

# *“The Word of God Is...”*

Hebrews 4:12

August 26, 2018

**INTRO:**           **VIDEO #1:** *“Why Read the Bible?”* (2:12)

*Why do you think we make such a big deal out of God’s Word?*

➤ **Because God’s Word tells us:**

- Who God really is... (Who vs what)
- Who we really are... (and why we exist)
- What’s really going on... (history & humanity)
  - We ALL need the Bible’s truth...
  - We ALL need a *“biblical worldview”*

**VIDEO #2:** *“What Is A Worldview”* (3:30)

**TEXT:**

*For... the word of God is... living/alive and active/powerful, sharper than any two-edged sword/scalpel, piercing/penetrating to the division of soul and of spirit, of joints and of marrow, and judging/discerning/revealing the thoughts and intentions... of the heart.*

**BIG IDEA:**           **Beware & be warned...**

*You ARE who & what God’s WORD says you are.*

## PREVIEW:

1. The Word of God **DELIVERED**
2. The Word of God **DEFINED**
3. The Word of God **DEFENDED**
4. The Word of God **DESCRIBED**
5. The Word of God **DECLARED**

# 1. The Word of God **DELIVERED**

**TEXT:** ***For...***

- Heaven (2 Timothy 3:16)
  - Hebrews 1:1-2
    - Here... 4:12

**CONTEXT:**

- Book of **Hebrews**... *"Hold On!"* series.... **1:1-2!!!**
- 2<sup>nd</sup> of 5 major **warnings**... **Don't DISCONNECT!**

# 2. The Word of God **DEFINED**

A. Fundamentally *"the Word of God is"*

*The phrase "the word of God" here may be applied... to the truth of God, however it is made known...*

a. *Divine REDEEMER... = Jesus...* cf. John 1:1ff

b. **DIVINE Revelation**

1. *From God*

2. *For good*

3. *As grace*

4. *For glory*

**VIDEO #3:** “3 Minute Theology/Divine Revelation” (2:16)

**B. Categorically**

i. The Bible

*The Word of God is not simply a collection of words from God, a vehicle for communicating ideas; it is living, life-changing, and dynamic as it works in us. With the incisiveness of a surgeon's knife, God's Word reveals who we are and what we are not. It penetrates the core of our moral and spiritual life. It discerns what is within us, both good and evil. (Moreover,) the demands of God's Word require decisions. We must not only listen to the Word; we must also (obey and) let it shape our lives. - Life Application Study Bible.*

ii. Prayer = 2-way conversation

iii. Believers = human messengers

iv. Circumstantial = Experiential...

**C. Internally – Hebrews 4:12** reveals 10 keys...

a. *Communication*

b. *Eternal*

c. *Divine*

d. *Truth*

- e. *Living*
- f. *Active*
- g. *Cutting*
- h. *Piercing*
- i. *Dividing*
- j. *Judging*

God's Word is...**God's Wake-up Call for Christians**

God's Word is...**God's Wisdom & God's Wildflowers**

- His Window AND Whistle into the soul

God's Word is...**God's Witness & Wedge in the world**

God's Word is...**God's Warning & Wrath foretold...**

God's Word ***reveals*** God's **Worthiness & His Worship**

- His Wellness-manual & Warranty
- ***His glory... grace, gospel & guaranties!***

### 3. The Word of God **DEFENDED**

***"Beware & be warned! You are who and what God's Word says you are."***

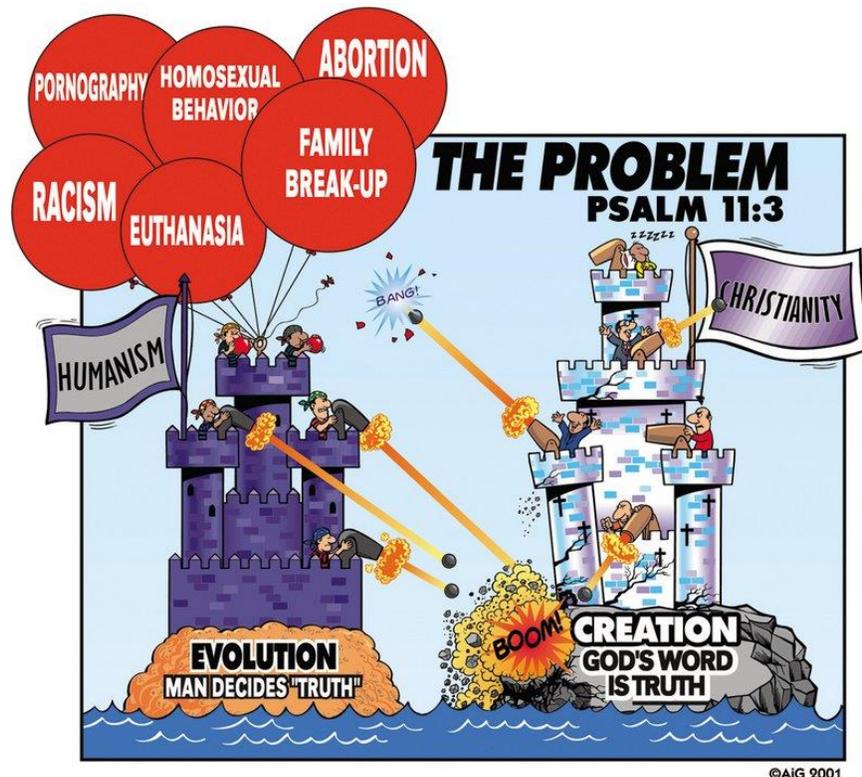
God's Word is **ATTACKED!**

**Genesis 3:1**

***"Did God REALLY say..."***

## 1 Timothy 4:1-2

*<sup>1</sup> The Spirit clearly says that in later times some will abandon the faith and follow deceiving spirits and things taught by demons. <sup>2</sup> Such teachings come through hypocritical liars, whose consciences have been seared.... (cf. Titus 1:11)*



### \*\*\* The Word of God Defines & Defends...

- Creation
- Christ
- Christian
- Corruption
- Church

**VIDEO #4:** *“Trust The Bible”* (3:35)

**Spurgeon QUOTE:** *The Word of God can take care of itself, and will do so if we preach it... Let the pure gospel go forth in all its lion-like majesty, and it will soon clear its own way and take care of its adversaries.* – (1888)

**God's Word is like an X-ray machine...**

- It sees & shows what's really inside...
- It reveals what needs to come out...

**T/S:** *The best Christian defense of God's Word is a genuine Christian life living out God's Word.* - JDP

## **4. The Word of God DESCRIBED**

**A. Contextually: **Word** = Warning & Worship**

**B. Metaphorically**

1. *Milk*
2. *Solid food*
3. *Sword*
4. *Fire & Hammer*
5. *Mirror*
6. *Seed*
7. *Lamp/Light*
8. *Water*
9. *Anchor*
10. *Gold & Honey*

C. Exegetically & Holistically

**LIVING**

**1 Peter 1:23**

*...you have been born again... through the living and abiding word of God;*

**VIDEO #5:** *“God Speaks Through His Word”* (2:30)

**ACTIVE**

**Romans 1:16**

*I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God for the salvation...*

**James 1:21**

*...receive with meekness the implanted word, which is able to save your souls.*

**Romans 10:17**

*So faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ.*

**1 John 1:3**

*We proclaim to you what we have seen and heard, so that you also may have fellowship with us. And our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son, Jesus Christ.*

God's Word accomplishes everything God wills... (Isa 55:11)

## CUTTING

God's Word SANCTIFIES: John 17:17

(Jesus praying to God the Father for us...)

*Sanctify them in the truth; your word is truth.*

*Scripture is like a scalpel wielded by God  
to perform spiritual surgery.*

- Christ-Centered Exposition

## Ephesians 6:17

*<sup>17</sup> and take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit,  
which is the word of God,*

*"God's Word-Sword defeats Satan."* - Wiersbe

## PIERCING

### Jeremiah 23:29

*Is not my word like fire, declares the LORD, and like a hammer  
that breaks the rock in pieces?*

God's Word ENRAGES: Acts 5:27-33

Acts 7:54

(Stoning of Stephen)

God's Word is OFFENSIVE...

**2 Corinthians 2:15-17**

*15 For we are to God the aroma of Christ among those who are being saved and those who are perishing.*

***“Piercing vs. Pragmatism”***

**VIDEO #6:** *“Will Biblical Christianity Work Today”* (6:40)

**John 15:7**

*If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you.*

- Genesis 1:1 & John 1:1ff
- Genesis 3 (1 & 15) & John 3 (3,16,36)
- Hebrews 1:1-2
- Ephesians 2:1-10
- Acts 1:8 & Romans 8:1
- John 13:35 (us/love) & 7:15-16 (bad fruit)
- John 14:15 & 20:21 & Matthew 28:18-20
- 1 John 1:9 & 2:6 & 2:19 & 3:18
- Romans 12:1 Hebrews 12:1
- 2 Corinthians 13:5 & Matthew 7:21-23
- **1 Corinthians 10:31**

***...whatever you do, do all to the glory of God!***

- **Acts 1:11** *This Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will come in the same way as you saw him go into heaven.”*

# DIVIDING

God's Word is FOOLISHNESS to the Lost: [1 Cor. 1:18 & 2:14](#)

*18 For the word/message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God.*

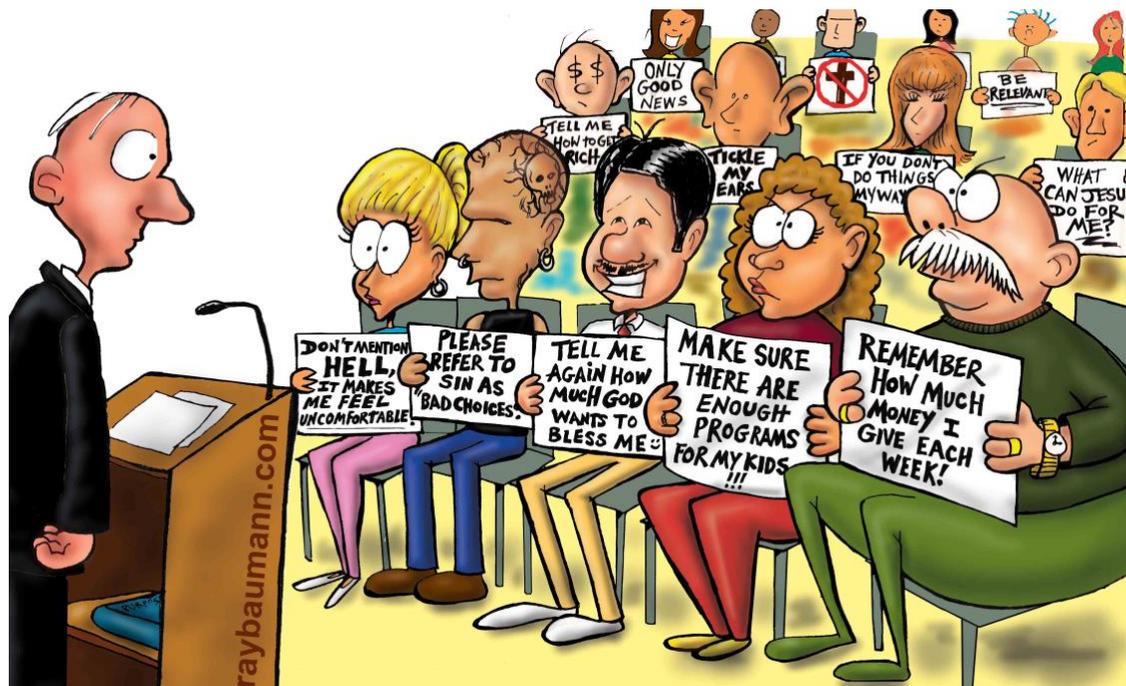
God's Word divides the WISE from FOOLS: [Matthew 7:24](#)

*24 "Everyone then who hears these words of mine and does them will be like a wise man who built his house on the rock.*

*God's Word DIVIDES the crowds...*

*and*

*God's Word UNIFIES the Church! - JDP*



## The Bible divides the:

Righteous	Unrighteous
Lovers	Liars
God-helpers	God-haters
Good teachers	False teachers
True converts	False converts
Disciples	Deceivers
Sheep	Goats
Shepherds	Wolves
Wheat	Weeds
Faithful	Phonies
Holy-ones	Hypocrites
Spiritually-courageous	Spiritual-cowards
Cross-carriers	Cross-compromisers
Christians	Anti-Christ
Children of God	Children of the Devil

**NOTE:** *sweetness, sincerity, & certainty... don't help!*

*- If you are not born AGAIN, you're dead.*

*- If your heart is not Spirit-filled, you're hope & soul are empty.*

*- If you are not living in Christ, you're dying in culture.*

*- If you're not obeying Jesus, you're not loving Him*

*- If you are not willing to pick up your cross daily...*

- *If you claim to be in Christ, you must walk as Jesus walked*
- *If you ARE Christ's you'll be known by your biblical love...*
- *If you hold to any other gospel...*
- *If you are divisive & unrepentant...*
- *If you are living a lukewarm life...*

**AND** (by contrast)

- \* If you are *miraculously born again* you're saved!
- \* If you are *faithfully obedient*, you're assured!
- \* If you are *persevering by grace*, you're in God's rest

## JUDGING

*God's Word defines the human by judging the heart!* - JDP

God's Word JUDGES: John 12:47-48

*<sup>47</sup> If anyone hears my words and does not keep them, I do not judge him; for I did not come to judge the world but to save the world. <sup>48</sup> The one who rejects me and does not receive my words has a judge; the word that I have spoken will judge him on the last day.*

*So the Word of God is not only saving and comforting and nourishing and healing, it is also a tool of judgment and execution. In the day of the great judgment His Word is going to penetrate and lay bare all hearts who have not trusted in Him. The sham and hypocrisy will be revealed and no profession of faith, no matter how orthodox, and no list of good works, no matter how sacrificial, will count for anything before Him. Only the thoughts and intentions of the heart will count. God's Word is the perfect discerner... It not only analyzes all the facts perfectly, but all motives, and intentions, and beliefs as well... The sword of His Word will make no mistakes in judgment or execution. All disguises will be ripped off and only the real person will be seen. - MacArthur*

## **5. The Word of God DECLARED**

***NOW WHAT?***

And If you're not sure... **cry out to Jesus!**

If you ARE sure... **then LIVE like it!** (*"Irish Elk"*)

**VIDEO #7: "Rock Solid Bible"** (3:35)

**Hebrews 4:12:** *For... the word of God is... living/alive and active/powerful, sharper than any two-edged sword/scalpel, piercing/penetrating to the division of soul and of spirit, of joints and of marrow, and judging/discerning the thoughts and intentions... **of the heart.***

**Revelation 19:11-16....** *Then I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse! The one sitting on it is called Faithful and True, and in righteousness he judges and makes war. <sup>12</sup> His eyes are like a flame of fire, and on his head are many crowns... <sup>13</sup> He is clothed in **a robe dipped in blood**, and the name by which he is called is **The Word of God**. <sup>14</sup> And the armies of heaven, arrayed in fine linen, white and pure, were following him on white horses. <sup>15</sup> From his mouth comes a sharp sword with which to strike down the nations, and he will rule them with a rod of iron. He will tread the winepress of the fury of the wrath of God the Almighty. <sup>16</sup> On his robe and on his thigh he has a name written, **King of kings and Lord of lords**.*

## **Titus 2:15**

**Beware & be warned!**

*You ARE who & what God's WORD says you are...*

**Let's PRAY!**

### Hebrews 4:11-13 (NASB)

<sup>11</sup> Therefore let us strive/be diligent to enter that rest, so that no one will fall/perish, through *following* the same example of disobedience.

<sup>12</sup> 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.

<sup>13</sup> And there is no creature hidden from His sight, but all things are open and laid bare to the eyes of Him with whom we have to do.

Verse 11 = Context & Connection (“For” = connect back)

Verse 12:

“For”

“the word of God” (logos theos) [\*\*\* What IS the “word of God”?]

- Literally
- Eternally
- Categorically
- Functionally
- Descriptively

“is **living**/quick”

“is **active**/powerful”

“is sharp”(er) (**cutting**... as with a single stroke vs. hacking)

“than ANY”

“two-edged”

“sword”

“is **piercing**” (penetrating/”to go through”)

“as far as”

“the **division** of soul & spirit” (dividing)

“of joint and marrow”

“and able to judge” (discerning/determining)

“the thoughts”

“and intentions”

“of the heart”

\*\*\* See the suite of videos from The Bible Project on “The Bible” \*\*\*

\*\*\* Be sure to address:

- Context of the verse:
  - Hebrews to Jews for Jesus...

