Press](#))

**NLT:** For the word of God is full of living power. It is sharper than the sharpest knife, cutting deep into our innermost thoughts and desires. It exposes us for what we really are. (NLT - Tyndale House)

**Phillips:** For the Word that God speaks is alive and active; it cuts more keenly than any two-edged sword: it strikes through to the place where soul and spirit meet, to the innermost intimacies of a man's being: it exposes the very thoughts and motives of a man's heart. (Phillips: Touchstone)

**Wuest:** for actively alive is the word of God, and energetic, and sharper than any two-edged sword, going through even to the dividing of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a sifter and analyzer of the reflections and conceptions of the heart. (Eerdmans)

**Young's Literal:** for the reckoning of God is living, and working, and sharp above every two-edged sword, and piercing unto the dividing asunder both of soul and spirit, of joints also and marrow, and a discerner of thoughts and intents of the heart

#### FOR THE WORD OF GOD: ho logos tou theou:

- Heb 13:7; Isaiah 49:2; Luke 8:11; Acts 4:31; 2Corinthians 2:17; 4:2; Revelation 20:4
- See Pink's ["Profiting From The Word" by A. W. Pink](#)
- Related Resource: Inductive study on The Power of God's Word
- [Hebrews 4 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries
- [Hebrews 4:12-13 God's Powerful Word](#) - Steven Cole
- [Hebrews 4:1-13 Entering Into God's Rest](#) - John MacArthur
- [Hebrews 4:12](#) - Audio by Steve Lawson
- [Hebrews 4 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

**For (gar)** - Always **pause** to **prayerfully ponder** and **peruse** this **poignant term of explanation** and you will often be rewarded by your Teacher the Spirit with rich spiritual insights on the text! In this case the writer is explaining why we must be diligent to enter God's rest. **Henry Alford** says it this way "Such an endeavour (Heb 4:11) is well worth all our **diligence**—for we have One to do with, Who can discern and will punish every and even the most secret disobedience." **Marcus Dods** says "In Heb 4:12-13 another reason is added for dealing sincerely and strenuously with God's promises and especially with this offer of rest." **Peter O'Brien** explains that "The long paraenetic (Pertaining to instruction, exhortation or command) section from Heb 3:1 to Heb 4:11 is concluded by a masterly literary piece that affirms the power of God's word and the impossibility of hiding from His judgment. This affirmation about the word of God in Heb 4:12–13 is joined to the preceding paragraph by **For (gar)**, and provides an additional reason for the exhortation to make every effort to enter God's rest that is enjoined in Heb 4:11."

The point is that Hebrews 4:12 is one of those passages we frequently memorize but often do so out of **context**. Yes, it is true the **Word of God is living and active**, and most of us who have walked with Jesus for a few years have experienced it's supernatural power in various ways. But if we read Hebrews 4:12 in context (context is king for accurate interpretation! = **Keep Context King**), we learn that the writer was explaining something he had previously stated. I remember memorizing Hebrews 4:12 some 30 years ago, but it was not until about 20 years later when I was learning **inductive Bible study**, that I truly understood the meaning of this great verse. Now, don't misunderstand -- this verse is still applicable to the Word of God in general, but that was not the specific intent of the writer. He was primarily referring to the Word of God that he had just **warned** them with (e.g., God's Word from Ps 95:7 quoted in Hebrews 3:7, 13, 15, Heb 4:7) in the long section beginning in Hebrews 3:1 through summary exhortation in Hebrews

4:11. Now in Hebrews 4:12, the writer explains why the Word of warning is effective and why they should take heed to the warning.

In the Greek sentence the emphasis is on **living** (it is placed first in the sentence = *Zon gar o logos tou theou*).

**Adolph Saphir** comments "RESTING by faith in Jesus, and laboring to enter into that perfect rest which remains to the people of God, the Christian, during his pilgrimage through the wilderness, is guided by **the word of God**, which is in his hand, and upheld and encouraged by the intercession and sympathy of the great High Priest above (Heb 7:25).

**The Word of God** - It is not the Word of man! When the Bible speaks, God speaks! It came down from heaven and is not from earth. The writers were merely human agents moved by the Spirit who used their own personalities (2 Pe 1:21+). When you receive the Word of God, you are in a sense receiving God. To reject the Word of God you are rejecting God! Some commentators state that this is another name for Jesus. Indeed, Jesus is called "the Word" (Jn 1:1, Rev 19:13) but in context, the writer is referring to the written revelation from God and not the person of Jesus Christ (Although to be sure the living Word and the living Lord are somehow mysteriously [to me] intimately linked together in time and eternity.)

Puritan Writer **Thomas Brooks** said "The Word of the Lord is a light to guide you, a counselor to counsel you, a comforter to comfort you, a staff to support you, a sword to defend you, and a physician to cure you. The Word is a mine to enrich you, a robe to clothe you, and a crown to crown you.

**John Flavel** echoes Brooks writing that "The Scriptures teach us the best way of living, the noblest way of suffering and the most comfortable way of dying.

**Frank Cooke** rightly wrote that "The foundation of every reformation of the Holy Spirit is the Word of God made plain to the people.

**Brian Edwards** - Philosophy and religion may reform, but only the Bible can transform.

**Vance Havner** once quipped "There is no devil in the first two chapters of the Bible and no devil in the last two chapters. Thank God for a book that disposes of the devil!"

**MacArthur** explains that "The need for God's rest is urgent. A person should diligently, with intense purpose and concern, secure it. It is not that he can work his way to salvation, but that he should diligently seek to enter God's rest by faith—lest he, like the Israelites in the wilderness, lose the opportunity. ([MacArthur, John: Hebrews. Moody Press](#))

Remember that the **Word of God** is also the **Word of His grace** "And now I commend you to God and to the **word of His grace**, (observe the beneficial effects) which is able to build you up and to give you the inheritance among all those who are sanctified. (Acts 20:32)

**Word of God** ([3056](#)) (**logos from lego** = to speak with words; English = logic, logical) means something said and describes a communication whereby the mind finds expression in words. Although **Lógos** is most often translated **word** which Webster defines as "something that is said, a statement, an utterance", the Greek understanding of **lógos** is somewhat more complex. To secular and philosophical Greek writers, **logos** did not mean merely the name of an object but was an expression of the thought behind that object's name.

**Lógos** then is a general term for speaking, but always used for speaking with rational content. **Lógos** is a word uttered by the human voice which embodies an underlying concept or idea. When one has spoken the sum total of their thoughts concerning something, they have given to their hearer a total concept of that thing. Thus the word **lógos** conveys the idea of "a total concept" of anything. **Lógos** means the word or outward form by which the inward thought is expressed and made known. It can also refer to the inward thought or reason itself. Note then that **lógos** does not refer merely to a part of speech but to a concept or idea. In other words, in classical Greek, **lógos** never meant just a **word** in the grammatical sense as the mere name of a thing, but rather the thing referred to, the material, not the formal part. In fact, the Greek language has 3 other words (rhema, onoma, epos) which designate a **word** in its grammatical sense. **Lógos** refers to the total expression whereas **rhema** (see word study) for example is used of a part of speech in a sentence. In other words **rhema**, emphasizes the parts rather than the whole.

**Cremer** explains that **logos** is used of the living, spoken word,

the word not in its outward form, but with reference to the thought connected with the form,... in short, not the word of language, but of conversation, of discourse; not the word as a part of speech, but the word as part of what is uttered.

**So what is the writer referring to by the word of God?** This verse is frequently taken as a description of the "**word of God**" in general which of course is not an inappropriate **application**. Indeed one can make a list of at least 5 wonderful characteristics of the "word of God" from this description. But the careful reader must remember that accurate **interpretation** is dependent on interpreting the text in **context** and failure to interpret "**word of God**" in the **context** of the writers argument is to miss his main reason for

inserting this description at this point in the book of Hebrews.

In the present context, Hebrews 3-4, the author has been emphasizing that it is urgent that his readers enter God's **rest** ("**today**"). He emphasizes that the way in which one enters **His rest** is by faith, faith that obeys and perseveres and holds fast until the end (holding fast doesn't save anyone - but it does show that such a person is saved for otherwise they would not be able to hold fast solely by their efforts).

The immediate **context** indicates that some of the readers were in danger of seeming to fall short of entering God's rest and even falling back into Judaism. It is in this background that he warns the readers that the "**word of God**" they have just heard is alive and can pierce right down into the innermost part of the heart to see if their belief is real or not.

The **word of God**, the Bible, describes itself and its work in many ways

- **Isaiah 55:11** God's word will not return to him empty, but will do what God desires and achieve the purpose for which he sent it.
- **Jeremiah 23:29** God's word is like fire and like a hammer that can break a rock into pieces.
- **John 6:63** God's word is spirit and life.
- **Acts 7:38** God's word is living.
- **Ephesians 6:17** (see note) God's word is part of the believer's armor—the sword of the Spirit.
- **Hebrews 4:12** God's word is living, powerful, sharper than a two-edged sword, judging people's thoughts and intentions.
- **1 Peter 1:23** (see note) God's word is living and enduring, through which people are born again.

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**The Word is A Sword** by C H Spurgeon (This is a summary in the Biblical Illustrator from his sermon on Hebrews 4:12 entitled [The Word a Sword](#))

It may be most accurate to interpret this passage as relating both to the Word of God incarnate, and the Word of God inspired. Christ and His Word must go together. What is true of the Christ is here predicated both of Him and of His Word.

#### **I. First let me speak CONCERNING THE QUALITIES OF THE WORD OF GOD**

It is "quick and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword."

1. The Word of God is said to be "**quick**." It is a living Book. Take up any other book except the Bible, and there may be a measure of power in it, but there is not that indescribable vitality in it which breathes, and speaks, and pleads, and conquers in the case of this sacred volume. It is a living and incorruptible seed. It moves, it stirs itself, it lives, it communes with living men as a living Word. That human system which was once vigorous may grow old, and lose all vitality; but the Word of God is always fresh, and new, and full of force. Here, in the Old and New Testaments, we have at once the oldest and the newest of books.

2. The Word is said to be "powerful," or "active." The Word of God is powerful for all sacred ends. How powerful it is to convince men of in!

How powerful it is for conversion!

3. Next, the apostle tells us that this Word is **cutting**, A sword with two edges has no blunt side: it cuts both this way and that. The revelation of God given us in Holy Scripture is edge all over. It is alive in every part, and in every part keen to cut the conscience, and wound the heart. Depend upon it, there is not a superfluous verse in the Bible, nor a chapter which is useless. Doctors say of certain drugs that they are inert — they have no effect upon the system one way or the other. Now, there is not an inert passage in the Scriptures; every line has its virtues.

4. It is **piercing**. While, it has an edge like a sword, it has also a point like a rapier. The difficulty with some men's hearts is to get at them. In fact, there is no spiritually penetrating the heart of any natural man except by this piercing instrument, the Word of God. Into the very marrow of the man the sacred truth will pass, and find him out in a way in which he

cannot even find himself out.

5. The Word of God is **discriminating**. It divides asunder soul and spirit. Nothing else could do that, for the division is difficult.

6. Once more, the Word of God is **marvelously revealing to the inner self**. It pierces between the joints and

marrow, and marrow is a thing not to be got at very readily. The Word of God gets at the very marrow of our manhood; it lays bare the secret thoughts of the soul.

## II. SOME LESSONS.

1. Let us greatly reverence the Word of God.
2. Let us, whenever we feel ourselves dead, and especially in prayer, get close to the Word, for the Word of God is alive.
3. Whenever we feel weak in our duties, let us go to the Word of God, and the Christ in the Word, for power; and this will be the best of power.
4. If you need as a minister, or a worker, anything that will cut your hearers to the heart, go to this Book for it.
5. If we want to discriminate at any time between the soul and the spirit, and the joints and marrow, let us go to the Word of God for discrimination.
6. And lastly, since this Book is meant to be a discernor or critic of the thoughts and intents of the heart, let the Book criticise us. (C. H. Spurgeon.)

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**Barnes** observes that...

The design of this and the following verse is obvious. **It is to show that we cannot escape the notice of God**; that all insincerity, unbelief, hypocrisy, will be detected by Him; and that since our hearts are perfectly open before Him, we should be sincere, and should not attempt to deceive Him.

The sense is, that the truth of God is all-penetrating and searching, and that the real thoughts and intents of the heart will be brought to light; and that if there is insincerity and self-deception, there can be no hope of escape.