- Warning #2
  - Don't Disconnect from Christ
  - Don't Disconnect from Christ's Church
  - Don't Disconnect from Christ's REST
- "STRIVE for that rest"
  - Remember God's Word
  - Realize God's Word
  - Respond to God's Word
- Define "the word/Word of God"
  - God's utterance
  - Jesus is the Word (John 1:1 & 1:14)
  - Holy Scripture
    - Old Testament
    - New Testament
  - Characteristics:
  - Purpose(s):
    - Set you free!
    - Encourage
    - Warn
    - Illuminate
    - Hammer/Break
    - Teach
    - Rebuke
    - Edify
    - Equip
    - Command
    - Prophecy
    - Prepare
    -
- Confidence in God's Word
  - God/man & man/God dynamics
  - Differences with translations
    - Valid but different in purpose
      - Word for word, sentence structure, etc.
      - Phrase for phrase...
      - "Paraphrase"
    - Invalid but claims to be accurate
      - Apocrypha (added but not divine)
      - JW's Watchtower "version" (NOT translation)
      - Mormons... "supplemented" with Book of Mormon
        - Implies the Bible is not enough
        - Contradicts Scripture...
- Hearing without DOING doesn't help & actually hurts! (accountability)

**4:12** *The Word of God is not simply a collection of words from God, a vehicle for communicating ideas; it is living, life-changing, and dynamic as it works in us. With the incisiveness of a surgeon's knife, God's Word reveals who we are and what we are not. It penetrates the core of our moral and spiritual life. It discerns what is within us, both good and evil. The demands of God's Word require decisions. We must not only listen to the Word; we must also let it shape our lives.*

**Life Application Study Bible.**

**4:12, 13** The preceding argument (3:7-4:11) has illustrated how the word of God's power exposed the faithlessness of the wilderness generation and how Scripture (e.g., Ps. 95) penetrates and judges those whom it invites today, as it warns about the deceitfulness of sin (3:13) and the possibility of falling short (v. 1).

**4:12** division of soul and of spirit, of joints and of marrow. Though some find support here for the view that a human being is basically a trichotomy consisting of body, soul, and spirit, the context is against it. It stresses the power of God's word to enter the deepest recesses of a person's being, and not a sort of division into constituent parts. Also, if the idea of division were intended, we would expect the author to say "bone and marrow" instead of "joints and of marrow."

**The Reformation Study Bible.**

**4:12-13** The warning continues: faithless disobedience will not go unnoticed. *word of God.* Usually this phrase in Hebrews refers to the message of salvation (13:7; cf. 4:2), but here the "word" is pictured as God's personal utterance, living, active, sharp, piercing, and discerning (v. 12), with eyes that expose (v. 13). The Word of God then acts as God himself, so that one's innermost thoughts and intentions are exposed. This happens constantly in Christians' lives.

**ESV Study Bible**

*Let us labor* ([vv. 9-13](#)). "Give diligence" is a good translation of this admonition. Diligence is the opposite of "drifting" ([Heb. 2:1-3](#)). **How do we (STRIVE) give diligence?**  
**By paying close attention to the Word of God.**

*Israel did not believe God's Word, so the rebels fell in the wilderness.*

*"So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God" ([Rom. 10:17](#)).*

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 ([Eph. 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."*

**The Israelites criticized God's Word instead of allowing the Word to judge them. Consequently, they lost their inheritance.**

Of course, God sees our hearts ([Heb. 4:13](#)); but we do not always know what is there ([Jer. 17:9](#)). God uses the Word to enable us to see the sin and unbelief in our own hearts. **The Word exposes our hearts; and then, if we trust God, the Word enables / (DIRECTS) our hearts to obey God and claim His promises.**

*This is why each believer should be diligent to apply himself to hear and heed God's Word. In the Word we see God, and we also see how God sees us. We see ourselves as we really are. This experience enables us to be honest with God, to trust His will, and to obey Him.*

**All of this is possible because of the finished work of Jesus Christ.** (The two "He's" in [Heb. 4:10](#) refer to Jesus Christ.) God rested when He finished the work of Creation. God's Son rested when He completed the work of the new

creation. *We may enter into His rest by trusting His Word and obeying His will.*

**We can do this as we listen to His Word, understand it, trust it, and obey it. Only in this way can we claim our inheritance in Christ.**

**Before Joshua conquered Jericho, he went out to survey the situation; and he met the Lord Jesus Christ ([Josh. 5:13-15](#)). Joshua discovered that he was second in command! The Lord had a sword in His hand, and Joshua fell at His feet in complete submission. It was this action in private that gave Joshua his public victory.**

We too claim our spiritual inheritance by surrendering to Him and trusting His Word. We must beware of an evil heart of unbelief.

**- Bible Exposition Commentary – Be Confident (Hebrews).**

*"Let us give diligence therefore to enter into that rest . . . 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."*

It should be evident that the first thing emphasized here is that Christianity consists not so much of external conduct, as the place which the Word of God has *within* us. The Word of God "piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit" is the effect which it produces, under the application of the Lord, when a sinner is regenerated. Man is a tripartite being, consisting of spirit and soul and body. This, we believe, is the first and deepest meaning of [Genesis 1:26](#), "And God said, Let *us* make man in Our image, after Our likeness." God Himself is a Trinity in Unity, and such He made man to be.

The "spirit" is the highest part of man, being the seat of God-consciousness. The "soul" is the ego, the individual himself, and is the seat of self-consciousness; man *has a "spirit,"* but he *is* "a living soul." The "body" is his house or tabernacle, being the seat of sense-consciousness. In the day that man first sinned, he died spiritually. But in Scripture "death" never means extinction of

being; instead, it always signifies *separation* (see [Luke 15:24](#)). The nature of man's spiritual "death" is intimated in [Ephesians 4:18](#), "*alienated from the life of God.*" When Adam disobeyed his Maker, he became a fallen creature, separated from God. The first effect of this was that his "spirit" no longer functioned separately, it was no more in communion with God. His spirit *fell* to the level of his soul.

The "soul" is the seat of the emotions ([1 Sam. 18:1](#), [Judges 10:16](#), [Gen. 42:21](#), etc.). It is that part of our nature which stirs into exercise the "lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life." The unregenerate man is termed "the *soulical* man" ([1 Cor. 2:14](#)), the Greek word there being the adjectival form of "psyche" or "soul." That is to say, the unregenerate man is entirely dominated by his soul, his lusts, his desires, his emotions. Spiritual considerations have no weight with him whatsoever, for he is "alienated from the life of God." True, he *has* a "spirit," and by means of it he is capable of perceiving all around him the evidences of the "eternal power and godhead" of the Creator ([Rom. 1:20](#)). It is the "candle of the Lord" ([Prov. 20:27](#)) within him; yet has it, because of the fall, *no* communion with God. Now at regeneration there is, literally, a "dividing asunder of soul and spirit." The spirit is restored to communion with God, made *enrapport* with Him, "reconciled." The spirit is raised from its immersion in the soul, and once more functions separately: "For God is my witness, whom I serve with my *spirit*" ([Rom. 1:9](#)); "my *spirit* prayeth" ([1 Cor. 14:14](#)) etc.

The first consequence of this is intimated in the closing words of verse 12, "And is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart." **The Word of God now exposes his innermost being. Having eyes to see, he discovers, for the first time, what a vile, depraved and hell-deserving creature he is. Though, in the mercy of God, he may have been preserved from much outward wickedness in his unregenerate days, and so passed among his fellows as an exemplary character, he now perceives that there dwelleth "no good thing" in him, that every thought and intent of his desperately wicked heart had, all his life, been contrary to the requirements and claims of a holy God. The Word has searched him out, and discovered him to himself. He sees himself a lost, ruined, undone sinner.** This is ever the first conscious effect of the new birth, for **one who is still "dead in trespasses and sins" has no realization of his awful condition before God.**

Ere passing on let us earnestly press upon the reader what has just been before us, and ask, **has the Word of God thus "pierced" you? Has it penetrated, as no word from man ever has, into your innermost being? Has it exposed the workings of your wicked heart? Has it detected to you the sink of iniquity which dwells within?** Make no mistake about it, dear friend, the thrice holy God of Scripture "requireth truth in the *inward* parts" ([Ps. 51:6](#)). **If the Word of God has searched you out, then you cried** with Isaiah "Woe is reel for I am undone" ([Heb. 6:5](#)); with Job, "I abhor myself" ([Heb. 42:6](#)); **with the publican, "God be merciful to me the sinner" (Luke 18:13).** But if you are a stranger to these experiences, no matter what your profession or performances, no matter how highly you may think of yourself or Christians think of you, **God says you are still dead in sin.**

Let it not be supposed that we have attempted to give above a *complete* description of all that takes place at the new birth; not so, we have confined ourselves to what is said in [Hebrews 4:12](#).

Nor **let it be thought that the language of this verse is to be**

**restricted to what occurs at regeneration, not so, that is only in initial reference.**

The activities of the Word of God therein described are repeated whenever a Christian gets out of communion with Him, for then he is dominated to a large extent by his soul rather than his spirit. It should not need pointing out, yet the terrible ignorance of Scripture prevailing today makes it necessary, that **when a child of God is walking in communion with Him, His word does not come to him as a "sword"; rather is it "a lamp" unto his feet.**

**If the reader will compare Revelation 2:12 and Revelation 19:15 he will obtain confirmation of this.**

**The relation of this 12th verse to the whole context is very striking, and its contents divinely appropriate. It brings out the dignity and Deity of "The Apostle" of our profession.**

**It shows the sufficiency of His Word.**

**It is striking to note that just 7 things are here said of it.**

1. **First**, it is the "Word of God."
2. **Second**, it is living, or "quick."
3. **Third**, it is mighty, "powerful."
4. **Fourth**, it is effectual, "sharper than any two edged sword."
5. **Fifth**, it is penetrating, "piercing."
6. **Sixth**, it is regenerative, "even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit."
7. **Seventh**, it is revealing and exposing, bringing to light the "thoughts and intents of the heart, etc."

The reference to the Word piercing to the dividing asunder of "the joints (external) and marrow" (internal) tells of its discriminating power over every part of our being. The more we submit ourselves unto its searching and convicting influence the more shall we be blest.

**An Exposition of Hebrews.**

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.

God cannot be trifled with. **For the word of God is living and active and sharper than any two-edged sword,...and able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart. In the immediate context this verse means that the readers who are hesitating in trusting Christ, who are even considering falling back into Judaism, had better be urgent and diligent in seeking to enter God's rest, because the Word of God is alive.** It is not static, but active—constantly active. **It can pierce right down into the innermost part of the heart to see if belief is real or not.**

*So the Word of God is not only saving and comforting and nourishing and healing, it is also a tool of judgment and execution. In the day of the great judgment His Word is going to penetrate and lay bare all hearts who have not trusted in Him. The sham and hypocrisy will be revealed and no profession of faith, no matter how orthodox, and no list of good works, no matter how sacrificial, will count for anything before Him. Only the thoughts and intentions of the heart will count. God's Word is the perfect discerner, the perfect kritikos (from which we get "critic"). 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. All disguises will be ripped off and only the real person will be seen.*

Verse 12. *For the word of God.*

*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."

*Some have supposed that it means the Lord Jesus; others the whole of the divine revelation; others the gospel; others the particular threatening referred to here. 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.

*Is quick.* Gr. ζῶν-living. It is not dead, inert, and powerless. It has a living power, and is energetic and active. It is adapted to produce this effect.

*And powerful.* Mighty. 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.

*Sharper than any two-edged sword.* Literally, *two-mouthed sword* δίστομον. 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. [Isaiah 49:2](#);

*"And he hath made my mouth like a sharp sword."*

[Revelation 1:16](#): "And out of his mouth went a sharp two-edged sword;" [Revelation 2:12,16, 19:15](#). The comparison is common in the classics, and in Arabic poetry. See Gesenius, on [Isaiah 49:2](#). **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.

*Piercing even to the dividing asunder.* Penetrating so as to divide.

*Soul and spirit.* The animal life from the immortal soul. The former word here—*ψυχή*—*soul*—is evidently used to denote the animal life, as distinguished from the mind or soul. The latter word—*πνεῦμα*—*spirit*—means the soul; the immaterial and immortal part; that which lives when the animal life is extinct, This distinction occurs in [1 Thessalonians 5:23](#) "your whole spirit. and soul, and body ;" and it is a distinction which we are constantly in the habit of making. There is the body in man-the animal life-and the immortal part that leaves the body when life is extinct. Mysteriously united, they constitute one man. When the animal life is separated from the soul, or when the soul leaves the animated body, the body dies, and life is extinct. To separate the one from the other is, therefore, the same as to take life-and this is the idea here, that the word of God is like a sharp sword that inflicts deadly wounds. The sinner "*dies*;" that is, he becomes dead to his former hopes, or is "slain" by the law. [Romans 7:9](#), "I was alive without the law once; but when the commandment came, sin revived, and I died." This is the power referred to here-the power of destroying the hopes of the sinner; cutting him down under conviction; and prostrating him, as if a sword had pierced his heart.

*And of the joints and marrow.* The figure is still continued of the sword that takes life. Such a sword would seem to penetrate even the joints and marrow of the body. It would separate the joints, and pierce through the very bones to the marrow. A similar effect, Paul says, is produced by truth. It seems to penetrate the very essence of the soul, and lay it all open to the view.

*And is a discerner of the thoughts.* It shows what the thoughts and intentions are. Prof. Stuart, Bloomfield, and some others, suppose that the reference here is to *God* speaking by his word. But the more natural construction certainly is, to refer it to the word or truth of God. It is true that God searches the heart, and knows the thoughts; but that is not the truth which is prominent here. It is, that the thoughts and intents of the heart are brought out to view by the word of God. And can any one doubt this? See [Romans 7:7](#). Is it not true that men are made to see their real character under the exhibition of the truth of God? That in the light of the law they see their past lives to be sinful? That *the exhibition of truth calls to their recollection many long forgotten sins*? And that their feelings are brought out when the truth of God is proclaimed?

Men then are made to look upon their motives as they had never done before, and to see in their hearts feelings whose existence they would not have suspected, if it had not been for the exhibition of the truth.

*The exhibition of the truth is like pouring down the beams of the sun at midnight on a dark world; and the truth lays open the real feelings of the sinner, as that sun would disclose the clouds of wickedness that are now performed under cover of the night. Many a man has a deep and fixed hostility to God, and to his*

*gospel, who might never be sensible of it, if the truth was not faithfully proclaimed.*

The particular idea here is, that the truth of God will detect the feelings of the hypocrite and self-deceiver. They cannot always conceal their emotions, and the time will come when truth, like light poured into the soul, will reveal their unbelief and their secret sins. *They who are cherishing a hope of salvation, therefore, should be on their guard lest they mistake the name for the reality.* Let us learn from this verse,

1. (1.) **the power of truth.** It is *fitted* to lay open the secret feelings of the soul. There is not an effect produced in awakening a sinner, or in his conviction, conversion, and Sanctification, which the truth is not *adapted* to produce. **The truth of God is not dead; nor fitted to make man worse; nor designed merely to show its own weakness, and to be a mere occasion on which the Holy Spirit acts on the mind;—it is, in its own nature, FITTED to produce just the effects which are produced when it awakens, convicts, converts, and sanctifies the soul.**
2. (2.) **The truth should be preached with the feeling that it is adapted to this end.**

*Men who preach should endeavour to understand the nature of the mind and of the moral feelings, as really as he who would inflict a deadly wound should endeavour to understand enough about anatomy to know where the heart is, or he who administers medicine should endeavour to know what is adapted to remove certain diseases.*

And he who has no belief in the efficacy of truth to produce any effect, resembles one who should suppose that all knowledge of the human system was needless to him who wished and who should **cut at random—to**

perform a surgical operations piously leaving it with God to direct the knife; or he who should go into a hospital of patients, and administer medicines indiscriminately—devoutly saying, that all healing must come from God, and that the use of medicine was only to show its own weakness!

### *Thus many men seem to preach.*

Yet, for aught that appears, *truth is just as wisely adapted to save the soul, as medicine is to heal the sick; and why, then, should not a preacher be as careful to study the nature of truths and its adaptedness to a particular end, as a student of the healing art is to understand the adaptedness of medicine to cure disease? The true way of preaching is, to feel that truth is adapted to the end in view; to select that which is best fitted for that end; to preach as if the whole result depended on getting that truth before the mind and into the heart, and then to leave the whole result with God—as a physician with right feelings, will exert all his skill to save his patient, and then commit the whole question of life and health to God.*

He will be more likely to praise God intelligently who believes that he has wisely adapted a plan to the end in view, than he who believes that God works only at random.

(\*) "word" [Isaiah 49:2](#)

(\*) "piercing" [Revelation 1:16](#)

(\*) "discerner" [Psalms 139:2](#), [Jeremiah 17:10](#), [Revelation 2:23](#)

- Barnes' Notes on the New Testament.

[Hebrews 4:12](#) is an often-quoted and frequently memorized verse. As such...

*it may seem that the writer suddenly shifts topics, from rest to the Word of God. Actually, he is emphasizing a point. He began his discussion of rest at [3:7](#) by quoting from scripture, attributing not a psalmist, but the Holy Spirit for the text. The psalm is a warning against hardening one's heart and rebelling against God.*

**So the point he makes in [4:12](#) is that God's Word is nothing to be taken lightly.**

It can never be ignored or dismissed with impunity.

*It is the living voice of God that gets right to the bottom of things. Someone may look fine in the eyes of other people, but God's Word exposes the true condition of the heart, the real character of one's faith, and reveals a genuine spirit.*

### Critical Observation

The phrase “soul and spirit, joints and marrow” ([4:12](#)) is simply a way to refer to the inner life of a human being in all of its aspects. Although some people use this verse as evidence that a person is composed of three parts (spirit, soul, and body), someone else could just as easily cite [Mark 12:30](#) to speculate that people have four parts (heart, soul, mind, and body).