There has been a great variety of opinion here about the meaning of the phrase **the word of God**. ... The **word of God** is that which God speaks--whether it be a promise or a threatening; whether it be law or gospel; whether it be a simple declaration or a statement of a doctrine. The idea here is, that what God had said is fitted to detect hypocrisy, and to lay open the true nature of the feelings of the soul, so that there can be no escape for the guilty. His truth is adapted to bring out the real feelings, and to show man exactly what he is. Truth always has this power --whether preached, or read, or communicated by conversation, or impressed upon the memory and conscience by the Holy Spirit. There can be no escape from the penetrating, searching application of the word of God. That truth has power to show what man is, and is like a penetrating sword that lays open the whole man. Comp. Isaiah 49:2. The phrase **the word of God** here may be applied, therefore, to the truth of God, however made known to the mind. In some way it will bring out the real feelings, and show what man is. (Albert Barnes. Barnes NT Commentary)

**Leon Morris** - The Word of God is unique. No sword can penetrate as it can. ([Gaebelein, F. Editor: Expositor's Bible Commentary](#))

**A W Pink** has a pithy challenge for the modern church...

There is grave reason to believe that much Bible reading and Bible study of the last few years has been of no spiritual profit to those who engaged in it. Yea, we go further; we greatly fear that in many instances it has proved a curse rather than a blessing. This is strong language, we are well aware, yet no stronger than the case calls for. Divine gifts may be misused, and Divine mercies abused. That this has been so in the present instance is evident by the fruits produced. Even the natural man may (and often does) take up the study of the Scriptures with the same enthusiasm and pleasure as he might of the sciences. Where this is the case, his store of knowledge is increased, and so also is his pride. Like a chemist engaged in making interesting experiments, the intellectual searcher of the Word is quite elated when he makes some discovery in it; but the joy of the latter is no more spiritual than would be that of the former. Again, just as the successes of the chemist generally increase his sense of self-importance and cause him to look with disdain upon others more ignorant than himself, so alas, is it often the case with those who have investigated Bible numerics, typology, prophecy and other such subjects.

The Word of God may be taken up from various motives. Some read it to satisfy their literary pride. In certain circles it has become both the respectable and popular thing to obtain a general acquaintance with the contents of the Bible simply because it is regarded as an educational defect to be ignorant of them. Some read it to satisfy their sense of curiosity, as they might any other book of note. Others read it to satisfy their

sectarian pride. They consider it a duty to be well versed in the particular tenets of their own denomination and so search eagerly for proof-texts in support of "our doctrines." Yet others read it for the purpose of being able to argue successfully with those who differ from them. But in all this there is no thought of God, no yearning for spiritual edification, and therefore no real benefit to the soul.

Of what, then, does a true profiting from the Word consist? Does not 2Timothy 3:16,17-note furnish a clear answer to our question? There we read,

"All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works."

Observe what is here omitted: the Holy Scriptures are given us not for intellectual gratification and carnal speculation, but to furnish unto "all good works," and that by teaching, reproving, correcting us. Let us endeavor to amplify this by the help of other passages. ([Profiting from the Word-Chapter 1 The Scriptures and Sin](#))

**A W Pink** wrote elsewhere that...

God's design in all that He has revealed to us is to the purifying of our affections and the transforming of our characters....Everything in Scripture has in view the promotion of holiness.

**Vance Havner** echoes Pink writing "The storehouse of God's Word was never meant for mere scrutiny, even primarily for study but for sustenance.

**Will H. Houghton** agrees writing that "The Bible calls itself food. The value of food is not in the discussion it arouses but in the nourishment it imparts.

**D L Moody** - The Scriptures were not given to increase our knowledge but to change our lives.

#### **IS LIVING AND ACTIVE: Zon (PAPMSN) gar ho logos tou theou kai energeis:**

- Ps 110:2; 119:130; Ecclesiastes 12:11; Isaiah 55:11; Jeremiah 23:29; Romans 1:16; 1Corinthians 1:24; 2Corinthians 10:4,5; 1Thessalonians 2:13; James 1:18; 1Peter 1:23; John 6:51; 1Peter 2:4,5
- Hebrews 4 Resources - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

### **THE WORD OF GOD IS LIVING IN ITS ESSENCE**

This is an amazing statement which we too often read past. The Bible is living. It has a "pulse." It has the mind of God in it. It speaks to us. It runs after us. It lays hold of us. And notice in the Greek sentence above that **zon** (living) is the first word in the sentence which literally would read "living for the Word of God is! This draw our attention and emphasizes this quality of the Word of God. God wants to make sure we grasp that this is not like any other book ever written. All the other books written are "dead books!" And because it is alive, it speaks to every person in every culture, in every country, addressing them where they are and telling them exactly what they need to hear. There is no book relevant for your life than the Bible! It is never empty, never lifeless, never flat, never tired, never sluggish. We may be sluggish, dull, etc, but the Bible is never dull, never boring. It is always like an electrical current is surging through it! It is dynamic.

**Martin Luther** rightly declared "The Bible is alive, it speaks to me; it has feet, it runs after me; it has hands, it lays hold on me."

**C H Spurgeon** said "Why, the Book has wrestled with me; the Book has smitten me; the Book has comforted me; the Book has smiled on me; the Book has frowned on me; the Book has clasped my hand; the Book has warmed my heart. The Book weeps with me, and sings with me; it whispers to me, and it preaches to me; it maps my way, and holds up my goings; it is the Young Man's Best Companion, and is still my morning and evening Chaplain."

The **living and active** aspect of the **Word of God** is similar to the Lord's picture of the Word as a **seed**, for both have life and power and both can produce spiritual fruit (Ga 5:22,23). But the seed can do nothing until it is planted (Jn 12:24). When a person hears and understands the Word, then the seed is planted in the heart. What happens after that depends on the nature of the soil (cp Lk 8:15).

**Living** (2198) (**zao**) refers to natural physical life as opposed to death. The words just spoken possess vital power in themselves to exert and impart vitality to the reader's soul. The Word is not dead, inert, or powerless but has a living power, and is adapted to produce this effect.



**Living** is in the **present tense** describing this trait as continually true of the word of God.

**Jesus** alludes to the living aspect of the Word of God declaring "It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh profits nothing; the words that I have spoken to you are spirit and are **life**." (Jn 6:63)

In his message just before being stoned to death, **Stephen**, a man filled with the Spirit (Acts 6:5, 8, 7:55) declared "This is the one who was in the congregation in the wilderness together with the angel who was speaking to him on Mount Sinai, and who was with our fathers and he received **living** (zao) oracles to pass on to you. (Acts 7:38)

**Charles Simeon** rightly says that "The word is not a mere dead letter, that will soon vanish away: it lives in the mind of God: it lives in the decrees of heaven: it lives and will live for ever: nor will millions of ages cause it to be forgotten, or in the least enervate its force. All besides this shall wax old, and decay: but this shall endure, without the alteration of one jot or tittle of it, to all generations

**Peter** writes that "you have been born again not of seed which is perishable but imperishable, that is, through the living and enduring word of God. For, "All flesh is like grass, and all its glory like the flower of grass. The grass withers, and the flower falls off, But the word of the Lord endures forever." (1Pe 1:23, 24, 25-note)

**Spurgeon** - The Word of God is alive. This is a living Book. This is a mystery that only living men, quickened by the Spirit of God, will fully comprehend. Take up any other book except the Bible, and there may be a measure of power in it, but there is not that indescribable vitality in it that breathes, and speaks, and pleads, and conquers in the case of this sacred volume. It is only because Jesus is not dead that the Word becomes living and effectual, "and sharper than any double-edged sword"; for, if you leave Christ out of it, you have left out its vitality and power. As I have told you that we will not have Christ without the Word, so neither will we have the Word without Christ. If you leave Christ out of Scripture, you have left out the essential truth that it is written to declare.

**Spurgeon** on the **Word** as a **living** seed - Plants unknown in certain regions have suddenly sprung from the soil: the seeds have been wafted on the winds, carried by birds, or washed ashore by the waves of the sea. So vital are seeds that they live and grow wherever they are borne; and even after lying deep in the soil for centuries, when the upturning spade has brought them to the surface, they have germinated at once. Thus is it with the Word of God: it lives and abides forever, and in every soil and under all circumstances it is prepared to prove its own life by the energy with which it grows and produces fruit to the glory of God.

## **THE WORD OF GOD IS ENERGETIC!**

The Bible is active, effective, powerful, productive, capable of causing things to happen! The Bible is "energetic" and never just sits still, never takes a day off, is always at work, is tireless.

**Steven Lawson** says "When we are hooked up to this book in humility and repentance and faith, there is a surge of energy that enters into our soul."

**Active** (1756) (**energes** from **en** = in + **érgon** = work) describes that which is working, efficient, effective, operative or powerful. **Energes** describes activity which produces results or which is effective in causing something to happen or to come about. The somber warnings that have reverberated through Hebrews 3-4 are working and effective words which are able to accomplish their purpose.

**Energes** is only used three times in the NT. Paul uses to describe "a wide (megas = great, large) door for **effective** (energes - God opened this door) [*service*] (not in the original Greek) has opened to me, and there are many adversaries (literally = those lined up against me). (1Corinthians 16:9)

**Gilbrant** on **energes** - In classical Greek thought, *energēs* had a social or ethical sense. Thus it denoted work as a burden laid on a man. The word group in Hellenism was used of cosmic or physical forces at work in man or the world around. Man was judged by his works, which were the basis and meaning of life. His works would include his deeds and his manner of conduct as a life-style. In the papyri *energēs* describes objects which have been made usable. Examples of this would be tilled land or a working mill. So one can see the object as receiving the effects from another source. While *energēs* is not found in the Septuagint, the works (*erga*) of God are. The activities of God result in His glory and honor. In contrast, the works of man come out of and result in the curse, sin, and vanity. In the New Testament the verb form *energeō* is used almost exclusively for the work of divine or demonic powers. In 1 Corinthians 16:9 Paul implied that it is God who ultimately makes the work effectual; He was opening a "great and effectual" door of ministry. In Philemon 6 Paul prayed that Philemon would be active or zealous in sharing the faith in which God had empowered him. Hebrews 4:12 says, "The word of God is quick, and powerful (*energēs*)." (Complete Biblical Library Greek-English Dictionary)

Writing to Philemon Paul prays "that the fellowship of your faith may become **effective** (energes) through the knowledge of every

good thing which is in you for Christ's sake.

Using the related verb **energeo** Paul writes to the saints at Thessalonica thanking God "that when you received (took hold of) from us the **word** of God's message, you accepted (put out the welcome mat so to speak) it not as the **word** of men, but for what it really is, the **word of God**, which also **performs its work (energeo - present tense = continually)** in you who believe. (1Thessalonians 2:13-[note](#))

**Leon Morris** - "Living and active" shows that there is a dynamic quality about God's revelation. It does things. Specifically it penetrates and, in this capacity, is likened to a "double-edged sword" (for the sword, cf. Is 49:2; Ep 6:17-[note](#); Re 19:15-[note](#); and for the double-edged idea, cf. Re 1:16-[note](#); Re 2:12-[note](#)). ([Gaebelein, F. Editor: Expositor's Bible Commentary](#))

Regarding the **Word** being **active**, **Barnes** writes that "Its power is seen in awakening the conscience; alarming the fears; laying bare the secret feelings of the heart; and causing the sinner to tremble with the apprehension of the coming judgment. All the great changes in the moral world for the better, have been caused by the power of truth. They are such as the truth in its own nature is fitted to effect; and, if we may judge of its power by the greatness of the revolutions produced, no words can over-estimate the might of the truth which God has revealed. (Albert Barnes. Barnes NT Commentary)

**Spurgeon** on **active** - Perhaps "energetic" is the best rendering, or almost as well, "effectual." Holy Scripture is full of power and energy. The Word of God is that by which sin is slain, and grace is born in the heart. It is the that which brings life with it. How active and energetic it is, when the soul is convinced of sin, in bringing it forth into gospel liberty!

#### AND SHARPER THAN ANY TWO EDGED SWORD: kai tomoteros huper pasan machairan distomon:

- Ps 45:3; 149:6; Pr 5:4; Isaiah 11:4; 49:2; Acts 2:37; 5:33; Eph 6:17; Rev 1:16; 2:16; 19:15,21
- [Hebrews 4 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries
- [Hebrews 4:12-13 God's Powerful Word](#) - Steven Cole
- [Hebrews 4:1-13 Entering Into God's Rest](#) - John MacArthur

### THE BIBLE IS "RAZOR SHARP"

Note the little word "and" (kai in Greek) which couples all of these attributes together. The Word does not just have one attribute, but all of them together. As Lawson says "It's not living for some and active for others. It's a package deal. It's all or nothing.

As **D. Martin Lloyd-Jones** said "The first thing the Bible does is to make man take a serious view of life."

**Sharper** ([5114](#)) (**tomoteros** from **temnô** = to cut) is the comparative of **tomos** which means sharp or cutting. It is used only here in the NT It means finer edged. "Tomos occurs first among classical writers in the Fifth Century B.C. in the works of Sophocles. Tomōteros is found first in extant papyri dating from the Third Century B.C. In its earliest extant appearances the word is used literally of objects such as swords. The word can be used metaphorically also. For instance, pseudo-Phocylides (First Century A.D.) says, "Surely, a word is sharper to a man than an iron weapon" (124). The word does not appear in the Septuagint." ([Complete Biblical Library Greek-English Dictionary](#))

**Vincent** - The Word of God has an incisive and penetrating quality. It lays bare self-delusions and moral sophisms. For the comparison of the word of God or of men to a sword, see Ps. 57:4; 59:7; 64:3; Eph. 6:17. Philo calls his Logos the cutter, as cutting chaos into distinct things, and so creating a kosmos.