- Layman's Bible Commentary

[4:12-13](#) The entire section is concluded in [vv. 12-13](#). Wray wrongly read the structure of verb plus *oun* as indicating a new section, but this does not begin until [v. 14](#). [Hebrews](#)

**[4:12-13](#) can still be read as an amplification of the warning in [4:11](#).**

[Verse 12](#) begins a new paragraph according to the UBS<sup>4</sup>Greek text and the NIV. The use of *gar*, "for," serves to indicate the reason for seeking to enter God's rest: nothing escapes God's notice and he will judge unbelief.

Many have suggested a hymnic background/structure for these verses, but the smooth transition coupled with the use of *logos* ("word") indicates the author's own composition. The phrase *ho logos tou theou*, "the word of God," is found in Hebrews only here and in [13:7](#) and can have two interpretations. The majority of the church fathers and medieval theologians saw it as referring to Jesus the Son. Since the Reformation, the phrase has usually been interpreted as the written Word of God. In this latter interpretation, the genitive is subjective and the reference includes both Old and New Testaments. Lane noted "the word of God" must have specific reference to the text of Scripture extensively cited in [3:7-4:11](#), especially [Ps 95:7-11](#). While this specific text is certainly included, it would seem that the phrase cannot be restricted to this, but given the immediate and broader context of the entire epistle, must include God's spoken or written word, including his word expressed through Jesus. Dunn believed that the identification of the "word of God" as the gospel was so firmly established in Apostolic Christianity that the equation of Christ with the Word "does not seem to have occurred" to the author. For him, the word of preaching is personified and identified with Christ because the gospel is the life, death, and resurrection of

Christ. Dunn compared the Lukan concept of "the word" as representing the gospel and not a hypostatization of Christ. He surveyed the power of the word preached in several Pauline texts and concluded that [Heb 4:12](#) is in this same pattern. For him, there is "no inherent logic" in the New Testament author's own understanding of their experience or in the language they used to describe it "which made it necessary for them to push the concept of the word beyond that of the (impersonal) power of God to that of a hypostatization or divine being." This perspective is difficult if not impossible to square with the Prologue of John's Gospel where Jesus is described as the "Word" of God.

The best argument for interpreting *logos* in [4:12-13](#) as Jesus the Word in a Johannine sense is made by Swetnam. The evidence is actually quite strong. First, it was virtually the only view during the time of the church fathers and the Middle Ages, with Chrysostom being the sole dissenter during the time of the fathers. While tradition cannot be the *sine qua non* of interpretation, such unanimity is certainly significant. Second, the immediately preceding and following contexts support this interpretation. Although there are parallels within the New Testament to the sword imagery, such as [John 12:48](#), the immediate context makes this interpretation more difficult ("oddly exaggerated" is Swetnam's phrase). In [Heb 4:2](#) the good news is called the "word of hearing" (NIV "the message they heard"), and it seems contextually odd for the author to use *logos* in a threatening tone. There is also the difficulty of seeing two meanings of *logos* ("word" and "account") within the confines of two verses. [Hebrews 4:14](#), connected by *oun*, closely links "since we have a great high priest." with the preceding *logos* (though it is true the *oun* could be reaching back to the total section of [4:1-13](#)).

Third, from a lexical perspective, it makes more sense to translate *machaira* as "knife" rather than "sword," given what is stated in the remainder of [v. 12](#). Also, the use of *gar* which introduces [v. 12](#) may refer back to the main clause of the preceding sentence and not the purpose clause to which it is immediately joined (as is the case in all other such constructions in

Hebrews). **The point of the author would be this: although the exodus generation failed to enter rest, Christians will succeed because of the work of Jesus, the Logos, in their lives. The use of *zōn* ("living") to qualify "word" implies personality. Nowhere else in Hebrews is this word used to describe non-personal life, but it is used four times of God, twice of Jesus, and five times of human life.**

The introductory *kai* in [v. 13](#) is best seen in an adversative sense where the author changed the subject from Jesus in [v. 12](#) to God in [v. 13](#). [Verse 12](#) is taken in a positive way, while [v. 13](#) is the negative counterpart. In [Heb 4:12](#), Jesus as the Word is the "agent of interior change in man." In [4:13](#) he appears as an intercessor with God, so Swetnam translated:

"And yet no creature is hidden before him, but all things are bare and exposed before his eyes, with whom on our behalf is the Word.... The Word is "with" God to act as one who pleads with God in favor of Christians who sin. This is why 4,14 follows logically from 4,13 with no break in the thought when it speaks of the 'high priest'... and why 4,15-16 speaks about the sympathy of the high priest and the importance of turning to him for mercy."

## A final argument in favor of taking the "word" in 4:12 to refer to Jesus is the connection of these verses with the prologue, Heb 1:1-2 to form an *inclusio*.

**It is likely that [4:14](#) is the beginning of a new major section of the epistle. The author began in the prologue with the statement "God spoke" in one who is a Son; now he concludes this section with a reference to God's "Word," the Son, in [Heb 4:13](#).**

G. Smillie has recently taken up the case that *logos* at the end of [v. 13](#) corresponds to the first use of *logos* in [v. 12](#). He noted that both uses are articular in form and bracket [Heb 4:12-13](#). The usual interpretation of the final phrase in [v. 13](#) is "as an idiom from the language of the business world: 'to whom we must give account.'" To attribute such diverse meaning of the same word in the short confines of two verses is

uncharacteristic of a writer who demonstrates the literary sensibilities of our author that he would,... bring the pericope to a close using *ho logos* as the very last word in a figurative expression with a meaning having little to do with the principle theme of the discourse.

How are we then to translate this final clause? Part of the answer depends upon the syntax of *hēmin*, whether it is an indirect object, "concerning whom is the word to us," or a dative of means, "to whom is the word by us." Smillie rejected the former as too contrived and redundant, but thinks the latter has promise, "indicating some sort of reciprocal responsibility towards God on the part of those addressed by his word."

Smillie examined all the places in the New Testament where *logos* is used in the sense of "to render account" with the following conclusions: (1) *logos* is linked with some form of the verb *didōmi* "to give" when this meaning is intended; (2) *logos* is anarthrous (with one exception) in this idiom; and (3) *logos* always appears in the accusative case. In light of this, he found it difficult to see the meaning in [Heb 4:13](#) as "render account" since no form of the verb *didomi* (or any other verb) is present, *logos* is articular, and it is in the nominative and not the accusative case.

If, as Smillie suggested, the author was engaging in word play in the double use of *ho logos*, then perhaps a colloquial rendering such as "towards whom the word is [now] up to us" contributes towards capturing the author's meaning as well as his means of verbalizing that meaning. Hughes offered a similar translation: "He to whom the Word has been given shall be required to give a word in return." Finally, Smillie mentioned how this interpretation of the phrase harmonizes well

with [Heb 4:14](#) where we read: "let us hold firmly to the faith we profess (*homologias*, NIV "faith we profess)." "Confession" is cognate with "word" in Greek, and both "are invitations to affirm or profess the word the readers have heard."

Those who interpret *pros hon hēmin ho logos* as "to whom we must give an account," rely on the similar uses found elsewhere in Scripture such as in [Luke 16:2](#) and [Heb 13:17](#). This interpretation is likewise grammatically feasible and harmonizes well with the entire section of [3:7-4:11](#) and the conclusion of [4:12-13](#).

In summary, Swetnam found the interpretation of *logos* as Scripture in [Heb 4:12-13](#) exegetically difficult for four reasons. First, the terminology is inconsistent: the change from *logos* as "word" in [v. 12](#) to *logos* as "account" in [v. 13](#) is "bizarre." Second, the imagery is inconsistent. The shift from the penetrating power of the word in [v. 12](#) to that of a sacrifice or wrestling hold in [v. 13](#) is problematic. Third, the description of a "sword" for the image of sacrifice or wrestling hold is inconsistent. Fourth, the language is inconsistent. If *logos* refers to Scripture in [Heb 4:12-13](#), it is difficult to account for the connector *oun* "therefore" in [v. 14](#), since there the high priest theme is brought back into play, but there is no reference to this theme in [4:12-13](#). Both Attridge and Ellingworth interpreted the conjunction in [v. 14](#) to be resumptive of the thought which has been interrupted since [3:7](#). Swetnam noted there is no explanation for why the author would do this if this is what he has done.

But Swetnam veered into less secure territory when he connected the *machaira* in [v. 12](#) with the double-edged knife of circumcision used by Joshua in [Josh 5:2](#) and then took it to refer to the knife of sacrifice used by Abraham in [Genesis 22](#). This "two-edged" knife alludes to the two functions of circumcision ([v. 12](#)) and sacrifice ([v. 13](#)). That [v. 13](#) should be so interpreted is, according to Swetnam, confirmed by the use of *pros ton theon* "before God" in [v. 13](#) connected with Jesus' high priestly role in [v. 14](#) and his intercessory role in [v. 16](#). For Swetnam, [Heb 4:12](#) sums up [3:7-4:11](#), "which discusses the spiritualized promise of land, i.e., God's rest, and prepares the way for the following part, about Christ's priesthood." The author was implicitly indicating "why entrance into the spiritualized land of God's rest is possible: Jesus, who is equal to God, is able to effect the spiritual circumcision of the heart needed for such an entrance."

Returning to the rest of [v. 12](#), the theme of "living" here ascribed to the Word of God and first introduced in [3:12](#) occurs six more times in Hebrews ([7:8,25](#); [9:14](#); [10:20,31](#); [12:22](#)). The forefronting of "living" at the beginning of the clause is emphatic by word order. By the use of "living and active," the author denoted that the Word possesses the power to effect its own utterance. It possesses an energizing power that renders it always effective in accomplishing its purpose. One is reminded of [Isa 55:10-11](#), where the word will not return void but will accomplish God's purpose. In addition, the word of God is emphatically compared to a "double-edged" sword in its power to penetrate the depths of the human soul.

The term here translated "sword," *machaira*, sometimes has the technical meaning of a surgeon's knife or the knife used by the priests to slaughter and carve sacrificial

animals. Michaelis argued that the context forbids the translation of "sword" and instead the image drawn is that of a knife used by a priest or butcher, or possibly a surgeon. The priestly usage may be in view in [Luke 22:38](#). Surgeon's knives were sometimes two edged while ordinary knives were not usually so. How fitting would be such imagery if it came from the pen of Luke the physician? If the translation of *machaire* is the "knife" used by the priest to slay the sacrificial animal, then the thought of the passage has greater coherence.

How are we to interpret the division of soul and spirit and the joints and marrow? Ellingworth summarized the four possible meanings. First, the reference could be to a tripartite division of soul, spirit, and body along the lines of [1 Thess 5:23](#). Second, the division could be between soul and body on the one hand, and between joints and marrow on the other. Third, the division is between each of the four mentioned entities. Fourth, the meaning could be along the lines of "within soul, within spirit," and "between joints and marrow." Spicq inferred from the similarity of this passage to what is said in Philo of the Logos dividing human faculties as proof of Philo's influence on Hebrews. But as is generally agreed, Williamson has shown that such is not the case.

Another interpretive issue has to do with whether "joints and marrow" are to be understood literally or figuratively. Most likely a metaphorical sense is intended where the sword or knife of Scripture pierces deep within our bones to probe, even dividing the marrow within.

The meaning of "laid bare" has been debated since early times. Two views are most likely. It may picture a wrestler using a choke hold on his opponent's neck, or the neck of the sacrificial animal laid bare for the knife. Given the overall context, the first option seems more likely. The word connotes the picture of total exposure and utter defenselessness. If the "word" of God in [4:13](#) refers not to Jesus but to the spoken/written word, then the use of "eyes of him" would be a personification of the word. It is probably better to see a shift from the spoken/written word of [4:12](#) to God or Jesus in [4:13](#). Lane noted the correlation with this passage and what was stated in [Num 14:43-45](#) where the exodus generation fell by the sword when they tried to enter Canaan in disobedience to God's word. The readers are threatened by the sword of the word of God, exposing their thoughts and rendering them defenseless before God.

## **THEOLOGICAL IMPLICATIONS.**

We are now in a position to consider the theological implications of [Hebrews 4:1-13](#). It seems prudent to note at the outset that the focus on "rest" serves to emphasize the author's contention, initiated in the prologue, that there is continuity between the people of God under the old covenant and under the new covenant. He consistently explained the new covenant in the light of the old covenant. The use of [Psalm 95](#) and the focus on "Today" indicates God, who spoke to the fathers by the prophets, is still speaking today.

A few still champion some form of Käsemann's thesis that the author of Hebrews drew the motif of *katapausis* from antecedents in Philo rather than from the Old Testament, which led to its entry into Christian Gnosticism. For Käsemann, the author of Hebrews used [Psalm 95](#) merely in an attempt "to anchor in Scripture a speculation already in existence." However, the majority of scholars tend to agree with Hofius who convincingly argued that the concept of "rest" is found in Jewish thought and is specifically the point of [Psalm 95](#). Although most English commentators like Lane, Ellingworth, and Laansma agreed with Hofius's critique of Käsemann's thesis, they were not necessarily in agreement with Hofius's thesis that the "rest" in [Hebrews 3-4](#) refers to God's resting place in the heavenly temple where Jesus has already entered as a forerunner and where believers will enter and share in an eternal Sabbath celebration around the throne of God.

Two of the most recent studies on the concept of "rest" in [Heb 3:7-4:11](#) are by Wray and Laansma. Laansma, in an evaluation of Wray's *Rest as a Theological Metaphor*, correctly chided her for suggesting that the author of [Psalm 95](#) made a "hermeneutical leap" by shifting God's promise in [Num 14:22-23](#) from the land to "rest." This is neither a leap nor one performed by the psalmist. The psalmist wrote from within an established tradition which characterized the land as "rest."

He also disagreed with Wray's conclusion against Hofius, who argued that the term *sabbatismos* is neither identical in meaning nor interchangeable with *katapausis*. Hofius took the meaning to be "the eternal sabbath celebration of salvation, i.e., the perfected community's before God's throne." On the contrary, Wray took *sabbatismos* as being equivalent to God's rest. But Hofius's evidence is solid and makes good sense in the context of Hebrews, especially when read in the light of [Heb 12:22-24](#).

Hofius argued extensively that "rest" in [Ps 95:11](#) means "resting place" and that *katapausis* in its spatial usage is a technical term for the temple in the LXX. Laansma, however, concluded from [Ps 95:11](#) and from the use of *katapausis* in the LXX that it is not tenable to identify in a simple fashion God's "rest" with the temple. He did note "that this noun is used in such a way throughout the LXX that a reader of the Greek would doubtless have a tendency to associate it closely with the temple."

Laansma and Wray also differed over the spatial nature of the concept of *katapausis*. Wray took it in a non-spatial sense while Laansma considered *katapausis* to mean "resting place". Finally, whereas Wray thought the "rest" motif is dropped after [4:11](#), Laansma believed that this theme is deeply embedded in the imagery used throughout Hebrews. Wray's study is, according to Laansma, "methodologically flawed" in that she attempts "to work over a *theological theme* in terms of a specific *vocabulary*." In spite of this, however, Wray's work is helpful, particularly in its rhetorical analysis of the pericope.

According to [Heb 3:7-4:11](#), God both promised and provided a rest for the people of Israel in the exodus generation. Those who disbelieved and disobeyed did not enter God's Canaan rest. Joshua, Caleb, and the younger generation that believed did enter Canaan rest according to [Exod 33:14](#); [Deut 3:20](#); [5:32-33](#); and [Josh 23:1](#). But the promise was not exhausted at this time. [Psalm 95](#) indicates the rest was still available some four centuries after its initial promise and provision, implying that "rest" means more than just entrance into the land of Canaan. Such an enlargement of the scope of the original promise was what occurred when Abraham originally received the promise of land and posterity, but the promise was not exhausted in his descendents. It was expanded to include all believers in Christ as [Gal 3:16,22,29](#) make clear. Whatever the "rest" is in Hebrews, it is distinguished from the land as well as the Sabbath.

The promised land is not equivalent to the promised rest for our author. Moses is twice presented as a model of faithful service to God in [Heb 3:2-5](#) and [Heb 11:23-28](#), yet he along with the wilderness generation failed to enter the promised land before he died. On the other hand, Joshua is identified in [Heb 4:8](#) with the people who failed to enter the rest, though he himself did enter the land and led in the conquering of Canaan. Joshua's name is absent from the Hall of Faith in [Hebrews 11](#), although there is mention of the fall of the walls of Jericho, which of course occurred under Joshua's leadership.

In [Heb 4:8](#), we are justified in interpreting the "rest" messianically. When Joshua led the people into Canaan, God gave the people "rest." Yet that was not the final extent of the rest which God had in mind, hence the statement in [Psalm 95](#) and our author's argument which he builds upon this fact. Contrary to Bruce and many others who take the same approach to [Heb 4:9](#), the "rest" is not only what believers enjoy in heaven. That will indeed be "rest," but that is not what the author is suggesting here. Hofius has proven there is a clear eschatological dimension to this metaphor of "rest." But this is not the whole story. The author's goal is to inspire faithfulness in the Christian community today. [Hebrews 4:9](#) is attempting to stir believers on to serve the Lord faithfully while still on the earth. "In [Heb 3:3](#) and [3:14](#), the relationship of the faithful to Christ is described, not as a possession, but as participation, a participation which must be maintained." Miller is correct when she said: "It is not the non-fulfillment of the promise that is the point but its non-fulfillment *where unbelief prevails*, and that the promise is not exhausted by past appropriations or non-appropriations."