**George Whitefield**, the great 18th-century evangelist, was hounded by a group of detractors who called themselves the "Hell-fire Club." They derided his work and mocked him. On one occasion one of them, a man named Thorpe, was mimicking Whitefield to his cronies, delivering his sermon with brilliant accuracy, perfectly imitating his tone and facial expressions, when he himself was so pierced that he sat down and was converted on the spot.

**Steve Lawson** says the Bible is "the sharpest weapon of any arsenal in the world! It is sharper than any surgeon's [scalpel](#)! It is two edged...there is no blunt side. every book in the Bible is razor sharp. Every chapter is razor sharp. Every verse is razor sharp. Every word can cut deeply. There is not a dull verse in the entire Bible! There's not a blunt chapter in the entire Book...And because it's two edged it cuts both ways - it both comforts the afflicted and afflicts the comfortable. It both tears down and it builds up. It both convicts and converts. It has both bad news and good news. It both saves and it damns. It both heals and it hardens. It both makes alive and it puts to death."



**Two-edged** (1366) (**distomos** from **dia** = through + **stoma** = mouth), double-mouthed like a river (Polybius), branching ways (Sophocles), applied to sword (**xiphos**) by Homer and Euripides. Distomos occurs three times in the New Testament (Hebrews 4:12; Revelation 1:16; 2:12).

**Barnes** commenting on "two mouthed" sword writes that "The word mouth was given to the sword because it seemed to devour all before it. It consumed or destroyed, as a wild beast does. The comparison of the word of God to a sword, or to an arrow, is designed to show its power of penetrating the heart, Ecclesiastes 12:11. "The words of the wise are as goads, and as nails fastened by the masters of assemblies." Comp. Isa 49:2; "And he hath made my mouth like a sharp sword." Re 1:16 ([note](#)): "And out of his mouth went a sharp two-edged sword;" Re 2:12 ([note](#)); Re 19:15 ([note](#)). The comparison is common in the classics, and in Arabic poetry....The idea is that of piercing, or penetrating; and the meaning here is, that the word of God reaches the heart--the very centre of action and lays open the motives and feelings of the man. It was common among the ancients to have a sword with two-edges. The Roman sword was commonly made in this manner. The fact that it had two edges made it more easy to penetrate, as well as to cut with every way. (Ibid)

**Distomos** occurs three times in the Septuagint

- Jdg 3:16 = "Ehud made himself a sword which had two edges"
- Ps 149:6 = "Let the high praises of God be in their mouth, And a two-edged sword in their hand"
- Pr 5:4 = "But in the end she is bitter as wormwood, Sharp as a two-edged sword. ")

The Word of God is a minister of death to those who reject it, and of life to those who receive it (cp 2Cor 2:16)

**Spurgeon** on **sharper than any two-edged sword** - The revelation of God given us in Holy Scripture is edge all over. It is alive in every part, and in every part keen to cut the conscience, and wound the heart. Depend upon it, there is not a superfluous verse in the Bible, nor a chapter that is useless. The Word of God is so sharp a thing, so full of cutting power, that you may be bleeding under its wounds before you have seriously suspected the possibility of such a thing. You cannot come near the gospel without its having a measure of influence over you; and, God blessing you, it may cut down and kill your sins when you have no idea that such a work is being done. Yes, when Christ comes, He comes not to send peace on the earth, but a sword; and that sword begins at home, in our own souls, killing, cutting, hacking, breaking in pieces. Blessed is that man who knows the Word of the Lord by its exceeding sharpness, for it kills nothing but that which ought to be killed. It quickens and gives new life to all that is of God; but the old depraved life, which ought to die, it hews in pieces, as Samuel destroyed Agag before the Lord (1Sa 15:33).

**A W Pink** has the following chapter entitled **The Power of God's Word to Convict Men of Sin..**

In Hebrews 4:12 we have a Scripture which draws attention to this peculiar characteristic of the Bible—

"For the Word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any two edged 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."

The writings of men may sometimes stir the emotions, search the conscience, and influence the human will, but in a manner and degree possessed by no other book the Bible convicts men of their guilt and lost estate. The Word of God is the Divine mirror, for in it man reads the secrets of his own guilty soul and sees the vileness of his own evil nature. In a way absolutely peculiar to themselves, the Scriptures discern the thoughts and intents of the heart and reveal to men the fact that they are lost sinners and in the presence of a Holy God.

Some thirty years ago there resided in one of the Temples of Tibet a Buddhist priest who had conversed with no Christian missionary, had heard nothing about the cross of Christ, and had never seen a copy of the Word of God. One day while searching for something in the temple, he came across a transcription of Matthew's Gospel, which years before had been left there by a native who had received it from some traveling missionary. His curiosity aroused, the Buddhist priest commenced to read it, but when he reached the eighth verse in the fifth chapter he paused and pondered over it:

"Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God."

Although he knew nothing about the righteousness of his Maker, although he was quite ignorant concerning the demands of God's holiness, yet he was there and then convicted of his sins, and a work of Divine grace commenced in his soul. Month after month went by and each day he said to himself,

"I shall never see God, for I am impure in heart."

Slowly but surely the work of the Holy Spirit deepened within him until he saw himself as a lost sinner; vile, guilty, and undone.

After continuing for more than a year in this miserable condition the priest one day heard that a “foreign devil” was visiting a town nearby and selling books which spoke about God. The same night the Buddhist priest fled from the temple and journeyed to the town where the missionary was residing. On reaching his destination he sought out the missionary and at once said to him,

“Is it true that only those who are pure in heart will see God?”

“Yes,” replied the missionary, “but the same Book which tells you that, also tells you how you may obtain a pure heart,” and then he talked to him about our Lord’s atoning work and how that “the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth us from all sin.”

Quickly the light of God flooded the soul of the Buddhist priest and he found the peace which “passeth all understanding.”

**Now what other book in the world outside of the Bible, contains a sentence or even a chapter which, without the aid of any human commentator, is capable of convincing and convicting a heathen that he is a lost sinner?**

Does not the fact of the miraculous power of the Bible, which has been illustrated by thousands of fully authenticated cases similar to the above, declare that the Scriptures are the inspired Word of God, vested with the same might as their Omnipotent Author? ([Divine Inspiration of the Bible](#)) (Related resource: Inductive Study on the **Power of God's Word**)

**Sword** (3162) (**machaira**) refers to a relatively short sword (even dagger) for cutting and stabbing. It is obviously used in the figurative sense in this verse, but is still penetrating nevertheless!

**Spurgeon** - The Word of God is like the sword of Goliath, which had been laid up in the sanctuary, of which David said, “There is none like it, give it me” (1Sa 21:9). Why did he like it so well? I think he liked it all the better because it had been laid up in the holy place by the priests. But I think he liked it best of all because it had stains of blood on it—the blood of Goliath. I like my own sword because it is covered with blood right up to the hilt—the blood of slaughtered sins and errors and prejudices has made it like the sword of Don Rodrigo, “of a dark and purple tint.” The slain of the Lord have been many by the old gospel.

**Wiersbe** - In comparing the Word of God to a sword, the writer is not suggesting that God uses His Word to slaughter the saints! It is true that the Word cuts the heart of sinners with conviction (Acts 5:33; 7:54), and that the Word defeats Satan (Ep 6:17). The Greek word translated “sword” means “a short sword or dagger.” The emphasis is on the power of the Word to penetrate and expose the inner heart of man. The Word is a “discerner” or “critic.” ([Wiersbe, W: Bible Exposition Commentary, 1989. Victor](#))

**Spurgeon** on the Word of the Lord as the sword of the Lord...

### **I. THE QUALITIES OF THE WORD.**

1. Divine.
2. Living.
3. Effectual.
4. Cutting.
5. Piercing.
6. Discriminating.
7. Revealing.

### **II. THE LESSONS WHICH WE SHOULD LEARN THEREFROM.**

1. That we do greatly reverence the Word, as truly spoken of God.
2. That we come to it for quickening for our own souls.
3. That we come to it for power when fighting the battles of truth.
4. That we come to it for cutting force to kill our own sins and to help us in destroying the evils of the day.
5. That we come to it, for piercing force when men’s consciences and hearts are hard to reach.

6. That we use it to the most obstinate, to arouse their consciences and convict them of sin.
7. That we discriminate by its means between truth and falsehood.
8. That we let it criticize us, and our opinions, and projects, and acts, and all about us.

## PIERCING AS FAR AS THE DIVISION OF SOUL AND SPIRIT: kai diiknoumenos (PMPMSN) achri merismou psuchês kai pneumatos:

- [Hebrews 4 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries
- [Hebrews 4:12-13 God's Powerful Word](#) - Steven Cole
- [Hebrews 4:1-13 Entering Into God's Rest](#) - John MacArthur

**Piercing** (1338) (**diikneomai** from **diá** = through + **hiknéomai** = to come) means to go through, to reach through, and so to penetrate, pierce, pass through (One other Scriptural use in the LXX of Ex 26:28). It was used in ancient Greek of missiles (as moving through a three dimensional space). The figurative idea is to thoroughly penetrate.

**Vincent** - The form of the expression is poetical, and signifies that the word penetrates to the inmost recesses of our spiritual being as a sword cuts through the joints and marrow of the body. The separation is not of one part from another, but operates in each department of the spiritual nature.

**Vine** adds that "the writer's meaning is not merely that the Word of God produces conviction and distinguishes between the emotions of the soul and those of the spirit; it has power to exclude not only from Canaan but from heaven. Let him therefore who is guilty of unbelief take heed. Let him beware of seeking rest in the wilderness. ([Collected writings of W. E. Vine](#))

**Spurgeon** on **piercing** - While it has an edge like a sword, it has also a point like a rapier, "Piercing as far as the division of soul and spirit." The difficulty with some men's hearts is to get at them. In fact, there is no spiritually penetrating the heart of any natural man except by this piercing instrument, the Word of God. But the rapier of revelation will go through anything.

**Division** (3311) (**merismos** from **merizo** = to partition, divide into parts <> **meros** = part) denotes primarily a division or partition. It refers to the act of distribution or apportionment as of spiritual gifts by the Holy Spirit. The word of God has an incisive and penetrating quality. It lays bare self-delusions and moral sophistries.

**Gilbrant** - F.F. Bruce says that what is meant in that verse is "the word of God probes the inmost recesses of our spiritual being and brings the subconscious motives to light" (New International Commentary on the New Testament, Hebrews, p.82). The passage is not necessarily trying to make a distinction between body components, but is perhaps saying that God's Word can discriminate between man's thoughts and intents. (Ibid)

**Merismos** is used 2 times in the NT and 2 times in the Septuagint (LXX)...

**Joshua 11:23** So Joshua took the whole land, according to all that the LORD had spoken to Moses, and Joshua gave it for an inheritance to Israel according to their **divisions** by their tribes. Thus the land had rest from war.

**Ezra 6:18** Then they appointed the priests to their **divisions** and the Levites in their orders for the service of God in Jerusalem, as it is written in the book of Moses.

**Hebrews 2:4** (note) God also bearing witness with them, both by signs and wonders and by various miracles and by **gifts** (distribution, apportionment) of the Holy Spirit according to His own will.

**Hebrews 4:12** For the word of God is living and active and sharper than any two-edged sword, and piercing as far as the **division** of soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow, and able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart.

**Spurgeon**- As you have seen hanging up in the butcher's shop the carcasses of animals cut right down in the center, so the Word of God is "**piercing to the dividing of soul and spirit, of joints and marrow.**" It opens a man to himself and makes him see himself. It divides asunder soul and spirit. Nothing else could do that, for the division is difficult. In a great many ways writers have tried to describe the difference between soul and spirit; but I question whether they have succeeded. No doubt it is a very admirable definition to say, "The soul is the life of the natural man, and the spirit the life of the regenerate or spiritual man." But it is one thing to define and quite another thing to divide.

**Soul and spirit** - Guthrie explains that "The New Testament use of pneuma for the human spirit focuses on the spiritual aspect of man, i.e. his life in relation to God, whereas psyche refers to man's life irrespective of his spiritual experience, i.e. his life in relation to himself, his emotions and thought. There is a strong antithesis between the two in the theology of Paul.

**How precious is the Book divine,  
By inspiration given!  
Bright as a lamp its doctrines shine,  
To guide our souls to heaven.**

-John Fawcett

**Soul** (5590) (**psuche** [word study] or **psyche** from **psucho** = to breathe, blow, English = psychology, "study of the soul") (Click word study on **psuche**) is the breath, then that which breathes, the individual, animated creature. However the discerning reader must understand that psuche is one of those Greek words that can have several meanings, the exact nuance being determined by the context. It follows that one cannot simply select of the three main meanings of psuche and insert it in a given passage for it may not be appropriate to the given context. The meaning of **psuche** is also contingent upon whether one is a dichotomist or trichotomist. Consult Greek lexicons for more lengthy definitions of psuche as this definition is only a brief overview. (Click an excellent article on **Soul** in the Evangelical Dictionary of Biblical Theology; see also ISBE article on **Soul**) (See also [Man A Trinity = Spirit, Soul, Body](#))

**BAGD's** lexicon makes the point that "It is often impossible to draw hard and fast lines in the use of this multivalent word. Generally it is used in reference to dematerialized existence or being... Without psuche a being, whether human or animal, consists merely of flesh and bones and without functioning capability. Speculations and views respecting the fortunes of psuche and its relation to the body find varied expression in our literature. ([Arndt, W., Danker, F. W., & Bauer, W. A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature](#))

**Lawrence Richards** adds that as "As with many biblical terms, the basic meaning of psyche is established by its OT counterpart, rather than by its meaning in Greek culture. "Soul" refers to personal life, the inner person. Of its over one hundred NT uses, **psyche** is rendered by the NIV as "soul(s)" only twenty-five times...While there is much overlap in the NT uses of psyche and pneuma (spirit), there seems to be some areas of distinction as well. Often the focus of contexts in which these terms appear overlaps. Thus, both are used in speaking of personal existence, of life after death, emotions, purpose, and the self. But psyche is also used of one's physical life and of spiritual growth, while pneuma is associated distinctively with breath, worship, understanding, one's attitude or disposition, and spiritual power ([Richards, L O: Expository Dictionary of Bible Words: Regency](#))

(1) **One meaning** is reference to the principle of life generally, the vital force which animates the body which shows itself in breathing, the "life principle" (the breath of life) as found even with animals (cf Luke 12:20 "...*this very night your soul is required of you...*", Acts 3:23 "*every soul that does not heed that prophet shall be utterly destroyed*") . To the Greeks the psuche was the principle of physical life. Everything which had physical life had psuche. Everything which is alive has **psuche**; a dog, a cat, any animal has **psuche**, but it has not got **pneuma** or spirit. Psuche is that physical life which a man shares with every living thing; but pneuma or spirit is that which makes a man different from the rest of creation and kin to God.

(2) A **second** meaning refers to the earthly, natural life in contrast to supernatural existence (Mt 6:25 "*do not be anxious for your life...*", Ro 11:3 "*...they are seeking my life...*"). This refers to So that the word denotes "life in the distinctness of individual existence" (Cremer).

(3) A **third** meaning of **psuche** is in reference to the inner nonmaterial life of man for which the physical body serves as the dwelling place often with focus on various aspects of feeling, thinking, etc and thus can refer primarily to the mind, to the heart, to desire (Lk 10:27 "*love the Lord...with all your soul*", Mk 14:34 "*My soul is deeply grieved...*", Eph 6:6 "*doing the will of God from the heart* [psuche], Heb 12:3 "*so that you may not grow weary and lose heart*"). One might say this meaning refers to the inner self, the essence of life in terms of thinking, willing, and feeling. Here psuche describes the seat and center of the inner human life in its many and varied aspects.

It should be noted that there is an additional meaning of a derivative of psuche (**psuchikos**) which is used to describe a "soulish" person, one who is still unregenerate and in Adam, and thus a person whose life is dominated by the unredeemed nature (1Cor 2:14, 15:44, 46, James 3:15, Jude 1:19)

**Vincent** offers the follows thoughts on **psuche** - The **soul (psuche)** is the principle of individuality, the seat of personal impressions. It has a side in contact with both the material and the spiritual element of humanity, and is thus the mediating organ between body and spirit. Its meaning, therefore, constantly rises above life or the living individual, and takes color from its relation to either the emotional or the spiritual side of life, from the fact of its being the seat of the feelings, desires, affections, aversions, and the bearer and manifester of the divine life-principle (pneuma). Consequently **psuche** is often used in our sense of heart (Lk 1:46; Lk 2:35; Jn

10:24; Acts 14:2); and the meanings of psuche, soul, and pneuma, spirit, occasionally approach each other very closely. Compare Jn 12:27 and Jn 9:33; Mt 11:29 and 1Co 16:18. Also both words in Lk 1:47. In this passage psuche, soul, expresses the soul regarded as a moral being designed for everlasting life. See Heb 6:19; Heb 10:39; Heb 13:17; 1Pe 2:11; 1Pe 4:19. John commonly uses the word to denote the principle of the natural life. See Jn 10:11, 15; Jn 13:37; Jn 15:13; 1Jn 3:16" (Vincent, M. R. Word studies in the New Testament. Vol. 2, Page 1-400).

**John MacArthur** offer the following discussion on **dichotomist** versus **trichotomist** view...

There has been a significant debate over the years about the definition and usage of the terms spirit and soul. Some (historically called **trichotomists**) believe Paul was identifying two different, distinct categories of the nonmaterial essence of man. Those parts, along with the body, make man a three-part being. Others (historically called **dichotomists**) believe spirit and soul are interchangeable words denoting man's indivisible inner nature. Those interpreters therefore view man as a two-part being, composed simply of a nonmaterial nature (spirit and soul) and a material nature (body).

No Scripture text ascribes different, distinct substance and functions to the spirit and soul. Trichotomists nevertheless usually propose that spirit is man's Godward consciousness and soul is his earthward consciousness; however, neither the Greek usage of spirit (pneuma) nor of soul (psuche) sustains that proposition. The nonmaterial part of man does have myriad capacities to respond to God, Satan, and the world's many stimuli, but it is untenable to arbitrarily separate the spirit from the soul. The two terms are used interchangeably in Scripture (He 6:19-note; He 10:39-note, 1Pe 2:11-note; 2Pe 2:8-note). Spirit and soul are familiar and common synonyms that Paul used to emphasize the depth and scope of sanctification. Some suggest that an acceptable translation of this portion of Paul's prayer could be, "May your spirit, even soul and body," in which case "spirit" would refer to the whole person, and "soul and body" to the person's nonmaterial and material parts. References from Paul's other epistles provide clear evidence that he was a dichotomist (Romans 8:10-note; 1Co 2:11; 5:3, 5; 7:34; 2Co 7:1; Gal 6:18; Col 2:5-note; 2Ti 4:22-note).

Some claim Hebrews 4:12, "For the word of God is living and active and sharper than any two-edged sword, and piercing as far as the division of soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow, and able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart," supports a trichotomist view of man's essence because it suggests splitting soul and spirit. But a careful look at the verse's language refutes that contention. The writer did not say the sword of the Word penetrates a person's inner being and separates his soul from his spirit. He said only that the sword cuts open the soul and the spirit of the person. He used a second metaphorical expression "piercing ... both joints and marrow" to further depict the deep penetration God's Word makes into the inner person. This verse poses no special difficulty for the dichotomist position. ([MacArthur, J. 1 & 2 Thessalonians. Chicago: Moody Press.](#))

**Spirit (4151)** (**pneuma** from **pnéo** = to breathe) refers to the immaterial part of the human personality in contrast to the outward and visible aspects of flesh and body.

**Leon Morris** - We should not take the reference to "soul" and "spirit" as indicating a "dichotomist" over against a "trichotomist" view of man, nor the reference to "dividing" to indicate that the writer envisaged a sword as slipping between them. Nor should we think of the sword as splitting off "joints" and "marrow." What the author is saying is that God's Word can reach to the innermost recesses of our being. We must not think that we can bluff our way out of anything, for there are no secrets hidden from God. We cannot keep our thoughts to ourselves. There may also be the thought that the whole of man's nature, however we divide it, physical as well as nonmaterial, is open to God. With "judges" we move to legal terminology. The Word of God passes judgment on men's **feelings** (enthymeseon) and on their **thoughts** (ennoion). Nothing evades the scope of this Word. What man holds as most secret he finds subject to its scrutiny and judgment ([Gaebelein, F. Editor: Expositor's Bible Commentary 6-Volume New Testament](#))

**Ryrie** - The meaning is that the Word pierces to the depths of soul and spirit, not between the two. They stand for the innermost facets of our immaterial nature, just as joints and marrow the material aspect. Both soul and spirit can be involved in what pleases or displeases God. (For soul, see Mark 12:30 and 1 Peter 2:11; for spirit, see 1 Cor. 2:11 and 2 Cor. 7:1). Also see note on 1 Thess. 5:23-24. ([The Ryrie Study Bible: New American Standard Translation: 1995. Moody Publishers](#))

**Believer's Study Bible** - The capabilities of the word of God are clearly featured here. The nature of God's word is that of life-giving communication. The word here translated "powerful" (energes) is the source of the English word "energy." Furthermore, God's word is sharp and penetrating, acting as a critic of the thought-life and the motivations or purposes of the human heart. Note that the word of God has the unique ability not merely to discover the merit of men's actions but also to reveal hidden motivations. Thus, "all things are naked and open to the eyes of Him to whom we must give account" (v. 13). ([Criswell, W. A. Believer's Study Bible: New King James Version. 1991. Thomas Nelson](#))



**Richard Phillips** laments that "we are living in a time when many Christians, even evangelicals who once were singularly known and even derided for their devotion to the Word, are losing confidence in the Bible's effectiveness. Yes, it is inspired; yes, it is useful; but it must be augmented by human means or wisdom or methods. Our evangelism now relies on manipulative psychological ploys, our spiritual growth depends on techniques and programs and store-bought gimmicks, our worship reflects the glitter of Hollywood entertainment. Far different is the message of the writer of Hebrews, who says that nothing is able to escape the revealing, energetic Word of God. Therefore, it alone is sufficient for our every need. (Reformed Expository Commentary – Hebrews)

**Spurgeon** says this sword "divides asunder soul and spirit. Nothing else could do that, for the division is difficult. In a great many ways writers have tried to describe the difference between soul and spirit; but I question whether they have succeeded. No doubt it is a very admirable definition to say, "The soul is the life of the natural man, and the spirit the life of the regenerate or spiritual man." But it is one thing to define and quite another thing to divide."

#### OF BOTH JOINTS AND MARROW: *harmôn te kai muelôn*:

- [Hebrews 4 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries
- [Hebrews 4:12-13 God's Powerful Word](#) - Steven Cole
- [Hebrews 4:1-13 Entering Into God's Rest](#) - John MacArthur

This is obviously a figure of speech emphasizing that all parts of the person are subject to the effects of the Word of God.

**Joints** ([719](#)) (*harmos* from *arô* = adjust, join properly together. Found only here in NT) refers to articulation of body = joint

**Marrow** ([3452](#)) (*muelos* from *muô* = shut. Found only here in NT)

This surgeon goes into and through the joints and marrow, not cleaving between them. The expressions of "joints and marrow" serve to convey effectively the notion of the extreme power of penetration of the Word of God, to the very core of man's being.

#### AND ABLE TO JUDGE THE THOUGHTS AND INTENTIONS OF THE HEART: *kai kritikos enthumêseôn kai ennoîôn kardias*

- Ps 139:2; Jeremiah 17:10; 1Corinthians 14:24,25; Ephesians 5:13; Revelation 2:23
- Related Resource: Simple Inductive Study on the Power of God's Word
- [Hebrews 4 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries
- [Hebrews 4:12-13 God's Powerful Word](#) - Steven Cole
- [Hebrews 4:1-13 Entering Into God's Rest](#) - John MacArthur

**William S Plumer** wrote that "Scripture is not only pure but purifying!"

As famous Bible teacher **Henrietta Mears** wrote "Hebrews 4:12 shows the power of God's Word. Let the Word search and try you! Let God's Word have its proper place in your life. It searches out every motive and desire and purpose of your life, and helps you in evaluating them. Christ is the living Word of God. He is alive (quick) and powerful and all wise and all knowing. ([What the Bible is All - highly recommended](#))

God's Word is powerful and effective which is the very reason that is Satan launches his greatest attacks against the Word of God, doing anything and everything he can to undermine the Word and derail or discourage those who preach and teach it faithfully. As a teacher I can personally testify to this truth. In the parable of the sower, our Lord describes Satan's attack "When anyone hears the word of the kingdom and does not understand it, the evil one comes and snatches away what has been sown in his heart. This is the one on whom seed was sown beside the road. (Mt 13:19)

He snatches the seed of the living and active Word from the hearer's heart before it has a chance to take root.

**John MacArthur** - Many people gladly listen to the gospel, but before their decision is made, some intrusion distracts them and the effectiveness of the witness is lost, along with the soul of that hearer. In another person's heart the word is accepted at first with joy, but when Satan sends "affliction or persecution... because of the word, immediately he falls away" (Mt 13:20, 21). Many people seem to be genuine and faithful believers—until hardship, criticism, or persecution come. When the price for faithfulness becomes too high, they reveal that they never had true faith in the first place. Still another hearer also accepts the word in a superficial and temporary way, but as he trusts in his wealth the word is choked and "it becomes unfruitful" (Mt 13:22). Because he wants the world, he forsakes the word. ([MacArthur, J: Ephesians. Chicago: Moody Press](#))



In an OT declaration of God's ability to judge hearts Jehovah declared...

I, the Lord, search the heart, I test the mind, even to give to each man according to his ways, according to the results of his deeds. (Jeremiah 17:10)

The psalmist affirms God omniscience regarding man's inner being...