To make the Old Testament concept of "rest" in the land of Canaan symbolic of heaven alone is problematic for both Calvinists and Arminians on a number of fronts. First, that the exodus generation was barred from entry because of their disobedience is contradictory to the doctrine of the eternal security of the believer. Second, the exodus generation had to work to obtain the inheritance in Canaan, which does not square with the doctrine of justification by faith alone. Third, out of the entire exodus generation, only two men who were over 40 years of age entered the promised rest, Joshua and Caleb. Are we to assume that all of those who died in the wilderness were not a part of God's covenant people, Israel, and thus were eternally lost? Moses himself did not enter the Promised Land because of his own disobedience. Surely no one would think to suggest that he was therefore eternally lost.

Carter made the interesting point that the notion that rest is only referring to heaven may be "a carryover from certain aspects of Roman Catholic theology, according to which there is not and

cannot be any certainty of salvation in the present life." Since the author's purpose was to bolster commitment and perseverance in the lives of his hearers, it would seem better to see the "entrance" into the "rest" as being in some sense a present reality for believers.

Thus, it seems best, given all the evidence, to understand the "rest" to have a threefold dimension: the present time, a state entered at death, and that which is experienced by the believer at the eschaton. The already/not yet eschatology of the author makes this interpretation likely. It is difficult to limit the rest to a location or specific point in time. [Genesis 2:2](#) as used by the author indicates God's rest is open ended. The "rest" must be seen as a present reality and not only as a reality at death or in the eschaton. Guthrie raised a salient question: how could the readers seem to have fallen short of the rest *now* if it lies entirely in the future? In that case, all Christians would be "short" of it. Barrett's conclusion perhaps stated it best: "The 'rest,' precisely because it is God's, is both present and future; people enter it, and must strive to enter it. This is paradoxical, but it is a paradox that Hebrews shares with all primitive eschatology."

The typological parallel is not between the earthly land as "rest" in the past and the heavenly land as "rest" in the future. Rather, the true typology which the author focused on is that between the two communities, his own and the exodus generation, both of which were confronted by the same word of God. The "rest" described here is not a "sedating" of human life, a spiritual "retirement," an invitation to quietism, a period of idleness, or immobility as a life style.

Is *katapausis* a place or a state? Those who take it as a place include Käsemann, Hofius, Weiss, Grässer, and Ellingworth. Attridge and Lane took it as a state, but Attridge said it might be a place. *Sabbatismos* is not so much a locale, but a Sabbath celebration. Laansma concluded "The *katapausis* is construed as a locale as God's own resting place, where he celebrates his own Sabbath.... The salvation thereby described comes to them also as a promise, the promise that they will enter into God's resting place."

Is *katapausis*, "rest," present or future? Those who take it as a present realization point to the present tense of *eiserchomai* in [Heb 4:3](#) and the eschatological outlook of "already/not yet" throughout the epistle. Laansma summarized the points made by those who take it primarily in a futuristic sense, although allowing for the present as well. His arguments include the following: (1) the imagery of [Psalm 95](#) suggests a *corporate* entrance into the rest, implying a future entrance; (2) the *katapausis* comes to us as a promise, which suggests future hope; (3) the demand to "strive" to enter the rest appears to place the reader before rather than in the act of entering; (4) if the rest is present, the "works" of [Heb 4:10](#) would seem to be interpreted as something along the lines of "self-justifying works" or "dead works," but this is unlikely since Christians are not in the present at rest from their works; (5) the exhortation as a whole is related to the Parousia contextually in [3:14](#). However, in light of [Heb 6:4-6](#) and [12:22-24](#), Laansma was uncomfortable restricting the meaning to an eschatological rest: "It does seem strange that elsewhere in the epistle he would think in such vivid terms of a present participation in the heavenly world, but think of entrance into the same place *qua katapausis* as only an eschatological-future event." Laansma summed up his discussion on the nature of *katapausis*:

The common use of the word *katapausis* for a 'resting place,' its present usage and context, and the strong testimony in Jewish literature for an other worldly or future resting *place* cumulatively tilt the balance of probability in favor of taking it straightforwardly here as 'resting place.'

The local meaning is probably the best interpretation of the "rest" throughout the entire passage. The connection between *katapausis* and *sabbatismos* is that God's *resting place* is where he enjoys his ongoing *Sabbath celebration*. "It is *in* this place that the people of God will ultimately rest from their works... and thus join in the *sabbatismos* (4,9-10)." Only on the seventh day, when we enter God's eschatological *sabbatismos*, will we be, as Augustine said, "ourselves."

Scripture speaks, according to Turretin, of a threefold "sabbath:" (1) a temporal sabbath which included a weekly day, an annual time ever seventh year when the land was to remain uncultivated, and the year of Jubilee which was the forty-ninth year; (2) a spiritual Sabbath, which included cessation from sinful works during their lives; and (3) a heavenly sabbath where we rest eternally with God. Related to this "sabbath" rest, Scripture also speaks of a threefold "rest" in [Heb 4:1-11](#): (1) God's creation rest; (2) Israel's Canaan rest; and (3) a Christian's spiritual and eternal rest, which Turretin apparently takes to include two aspects: the spiritual rest Christians can enjoy now in this life, and eternal rest in heaven. Turretin noted the "rest" in [Hebrews 4](#) cannot refer to creation rest or Canaan rest as these have already passed away. The phrase in [v. 3](#), "although the works were finished since the creation of the world," eliminates creation rest and the statement in [4:8](#) that Joshua did not lead the people into "rest" obviates Israel's Canaan rest as the meaning. This leaves only one alternative, the conclusion of [4:9](#), that there remains a rest available which is different from both God's creation rest and Israel's Canaan rest. It may be that the author chose to use the unusual word *sabbatismos* in [4:9](#) to indicate that the rest which he intends is not the same as creation rest or Israel's Canaan rest.

Is it conceivable that the "rest" of [Heb 4:10](#) may have reference to a millennial fulfillment? Although the majority of commentators do not think so, several have made this case. Buchanan's analysis of this section, particularly [Heb 4:8-11](#), challenges the assumptions made by many about the spiritual nature of the rest. He criticized those who make the assumption that God's promise of rest is a purely spiritual and a purely eschatological matter. For example, Buchanan noted F. F. Bruce rejected a millennial interpretation of the rest on the grounds that such is an importation of a concept alien to Hebrews, then went on to chide Bruce for importing his own alien concept, namely, a spiritualizing of the rest. Likewise, Dillow has made the case for understanding the "rest" in [Heb 4:9](#) to be a reference to a future millennial reign of Christ on the earth: "The writer is evidently setting before his Christian readers the hope of an inheritance in the land of Canaan which was made to Israel." He continued:

As Christian believers they will have an inheritance in the land of Canaan in the consummation of the present kingdom if they make every effort to finish their course.... That we should make "every effort" to do this proves that entrance into heaven is not meant. Otherwise a salvation by works is taught!

Dillow drew the conclusion that the content of the inheritance spoken of in [Hebrews 3-4](#) is the millennial land of Canaan. The inheritance-rest is participation with Christ in his millennial reign.

"Consistent with its usage throughout the New Testament, the inheritance (rest) must be earned... Not all Christians will make that effort or will make equal effort, and those distinctions will be acknowledged by Christ... during the millennial kingdom."

**The theme of "promise" in [Heb 3:7-4:13](#), which is identified specifically as "entering into rest," reappears in chaps. 11-12.** Here it is identified as the promise of a "heavenly city." It is not clear whether the author made or intended his readers to make the connection between the concept of "rest" and the "heavenly city." There is nothing overt in the text which makes this connection. It is, however, possible that the author had such a connection in mind.

*The rest is related to the redemptive work of Christ. When believers cease from their works, they enter rest. The crucial question then is what are these works? It would seem from the immediate context as well as that of the entire book that these "works" are "works of consecration, the faith and obedience required to establish and maintain covenant relationship with God."*

This rest is not a ceasing from works of self-righteousness, or from works understood as the requirements of Judaism. Neither is in view in our passage.

*Spiritual rest is ongoing maturity and perseverance, a community ethic, made possible by faith and obedience.*

**The failure to reach the "rest" in [Heb 4:1](#) is the consequence of the warning given in [3:12](#).**

We may also conclude, based on [3:1-4:13](#), that the concept of faith for the author of Hebrews includes Jesus as the object of faith in a soteriological sense, and not merely an ethical category of steadfastness based on Jesus' faithfulness as some of suggested. Jesus is both the object of faith in a soteriological sense as well as the model of faith in a practical sense. This is demonstrated well by V. Rhee from the meaning of *homologia* ("confession") in [Heb 3:1](#), which includes both the apostleship and high priesthood of Jesus; the meaning of "our courage and the

hope of which we boast" in [Heb 3:6](#), where the object of our hope is the high priesthood of Jesus; and the references to God's word in [3:7-4:13](#).

**Disobeying God's voice (the word of God) is equivalent to failing to receive the message of salvation; the exhortation to "take heed" to God's word simply means to believe the message of salvation in Jesus.**

Another theological issue, which is actually hermeneutical in nature, is how much the author's treatment of Old Testament Scripture in [Heb 3:7-4:13](#) resembles rabbinic midrash. Leschert examined this issue thoroughly and has drawn a number of conclusions. The author's view of the inspiration of Scripture and his application of it to his readers' situation is similar to Jewish midrash. Yet he did not find hidden meanings in Scripture or wrest a text from its context, as is evident from his careful exegetical use of [Psalm 95](#) in the light of [Numbers 14](#). The author's use of the midrashic technique *gezerah shawah*, in joining [Ps 95:11](#) with [Gen 2:2](#), has long been noted by commentators. It is also possible that the technique *Dabar ha-lamed me-inyano* was used, where the meaning is established by its context. Leschert concluded that when it comes to midrashic style, there is nothing "intrinsically illegitimate" and "we have not detected any use of midrashic methodology or presuppositions in this section of Hebrews which distorts the meaning of the OT."

**Eschatologically, [Heb 3:7-4:11](#) is in line with other New Testament authors who consistently take the perspective that the coming age somehow has already begun with the advent of Christ, and thus the two, in a sense, overlap. Sometimes this view of the two ages is presented in linear and historical terms (horizontally) and sometimes in more spatial terms such as heaven and earth (vertically). For the author of Hebrews, the last days began with the first coming of Jesus ([Heb 1:1-2](#)) and culminate in the second coming ([9:23-28](#)).**

As Laansma well noted, the author of Hebrews placed more of the emphasis on the "vertical" perspective, especially in chaps. 8-12. Why does the author do this? Laansma speculated this is his rhetorical strategy for dealing with the problem of the present sufferings of the church in light of the new covenant salvation which is going to effect ultimate deliverance from such sufferings. All present appearances to the contrary, this new covenant salvation, about which the Scriptures spoke, is the only salvation there ever has been and that will ever be.

In light of the available evidence, it seems best to conclude that the author of Hebrews is not dependent upon Philo, Gnosticism, or Jewish apocalyptic for his theology of rest in [Hebrews 3-4](#). He was "a serious student of the OT who is drawing out of the text what he believes to be embedded in it." [Hebrews 3:7-4:11](#) presents a distinctly Christian interpretation of the Old Testament.

Another theological implication of these verses has to do with progressive creationism. The inclusion of [Gen 2:2](#) in [Heb 4:4](#) paves the way for the argument that the creative days of [Gen 1](#) are not to be understood as literal 24-hour days, but rather as successive epochs of perhaps

millions of years. Since God's rest is equated with the seventh day of creation, and his rest extends from the completion of creation until now, then this seventh day is, according to progressive creationists, obviously not a 24-hour day. If the seventh day was not literally 24 hours in length, then neither are the other six.

But there are problems with this reasoning. When one considers the grammar of [Gen 2:2](#) in the LXX and what is stated in [Heb 4:4](#), the most that can be said is that God rested on the seventh day. Nothing is said as to whether this rest in some way continues to the present time, nor is there any indication as to how long the rest lasted if it is not still somehow in progress. All that can be said for sure is that God rested from his creative work in the past. If the aorist tense is ingressive, as is likely, the focus is on the inception of the rest, not on the duration of it or whether it corresponds to the seventh day. There are no exegetical grounds for suggesting that the seventh day of creation is still in effect.

In drawing the discussion to a close, **the author of Hebrews clearly thought the first generation of Jewish Christians found themselves in a parallel situation with their exodus generation counterparts.**

*Forty years of wilderness wandering was the lot of the exodus generation prior to entrance into the land. From the crucifixion of Jesus until the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple by the Romans was also a period of forty years. Both groups lived in what might be called the "formative" years of a new movement of God in their midst.*

Whereas the exodus generation benefited from the leadership of Moses and Joshua, now the new people of God have a leader who is far superior, namely Jesus. To fail to respond to him in faith would have disastrous consequences as in the wilderness failure of the exodus generation. If Hebrews was written during the turbulent times of the Jewish War (A.D. 66-70), and specifically toward the end of that period, it is not unlikely that the author reflected upon the watershed event of the exodus generation at Kadesh Barnea and used it typologically or analogically with his present generation of Jewish Christians. The "today" which the author takes up from [Psalm 95](#) is invested with ultimate significance.

Structurally, [Heb 4:13](#) concludes the first major section of the epistle, which is bracketed (i.e., an *inclusio*) by God speaking in a Son in the prologue and speaking in his Word in [4:12-13](#). Theologically, [v. 13](#) indicates something else as well. Christ's high priesthood, which plays such a key role in the epistle, actually develops out of the revelation of Jesus as "Son." He is able to be "high priest" because he is first a "Son."

From an overall discourse perspective, we can now see how the author has very carefully made the case that Jesus is exalted above angels and Moses because of his high-priestly office and mediatorial work. If we remember that the entire discourse unit of [1:5-4:13](#) is bisected into two sections with the second section beginning in [3:1](#), we are able to discern a parallel structure developed by the author between these two sections. Christ is superior to the angels in [Heb 1:5-14](#), and he is superior to Moses in [3:1-6](#). The exhortation in [2:1-4](#) is paralleled by the exhortation in [3:7-19](#). In [2:5-18](#), Jesus raised humanity beyond the status of angels, and in [4:1-13](#) he did what Moses and Joshua failed to do: bring his people into true "rest." He is our high priest who helps us in [Heb 2:17-18](#), and he is again the same in [Heb 4:14-16](#).

- The New American Commentary

## Entering with the Word

### [Hebrews 4:11-13](#)

[Verse 11](#) introduces the “so what” of the preceding section. In light of what has preceded, “Let us *then* make every effort to enter that rest” (emphasis added). The accent in this verse is on the exhortation to strive for God’s rest so that the threat of falling by disobedience will not come true for these believers as it did for the wilderness generation. We must not be like the Israelites in the wilderness. We must strive to enter God’s rest. In other words, we must work at resting. This means we must work *against* all of our efforts to prove our righteousness. We must strive *against* all our efforts to justify ourselves.

One of our chief responsibilities in the Christian life is to exhort one another to faithfulness. This is one of the things we do every Sunday in corporate worship when we sit under the preaching of the Word of God. This is what we do when we sing together. This is what we do when we pray together. This is what we do when we fellowship together. We gather in corporate worship to encourage one another to be fully satisfied in Christ and in him alone, lest we fail to enter his rest.

**The author also underlines the role of God’s Word in our perseverance in verses 12 and 13. The designation “word of God” requires some definition. The author uses the phrase**

to point to the entirety of divine revelation—both written and incarnate.

*Regrettably, many Christians divorce the Bible from Jesus. “I don’t need theology or the Bible, I just want Jesus,” some may say. This is a misguided assessment. Christ cannot be divorced from Scripture.*

Our knowledge of Jesus as the divine Son of God and his accomplishments for us only come through Scripture. We cannot have Jesus Christ apart from the witness of the Bible. The two are inseparably wedded.

The author establishes two characteristics about the Word of God in [verse 12](#). First, the Word of God is *“living and effective.”* This **highlights the enduring vitality of Scripture**. Since God is the author of Scripture, it is not a dead book.

*As God lives, Scripture lives.*

Furthermore, as we see throughout Scripture, *when God speaks, God acts.*

This is what is meant by the adjective *effective*. **For example, God created the heavens and the earth with his word. Thus, Scripture, because it is God’s Word, is alive and life giving.**

The Bible is not a bunch of dead, lifeless words. It is the living Word of God. **God’s Word accomplishes everything God wills.** As the Lord says through the prophet Isaiah, *“so my word that comes from my mouth will not return to me empty, but it will accomplish what I please and will prosper in what I send it to do”* ([Isa 55:11](#)).

Second, the author describes Scripture as “sharper than any double-edged sword.” As a sword, Scripture is “penetrating as far as the separation of soul and spirit, joints and marrow. It is able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart.” **The description of the Bible as**

**a sword that can pierce and divide the soul demonstrates the invasive quality of the Word.**

*When we approach Scripture with a humble hermeneutic of submission rather than a haughty hermeneutic of suspicion, then it is not we who read Scripture, it is Scripture that reads us. Scripture untangles the human heart and unearths sin....*

...like no other book can. No other book can discern the thoughts and intentions of our hearts. Only God's Word can do that.

***Scripture is like a scalpel wielded by God to perform spiritual surgery.***

***In conjunction with the Holy Spirit, the Word of God cuts through the sin and darkness of the human heart to restore spiritual health and vitality for Christ. Without the Word, we are as good as dead. God's Word, however, eradicates the disease of the human heart and breathes life where there is death.***

**- Christ-Centered Exposition Commentary**

I. Here we have a serious exhortation: Let us labour therefore to enter into that rest, [v. 11](#).  
Observe,

1. The end proposed—rest spiritual and eternal, the rest of grace here and glory hereafter—in Christ on earth, with Christ in heaven.

2. The way to this end prescribed—labour, diligent labour; this is the only way to rest; those who will not work now shall not rest hereafter. After due and diligent labour, sweet and satisfying rest shall follow; and labour now will make that rest more pleasant when it comes. The sleep of the labouring man is sweet, [Ecclesiastes 5:12](#). Let us therefore labour, let us all agree and be unanimous in this, and let us quicken one another, and call upon one another to this diligence. It is the truest act of friendship, when we see our fellow-Christians loiter, to call upon them to mind their business and labour at it in earnest. "Come, Sirs, let us all go to work; why do we sit still? Why do we loiter? Come, let us labour; now is our working time, our rest remains." Thus should Christians call upon themselves and one another to be diligent in duty; and so much the more as we see the day approaching.

II. Here we have proper and powerful motives to make the advice effectual, which are drawn,

1. From the dreadful example of those who have already perished by unbelief: Lest any man fall after the same example of unbelief. To have seen so many fall before us will be a great aggravation of our sin, if we will not take warning by them: their ruin calls loudly upon us; their lost and restless souls cry to us from their torments, that we do not, by sinning as they did, make ourselves miserable as they are.

2. **From the great help and advantage we may have from the word of God to strengthen our faith, and excite our diligence, that we may obtain this rest:** The word of God is quick and

powerful, [v. 12](#). By the word of God we may understand either the essential or the written word: the essential Word, that in the beginning was with God, and was God ([John 1:1](#)), the Lord Jesus Christ, and indeed what is said in this verse is true concerning him; but most understand it of the written word, the holy scriptures, which are the word of God. Now of this word it is said,

(1.) **That is quick; it is very lively and active, in all its efforts, in seizing the conscience of the sinner, in cutting him to the heart, and in comforting him and binding up the wounds of the soul.** Those know not the word of God who call it a dead

letter; it is quick, compared to the light, and nothing quicker than the light; *it is not only quick, but quickening; it is a vital light; it is a living word*, *zōn*. Saints die, and sinners die; but the word of God lives. All flesh is grass, and all the glory thereof as the flower of grass. The grass

withereth, and the flower thereof falleth away, but the word of the Lord endureth for ever, [1 Peter 1:24, 25](#). Your fathers, where are they? And the prophets, do they live for ever? But my words, which I commanded the prophets, did they not take hold of your fathers? [Zechariah 1:5, 6](#).

(2.) **It is powerful.**

*When God sets it home by his Spirit, it convinces powerfully, converts powerfully, and comforts powerfully.*

It is so powerful as to pull down strong holds ([2 Corinthians 10:4, 5](#)), to raise the dead, to make the deaf to hear, the blind to see, the dumb to speak, and the lame to walk. It is powerful to batter down Satan's kingdom, and to set up the kingdom of Christ upon the ruins thereof.

(3.) **It is sharper than any two-edged sword;** it cuts both ways; it is the sword of the Spirit, [Ephesians 6:17](#). **It is the two-edged sword that cometh out of the mouth of Christ,** [Revelation 1:16](#). It is sharper than any two-edged sword, for it will enter where no other sword can, and make a more critical dissection: it pierces to the dividing asunder of the soul and the spirit, the soul and its habitual prevailing temper; it makes a soul that has been a long time of a proud spirit to be humble, of a perverse spirit to be meek and obedient. Those sinful habits that have become as it were natural to the soul, and rooted deeply in it, and become in a manner one with it, are separated and cut off by this sword. It cuts off ignorance from the understanding, rebellion from the will, and enmity from the mind, which, when carnal, is enmity itself against God. **This sword divides between the joints and the marrow, the most secret, close, and intimate parts of the body;** this sword can cut off the lusts of the flesh as well as the lusts of the mind, and make men willing to undergo the sharpest operation for the mortifying of sin.

(4.) **It is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart, even the most secret and remote thoughts and designs.** It will discover to men the variety of their thoughts and purposes, the vileness of them, the bad principles they are actuated by, the sinister and sinful ends they act to. *The word will turn the inside of a*

*sinner out, and let him see all that is in his heart.* Now such a word as this must needs be a great help to our faith and obedience.

**Matthew Henry's Commentary**

"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" (verse 12). **The first word of this verse (which has the force of "because") denotes that the apostle is here furnishing further reason why professing Christians should give diligence in pressing forward to the rest which is set before them.**

*That reason is drawn from the nature of and the effects produced by the Word of God. This verse and the one which follows appear to be brought in for the purpose of testing profession and enabling exercised souls to discover whether or not they have been born again.*

"Let us give diligence therefore to enter into that rest . . . 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."

**It should be evident that the first thing emphasized here is that Christianity consists not so much of external conduct, as the place which the Word of God has *within* us.**

The Word of God "piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit" is the effect which it produces, under the application of the Lord, when a sinner is regenerated. Man is a tripartite

being, consisting of spirit and soul and body. This, we believe, is the first and deepest meaning of [Genesis 1:26](#), "And God said, Let *us* make man in Our image, after Our likeness." God Himself is a Trinity in Unity, and such He made man to be.

The "spirit" is the highest part of man, being the seat of God-consciousness. The "soul" is the ego, the individual himself, and is the seat of self-consciousness; man *has a "spirit,"* but he *is* "a living soul." The "body" is his house or tabernacle, being the seat of sense-consciousness. In the day that man first sinned, he died spiritually. But in Scripture "death" never means extinction of being; instead, it always signifies *separation* (see [Luke 15:24](#)). The nature of man's spiritual "death" is intimated in [Ephesians 4:18](#), "*alienated from the life of God.*" When Adam disobeyed his Maker, he became a fallen creature, separated from God. The first effect of this was that his "spirit" no longer functioned separately, it was no more in communion with God. His spirit *fell* to the level of his soul.

The "soul" is the seat of the emotions ([1 Sam. 18:1](#), [Judges 10:16](#), [Gen. 42:21](#), etc.). It is that part of our nature which stirs into exercise the "lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life." The unregenerate man is termed "the *soulical* man" ([1 Cor. 2:14](#)), the Greek word there being the adjectival form of "psyche" or "soul." That is to say, the unregenerate man is entirely dominated by his soul, his lusts, his desires, his emotions. Spiritual considerations have no weight with him whatsoever, for he is "alienated from the life of God." True, he *has* a "spirit," and by means of it he is capable of perceiving all around him the evidences of the "eternal power and godhead" of the Creator ([Rom. 1:20](#)). It is the "candle of the Lord" ([Prov. 20:27](#)) within him; yet has it, because of the fall, *no* communion with God. Now at regeneration there is, literally, a "dividing asunder of soul and spirit." The spirit is restored to communion with God, made *enrapport* with Him, "reconciled." The spirit is raised from its immersion in the soul, and once more functions separately: "For God is my witness, whom I serve with my *spirit*" ([Rom. 1:9](#)); "my *spirit* prayeth" ([1 Cor. 14:14](#)) etc.

The first consequence of this is intimated in the closing words of verse 12, "And is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart."

**The Word of God now exposes his innermost being. Having eyes to see, he discovers, for the first time, what a vile, depraved and hell-deserving creature he is.** Though, in the mercy of God, he may have been preserved from much outward wickedness in his unregenerate days, and so passed among his fellows as an exemplary character, **he now perceives that there dwelleth "no good thing" in him, that every thought and intent of his desperately wicked heart had, all his life, been contrary to the requirements and claims of a holy God. The Word has searched him out, and discovered him to himself.**

*He sees himself a lost, ruined, undone sinner. This is ever the first conscious effect of the new birth, for one who is still "dead in trespasses and sins" has no realization of his awful condition before God.*

Ere passing on **let us earnestly press upon the reader what has just been before us, and ask, has the Word of God thus "pierced" you? Has it penetrated, as no word from man ever has, into your innermost being? Has it exposed the workings of your wicked heart?** Has it detected to you the sink of iniquity which dwells within?

*Make no mistake about it, dear friend, the thrice holy God of Scripture "requireth truth in the inward parts" ([Ps. 51:6](#)). If the Word of God has searched you out, then you cried with Isaiah "Woe is reel for I am undone" ([Heb. 6:5](#)); with Job, "I abhor myself" (Heb. 42:6); with the publican, "God be merciful to me the sinner" ([Luke 18:13](#)). But if you are a stranger to these experiences, no matter what your profession or performances, no matter how highly you may think of yourself or Christians think of you, God says you are still dead in sin.*

**Let it not be supposed that** we have attempted to give above a *complete* description of all that takes place at the new birth; not so, we have confined ourselves to what is said in [Hebrews 4:12](#). Nor let it be thought that **the language of this verse is to be restricted to what occurs at regeneration, not so, that is only in initial reference. The activities of the Word of God therein described are repeated whenever a Christian gets out of communion with Him,** for then he is dominated to a large extent by his soul rather than his spirit.

*It should not need pointing out, yet the terrible ignorance of Scripture prevailing today makes it necessary, that when a child of God is walking in communion with Him, His word does not come to him as a "sword"; rather is it "a lamp" unto his feet.*

If the reader will compare [Revelation 2:12](#) and [Revelation 19:15](#) he will obtain confirmation of this.

*The relation of this 12th verse to the whole context is very striking, and its contents divinely appropriate. It brings out the dignity and Deity of "The Apostle" of our profession.*

**It shows the sufficiency of His Word.**

***It is striking to note that just 7 things are here said of it.***

1. First, it is the "Word of God."
2. Second, it is living, or "quick."
3. Third, it is mighty, "powerful."
4. Fourth, it is effectual, "sharper than any two edged sword."
5. Fifth, it is penetrating, "piercing."
6. Sixth, it is regenerative, "even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit."
7. Seventh, it is revealing and exposing, bringing to light the "thoughts and intents of the heart, etc."

The reference to the Word piercing to the dividing asunder of "the joints (external) and marrow" (internal) tells of its discriminating power over every part of our being. The more we submit ourselves unto its searching and convicting influence the more shall we be blest.

- An Exposition of Hebrews.

**WORD** utterance or saying that may refer to a single work, the entire law, the gospel message, or even Christ.

*The Word of God is an utterance or saying that may refer to a single work, the entire law, the gospel message, or even Christ.*

**Old Testament** *Dabar* is the primary Hebrew expression for word. It has various meanings. It can refer to a spoken utterance, a saying, a command, a speech, a story—linguistic communication in general. *Dabar* can also mean a thing, event, or action ([Gen. 18:14](#)). Occasionally, difficulty arises in distinguishing between these meanings ([Ps. 35:20](#) NRSV, “deceitful words”; KJV, “deceitful matters”; REB, “intrigues”; NIV, “false accusations”). The frequent construction “the word of the Lord” or “the word of Yahweh” refers to communication made by God to people. The means of this communication are seldom related, nor must the phrase refer to a particular set of words.

**Three aspects of this word demand special attention.**

***1. A prophetic word.*** **The prophets claimed to deliver the “word of God” ([Jer. 1:9](#)). For this purpose they were commissioned ([Isa. 6:8](#)). This word of God addressed human**

**beings and demanded a response.** Thus God's word may be visualized as a great salvation ([Isa. 2:2-5](#)) or a great judgment ([Jer. 26:4-6](#)).

**2. A legal word.** In the covenant law God spoke the words of the law to Moses ([Ex. 20:1; 24:3-8](#)). The heart of the law is called the ten words ([Ex. 34:28; Deut. 4:13](#)). **The entire law represents the will of God and so can be called a single "word"** ([Deut. 4:2](#) KJV). **This word also demands response: faithful obedience will bring God's blessing while disobedience will lead to a curse** ([Deut. 30:15-20](#)).

**3. Creative word.** **God created the world by His word** ([Gen. 1; Isa. 48:13; Ps. 33:9](#)). This world reveals God's majesty ([Ps. 19:1](#)) and thus extends the sphere of His revelation beyond His work with covenant Israel to all people. **The word is spoken of as if it were a person who directs the events of nature (Ps. 147:15-18; 148:8), saves (107:20), and gives life (Ezek. 37:1-4).**

**New Testament *Logos* and *Rhema* are the two primary Greek words meaning "word."** They are used interchangeably and variously as with the Old Testament *dabar*.

*The New Testament can use these words to apply to Jesus' message, the message about Jesus, and Jesus Himself.*

*Jesus' message* of the coming kingdom can be called a "word" ([Mark 2:2; 4:33; Luke 5:1](#)) as can His individual sayings ([Matt. 26:75; Luke 22:61; John 7:36](#)). Significantly, Jesus avoided citing rabbinic authorities or using the traditional language of a prophet who would claim "that the word of the Lord came to me" or declare "thus says the Lord." Perhaps these phrases did not significantly honor His special relationship with the Father and His own authority ([Matt. 11:27](#); compare [5:21-26; Mark 3:28-29](#)).

*As in the Old Testament, so also Jesus' word demanded decision on the part of the hearers*  
([John 8:51](#); [12:47](#)).

*The message concerning Jesus can also be called “a word.” Paul spoke of “the word of God that you heard from us” that is mediated by his human words ([1 Thess. 2:13](#) NRSV). The content of this word is certainly the good news story concerning Jesus' death and resurrection—the heart of the gospel ([1 Cor. 15:3-5](#)). This message is the word of the cross ([Gal. 3:1](#)) and is the core content of Paul's preaching ([1 Cor. 2:2](#)). Because of His sacrifice and resurrection, the gospel message is a “word of reconciliation” ([2 Cor. 5:19](#)) and a “word of life” ([Phil. 2:16](#)). The word is witnessed and proclaimed by Jesus' followers ([Luke 1:2](#); [Acts 4:2](#); [6:7](#)). The word revealed through His son ([Heb. 1:1-4](#)) brings illumination and judgment.*

Jesus Himself is the Word—the living Word. The preexistent Word who was with God “in the beginning” has now become flesh ([John 1:1-18](#)). Scholars have frequently claimed that John used *logos* in a philosophical sense to refer to the world's controlling rational principle (Stoicism) or to the created intermediary between God and His world (Philo). However,

*John's word is not a principle or divine characteristic. It is a preexistent, life-giving*

*person. John opposed Greek philosophy by arguing that salvation comes not by mankind's escape from this world but by God entering and redeeming creation.*

More probably *logos* was chosen because of its meaning in the Old Testament, its Greek translation, and contemporary Hebrew literature, where the concepts of *wisdom* and *word* were being spoken of as a distinct manifestation of God.

**John saw that the same agent of God who gave life in the first creation was also giving life in the new creation inaugurated by Jesus' coming.**

The creative Word of God became flesh; being divine He embodied divine communication. Now the Word dwells among us revealing the glory of God ([John 1:14](#)).

**Power of the Word** It is often assumed that in Hebrew thought words had a mysterious binding authority. For example, when Isaac discovered he had been deceived and wrongly gave his blessing to Jacob, he declared that his blessing had been given and Jacob “shall be blessed” ([Gen. 27:33](#)). Isaac’s word seems magical—like an arrow once shot, it could not be recalled. Caution must be exercised here. Actually, only God’s word has this type of irresistible potency ([Isa. 55:11](#)) and absolute creative power ([Gen. 1:3-31](#); [Luke 1:32-35](#); compare [Isa. 9:8](#); [31:2](#); [45:23](#)). Most occurrences like Isaac’s may be explained in terms of their social custom. Following a prescribed social custom, a person may form a bond, or a will, by speaking a word. Even today a couple can make or create a marriage by saying “I do.” **We must also note that Scripture teaches that a person’s word is often powerless ([1 Cor. 2:4](#); [4:19-20](#)) and frequently fails ([Matt. 21:28-32](#)).**

Words are capable of great good and evil ([Matt. 12:36](#); [Jas. 3:5-6,8](#)). Words can deeply injure ([Prov. 12:18](#); [18:14](#)), and revive ([Prov. 12:18,25](#); [16:24](#)). Words can have a widespread influence; **words from the wicked are like a fire-spreading torch ([Prov. 16:27-28](#)); words from the good bring good fruit ([Prov. 12:14](#); [10:11](#)).**

Randy Hatchett

Holman Bible Dictionary.

**SOUL** The vital existence of a human being.

# *A soul is the vital existence of a human being.*

The Hebrew word *nephesh* is a key Old Testament term (755 times) referring to human beings. In the New Testament, the term *psyche* retreats behind the ideas of body, flesh, spirit to characterize human existence. **In the Bible, a person is a unity. Body and soul or spirit are not opposite terms, but rather terms which supplement one another to describe aspects of the inseparable whole person.** See *Anthropology; Humanity*.

Such a holistic image of a person is maintained also in the New Testament even over against the Greek culture which, since Plato, sharply separated body and soul with an analytic exactness and which saw the soul as the valuable, immortal, undying part of human beings. In the Old Testament, the use and variety of the word is much greater while in the New Testament its theological meaning appears much stronger.