You know when I sit down and when I rise up; You understand my thought from afar. (Ps139:2)

The Word of God is like a light (Ps 119:105) and as Paul says...

all things become visible when they are exposed by the light, for everything that becomes visible is light. (Ep 5:13-note)

**Able to judge** (2924) (**kritikos** = verbal adjective **-ikos**, from **krino** = to divide, separate, to judge, to sift out and analyze evidence) means related to judges, fit for judging, skilled in judging. The Word is able to discern or decide as the surgeon has to be and able to decide on the instant what to do. God's word like His eye sees the secret lurking doubt and unbelief "of the thoughts and intents of the heart".

**Vine** writes that **kritikos** "signifies possessed of a power to judge. The Word of God, which is God's own voice, scans, and sits in judgment, for instance, upon, the unbelief which leads to departure from the Living God.

God's Word is the perfect discerner, the perfect **kritikos** (English = critic, critical). It not only analyzes all the facts perfectly, but all motives, and intentions, and beliefs as well, which even the wisest of human judges or critics cannot do. The sword of His Word will make no mistakes in judgment or execution

We never see Israel or Moses arguing with God's verdict of "guilty" of always going astray in your hearts leading to the sentence that they "shall not enter My rest." All deceptions are disclosed and brought to the light by God's Truth. God had given Israel a wonderful **motivation** (the promise of a Land flowing with milk and honey) and His **guiding Truth** (the Law) and a **leader** (Moses) and despite all these advantages, Israel for the most part willfully, obstinately choose grumbling, unfaithfulness and rebellion over gratitude, faithfulness and obedience. **Aren't we all a lot like Israel from time to time? We stubbornly choose our path rather than the Lord's path which promises blessing! Such is the nature of our old sin nature, constantly seeking to drag us off the highway of holiness and into the pit of destruction.**

A surgeon exposes the operating field with a bright, powerful light to illuminate every dark crevice and then with a sharp knife is able to lance the abscess to remove the infected pocket or to excise the portion of the organ that is being ravaged by cancer. Such is the power and potential of the "scalpel" of the Word of God to expose and excise the sin in our innermost being.

**Spurgeon** - Many and many a time have persons written to me or spoken with me and said, "Did you intend in the sermon to make a personal allusion to me?" I have said, "Yes, I most certainly did. But I never saw you in my life and never knew anything about your case; only he that sent me commanded me to say this and that, and he knew who would be there to hear it, and he took care to guide my thoughts and words, so as to suit your case exactly, so that there could be no mistake about it."

**The Dictionary of Biblical Imagery** has an interesting analysis on judgment "Judgment as the Great Exposé. The popularity and success of exposé in all forms of the media may be due in part to the ability of the reader/listener to anonymously sit in judgment against the exposed. Few things can rival the protracted examination of another's sins to quiet one's own conscience and sense of depravity. In the final exposé, the shroud of anonymity will be stripped as each individual stands naked before the Judge of the Universe (Mt 12:36, 37; 1Cor 4:5; Heb 4:12-13)

**Thoughts** (1761) (**enthumesis** from **en** = in + **thumos** = strong feeling, passion, mind, thought) means an inward reasoning or deliberation and conveys the idea of pondering or thinking out. Our English word "reflection" is an accurate translation. Westcott notes that the word refers to the action of the affections and is related to the will.

**Spurgeon** - The Word not only lets you see what your thoughts are, but it criticizes your thoughts. The Word of God says of this thought, "it is vain," and of that thought, "it is acceptable"; of this thought, "it is selfish," and of that thought, "it is Christlike." It is a judge of the thoughts of men. And the Word of God is such a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart that when men twist about, and wind, and wander, yet it tracks them. There is nothing so difficult to get at as a man. You may hunt a badger, and run down a fox, but you cannot get at a man—he has so many doublings and hiding places. Yet the Word of God will dig him out, and seize on him. When the Spirit of God works with the gospel, the man may dodge, and twist, but the preaching goes to his heart and conscience, and he is made to feel it, and to yield to its force. The Word of God gets at the very marrow of our manhood; it lays bare the secret thoughts of the soul. It is "able to judge the reflections and thoughts of the heart." Have you not often, in hearing the Word, wondered how the preacher could so unveil that which you had concealed? He says the very things in the pulpit that you had

uttered in your bedchamber. Yes, that is one of the marks of the Word of God, that it lays bare a man's inmost secrets; indeed, it discovers to him that which he had not even himself perceived. The Christ that is in the Word sees everything.

**Matthew Henry** - Thoughts are words to Christ; we should therefore take heed not only what we say and do, but what we think.

There are 4 uses of **enthumesis** in the NT (no uses in the LXX)...

**Matthew 9:4** And Jesus knowing their **thoughts** said, "Why are you thinking evil in your hearts?"

**Matthew 12:25** And knowing their **thoughts** He said to them, "Any kingdom divided against itself is laid waste; and any city or house divided against itself shall not stand.

**Acts 17:29** "Being then the offspring of God, we ought not to think that the Divine Nature is like gold or silver or stone, an image formed by the art and **thought** of man.

**Hebrews 4:12** For the word of God is living and active and sharper than any two-edged sword, and piercing as far as the division of soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow, and able to judge the **thoughts** and intentions of the heart.

**Intentions** (1771) (**ennoia** from **en** = in + **noús** = mind) means literally that which takes place in the mind. **Ennoia** describes a mental conception that follows consideration or deliberation. It is closely allied to **enthumesis** for both refer to the act of consideration or reflection. Like *phroneo*, **ennoia** relates to thought, especially to the development of a perspective that will provide insight and so shape our attitude and guide our actions.

**Intention** (*The road to hell is paved with good intentions*) is a determination to act in a certain way and describes what one intends to accomplish or attain. Intention represents the deliberate exercise of the will with reference to the consequences of an act attempted or performed. In Logic **intentions** describe conceptions formed by directing the mind towards an object.

There are 12 uses of **ennoia** in the Septuagint (LXX), all in Proverbs (Prov. 1:4; 2:11; 3:21; 4:1; 5:2; 8:12; 16:22; 18:15; 19:7; 23:4, 19; 24:7)

Regarding the uses of **ennoia** in **Proverbs** NIDNTT writes that...

All the Hebrew equivalents mean understanding, wisdom, knowledge, and so **ennoia** retains its sense of reflection, insight, perception, wisdom, though not the theoretical meaning of concept. ([Brown, Colin, Editor. New International Dictionary of NT Theology. 1986. Zondervan](#))

The only other NT use of **ennoia** is in 1Pe 4:1 (note)

Therefore, since Christ has suffered in the flesh, arm yourselves also with the same **purpose** (*ennoia* - way of thinking, purpose describes a more settled determination), because he who has suffered in the flesh has ceased from sin.

**Vincent** writes that **ennoia** "is the definite conception which follows **enthumesis**."

**Barclay** compares **enthumesis** and **ennoia** writing that the former "is the emotional part of man, (while) **intention** (*ennoia*) is the intellectual part of man. It is as if he said: "Your emotional and intellectual life must alike be submitted to the scrutiny of God." ([Daily Study Bible](#))

God's inspired Word reveals all a person is and can become. It judges every person in relationship to God's will and way. The judgment centers on potential, plans, and attitudes, not simply on individual acts.

**Heart** (2588) (**kardia** [word study]) does not refer to the physical organ but is always used figuratively in Scripture to refer to the seat and center of human life. The heart is the center of the personality, and it controls the intellect, emotions, and will. The heart is a person's "control center". Just as "air traffic control" directs all inbound and out bound flights, so too the heart exercises a similar control over the "safe" flight of one's being.

**MacArthur** commenting on *kardia* writes that "While we often relate **heart** to the emotions (e.g., "He has a broken heart"), the Bible relates it **primarily to the intellect** (e.g., "Out of the **heart** come evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, slanders," Matt 15:19). That's why you must "watch over your heart with all diligence" (Proverbs 4:23-note). In a secondary way, however, **heart** relates to the will and emotions because they are influenced by the intellect. If you are committed to something, it will affect your will, which in turn will affect your emotions." (Drawing Near. Crossway Books) MacArthur adds that "In most modern cultures, the **heart** is thought of as the seat of emotions and feelings. But most ancients—Hebrews, Greeks, and many others—considered the **heart** to be the center of knowledge, understanding, thinking, and wisdom. The New Testament also uses it in that way. The **heart** was considered to be the seat of the mind and will, and it could be taught what the brain could never know.

Emotions and feelings were associated with the intestines, or bowels." ([MacArthur, J: Ephesians. 1986. Chicago: Moody Press](#))

**Hughes** explains that what Paul is saying here is that The **heart** is the wellspring of man's spiritual life, and that is where the Roman Christians' obedience was rooted. It was not just a formal obedience—it came from the center of their being. This is the example of slavery Paul holds up for us all: a heartfelt obedience to Christ and his Word. It is an obedience which brings liberation. ([Hughes, R. K. Romans: Righteousness from heaven. Preaching the Word](#))

**Vine** writes that **kardia** "came to denote man's entire mental and moral activities, and to stand figuratively for the hidden springs of the personal life, and so here signifies the seat of thought and feeling. ([Collected writings of W. E. Vine](#))

It is notable that 6 of 12 uses of **kardia** or "heart" are in Hebrews 3 and 4, which are also pivotal chapters regarding the nature of true belief which allows one to enter His rest (see all uses below)

In Hebrew thinking, the **heart** represents the entire person and their inner motivation. Study the uses of **heart** in Hebrews...

**Hebrews 3:8** (note) - DO NOT HARDEN YOUR **HEARTS** AS WHEN THEY PROVOKED ME, AS IN THE DAY OF TRIAL IN THE WILDERNESS,

**Hebrews 3:10** (note) - "THEREFORE I WAS ANGRY WITH THIS GENERATION, AND SAID, 'THEY ALWAYS GO ASTRAY IN THEIR **HEART**, AND THEY DID NOT KNOW MY WAYS ';

**Hebrews 3:12** (note) - Take care, brethren, that there not be in any one of you an evil, unbelieving **heart** that falls away from the living God.

**Hebrews 3:15** (note) - while it is said, "TODAY IF YOU HEAR HIS VOICE, DO NOT HARDEN YOUR **HEARTS**, AS WHEN THEY PROVOKED ME."

**Hebrews 4:7** (note) - He again fixes a certain day, "Today ," saying through David after so long a time just as has been said before, "TODAY IF YOU HEAR HIS VOICE, DO NOT HARDEN YOUR **HEARTS** ."

**Hebrews 4:12** (note) - For the word of God is living and active and sharper than any two-edged sword, and piercing as far as the division of soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow, and able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the **heart**.

**Hebrews 8:10** (note) - "FOR THIS IS THE COVENANT THAT I WILL MAKE WITH THE HOUSE OF ISRAEL AFTER THOSE DAYS, SAYS THE LORD: I WILL PUT MY LAWS INTO THEIR MINDS, AND I WILL WRITE THEM ON THEIR **HEARTS**. AND I WILL BE THEIR GOD, AND THEY SHALL BE MY PEOPLE.

**Hebrews 10:16** (note) - "THIS IS THE COVENANT THAT I WILL MAKE WITH AFTER THOSE DAYS, SAYS THE LORD: I WILL PUT MY LAWS UPON THEIR **HEART**, AND ON THEIR MIND I WILL WRITE THEM," He then says,

**Hebrews 10:22** (note) - let us draw near with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith, having our **hearts** sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water.

**Hebrews 13:9** (note) - Do not be carried away by varied and strange teachings; for it is good for the **heart** to be strengthened by grace, not by foods, through which those who were so occupied were not benefited.

**Newell** - We have known people suddenly arrested in their deepest being by reading a verse of Scripture. The thoughts, and necessarily, the intents of the heart, they found discerned, and themselves the object of an infinite Intelligence, but yet an Intelligence not like that at Siani, when the glory and power and majesty of God were openly displayed; but in the written Word of God, which, being "living and active," had pierced them. This piercing may have resulted in their conviction of sin, and accepting Christ and salvation; or it may have been resisted. Nevertheless, the power of the Word of God is here seen, and we greatly need to meditate upon it in these days.

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**Ray Stedman** writes that...

David asks, in Psalm 19:12, "Who can discern his errors?" The answer he gives in the psalm and that of the writer of Hebrews is the same. Only the Word of God, which is living and active and sharper than any double-edged sword, is capable of exposing the thoughts and attitudes of a single human heart! We do not know ourselves. We do not even know how to distinguish, by feelings or rationale, between that which comes from our souls (psyches) and from our spirits (pneumas). Even our bodily functions (symbolized here by joints and marrow) are beyond our full knowledge. Only the all-seeing eye of God knows us thoroughly and totally (Ps 139:1–18), and before him we will stand and ultimately give account.