**The soul designates the physical life: Vitality in all of its breadth and width of meaning is meant by the soul.** The basic meaning of *nephesh* is throat. Thus, the Bible refers to the hungry, thirsty, satisfied, soul ([Ps. 107:5,9](#); [Prov. 27:7](#); [Jer. 31:12,25](#)). The soul means the entire human being in its physical life needing food and clothing ([Matt. 6:25](#)). The breathing organs and the breath blown out from them also express individual life in animals as well as human beings ([Job 11:20](#); [41:21](#); [Acts 20:10](#)). At times, then, soul can be interchanged with life ([Prov. 7:23](#); [8:35-36](#)) and can be identical with blood ([Deut. 12:23](#)). A person does not have a soul. A person is a living soul ([Gen. 2:7](#)). That means a living being that owes life itself to the Creator just as does the animal ([Gen. 2:19](#)). For this life or soul, one gives all one has ([Job 2:4](#)). **Satan is permitted by God to take health, that is flesh and blood, but Satan cannot take the bare life of a person ([Job 2:5-6](#)).**

**Soul designates the feelings, the wishes, and the will of humans:** The work of the throat, its hunger and appetite, stands for the desire and the longing of the human being after power and sex, after satisfaction, and after even the evil ([Prov. 21:10](#)), but also after God ([Ps. 42:2-3](#)). **The soul can be incited, embittered, confirmed, unsettled, or kept in suspense** ([Acts 14:2,22](#); [15:24](#); [John 10:24](#)). The word mirrors the entire scale of feelings under the influence of the human being, even the psychological. The bitter soul of the childless, the sick, or the threatened ([1 Sam. 1:10](#); [2 Kings 4:27](#); [2 Sam. 17:8](#)) reminds us of the *nephesh* as the organ of taste that also stands for the entire embittered person.

**The soul also knows positive emotions. The soul rejoices, praises, hopes, and is patient. Never in these cases is only one part of the human being meant. It is always the powerful soul as an expression of the entire personality** ([Ps. 33:20](#)).

In the command to love ([Deut. 6:5](#); [Mark 12:30](#)), the soul stands next to other expressions for the human being to emphasize the emotional energy and willpower of the human being all rolled into one.

**The soul designates the human person:** Soul is not only a synonym with life. One can also speak of the life of the soul ([Prov. 3:22](#)). Every human soul ([Acts 2:43](#); [Rom. 2:9](#)) means each individual person. **The popular expression used today “to save our souls” goes back to this biblical way of thinking (1 Pet. 3:20). It means to save the entire**

**person.** In legal texts, the soul is the individual person with juristic responsibilities ([Lev. 17:10](#), a blood-eating soul). Connected with a figure showing statistics or numbers of people, soul becomes an idea in the arena of the statistician ([Gen. 46:26-27](#); [Acts 2:41](#)). At times, soul simply replaces a preposition such as the expression “let my soul live,” which means “let me live” ([1 Kings 20:32](#)). It is even possible for all the nuances of meaning to sound forth together in the same expression. For instance, in [Psalm 103:1](#), we read, “Bless, Yahweh, O my soul.” This includes the throat as the organ of life, the soul as the totality of capabilities; my own personal life which experiences the saving actions of Yahweh our God; my person; my own “I”; and the vital, emotional self.

**Soul designates the essential life:** Physical life is given and maintained by God ([Matt. 6:25-34](#)). Meaningful and fulfilled life comes only when it is free to give itself to God as a disciple of Jesus Christ. **Life is the highest good when it is lived according to God’s intentions and not used up in search for material and cultural goods** ([Mark 8:34-37](#)).

This life is stronger than death and cannot be destroyed by human beings ([Matt. 10:28](#)). The soul does not, however, represent a divine, immortal, undying part of the human being after death as the Greeks often thought. Paul, thus, avoids the word soul in connection with eternal life. There is a continuity between the earthly and the resurrected life that does not lie in the capabilities or nature of mortal humans. It lies alone in the power of the Spirit of God ([1 Cor. 15:44](#)).

*According to the Bible, a human being exists as a whole unit and remains also as a whole person in*

*the hand of God after death. A person is not  
at any time viewed as a bodiless soul.*

Christian Wolf

Holman Bible Dictionary.

**HEART** The center of the physical, mental, and spiritual life of humans. This contrasts to the normal use of *kardia* (“heart”) in Greek literature outside the Scriptures. The New Testament follows the Old Testament usage when referring to the human heart in that it gives *kardia* a wider range of meaning than it was generally accustomed to have.

First, the word heart refers to the physical organ and is considered to be the center of the physical life. Eating and drinking are spoken of as strengthening the heart ([Gen. 18:5](#); [Judg. 19:5](#); [Acts 14:17](#)). As the center of physical life, the heart came to stand for the person as a whole.

The heart became the focus for all the vital functions of the body; including both intellectual and spiritual life. The heart and the intellect are closely connected, the heart being the seat of intelligence: “For this people’s heart is waxed gross... lest at any time they should... understand with their heart, and should be converted” ([Matt. 13:15](#)). The heart is connected with thinking: As a person “thinketh in his heart, so is he” ([Prov. 23:7](#)). To ponder something in one’s heart means to consider it carefully ([Luke 1:66](#); [2:19](#)). “To set one’s heart on” is the literal Hebrew that means to give attention to something, to worry about it ([1 Sam. 9:20](#)). To call to heart (mind) something means to remember something ([Isa. 46:8](#)). All of these are functions of the mind, but are connected with the heart in biblical language.

Closely related to the mind are acts of the will, acts resulting from a conscious or even a deliberate decision. Thus, [2 Corinthians 9:7](#): “Every man according as he purposeth in his heart, so let him give.” Ananias contrived his deed of lying to the Holy Spirit in his heart ([Acts 5:4](#)). The conscious decision is made in the heart ([Rom. 6:17](#)). Connected to the will are human wishes and desires. [Romans 1:24](#) describes how God gave them up “through the lusts of their own hearts, to dishonor their own bodies.” David was a man after God’s “own heart” because he would “fulfill all” of God’s will ([Acts 13:22](#)).

Not only is the heart associated with the activities of the mind and the will, but it is also closely connected to the feelings and affections of a person. Emotions such as joy originate in the heart ([Ps. 4:7](#); [Isa 65:14](#)). Other emotions are ascribed to the heart, especially in the Old Testament. Nabal’s fear is described by the phrase: “his heart died within him” ([1 Sam. 25:37](#); compare [Ps. 143:4](#)). Discouragement or despair is described by the phrase “heaviness in the heart” which

makes it stoop ([Prov. 12:25](#)). Again, [Ecclesiastes 2:20](#) says, “Therefore I went about to cause my heart to despair of all the labor which I took under the sun.” Another emotion connected with the heart is sorrow. [John 16:6](#) says, “because I have said these things unto you, sorrow hath filled your heart.” [Proverbs 25:20](#), describes sorrow as having “an heavy heart.” The heart is also the seat of the affection of love and its opposite, hate. In the Old Testament, for example, Israel is commanded: “You shall not hate your brother in your heart, but you shall reason with your neighbor, lest you bear sin because of him” ([Lev. 19:17](#) RSV). A similar attitude, bitter jealousy, is described in [James 3:14](#) as coming from the heart. On the other hand, love is based in the heart. The believer is commanded to love God “with all your heart” ([Mark 12:30](#); compare [Deut. 6:5](#)). Paul taught that the purpose of God’s command is love which comes from a “pure heart” ([1 Tim. 1:5](#)).

Finally, the heart is spoken of in Scripture as the center of the moral and spiritual life. The conscience, for instance, is associated with the heart. In fact, the Hebrew language had no word for conscience, so the word heart was often used to express this concept: “my heart shall not reproach me so long as I live” ([Job 27:6](#)). The Revised Standard Version translates the word for “heart” as “conscience” in [1 Samuel 25:31](#) (RSV). In the New Testament the heart is spoken of also as that which condemns us ([1 John 3:19-21](#)). All moral conditions from the highest to the lowest are said to center in the heart. Sometimes the heart is used to represent a person’s true nature or character. Samson told Delilah “all his heart” ([Judg. 16:17](#)). This true nature is contrasted with the outward appearance: “man looks on the outward appearance, but the Lord looks on the heart” ([1 Sam. 16:7](#) RSV).

On the negative side, depravity is said to issue from the heart: “The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?” ([Jer. 17:9](#)). Jesus said that out of the heart comes evil thoughts, murder, adultery, fornication, theft, false witness, slander ([Matt. 15:19](#)). In other words, defilement comes from within rather than from without.

Because the heart is at the root of the problem, this is the place where God does His work in the individual. For instance, the work of the law is “written in their hearts,” and conscience is the proof of this ([Rom. 2:15](#)). The heart is the field where seed (the Word of God) is sown ([Matt. 13:19](#); [Luke 8:15](#)). In addition to being the place where the natural laws of God are written, the heart is the place of renewal. Before Saul became king, God gave him a new heart ([1 Sam. 10:9](#)). God promised Israel that He would give them a new spirit within, take away their “stony heart” and give them a “heart of flesh” ([Ezek. 11:19](#)). Paul said that a person must believe in the heart to be saved, “for with the heart man believeth unto righteousness” ([Rom. 10:10](#)). (See also [Mark 11:23](#); [Heb. 3:12](#).)

Finally, the heart is the dwelling place of God. Two persons of the Trinity are said to reside in the heart of the believer. God has given us the “earnest of the Spirit in our hearts” ([2 Cor. 1:22](#)). [Ephesians 3:17](#) expresses the desire that “Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith.” The love of God “is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us” ([Rom. 5:5](#)).

**Gerald Cowen - Holman Bible Dictionary.**

**SPIRIT** The empowering perspective of human life and the Holy Spirit bringing God's presence and power to bear in the world. A translation of the Hebrew word *ruach* and the Greek word *pneuma* which can be translated as "wind," "breath," or "spirit" depending upon the context.

In both Testaments, *spirit* is used of both God and human beings. *Spirit*, whether used of God or of human beings, is difficult to define. The kinship of spirit, breath, and wind is a helpful clue in beginning to understand *spirit*. In His conversation with Nicodemus ([John 3](#)), Jesus said that the Spirit is like the wind in that one cannot see it but one can see its effects. This is true of both the Spirit of God and the spirit of a human being.

**Spirit of God** At the beginning of creation, the Spirit of God hovered over the waters ([Gen. 1:3](#)). Elihu acknowledged to Job that the Spirit of God had made him and was the source of his life ([Job 33:4](#)). The animals were created when God sent out His "breath" ([Ps. 104:30](#) NRSV note).

The Spirit of God is present everywhere. The psalmist sensed that no matter where he was, God's Spirit was there ([Ps. 139:7](#)). The Pharaoh saw the Spirit of God in Joseph ([Gen. 41:38](#)). Moses realized that the Spirit of God was on him, and he desired that God's Spirit be on all of His people ([Num 11:29](#)). During the period of the Judges, the Spirit of the Lord came to individuals and empowered them to accomplish specific tasks ([Judg. 3:10](#); [6:34](#); [11:29](#); [13:25](#); [14:6](#); [14:19](#)). When Samuel, the last of the judges, anointed Saul, Israel's first king, he told Saul that the Spirit of the Lord would come upon him. The result was that Saul prophesied and was changed into a different person ([1 Sam. 10:6](#)). Later, the Spirit departed from Saul ([1 Sam. 16:14](#)). Likewise, the Spirit came upon David when Samuel anointed him ([1 Sam. 16:13](#)). In his last words, David said that the Spirit of the Lord had spoken through him ([2 Sam. 23:2](#)).

Isaiah spoke of one who is to come from the line of Jesse, one on whom the Spirit of the Lord would rest. This person would have the Spirit of wisdom, understanding, counsel, power, knowledge, and the fear of the Lord ([Isa. 11:1-3](#)). Ezekiel prophesied that God would put His Spirit within His people, removing from them hearts of stone and putting within them hearts of flesh that would be obedient to God's way ([Ezek. 36:26-27](#)).

**New Testament Teaching** Each of the four Gospels has numerous references to the Spirit of God or the Holy Spirit. The Spirit was the agent of Jesus' miraculous conception ([Matt. 1:18,20](#)), came down on Jesus at His baptism ([Matt. 3:16](#)), led Him into the wilderness where He was tempted by the devil ([Matt. 4:1](#)), and enabled Him to heal diseases and cast out demons ([Matt. 12:28](#)). Jesus promised the Spirit to His followers as He prepared to leave the world. The Spirit would serve as Comforter and Counselor, continuing to teach Jesus' followers and reminding them of what He had said to them ([John 14:25-26](#)). Not many days after Jesus' ascension, the promised Spirit came upon His followers during the Feast of Pentecost. The advent of the Spirit was accompanied by a sound that was like a mighty wind. Those who witnessed this event saw what seemed to be tongues of fire resting on the believers. Moreover, these disciples were empowered to speak in tongues other than their native language ([Acts 2:1-3](#)). Throughout Luke's account of the early church, the Holy Spirit empowered and guided the followers of Jesus in their mission to the world surrounding the Mediterranean ([Acts 11:12](#); [13:2](#); [15:28](#); [16:6-7](#); [20:22](#); [21:11](#)).

The Spirit is important in Paul's understanding of the believer's relationship to God. The Spirit is a gracious personal presence who lives in one who has confessed that Jesus Christ is Lord.

Relationship to God through Christ by the Spirit is revolutionary. In Galatians, Paul argued that legalism and the way of faith are incompatible. God's Spirit comes to us as a gift based on our faith in Christ and His grace. ([Gal. 3:1-5](#)). God's Spirit comes into a believer's life, with assurance that we are God's children ([Rom. 8:16](#)). The Spirit is God's pledge to us that we shall be fully transformed and conformed to the image of Christ. ([Rom. 8:1-29](#); [2 Cor. 1:22](#)). Paul identified the Spirit with the Lord (the risen Christ) and asserted that where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom, a growing freedom from the law of sin and death ([2 Cor. 3:18](#); compare [Rom. 8:2](#)).

The Spirit distributes gifts in the church which are designed to equip God's people for serving and building up the body of Christ ([1 Cor. 12](#); [Eph. 4:7-13](#)). Evidence that the Spirit of God is at work in a person or group of persons is love, joy, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control ([Gal. 5:22-23](#)).

At the beginning of Scripture we see the Spirit at work in creation. As Scripture closes, the Spirit and the Bride, the church, issue an invitation for all who are thirsty to come and drink of the water of life ([Rev. 22:17](#)).

**Human Spirits** In both the Old and New Testaments, *spirit* is used of humans and of other beings. When used of humans, *spirit* is associated with a wide range of functions including thinking and understanding, emotions, attitudes, and intentions. Elihu told Job it was *spirit* in a person, the breath of God, which gave understanding ([Job 32:8](#)). When Jesus healed the paralytic, He perceived in His "spirit" that the religious leaders present were questioning His forgiving the man's sins ([Mark 2:8](#)).

*Spirit* is used extensively with human emotions including sorrow ([Prov. 15:4,13](#)), anguish ([Ex. 6:9](#); [John 13:21](#)), anger ([Prov. 14:29](#); [16:32](#)), vexation ([Eccl. 1:14](#)), fear ([2 Tim. 1:7](#)), and joy ([Luke 1:47](#)).

A variety of attitudes and intentions are associated with spirit. Caleb had a different spirit than most of his contemporaries in that he followed the Lord wholeheartedly ([Num. 14:24](#)). Sihon, king of Heshbon, had a stubborn spirit ([Deut. 2:30](#)). [First Kings 22](#) refers to a lying spirit. The psalmist called persons who have no deceit in their spirits, "blessed" ([Ps. 32:2](#)). A person's spirit can be contrite ([Ps. 34:18](#)), steadfast ([Ps. 51:10](#)), willing ([Ps. 51:12](#)), broken ([Ps. 51:17](#)), and haughty ([Prov. 16:18](#)). The Gospel of Mark has numerous references to Jesus healing persons with unclean or foul spirits.

Spirit is used of nonphysical beings, both good and evil. Satan is called the ruler of the kingdom of the air, the spirit who is at work in those who are disobedient ([Eph. 2:2](#)).

One of the perennial points of conflict between the Sadducees and the Pharisees was over whether there are angels and spirits. The latter believed that there were such while the former denied that such existed. When the risen Christ appeared to the disciples, they were startled and frightened, thinking they were seeing a spirit. Jesus invited them to touch Him. He then reminded them that a spirit does not have flesh and bones ([Luke 24:37-39](#)).

*“Disobedience is fatal... the Word of God is powerful & effective, so that those who disobey it will not escape punishment.” - Schreiner*

*“The word of God is like God Himself.” – Schreiner*

*“The word’s role in judgment is brought to the forefront.” (“double edged sword”) – Schreiner*

*“Our author is not concerned to provide here a psychological or anatomical analysis of the human condition, but rather to describe in graphic terms the penetration of God’s word to the innermost depth of man’s personality.” – Hughes*

*“Just as God knows our thoughts & attitudes, so God’s word judges our thoughts & intentions.”  
- Schreiner*

# Bible Symbols

## ***Milk***

The writer to the Hebrews compared the basics of the Word of God to milk.

For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you again the basic elements of the oracles of God. You need milk, not solid food; for everyone who lives on milk, being still an infant, is unskilled in the word of righteousness. But solid food is for the mature, for those whose faculties have been trained by practice to distinguish good from evil ([Hebrews 5:12-14](#)).