The images the author employs in this marvelous passage are effective ones. Like a sharp sword which can lay open the human body with one slashing blow, so the sword of the Scripture can open our inner life and expose it to ourselves and others. Once the ugly thoughts and hidden rebellions are out in the open, we stand like criminals before a judge, ineffectually trying to explain what we have done. Yet such honest revelation is what we need to humble our stubborn pride and render us willing to look to God for forgiveness and his gracious supply.

Plainly, Scripture is the only reliable guide we have to function properly as a human in a broken world. Philosophy and psychology give partial insights, based on human experience, but they fall far short of what the Word of God can do. It is not intended to replace human knowledge or effort, but is designed to supplement and correct them. Surely the most hurtful thing pastors and leaders of churches can do to their people is to deprive them of firsthand knowledge of the Bible. The exposition of both Old and New Testaments from the pulpit, in class rooms and small group meetings is the first responsibility of church leaders. They are "stewards of the mysteries of God" and must be found faithful to the task of distribution. This uniqueness of Scripture is the reason that all true human discovery in any dimension must fit within the limits of divine disclosure. Human knowledge can never outstrip divine revelation.

The remaining verses of chapter 4 (vv. 14–16) properly belong with the subject of chapter 5 and will be considered there. Thus far we have seen that Jesus is far greater than any angel, eclipses Moses as the spokesman of God, and leads believers into a far superior rest than Joshua led Israel into. In chapter 5, we are introduced to the major theme of Hebrews: the high priesthood of Jesus. He is superior in every respect to the priesthood of Aaron, and encompasses a ministry which the Old Testament only faintly shadowed in the mysterious ministry of Melchizedek to Abraham. ([Stedman, Ray: Hebrews IVP New Testament Commentary Series](#))

## **Pierced by the Word of God**

### **A Meditation on Hebrews 4:12**

#### **John Piper**

For the word of God is living and active and sharper than any two-edged sword, and piercing as far as the division of soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow, and able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart.

The term "word of God" may mean a word spoken by God without a human mouthpiece. But in the New Testament it regularly means a word or a message that a human speaks on God's behalf. So, for example, in Heb 13:7 it says, "Remember those who led you, who spoke the word of God to you; and considering the result of their conduct, imitate their faith."

So the "word of God" in Heb 4:12 probably refers to the truth of God revealed in Scripture that humans speak to each other with reliance on God's help to understand it and apply it.

"Living and active."

The word of God is not a dead word or an ineffective word. It has life in it. And because it has life in it, it produces effects. There is something about the Truth, as God has revealed it, that connects it to God as a source of all life and power. God loves his word. He is partial to his word. He honors his word with his presence and power. If you want your teaching or witness to have power and produce effects, stay close to the revealed word of God.

Sharper than any two-edged sword, and piercing as far as the division of soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow.

What does this living and effective word do? It pierces. For what purpose? To divide. To divide what? Soul and spirit. What does that mean?

The writer gives an analogy: it's like dividing joints and marrow. Joints are the thick, hard, outer part of the bone. Marrow is the soft, tender, living, inner part of the bone. That is an analogy of "soul and spirit." The word of God is like a sword that is sharp enough to cut right through the outer, hard, tough part of a bone to the inner, soft, living part of the bone. Some swords, less sharp, may strike a bone and glance off and not penetrate. Some swords may penetrate part way through the tough, thick joint of a bone. But a very sharp,

powerful double-edged sword (sharp on each side of the point) will penetrate the joint all the way to the marrow.

"Soul and spirit" are like "bone joint and bone marrow." "Soul" is that invisible dimension of our life that we are by nature. "Spirit" is what we are by supernatural rebirth. Jesus said, "That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit" (Jn 3:6). Without the awakening, creative, regenerating work of the Spirit of God in us we are merely "natural" rather than "spiritual" (1Co 2:14-15). So the "spirit" is that invisible dimension of our life that we are by the regenerating work of the Spirit.

What then is the point saying that the "word of God" pierces to the "division of soul and spirit"? The point is that it's the word of God that reveals to us our true selves. Are we spiritual or are we natural? Are we born of God and spiritually alive, or are we deceiving ourselves and spiritually dead? Are the "thoughts and intentions of our heart" spiritual thoughts and intentions or only natural thoughts and intentions. Only the "word of God" can "judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart" as Heb4:12 says.

Practically speaking, when we read or hear "the word of God," we sense ourselves pierced. The effect of this piercing is to reveal whether there is spirit or not. Is there marrow and life in our bones? Or are we only a "skeleton" with no living marrow? Is there "spirit," or only "soul"? The word of God pierces deep enough to show us the truth of our thoughts and our motives and our selves.

Give yourselves to this word of God in the Bible. Use it to know yourself and confirm your own spiritual life. If there is life, there will be love and joy and a heart to obey the word. Give yourself to this word so that your words become the word of God for others and reveal to them their own spiritual condition. Then in the wound of the word, pour the balm of the word. ([Pierced By the Word of God :Desiring God](#))

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**Sigmund Freud and the Word of God** - Few thinkers in recent times have exerted so pervasive an influence as Sigmund Freud. Although he claimed to be an atheist, he continually speculated about religious issues as if subconsciously haunted by the God whom he denied.

When Freud turned 35, his father sent him a copy of the Hebrew Scriptures he had given to him when he was a boy. Sigmund had read and studied that book, at least for a while. Enclosed in that worn copy of the Scriptures was a note from the elder Freud reminding his son that "the Spirit of the Lord began to move you and spoke within you:

'Go read in My Book that I've written and there will burst open for you the wellsprings of understanding, knowledge, and wisdom.'

His father expressed the hope that Sigmund might, as a mature man, once again read and obey God's law. We have no evidence, however, that Freud took to heart his father's exhortation. How different his life and influence might have been if he had!

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**The Robber** - When evangelist John Wesley (1703-1791) was returning home from a service one night, he was robbed. The thief, however, found his victim to have only a little money and some Christian literature.

As the bandit was leaving, Wesley called out,

"Stop! I have something more to give you."

The surprised robber paused.

"My friend," said Wesley, "you may live to regret this sort of life. If you ever do, here's something to remember: 'The blood of Jesus Christ cleanses us from all sin!'"

The thief hurried away, and Wesley prayed that his words might bear fruit.

Years later, Wesley was greeting people after a Sunday service when he was approached by a stranger. What a surprise to learn that this visitor, now a believer in Christ as a successful businessman, was the one who had robbed him years before!

"I owe it all to you," said the transformed man.

"Oh no, my friend," Wesley exclaimed, "not to me, but to the precious blood of Christ that cleanses us from all sin!"

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God's Word is an arrow that never misses its mark. ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

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**First In Our Lives** - Actor Sylvester Stallone is applauded for his strongman movie roles as Rocky and Rambo. But what is he really like in his personal life? During an interview he honestly admitted, "If I were watching a home movie of my life, I would shake my head in despair and wonderment. It's a comedy of errors."

Suppose a movie were made of your life or mine. Would it reveal not only errors and poor choices but also a sinful person who doesn't even act like a follower of Christ? Would we be ashamed of some scenes? Would we be motivated, as Stallone says he was, to shift our values and start paying attention to "relationships . . . and putting someone else first"?

Jesus wants to be the "someone else" in our lives whom we put first (Matthew 6:24-note, Mt 6:33-note). But how do we do that? It starts with confession of any sin that is between us and Him, and then experiencing the Lord's cleansing and forgiveness (Psalm 32:5-note). Then we are gradually changed by Him through the work of the Holy Spirit and by the Word of God (Galatians 5:22-note, Gal 5:23-note; Hebrews 4:12). If we make our relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ our first priority, He will make us into the kind of people He wants us to be (Philippians 2:3, 4-note, Php 2:5, 6, 7-note, Php 2:8-note). —Vernon C Grounds ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

Search me, O God, and know my heart today;  
Try me, O Savior, know my thoughts, I pray.  
See if there be some wicked way in me;  
Cleanse me from every sin and set me free. —Orr

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### **The Spirit of God uses the Word of God to change the people of God.**

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**A "Dangerous" Weapon** - One Sunday evening at church a short-term missionary reported on her overseas experiences and told about crossing into a communist country. At the border, the guards asked, "Do you have any guns, drugs, or Bibles?"

Although they probably hadn't read it, those communist border guards apparently believed Hebrews 4:12. To them, the Bible was as dangerous as guns and drugs. Guns injure and kill the body. Drugs alter and distort the mind. The Bible exposes and destroys falsehood. But the Bible threatens more than their religion of atheism. It threatens their place of power and control over the people because it gives to the people what no government can. The Bible enriches lives, instills hope, and frees the human spirit, which makes it as threatening to an atheistic government as guns and drugs.

In Psalm 119, the psalmist refers to some of the powerful effects of the Word of God on his life. It revives his soul (Ps 119:25-note); it imparts inner strength (Ps 119:28-note); it guides him into truth (Ps 119:30-note); and it enlarges his heart (Ps 119:32-note).

We who are blessed with both the Old and New Testaments have God's full and final written revelation of Himself. When we meditate on the truths of this powerful book, we experience its impact on our lives by the indwelling Holy Spirit, who makes it real to us. Guns, drugs, and the Bible all wield power, but only the Bible destroys what is false and builds what is true. —D. J. De Haan ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

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### **No weapon in Satan's arsenal can destroy the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God.**

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**Changed By The Book** -He was trouble. He lived in a home for orphans, but he didn't like it. He was disobedient and miserable, so he ran away. When he did, he took with him the Bible his housemother had given him. Several years later, the young man returned to the home he had abandoned. He told the people that while he was gone, he had begun reading the Bible. "Now I want to accept Christ," he told his astonished listeners.

What a remarkable book the Bible is! Read by a hurting and troubled young man, this Book was used by God's Spirit to show him his need for salvation. We live in a world that needs what the Bible offers. People need to read its words of comfort, hope, cleansing, and joy. They need to discover in its pages the good news of salvation in Christ.

Not everyone who reads God's Word turns to Christ. Jesus made this clear in the parable of the sower (Lk. 8:4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15). We are to be sowers of God's Word, but we don't decide who will receive it. Our job is to scatter the seed.

Maybe you've been looking for a good witnessing tool and never thought that God's Word is the answer. Why not give a Bible to those you want to reach. Then watch what happens. They can be changed by His Book. —Dave Branon ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

The world's greatest Book is the Bible,  
Its words are inspired and true;



Some may have scorned as they read it  
But found their lives changed and made new. --Byer

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### God's Word is an arrow that never misses its mark

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#### Nothing Hidden

Read: Hebrews 4:12–16

Nothing in all creation is hidden from God's sight. Hebrews 4:13

In 2015 an international research company stated that there were 245 million surveillance cameras installed worldwide, and the number was growing by 15 percent every year. In addition, multiplied millions of people with smartphones capture daily images ranging from birthday parties to bank robberies. Whether we applaud the increased security or denounce the diminished privacy, we live in a global, cameras-everywhere society.

The New Testament book of Hebrews says that in our relationship with God, we experience a far greater level of exposure and accountability than anything surveillance cameras may see. His Word, like a sharp, two-edged sword, penetrates to the deepest level of our being where it "judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart. Nothing in all creation is hidden from God's sight. Everything is uncovered and laid bare before the eyes of him to whom we must give account" (Heb. 4:12–13).

Nothing is hidden from God's sight. Nothing is greater than God's love.

Because Jesus our Savior experienced our weaknesses and temptations but did not sin, we can "approach God's throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need" (vv. 15–16). We don't need to fear Him but can be assured we'll find grace when we come to Him.

Nothing is hidden from God's sight. Nothing is greater than God's love. Nothing is stronger than God's mercy and grace. Nothing is too hard for God's power.

Discover how you can develop and maintain a meaningful prayer life. Read Jesus' Blueprint for Prayer at [discoveryseries.org/hj891](http://discoveryseries.org/hj891).

No part of our lives is hidden from God's grace and power.

By David C. McCasland ([Our Daily Bread. Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

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**The Big Questions** - Author Ronald B. Schwartz asked scores of well-known contemporary writers to name the books that influenced them most deeply. Their responses ranged from the novels of Dostoevsky to the popular stories of Mark Twain. The works of Dickens, Shakespeare, and Faulkner were mentioned many times. But topping the list was the Bible. Why?

Perhaps because most writers want to deal with the "big questions" of life, and the Bible is the ultimate book for life's big questions: Who am I? Why am I here? Is there a God? Does life have any meaning or purpose?

The pages of Scripture bring us face to face with ourselves, with God, and with His grand design for our lives. The Bible, according to the late journalist Malcolm Muggeridge, is "the book that reads me." The writer of Hebrews said, "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" (Hebrews 4:12).

When we read the Bible, God speaks personally and powerfully to us about the big questions that matter most in life. -- David C. McCasland ([Our Daily Bread. Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

What is the meaning of life here on earth?  
What is its purpose, and what is its worth?  
God has the answers in His holy book;  
That is the first and the best place to look. —Hess

**The Bible is God's answer book.**

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**Change The Word?** - The Bible, God's written Word, changes lives. Its message of salvation makes the most profound change, of course, but Scripture can also change the way we treat others. It can provide a firm foundation for society with its clear teachings on

institutions such as marriage, family, and the church.