## ***Solid Food***

Scripture is symbolized by solid food. Paul wrote.

And so, brothers and sisters, I could not speak to you as spiritual people, but rather as people of the flesh, as infants in Christ. I fed you with milk, not solid food, for you were not ready for solid food. Even now you are still not ready ([1 Corinthians 3:1,2](#)).

While solid food gives physical sustenance - the Bible gives spiritual sustenance.

## ***A Sword***

A sword illustrates the power of God's Word. The writer to the Hebrews said.

Indeed, the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing until it divides soul from spirit, joints from marrow; it is able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart ([Hebrews 4:12](#)).

## ***Fire And A Hammer***

In Jeremiah, the Word is compared to fire and a hammer.

Is not my word like fire, says the LORD, and like a hammer that breaks a rock in pieces? ([Jeremiah 23:29](#))

## ***A Mirror***

James uses the symbol of a mirror to illustrate the power of the Word of God.

For if any are hearers of the word and not doers, they are like those who look at themselves in a mirror; for they look at themselves and, on going away, immediately forget what they were like. But those who look into the perfect law, the law of liberty, and persevere, being not hearers who forget but doers who act-they will be blessed in their doing ([James 1:23-25](#)).

## ***Seed That Is Sown***

The Word of God is compared to seed that is sown.

For you have been born again, not of perishable seed, but of imperishable, through the living and enduring word of God ([1 Peter 1:23](#)).

## ***A Lamp And A Light***

The Word of God is compared to a lamp and light. The psalmist wrote.

Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path ([Psalm 119:105](#)).

## ***It Is Like A Light Shining In The Darkness***

The Bible is also compared to a light shining in the darkness. Peter wrote.

And we have the word of the prophets made more certain, and you will do well to pay attention to it, as to a light shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts ([2 Peter 1:19](#)).

## ***Water***

The Word of God is compared to water - a necessary source of life. Paul wrote.

So that he might set her [the church] apart, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word ([Ephesians 5:26](#)).

## ***Gold And Honey***

According to the Psalmist, the Scriptures are more to be desired than gold or the drippings of the honeycomb.

More to be desired are they than gold, even much fine gold; sweeter also than honey, and drippings of the honeycomb ([Psalm 19:10](#)).

## **Anchor**

The Word of God is compared to an anchor.

God did this so that, by two unchangeable things in which it is impossible for God to lie, we who have fled to take hold of the hope offered to us may be greatly encouraged. We have this hope as an anchor for the soul, firm and secure ([Hebrews 6:18,19](#)).

### **Summary**

As we examine the various symbols the Scripture uses to describe itself, we come away with a better overall understanding of it. The Bible can be compared to solid food, milk, water, honey, gold, a sword, an anchor, a mirror, a lamp and a light, and a light shining in the darkness. These different symbols provide greater insight into the character of Scripture.

## **What is the Bible?**

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by [Matt Slick](#)

*The Bible is a collection of 66 books written by about 40 authors, in three different languages, on three different continents, over approximately 1600 years. The Bible claims to be inspired and inerrant. This means that the Bible claims to be from God and that it is without error in everything it addresses.*

**The Bible contains many different styles of writing such as poetry, narration, fiction, history, law, and prophecy and**

**must be interpreted in the context of those styles.** It is the source of the [Christian](#) religion in that the Bible contains the words of God and how the Christian is to apply the words of God to his life.

Basically, the Bible describes the origin of man in the Garden of Eden along with his fall into sin and out of fellowship with [God](#). It then describes how God called out a special people to Himself, the Israelites. He promised the Israelites a future Messiah who would restore mankind's relationship with God. The Bible is the account of the work of God in history bringing to fruition His prophetic declarations concerning Jesus. Jesus was born of the Virgin, died on the cross, and paid for sins, just as the Bible prophesied in the Old Testament and fulfilled in the New. In short, the Bible points to Jesus, "You search the Scriptures, because you think that in them you have eternal life; and it is these that bear witness of Me," ([John 5:39](#)).

Furthermore, the Bible teaches us that forgiveness of sins is found in Jesus alone, "And there is salvation in no one else; for there is no other name under heaven that has been given among men, by which we must be saved," ([Acts 4:12](#)).

Some say that the Bible is nothing more than fairy tales. But this cannot be for it contains great wisdom and truth and it has been verified throughout history as being accurate. Its historical accounts are flawlessly accurate. In fact, archaeology routinely demonstrates the accuracy of the biblical records concerning locations and events recorded in the Bible.

*We are all like “natural” puddle-water or spring-fed swamp water. Oh... we’re “natural” alright... but that doesn’t mean we’re clean. No. In fact, to continue the “water metaphor,” while our “natural” status can be quickly authenticated, in like fashion, it can be clearly proven, that all humans have been supernaturally infiltrated with the contaminants of life-taking sin. Moreover, to that end, it is the cleansing filter of faith AND God’s Word, as applied by God’s grace & God’s Spirit, that miraculously transforms & transplants the dirty hearts of sinners into the holy hearts of saints. – JDP*

INTRO: Read aloud John 1:1ff

God's Word is ETERNAL:

- See 1 Peter 1:25
- See Isaiah 40:8

God's Word IS JESUS:

- See John 1:1-18
- See Revelation 19:12-13

God's Word is ALIVE:

- Hebrews 4:12
- See 1 Peter 1:23
- See John 6:63
- John 1

God's Word ABIDES/DWELLS in believers:

- See John 15:7
- See Colossians 3:16

God's Word is EFFECTUAL:

- See Isaiah 55:11

God's Word is LIFE-GIVING & HEALING:

- See Psalm 4:22
- See Amos 8:11 (lack of Word = “famine”)

#### God’s Word DIVIDES:

- See Genesis 1 & many creation separations
- See Hebrews 4:12

#### God’s Word SUSTAINS: (us/universe)

- See Mathew 4:4
- Deuteronomy 8:3
- John 1
- Hebrews 1:1-3

#### God’s Word PROSPERS & PREPARES:

- Joshua 1:8

#### God’s Word PROTECTS:

- Proverbs 30:5

#### God’s Word ENRAGES:

- See Acts 5:33 (“furious & wanted to execute”)
- See Acts 7:54 (“furious & ground their teeth”)

#### God’s Word HAMMERS/CRUSHES:

- See Jeremiah 23:29!
- See Isaiah 28:13

#### God's Word CANNOT BE BROKEN:

- See John 10:35

#### God's Word WORKS (IN BELIEVERS):

- See 1 Thessalonians 2:13
- See 1 Peter 1:22-25

#### God's Word BLESSES:

- See Luke 11:28 (when heard & obeyed)
- See Psalm 1:1-2

#### God's Word is a SWORD:

- See Hebrews 4:12
- See Ephesians 6:17 ("DEFEATS Satan" - W.W.)
- Isaiah 49:2
- Revelation 1:16 & 2:12
- Wisdom of Solomon 18:15-16

#### God's Word is to be PROCLAIMED/PREACHED:

- See 2 Timothy 4:2
- See Romans 1:16

God's Word leads to WISDOM:

- See Matthew 7:24 (= building on the Rock)

God's Word/Way is PERFECT:

- See Psalm 18:30 & 19:7

- See 2 Samuel 22:31

God's Word is TREASURE: ("to be treasured")

- See Job 23:12

God's Word JUDGES:

- See John 12:47-48!

God's Word DIVIDES the crowds... and  
God's Word UNIFIES the Church! - JDP

God's Word is God-BREATHED:

- See 2 Timothy 3:16-17 (right vs wrong)

- See 2 Peter 1:20

God's Word SAVES SOULS:

- See James 1:21

- See 1 Peter 1:22-25

- Romans 10:17 (faith comes by hearing...)

God's Word SANCTIFIES:

- See John 17:17

NOTE: no Spirit mentioned... Word is ALIVE!

Confirmed in Hebrews 4:12

- See Deuteronomy 6:6-7

- See 1 Peter 2:1-3

God's Word is PURIFIED & PURIFIES:

- See Psalm 12:6

- See Psalm 119:9

- See 1 Peter 1:22-25

God's Word is the BELT of TRUTH & SWORD of the SPIRIT!

God's Word INDWELLS hearts:

- See Psalm 40:8

God's Word(s) "ARE SPIRIT & LIGHT"

- See John 6:63 (See response in 6:60-66)

God's Word is a LIGHT:

- See Psalm 119:105

God's Word INVITES & EMPOWERS Koinonia:

- See 1 John 1:3

God's Word is POWERFUL:

- See 1 Corinthians 1:18
- See Hebrews 1:1-3

God's Word is AUTHORITATIVE:

- See Matthew 28:18-20
- See 2 Timothy 3:16-17
- See Titus 2:1 & 15

God's Word is TRUTH & LOVE:

- See Ephesians 4:15

God's Word is PROPHETIC:

- See Ezekiel 12:28

God's Word CLEANSSES:

- See John 15:3

God's Word is worthy of DEVOTION:

- See Acts 2:41ff

God's Word is TRUSTWORTHY:

- See Psalm 33:4 ("right & true")

God's Word is COMPLETE:

- Deuteronomy 4:2 & 12:32

- Revelation 22:18-19

God's Word is CONSISTENT: (non-contradictive)

- See Matthew 22:37-40

God's Word is FOOLISHNESS to the Lost:

- See 1 Corinthians 1:18 & 2:14

God's Word VERIFIES & VALIDATES:

- See Acts 17:11 (the Bereans)

- See John 14:21 (obey Word validates love)

- See Isaiah 8:20 (no Word = "no dawn")

- See John 8:31 (hold to My Word... set you free)

God's Word FIGHTS SIN:

- See Psalm 119:11

God's Word is PERVERTED by false teachers:

- 2 Peter 3:15-16
- Titus 1:10-16

God's Word ELIMINATES EXCUSES:

- See 2 Peter 1:3-4
- See Deuteronomy 30:11-14

God's Word ENCOURAGES/AFFIRMS:

- Romans 15:4 (instructs & gives Hope)

God's Word BEARS WITNESS to Christ:

- John 5:39

God's Word is STRATEGIC:

God's Word is SYMBOLIC:

- See "the seed" in the Parable of the Sower...
- 
- 
- 
- 
-

God's Word is MERCIFUL/WARNING:

- See 1 Corinthians 10:5-11

See Hebrews 4:12

God's Word is GRACIOUS/INVITING:

- Luke 14:23

God's Word is EVERLASTING/ETERNAL:

- See Matthew 24:35

God's Word GIVES LIGHT & UNDERSTANDING TO THE SIMPLE:

- See Psalm 119:130

God's Word is NON-NEGOTIABLE:

God's Word is TRANSFORMATIVE:

See John 8:32 & 36

See 2 Corinthians 5:17ff

God's Word CONVICTS / is CONFRONTATIONAL:

- 1 Corinthians 14:25-26

God's Word CONVERTS:

- Romans 10:17 & 14:17

God's Word is SYMBOLIC: (the way of salvation)

- See Hebrews 4:2

- See Hebrews 13:7

\*\*\* When we read the Bible with the right heart, the Bible begins to righteously read our hearts back to us. - JDP

\*\*\* We get into the Word so that the Word will get into us!

\*\*\* Spurgeon QUOTE on "defending the Bible":

It's like defending a caged lion... you just open the cage & let it out... It defends itself very well..."

\*\*\* "Bible" means "Book(s)" per its Gk title

\*\*\* QUOTE: "The greatest argument against the reality of God is the professing church and professing people of God..." - Hitchens

\*\*\* The Word of God has life in it, the same way a seed has life in it... There is a forest of potential in every word! - JDP

## LIVING

*For the word of God is... living/alive*

**VIDEO:** "God Speaks Through His Word" (2:30)

L God's Word is ALIVE:

### 1 Peter 1:23

*...you have been born again, not of perishable seed but of imperishable, through the living and abiding word of God;*

### John 6:63

*<sup>63</sup> It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh is no help at all. The words that I have spoken to you are spirit and life.*

- **John 1:1-18**

**Hebrews 4:12**

**The Word of God has life in it, the same way a seed has life in it... There is a forest of potential in every word! - JDP**

L God's Word is MERCIFUL/WARNING:

**1 Corinthians 10:9-11**

*<sup>9</sup> We must not put Christ to the test, as some of them did and were destroyed by serpents, <sup>10</sup> nor grumble, as some of them did and were destroyed by the Destroyer. <sup>11</sup> Now **these things happened to them as an example**, but they were written down for our instruction, on whom the end of the ages has come.*

See Hebrews 4:12

L God's Word is EVERLASTING/ETERNAL:

**Matthew 24:35**

*<sup>35</sup> Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away.*

L God's Word(s) "ARE SPIRIT & LIGHT"

**John 6:63**

*<sup>63</sup> It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh is no help at all. The words that I have spoken to you are spirit and life.*

(See response in 6:66)

L – X. God's Word is COMPLETE:

**Deuteronomy 4:2**

*Do not add to what I command you and do not subtract from it, but keep the commands of the LORD your God that I give you.*

**Deuteronomy 12:32**

*<sup>32</sup> See that you do all I command you; do not add to it or take away from it.*

**Revelation 22:18-19**

*I warn everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book: If anyone adds anything to them, God will add to him the plagues described in this book. <sup>19</sup> And if anyone takes words away from this book of prophecy, God will take away from him his share in the tree of life and in the holy city, which are described in this book.*

L God's Word is BLOOD bought & preserved!

- Jesus, Paul, Apostles, **Hebrews 11**, Church-Fathers, etc.
  - o "It is finished!"
  - o "I have fought the good fight..."
  - o John the Baptist's head on a platter...
- Voice of the Martyrs... past & present
- Our brothers & sisters

L God's Word is TREASURE: ("to be treasured")

**Job 23:12**

*<sup>12</sup> I have not departed from the commandment of his lips; I have treasured the words of his mouth more than my portion of food.*

**Psalm 19:10** (God's Word & Ways...)

*<sup>10</sup> More to be desired are they than gold, even much fine gold; sweeter also than honey and drippings of the honeycomb.*

**ACTIVE**

A God's Word INVITES & EMPOWERS Koinonia:

**1 John 1:3**

*We proclaim to you what we have seen and heard, so that you also may have fellowship with us. And our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son, Jesus Christ.*

*For... the word of God is... alive/living and active/mighty/powerful,*

**For example, God created the heavens and the earth with his word.**

**God's Word accomplishes everything God wills.** As the Lord says through the prophet Isaiah, *"so my word that comes from my mouth will not return to me empty, but it will accomplish what I please and will prosper in what I send it to do"* (**Isa 55:11**).

*And powerful. **Mighty.** 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 & better changes in the moral world have been caused by the power of truth... No words can over-estimate the might of the truth which God has revealed.*

**- Barnes' Notes**

**A God's Word is EFFECTUAL:**

**Isaiah 55:11 (NIV)**

*...(when) My word goes out from My mouth: It will not return*

*to Me empty, but will accomplish what I desire and achieve the purpose for which I sent it.*

A God's Word is LIFE-GIVING & HEALING:

Amos 8:11 (lack of Word = "famine")

**Amos 8:11 (NIV)**

*"The days are coming," declares the Sovereign LORD, "when I will send a famine through the land-- not a famine of food or a thirst for water, but a famine of hearing the words of the LORD.*

**Psalms 119:25**

*My soul clings to the dust; give me life according to your word!*

A God's Word SUSTAINS: (us/universe)

**Colossians 1:17**

*He is before all things, and in Him all things hold together.*

**Matthew 4:4**

*But Jesus answered, "It is written, "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God."*

**Deuteronomy 8:3**

*...man does not live by bread alone, but man lives by every word that comes from the mouth of the LORD.*

- Hebrews 1:1-4

A God's Word is God-BREATHED:

**2 Timothy 3:16-17**

*All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness,<sup>17</sup> so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.*

**2 Peter 1:20**

*knowing this first of all, that no prophecy of Scripture comes from someone's own interpretation.*

A God's Word INVITES & EMPOWERS Koinonia:

**1 John 1:3**

*We proclaim to you what we have seen and heard, so that you also may have fellowship with us. And our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son, Jesus Christ.*

i. God's Word is **ACTIVE**

*For... the word of God is... alive/living and active/mighty/powerful,*

A God's Word is POWERFUL:

**Romans 1:16**

*I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes: first for the Jew, then for the Gentile.*

**1 Corinthians 1:18**

*For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God.*

**Hebrews 1:1-3**

*In the past God spoke to our forefathers through the prophets at many times and in various ways, <sup>2</sup> but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, and through whom he made the universe. <sup>3</sup> The Son is the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of his being, sustaining all things by his powerful word. After he had provided purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty in heaven.*

A – X God's Word CANNOT BE BROKEN:

**John 10:35 (NASB)**

*"If he called them gods, to whom the word of God came (and the Scripture cannot be broken),*

A God's Word SAVES SOULS:

**James 1:21**

*Therefore put away all filthiness and rampant wickedness and receive with meekness the implanted word, which is able to save your souls.*

**Romans 10:17**

*So faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ.*

**1 Peter 1:22-25**

*Having purified your souls by your obedience to the truth for a sincere brotherly love, love one another earnestly from a pure heart, <sup>23</sup> since you have been born again, not of perishable seed but of imperishable, through the living and abiding word of God; <sup>24</sup> for "All flesh is like grass and all its glory like the flower of grass. The grass withers, and the flower falls, <sup>25</sup> but the word of the Lord remains forever." And this word is the good news that was preached to you.*

A God's Word CONVERTS:

**Romans 10:17**

*So faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ.*

A God's Word is AUTHORITATIVE:

### **Matthew 28:18-20**

*18 And Jesus came and said to them, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me.*

*19 Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit,*

*20 teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age."*

### **2 Timothy 3:16-17**

*16 All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, 17 so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.*

### **Titus 2:1-15**

*1 ...as for you, teach what accords with sound doctrine...*

*15 Declare these things; exhort and rebuke with all authority. Let no one disregard you.*

**A God's Word is TRUTH & LOVE:**

### **Ephesians 4:15**

*...speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ,*

**A God's Word leads to WISDOM:**

## Matthew 7:24

*<sup>24</sup> “Everyone then who hears these words of mine and does them will be like a wise man who built his house on the rock.*

## CUTTING

*For... the word of God is... alive/living and active/mighty/powerful, sharper than any two-edged sword/scalpel,*

C God's Word is a SWORD:

## Ephesians 6:17

*<sup>17</sup> and take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God,  
“God's Word-Sword defeats Satan.” - Wiersbe*

## Isaiah 49:2

*<sup>2</sup> He made my mouth like a sharp sword; in the shadow of his hand he hid me; he made me a polished arrow; in his quiver he hid me away.*

### Romans 1:16

*<sup>16</sup> For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek.*

### Romans 2:12

*<sup>12</sup> For all who have sinned without the law will also perish without the law, and all who have sinned under the law will be judged by the law.*

*Scripture is like a scalpel wielded by God  
to perform spiritual surgery.*

**- Christ-Centered Exposition**

C God's Word is CONSISTENT: (non-contradictive)

### Matthew 22:37-40

*Jesus replied: "'Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind (and all your strength).'<sup>38</sup> This is the first and greatest commandment.*

*<sup>39</sup> And the second is like it: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.'*

*<sup>40</sup> **All** the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments."*

## 2 Timothy 3:16-17

*All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness,<sup>17</sup> so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.*

## 2 Peter 1:20

*knowing this first of all, that no prophecy of Scripture comes from someone's own interpretation.*

C God's Word SANCTIFIES:

### John 17:17

(Jesus praying to God the Father for us...)