But what happens when what the Bible clearly says—as understood for centuries by learned believers and scholars alike—is rejected? Those who reject its teachings try to change the Word.

Two Greek words can help explain this: **eisegesis** and **exegesis**. **Eisegesis** is the process of reading into a passage something that is not there—inserting a meaning that flows from a personal agenda. By contrast, **exegesis** means drawing from the passage the clearly intended meaning, using context, other Scripture passages on the same topic, and legitimate tools of understanding such as Bible commentaries.

Instead of trying to change God's Word to fit our own ideas, let's allow the Word to change us. As we read His Word and obey it, the Holy Spirit will transform us into the kind of people God wants us to be.

Don't change the Word—let it change you.—Dave Branon ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

The Lord has given man His Word,  
His will He has made known;  
Let man not try to change that Word  
With words that are his own. —D. De Haan

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### **The Bible—eternal truth and never-fading beauty.**

**Excuses** - Unbelief, indifference, busyness, and laziness are some of the excuses people give for not reading the Bible. Gamaliel Bradford, a renowned American biographer who explored the lives and motives of famous individuals, candidly admitted, "I do not read the New Testament for fear of its awakening a storm of anxiety and self-reproach and doubt and dread of having taken the wrong path, of having been traitor to the plain and simple God."

Fear of facing up to failure, guilt and sin is not a very reasonable reason to avoid reading the Bible! It's about as irrational as refusing to see a doctor because there's a suspicion that cancer has started to develop in one's body.

Yes, the Bible does indeed compel us to face ourselves. It is like an x-ray machine that penetrates below the facade of goodness and shows up any spiritual malignancy. It enables us to see how God views all the worst diseases of the soul. But the Bible does more than expose a fatal condition. It introduces us to the Great Physician, who can cure our sin and bring spiritual healing.

If you read the Bible with a willingness to obey the truth, you will find life's greatest cure. Vernon C. Grounds ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

Instill within our hearts, dear Lord,  
A deep desire to know Your voice;  
We need to learn to hear  
Your Word That we may make  
Your will our choice. - Dennis J. De Haan

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### **Many people criticize the bible because the bible criticizes them**

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#### **Hebrews 4:12 Undiscovered Country**

The Word of God is living and powerful. —Hebrews 4:12

I studied the map as my husband and I drove up the east coast of Virginia. We were looking for any road that would take us to the seashore. Finally, I found one and we turned toward the sun.

In only a few minutes, we were laughing in delight when—just before the seashore—we happened upon a national wildlife refuge. All around us were dunes and marsh and beach grasses and an abundance of gulls, egrets, and blue herons. It was active and loud and wonderful! We had arrived at Chincoteague and Assateague Islands—famous for the annual pony swim from one island to the other. Others had realized its value and beauty long before, but to us it was undiscovered country.

The Scriptures are like “undiscovered country” to many. They have never discovered the valuable treasures found in the eternal words of the Bible. The Bible is alive and powerful and sharper than any two-edged sword, exposing our innermost thoughts and desires (Heb. 4:12). It is like a lamp to illuminate our path (Ps. 119:105), and it has been given to equip us for God's purposes (2 Tim. 3:16-17).

Open the Bible and read it so you can find these treasures. It's time . . . to discover!

Exhaustless store of treasured gems

Within this Book I hold;

And as I read, it comes alive,

New treasures to unfold.

—Mortenson

Rich treasures of God's truth are waiting to be discovered by you.

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### Hebrews 4:12 One Verse

The Word of God is living and powerful. —Hebrews 4:12

Which of the 31,173 verses in the Bible is your favorite? And do you think that verse can make a difference in someone's life?

God has used certain verses to make a remarkable impact on the world. For example, the author of *Pilgrim's Progress*, John Bunyan, touched the lives of thousands by preaching from John 6:37, "All that the Father gives Me will come to Me, and the one who comes to Me I will by no means cast out."

Noted reformer Martin Luther greatly influenced the course of church history because of his understanding of Romans 1:17, "The just shall live by faith." And missionary pioneer William Carey introduced the gospel to India after being touched by the words of Isaiah 54:2, "Enlarge the place of your tent."

As a young person about to embark on my first overseas missionary venture, I was moved, challenged, and comforted by Jeremiah 33:3. God used this verse to remind me to call on Him because He had "great and mighty" things in store for me.

Maybe a specific verse from Scripture has touched your heart in a special way. Share that truth with others—because God's Word will always have an impact.

May the Word of God dwell richly

In my heart from hour to hour,

So that all may see I triumph

Only through His power.

—Wilkinson

One truth from the Bible is worth more than all the wisdom of man.

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### Hebrews 4:12 A Question Of Motive

The Word of God is living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword . . . and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart. —Hebrews 4:12

Read: Hebrews 4:11-16 | Bible in a Year: 1 Chronicles 7-9; John 6:22-44

My wife and I were stopped at a railroad crossing to allow a train to pass. As we waited in the line of cars, the driver next to us suddenly darted through a nearby parking lot and headed in the direction of the next available railroad crossing.

I turned to Marlene and said, with some righteous indignation, "Look at that guy. He's trying to get around the train instead of waiting like the rest of us." As soon as I said those words, the man, camera in hand, hopped from his car to take pictures of the oncoming train. I had judged his motives, and I was dead wrong.

Although we can observe behavior and outward appearance, only God can see what's in the heart. That is one reason we all need the Word of God so desperately. Hebrews 4:12 says, "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."

When we find ourselves ready to judge another person's motives, let's pause and remember—only God can see the heart, and only His Word can expose its motives. Our responsibility is to let the Lord and His Word convict us about our own hearts.

The Bible is a lamp from God,

A sword of truth and light;

It searches heart and soul and mind,  
And helps us know what's right.  
—Bosch

People will be judged by the way God sees them not by the way we see them.

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### Hebrews 4:12 A Powerful Word

The Word of God is living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword. —Hebrews 4:12

Read: Hebrews 4:12-13 | Bible in a Year: Exodus 9-11; Matthew 15:21-39

When a teenager named Poh Fang learned about Jesus' love for her and received Him as her Savior, her parents weren't sure about the merits of Christianity. So they sent her older sister with her to church to keep an eye on her. But something happened that they didn't expect. The powerful Word of God penetrated the heart of the older sister, and she accepted Jesus as her Savior as well.

The psalmist said of the Word of God, "Your precepts . . . have given me life" (Ps. 119:93). That's the testimony of Poh Fang and her sister and of all who know Christ as Savior. His Word is "powerful . . . and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart" (Heb. 4:12).

God's Word shows us our sin and its consequences: "All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God" (Rom. 3:23); "the wages of sin is death" (6:23). It tells us of God's love and salvation: "God, who is rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, . . . made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved)" (Eph. 2:4-5). And it gives wisdom for daily living: "Your Word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path" (Ps. 119:105).

Thank You, Lord, for Your powerful Word, which gives us life and direction for daily living.

Many books inform, but only one transforms—the Bible.

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### Hebrews 4:12 Exploratory Procedure

The Word of God is living and powerful, . . . a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart. —Hebrews 4:12

Read: Hebrews 4:11-16 | Bible in a Year: Jeremiah 34-36; Hebrews 2

I have a friend who recently underwent a laryngoscopy. I winced as he explained how his doctor took a camera with a light on the end and stuck it down his throat to try to find the cause of his pain.

It reminded me that God's Word is like a laryngoscopy. It invades the unseen areas of our lives, exposing the diseased and damaged spiritual tissue that troubles us. If you're wincing at the thought of how uncomfortable this divine procedure might be, consider Jesus' words: "Everyone practicing evil hates the light and does not come to the light, lest his deeds should be exposed" (John 3:20). Internal intrusions may be uncomfortable, but do you really want the disease?

Welcoming God's Word to penetrate the deep, dark places of our hearts is the only way to find true healing and the spiritual health we long for. Believe me, the procedure will be thorough. As the writer of Hebrews assures, God's Word is "sharper than any two-edged sword" (4:12)—piercing all the way through the external stuff of our lives, all the way down to our thoughts, intentions, and motives.

So what are you waiting for? With God's Word you don't need an appointment. The divine Surgeon is ready when you are!

Ever present, truest Friend,  
Ever near Thine aid to lend,  
Guide us as we search the Word,  
Make it both our shield and sword.  
—Anon.

Let God's Word explore your inner being.

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**J C Philpot...February 10 - "For the word of God is quick and powerful."** He 4:12 - What is meant by the word of God being "quick?" That it moves with swiftness and velocity? It is certainly said of God's word (Ps 147:15) that "it runs very swiftly;" but that is not the meaning of the word "quick" in the text. It there means "living," and corresponds with the expression (Acts 7:38) "living oracles." It is an old English word signifying "living;" as in the expression, "who shall judge the quick and the dead" (2Ti 4:1), that is,

the living and the dead. So we read of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram "going down quick (that is, alive) into the pit" (Nu 16:30). So the Lord is said to have "quicken (that is, made spiritually alive) those who were previously dead in trespasses and sins" (Ep 2:1). The word "quick," then, does not mean moving with velocity, but "living", or rather "communicating life", and thus distinguished from the dead letter.

Truth, as it stands in the naked word of God, is lifeless and dead; and as such, has no power to communicate what it has not in itself, that is, life and power to the hearts of God's people. It stands there in so many letters and syllables, as lifeless as the types by which they were printed. But when the incarnate Word takes of the written word, and speaks it home into the heart and conscience of a vessel of mercy, whether in letter or substance, then he endues it with divine life, and it enters into the soul, communicating to it a life that can never die. As James speaks, "Of his own will begat he us with the word of truth." And also Peter, "Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which lives and abides forever" (1Pe 1:23). Eternal realities are brought into the soul, fixed and fastened by an Almighty hand. The conscience is made alive in the fear of God; and the soul is raised up from a death in sin, or a death in profession, to a life heavenly, new, and supernatural. (J. C. Philpot. Daily Words for Zion's Wayfarers)

The Way into the Holiest has the following chapter on Hebrews 4:12 entitled

## The Word of God and Its Edge F B Meyer

WE all have to do with God. "Him with whom we have to do." You cannot break the connection. You must do with him as a rebel, if not as a friend; on the ground of works, if not on the ground of grace; at the great white throne, if not in the fleeting days of time. You cannot do without God. You cannot do as you would if there were no God. You cannot avoid having to do with him; for even though you were to say there was no God, doing violence to the clearest instincts of your being, yet still you would breathe his air, eat his provender, occupy his world, and stand at last before his bar. And, if you will pardon the materialism of the reference, I will follow the suggestion of my text, and say that the God with whom we have to do has eyes. "The eyes of him with whom we have to do." "Thou art a God that seest" was the startled exclamation of an Egyptian slave girl whose childhood had been spent amid the vast statues of gods who had eyes with far-away stony stare, but saw not. And she was right.

"The Lord looks from heaven; his eyes behold, his eyelids try, the children of men." (Ps 33:13)

**Those eyes miss no one.** "There is not any creature not manifest in his sight." The truest goodness is least obtrusive of itself. It steals unnoticed through the world, filling up its days with deeds and words of gentle kindness, which are known only to heaven; and herein it finds its sufficient reward. It prays behind closed doors; it exercises a vigorous self-denial in secret; it does its work of mercy by stealth. Thus the great blatant world of men, with its trumpets and heralds and newspaper notices, knows little of it, and cannot find the nooks where God's wild flowers bloom in inaccessible heights, for his eye alone. But the Father seeth in secret. The eyes of the Lord are upon the righteous. His eyes run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to show himself strong on behalf of those whose heart is perfect toward him. Do you want guidance? Look up! those eyes wait to guide by a glance. Are you in sorrow? they will film with tears. Are you going astray? they shall beckon you back, and break your heart, as Peter's. You will come to find your heaven in the light radiated by the eye of God, when once you have learned to meet it, clad in the righteousness of Jesus.

Unconverted reader, remember there is no screen from the eye of God. His eyes are as a flame of fire; and our strongest screens crackle up as thinnest gauze before the touch of that holy flame. Even rocks and hills are inadequate to hide from the face of him that sits upon the throne. "Whither shall I go from thy presence?" That question is unanswered, and unanswerable. It has stood upon the page of Scripture for three thousand years, and no one yet of all the myriads that have read it has been able to devise a reply. Heaven says, Not here. Hell says, Not here. It is not among angels, or the lost, or in the vast silent spaces of eternity. There is no creature anywhere not manifest to his sight. He who made vultures, able from immense heights to discern the least morsel on the desert waste, has eyes as good as they. And think how terrible are the eyes of God! When Egypt's chivalry had pursued Israel into the depths of the sea, they suddenly turned to flee. Why? Not because of thunder or lightning or voice; but because of a look. "The Lord looked out of the cloud, and troubled the Egyptians." Ah, sinner, how terrible will it be for thee to abide under the frown of God! "With the froward he will

show himself froward."

**Those eyes miss nothing.** "All things are naked and opened unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do." It is said of the Lord Jesus, on one occasion, that he entered into Jerusalem, and into the Temple; and when he had looked round about on all things, he went out. It was his last, long, farewell look. But note its comprehensiveness. Nothing escaped it. We look only on parts of things, and often look without seeing. But the Lord sees not as man sees; for man looks on the outward appearance, but the Lord looks on the heart. "Naked and opened." This is a sacrificial phrase, indicating the priestly act of throwing the victim on its back before him, so that it lay, exposed to his gaze, helpless to recover itself, ready for the knife. Ah, how eagerly we try to hide and cloak our sin! We dare not pen a truthful diary; we dread the illness which would unlock our tongues in wholesale chatterings; we shrink from the loving gaze of our dearest. We deceive man, and sometimes ourselves; but not our great High-Priest. He sees all, that secret sin; that lurking enmity; that closed chamber; that hidden burglar; that masked assassin; that stowaway; that declension of heart; that little rift within the lute; that speck of decay in the luscious fruit. And thus it is that men are kept out of the Canaan of God's rest, because he sees the evil heart of unbelief which departs from himself; and on account of which he swears now, as of old, "they shall not enter into my rest."

Is it not a marvel that he who knows so much about us should love us still? It were indeed an inexplicable mystery, save for the truth of the words which so sweetly follow: "Seeing, then, that we have a great High-Priest." He has a priest's heart. His scrutiny is not one of morbid or idle curiosity, but of a surgeon, who intently examines the source of disease with pity and tenderness, and resolves to extirpate it as quickly and as painlessly as possible. Is it not frequently the case that fuller knowledge will beget love, which once seemed impossible? There are some people whose faces are so hard, and their eyes so cold, that we are instantly repelled; but if we knew all, how they have been pierced and wounded, and disappointed, we should begin to pity them, and pity is close kinsman to love. The Saviour has known us from all eternity, our downittings and uprisings, our secret possibilities of evil, our unfathomed depths of waywardness and depravity; and yet he loves us, and will love us. "He knows all, But loves us better than he knows." And out of this love, which wells up perennially in the heart of Jesus, unfrozen by the winter of our neglect, Unstanch'd by the demands of our fickleness, there comes the stern discipline of which this passage proceeds to speak. In majestic phrase, the Apocalyptic seer tells how he beheld the Word of God ride forth on his snow-white steed, arrayed in crimson robes, whilst the many crowns of empire flashed upon his brow. Two features are specially noted in his appearance. His eyes were as a flame of fire; this characteristic looks back over the words we have considered. Out of his mouth comes a sharp two-edged sword; this looks forward to the words which now invite us. We must never divorce these two. The eyes and the sword. Not the eyes only; for of what use would it be to see and not strike? Not the sword only; for to strike without seeing would give needless pain, this would be surgery blindfolded. But the searching tender vision, followed by the swift and decisive flash of the sword of amputation and deliverance. Oh, who will now submit to that stroke, wielded by the gentle hand that often carried healing and blessing, and was nailed to the cross; guided by unerring wisdom, and nerved by Almighty strength? Not death, but life and fruitfulness, freedom and benediction, are all awaiting that one blow of emancipation. That sword is the Word of God.

## I. THE WORD OF GOD IS LIVING

**The words he speaks are spirit and life** (John 6:63). Wherever they fall, though into dull and lifeless soil, they begin to breed life, and produce results like themselves. They come into the heart of an abandoned woman; and straightway there follow compunction for the past, vows of amendment, and the hasty rush to become an evangelist to others. They come into the heart of a dying robber; and immediately he refrains from blasphemy, and rebukes his fellow, and announces the Messiahship, the blamelessness, the approaching glory, of the dying Saviour. They come into hearts worn out with the wild excesses of the great pagan ages, and ill-content, though enriched with the spoils of art and refinement and philosophy in the very zenith of their development; and lo! the moral waste begins to sprout with harvests of holiness, and to blossom with the roses of heaven. If only those words, spoken from the lips of Christ, be allowed to work in the conscience, there will be forthwith the stir of life.

## II. THE WORD OF GOD IS ACTIVE

**I.e., energetic.** Beneath its spell the blind see, the deaf hear, the paralyzed are nerved with new energy, the dead stir in their graves and come forth. There are few things more energetic than life. Put a seed into the fissure of a rock, and it will split it in twain from top to bottom. Though walls and rocks and ruins impede the course of the seedling, yet it will force its way to the light and air and rain. And when the Word of God enters



the heart, it is not as a piece of furniture or lumber. It asserts itself and strives for mastery, and compels men to give up sin; to make up long standing feuds; to restore ill-gotten gains; to strive to enter into the strait gate. "Now ye are pruned," said our Lord, "through the word that I have spoken to you." The words of Christ are his winnowing-fan, with which he is wont to purge his flour, whether in the heart or the world. We are not, therefore, surprised that a leading tradesman in a thriving commercial center said that the visit of two evangelists, who did little else than reiterate the Word of God, was as good as a revival of trade, because it led so many people to pay up debts which were reckoned as lost.

### **III. THE WORD OF GOD IS SHARP**

Its sharpness is threefold.

#### **(1) It is sharp to pierce.**

On the day of Pentecost, as Peter wielded the sword of the Spirit, it pierced three thousand to the heart; and they fell wounded to the death before him, crying, "What shall we do?" Often since have strong men been smitten to the dust under the effect of that same sword, skillfully used. And this is the kind of preaching we need. Men are urged to accept of the gift of God, and many seem to comply with the invitation; but in the process of time they fall away. Is not the cause in this, that they have never been wounded to the death of their self-esteem, their heart has never been pierced to the letting of the blood of their own life, they have never been brought into the dust of death? Oh for Boanerges! able to pierce the armor of excuses of vain hopes, behind which men shield themselves, that many may cry with Ahab, pierced between the joints of the harness "Turn thine hand, and carry me out of the battle, for I am wounded!"

#### **(2) It is sharp to divide.**

With his sharp knife the priest was accustomed to dissect the joints of the animal, and to open to view even the marrow of the bones. Every hair was searched, every limb examined; and thus the sacred gift was passed, and permitted to be offered in worship. And God's scrutiny is not satisfied with the external appearance and profession. It goes far deeper. It enters into those mysterious regions of the nature where soul and spirit, purpose, intention, motive, and impulse, hold their secret court, and carry on the hidden machinery of human life. Who can tread the mysterious confines where soul and spirit touch? What is the line of demarkation? Where does the one end, and the other begin? We cannot tell; but that mystic Word of God could cut the one from the other, as easily as the selvage is divided from the cloth. It is at home in distinctions which are too fine drawn and minute for human apprehension. It assumes an office like that which Jesus refused when he said, "Who made me a judge and divider over you?"

#### **(3) It is sharp to criticize and judge.**

"Quick to discern the thoughts and intents of the heart." Christ is eager about these. Because what a man thinks and intends in his heart, that he will be sooner or later in life. We must expect to have our most secret thoughts, relations, and purposes questioned, criticized, and measured by the Word of God. No court of inquiry was ever presided over by a more exact inquisitor than this. The corpses of the dead past are exhumed; the old lumber-rooms with their padlocked boxes are explored; the accounts of bygone years are audited and taxed. God is critic of all the secrets of the heart. As each thought or intention passes to and fro, he searches it. He is constantly weighing in the balance our thoughts and aims, though they be light as air. On one occasion, when Saul had spared the spoils of a doomed city, together with its monarch, the latter came to Samuel, not as a criminal, but delicately, as a pampered friend. And Samuel said, "As thy sword has made women childless, so shall thy mother be childless among women. And Samuel hewed Agag in pieces before the Lord." Thus it is that we have spared too many of our sins, at the risk of our irreparable rejection from the throne of true manhood and righteousness. How much better to let Christ do his work of amputation and excision! If we do not know ourselves, let us ask him to search us. If we cannot cut off the offending member, let us look to him to rid us of it. Do not fear him; close after these terrible words, as the peal of bells after the crash of the storm on the organ at Freiburg, we are told that "he was tempted in all points like as we are," and that "we have not a High Priest who cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities." "Does she sing well?" asked the trainer of a new operatic singer. "Splendidly," was the reply; "but if I had to bring her out, I would first break her heart." He meant that one who had not been broken by sorrow could not touch the deepest chords of human life. Ah! there is no need for this with our Lord Jesus; reproach broke his heart. He understands broken hearts, and is able to soothe and save all who come unto God by him. (From F. B. Meyer. The Way Into the Holiest)

## HEART SEARCHING

### WORD OF GOD

#### Hebrews 4:12, 13

Andrew Murray

THEY have been earnest words with which the writer has been warning the Hebrews against unbelief and disobedience, hardening the heart and departing from God, and coming short of the promised rest. The solemn words of God's oath in Ps. 95. I have sworn in My wrath, they shall not enter into My rest, have been repeated more than once to urge all to give diligence lest any man fall after the same example of unbelief. He is about to close his warning. He does so by reminding them of the power of the word of God as the word of the omniscient One, of Him with whom we have to do, before whose eyes all things, our hearts and lives too, are naked and open. Let each student of the Epistle make a very personal application of the words. Let us take the oath of God concerning His rest, and the command to labour that we may enter in, home to our heart, and say whether we have indeed entered in. And if not, let us all the more yield ourselves to the word to search and try us: it will without fail do its blessed work in us, and prepare us for following with profit the further teaching concerning our Lord Jesus.

For the word of God is living and active. At times it may appear as if the word effects so little. The word is like seed: everything depends on the treatment it receives. Some receive the word with the understanding: there it cannot be quickened. The word is meant for the heart, the will, the affections. The word must be submitted to, must be lived, must be acted out. When this is done it will manifest its living, quickening power. It is not we who have to make the word alive. When, in faith in the life and power there is in the word, the heart yields itself in humble submission and honest desire to its action, it will prove itself to be life and power.

And sharper than any two-edged sword, and piercing even to the dividing of soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow. The first action of God's word is to wound, to cut, to divide. In the soul the natural life has its seat; in the spirit the spiritual and divine. Sin has brought confusion and disorder; the spirit is under the mastery of the soul, the natural life. God's word divides and separates; wakens the spirit to a sense of its destiny as the faculty for the unseen and eternal; brings the soul to a knowledge of itself as a captive to the power of sin. It cuts deep and sure, discovering the deep corruption of sin. As the knife of the surgeon, who seeks to heal, pierces even to the dividing of the joints and marrow, where it is needed, so the word penetrates all; there is no part of the inner being to which it does not pass.

And quick to discern the thoughts and intents of the heart. It is specially with the heart that God's word deals. In Hebrews 3. we read of the hardened heart, the evil heart of unbelief, the erring heart. When the word heart occurs later in the Epistle we shall find everything changed; we shall read of a heart in which God's law is written, of a true heart, a heart sprinkled with the blood, a heart established by grace (Hebrews 8:10, 10:22, 13:9). We have here the transition from the one to the other. God's appeal was, To-day, if ye hear His voice, harden not your heart. The heart that will but yield itself to be searched by God's word, to have its secret thoughts and intents discerned and judged by it, will be freed from its erring and unbelief, and quickened and cleansed, and made a living table on which the word is written by God Himself. Oh, to know how needful it is, but also how blessed, to yield our hearts to the judgment of the word.

And there is no creature that is not manifest in His sight. God's word bears the character of God Himself. He is the all-knowing and all-pervading: nothing can hide itself from the judgment of His word. If we will not have it judge us now, it will condemn us hereafter. For all things are naked and laid open before the eyes of Him with whom we have to do. Yes, the God with whom we have to do is He of whom we later read: "It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God." And again: "Our God is a consuming fire." It is this God who now pleads with us to enter into His rest.

Let each of us gladly yield ourselves to have to do with Him. If perhaps there be a secret consciousness that all is not right, that we are not giving diligence to enter into the rest, oh, let us beware of setting such thoughts aside. It is the first swelling of the living seed of the word within us. Do not regard that thought as coming from thyself, or from man who brings thee God's word; it is God waking thee out of sleep. Have to do with Him. Be willing that the word should show thee what is wrong. Be not afraid of its discovering to thee thy sin and wretchedness. The knife of the physician wounds to heal. The light that shows thee thy sin and wrong will surely lead thee out. The word is living and will give thee life.

1. God has spoken to us in His Son. This is the keynote of the Epistle. To-day, if you hear His voice, harden not your heart: this is the keynote of this long and solemn warning. Let us hearken, let us yield to the word. As we deal with the word, so we deal with God. And so will God deal with us.

2. Judge of thy life not by what thy heart says, or the Church, or the so-called Christian world--but by what the word says. Let it have its way with thee: It will greatly bless thee.

3. All things are naked before the eyes of Him with whom we have to do. Why, then, through indifference or discouragement, shut thine eyes to them? Oh, lay everything open before God, the God with whom we have to do, whether we will or not.

4. The word is living and active. Have great faith in its power. Be sure that the Holy Spirit, that the living Word, that God Himself works in it. The word ever points to the living God, who is present in it and makes it a living word in the heart that is seeking for life and for God. (Andrew Murray. The Holiest of All)