*Sanctify them in the truth; your word is truth.*

NOTE: no Spirit mentioned... Word is ALIVE!

## Deuteronomy 6:6-7

*And these words that I command you today shall be on your heart.<sup>7</sup> You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise.*

## 1 Peter 2:2

*Like newborn infants, long for the pure spiritual milk, that by it you may grow up into salvation—*

C God's Word SANCTIFIES:

### John 17:17

(Jesus praying to God the Father for us...)

*Sanctify them in the truth; your word is truth.*

NOTE: no Spirit mentioned... Word is ALIVE!

### Deuteronomy 6:6-7

*And these words that I command you today shall be on your heart. <sup>7</sup> You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise.*

### 1 Peter 2:2

*Like newborn infants, long for the pure spiritual milk, that by it you may grow up into salvation—*

*When we approach Scripture with a humble hermeneutic of submission rather than a haughty hermeneutic of suspicion, then it is not we who read Scripture, it is Scripture that reads us. Scripture untangles the human heart and unearths sin....*

**- Christ-Centered Exposition**

## PIERCING

*For... the word of God is... alive/living and active/mighty/powerful, sharper than any two-edged sword/scalpel, piercing/penetrating to the*

*division of soul and of spirit, of joints and of marrow,*

**SOUL:**

*A soul is the vital existence of a human being.*

**Soul designates the feelings, the wishes, and the will of humans:**

**Christian Wolf - Holman Bible Dictionary.**

*“Our author is not concerned to provide here a psychological or anatomical analysis of the human condition, but rather to describe in graphic terms the penetration of God’s word to the innermost depth of man’s personality.” – Schriener/Hughes*

**VIDEO:** *“B.P. – Precision: Portrait, Plots, Patterns”* (14:45)

**P God’s Word HAMMERS/CRUSHES:**

**Jeremiah 23:29**

*Is not my word like fire, declares the LORD, and like a hammer that breaks the rock in pieces?*

**Isaiah 28:13**

*So the word of the LORD to them will be, "Order on order, order on order, Line on line, line on line, A little here, a little*

*there," That they may go and stumble backward, be broken, snared and taken captive.*

P God's Word INDWELLS/ABIDES in hearts:

**Psalm 40:8**

*I delight to do Your will, my God; Your law/instruction lives within me."*

**John 15:7**

*If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you.*

P God's Word is OFFENSIVE...

**2 Corinthians 2:15-17**

*<sup>15</sup> For we are to God the aroma of Christ among those who are being saved and those who are perishing.*

*<sup>16</sup> To the one we are the smell of death; to the other, the fragrance of life. And who is equal to such a task?*

*<sup>17</sup> Unlike so many, we do not peddle the word of God for profit. On the contrary, in Christ we speak before God with sincerity, like men sent from God.*

**Acts 4:5-13 & 18-21**

*<sup>5</sup> The next day the rulers, elders and teachers of the law met in Jerusalem.*

*<sup>6</sup> Annas the high priest was there, and so were Caiaphas, John, Alexander and the other men of the high priest's family.*

- 7 They had Peter and John brought before them and began to question them: "By what power or what name did you do this?"*
- 8 Then Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, said to them: "Rulers and elders of the people!*
- 9 If we are being called to account today for an act of kindness shown to a cripple and are asked how he was healed,*
- 10 then know this, you and all the people of Israel: It is by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified but whom God raised from the dead, that this man stands before you healed.*
- 11 He is "'the stone you builders rejected, which has become the capstone'.*
- 12 Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved."*
- 13 When they saw the courage of Peter and John and realized that they were unschooled, ordinary men, they were astonished and they took note that these men had been with Jesus...*
- 18 Then they called them in again and commanded them not to speak or teach at all in the name of Jesus.*
- 19 But Peter and John replied, "Judge for yourselves whether it is right in God's sight to obey you rather than God.*
- 20 For we cannot help speaking about what we have seen and heard."*
- 21 After further threats they let them go. They could not decide how to punish them, because all the people were praising God for what had happened.*

## T/S:

P/D God's Word ENRAGES:

### Acts 5:27-33

- 27 ...they set them before the council. And the high priest questioned them,*
- 28 saying, "We strictly charged you not to teach in this name, yet here you have filled Jerusalem with your teaching, and you intend to bring this man's blood upon us."*
- 29 But Peter and the apostles answered, "We must obey God rather than men.*
- 30 The God of our fathers raised Jesus, whom you killed by hanging him on a tree.*
- 31 God exalted him at his right hand as Leader and Savior, to give repentance to Israel and forgiveness of sins.*
- 32 And we are witnesses to these things, and so is the Holy Spirit, whom God has given to those who obey him."*
- 33 When they heard this, they were furious/enraged and wanted to kill them.*

### Acts 7:54

(Stoning of Stephen)

- 54 Now when they heard these things they were furious/enraged, and they ground their teeth at him.*

## DIVIDING

## D God's Word DIVIDES:

- See Genesis 1 & many creation separations
- Aroma of life vs. Aroma of death...
- You are either for Me or against Me; gathering vs scattering
- See Hebrews 4:12

## D God's Word is FOOLISHNESS to the Lost:

### 1 Corinthians 1:18

*<sup>18</sup> For the word/message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God.*

### 1 Corinthians 2:14

*...the unbeliever does not welcome what comes from God's Spirit, because it is foolishness to him; he is not able to understand it since it is evaluated spiritually.*

## D God's Word is ATTACKED!

### Genesis 3:1

*"Did God REALLY say..."*

## 2 Corinthians 2:17

*17 Unlike so many, we do not peddle the word of God for profit. On the contrary, in Christ we speak before God with sincerity, like men sent from God.*

## 1 Timothy 4:1-2

*<sup>1</sup> The Spirit clearly says that in later times some will abandon the faith and follow deceiving spirits and things taught by demons.*

*<sup>2</sup> Such teachings come through hypocritical liars, whose consciences have been seared...*

D God's Word CLEANSSES:

## John 15:1-2

*<sup>1</sup> "I am the true vine, and my Father is the vinedresser. <sup>2</sup> Every branch in me that does not bear fruit he takes away, and every branch that does bear fruit he prunes, that it may bear more fruit.*

***God's Word DIVIDES the crowds... and  
God's Word UNIFIES the Church! - JDP***

## **JUDGING**

*For... the word of God is... alive/living and active/mighty/powerful, sharper than any two-edged sword/scalpel, piercing/penetrating to the division of soul and of spirit, of joints and of marrow, and discerning/judging/revealing the thoughts and intentions...*

J God's Word is PERVERTED by false teachers:

### **Galatians 1:6-7**

*<sup>6</sup> I am astonished that you are so quickly deserting the one who called you by the grace of Christ and are turning to a different gospel--*

*<sup>7</sup> which is really no gospel at all. Evidently some people are throwing you into confusion and are trying to pervert the gospel of Christ.*

### **2 Peter 3:15-16**

*<sup>15</sup> ...regard the patience of our Lord as [an opportunity for] salvation, just as our dear brother Paul has written to you according to the wisdom given to him.*

*<sup>16</sup> He speaks about these things in all his letters in which there are some matters that are hard to understand. The untaught and unstable twist them to their own destruction, as they also do with the rest of the Scriptures.*

### **Titus 1:10-16**

- <sup>10</sup> For there are many rebellious people, mere talkers and deceivers, especially those of the circumcision group.*
- <sup>11</sup> They must be silenced, because they are ruining whole households by teaching things they ought not to teach--and that for the sake of dishonest gain.*
- <sup>12</sup> Even one of their own prophets has said, "Cretans are always liars, evil brutes, lazy gluttons."*
- <sup>13</sup> This testimony is true. Therefore, rebuke them sharply, so that they will be sound in the faith*
- <sup>14</sup> and will pay no attention to Jewish myths or to the commands of those who reject the truth.*
- <sup>15</sup> To the pure, all things are pure, but to those who are corrupted and do not believe, nothing is pure. In fact, both their minds and consciences are corrupted.*
- <sup>16</sup> They claim to know God, but by their actions they deny him. They are detestable, disobedient and unfit for doing anything good.*

### **God's Word JUDGES:**

#### **John 12:47-48**

- <sup>47</sup> If anyone hears my words and does not keep them, I do not judge him; for I did not come to judge the world but to save the world. <sup>48</sup> The one who rejects me and does not receive my words has a judge; the word that I have spoken will judge him on the*

*last day.*

*So the Word of God is not only saving and comforting and nourishing and healing, it is also a tool of judgment and execution. In the day of the great judgment His Word is going to penetrate and lay bare all hearts who have not trusted in Him. The sham and hypocrisy will be revealed and no profession of faith, no matter how orthodox, and no list of good works, no matter how sacrificial, will count for anything before Him. Only the thoughts and intentions of the heart will count. God's Word is the perfect discerner... It not only analyzes all the facts perfectly, but all motives, and intentions, and beliefs as well... The sword of His Word will make no mistakes in judgment or execution. All disguises will be ripped off and only the real person will be seen. - MacArthur*

*Your sweetness, sincerity, & certainty... don't help...*

*- If you are not born AGAIN, you're dead.*

*- If your heart is not Spirit-filled, you're hope is eternally empty.*

*- If you are not living in Christ, you're dying alone.*

- *If you're not obeying Jesus, you're not loving Him*
- *If you are not loving Jesus, you're not living for Him*
- *If you are not living for Him, you're living against Him*
- *If you are not willing to pick up your cross daily...*
- *If you are not willing to persevere to the end...*
- *If you claim to be in Christ, you must walk...*
- *If you ARE Christ's you'll be known by your biblical love...*
- *If you hold to any other gospel...*
- *If you are divisive & unrepentant...*
- *If you are against the Church. you're antichrists...*

**AND** (by contrast)

- \* If you are *miraculously born again* you're saved!
- \* If you are *faithfully obedient*, you're assured!
- \* If you are *persevering by grace*, you're in God's rest

## 6. The Word of God **DECLARED**

*For... the word of God is... living/alive and active/mighty/powerful, sharper than any two-edged sword/scalpel, piercing/penetrating to the division of soul and of spirit, of joints and of marrow, and discerning/judging/revealing the thoughts and intentions... of the heart.*

**VIDEO:** "Rock Solid Bible" (3:35)

### A. Macro... Big Picture

- Genesis 1:1 & John 1:1ff
- Genesis 3 (1 & 15) & John 3 (3,16,36)
- Hebrews 1:1-2
- Ephesians 2:1-10
- Acts 1:8 & Romans 8:1
- John 13:35 (us/love) & 7:15-16 (bad fruit)
- John 14:15 & 20:21 & Matthew 28:18-20
- 1 John 1:9 & 2:6 & 2:19 & 3:18
- Romans 12:1 Hebrews 12:1
- 2 Corinthians 13:5 & Matthew 7:21-23
- Hebrews 4:12
- 1 Corinthians 10:31

- **Acts 1:10-11 (ESV)**

<sup>10</sup> And while they were gazing into heaven as he went, behold, two men stood by them in white robes,

<sup>11</sup> and said, “Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking into heaven? This Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will come in the same way as you saw him go into heaven.”

- **Revelation 19:11-16 (ESV)**

<sup>11</sup> Then I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse! The one sitting on it is called Faithful and True, and in righteousness he judges and makes war.

<sup>12</sup> His eyes are like a flame of fire, and on his head are many diadems, and he has a name written that no one knows but himself.

<sup>13</sup> He is clothed in a robe dipped in blood, and the name by which he is called is The Word of God.

<sup>14</sup> And the armies of heaven, arrayed in fine linen, white and pure, were following him on white horses.

<sup>15</sup> From his mouth comes a sharp sword with which to strike down the nations, and he will rule them with a rod of iron. He will tread the winepress of the fury of the wrath of God the Almighty.

<sup>16</sup> On his robe and on his thigh he has a name written, King of kings and Lord of lords.



*...whatever you do, do all to the glory of God!*

B. Micro... Personal: **Titus 2:1 & 2:15**

*Judging your HEART...*

*God's Word defines the human  
by judging the heart!* - JDP

\*\*\* When we read the Bible with the right heart, the Bible begins to righteously read our hearts back to us. – JDP

\*\*\* The Bible is our TRANSLATER and AUTHENTICATOR! - JDP

\*\*\* We get into the Word so that the Word will get into us!

\*\*\* God's Word reveals & exposes our meditations & our motives... It is a mirror that helps us looking into our souls. – JDP

\*\*\* In this verse, we need to see both God's authority & application...

*For... the word of God is... living/alive and active/mighty/powerful, sharper than any two-edged sword/scalpel, piercing/penetrating to the division of soul and of spirit, of joints and of marrow, and discerning/judging/revealing the thoughts and intentions... of **the heart**.*

## II. **NOW WHAT?**

And If you're not sure... **cry out to Jesus!**

**If you ARE sure... then LIVE like it!** (*"Irish Elk"*)

### **Psalm 19:7-11** (NIV)

*<sup>7</sup> The law of the LORD is perfect, reviving the soul. The statutes of the LORD are trustworthy, making wise the simple.*

*<sup>8</sup> The precepts of the LORD are right, giving joy to the heart. The commands of the LORD are radiant, giving light to the eyes.*

*<sup>9</sup> The fear of the LORD is pure, enduring forever. The ordinances of the LORD are sure and altogether*

*righteous.*

*<sup>10</sup> They are more precious than gold, than much pure gold; they are sweeter than honey, than honey from the comb.*

*<sup>11</sup> By them is your servant warned; in keeping them there is great reward.*

**Beware & be warned!**

*You ARE who & what God's WORD says you are...*

**Let's PRAY!**

\*\*\* See our Fundamentals... God's WORD, will, & ways!!!

Who we are & How we live & love...

What we believe & How we behave...

**In the New Testament**

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**Christian**

The word "[Christian](#)" is used three times in the New Testament: [Acts 11:26](#), [Acts 26:28](#), and [1 Peter 4:16](#). The original usage in all three New Testament verses reflects a derisive element in the term *Christian* to refer to followers of Christ who did not acknowledge the emperor of Rome.<sup>u</sup>

**Acts 11:26**

and when he had found him, he brought him to Antioch And for an entire year they met with the church and taught considerable numbers; and the disciples were first called Christians in Antioch.

Witnesses

Children of God (Romans 8:16... 1<sup>st</sup> John)

New Creations

Ministers of Reconciliation

Ambassadors

Imitators of God

Members of the Body of Christ

Bridge of Christ

Royal Priests (priesthood)

Slaves/Servants

Worshippers

Approved Workers (rightfully handling the Word of truth)

Aliens & Strangers (in this world)

Sheep

Lovers of Christ/God

Examples (1 Timothy 4:12)

Steadfast, Immovable (1 Corinthians 15:58)

Blessed of the Lord (Genesis 24:31)

Beatitudes

Fruit of the Spirit

Full Armor of God

Courageous

Free

Called

Sons/Daughters/Children of God

God's people

The Way

The Righteous (vs. the unrighteous)

The Obedient (vs. the disobedient)

Spiritual children of Abraham (vs. physical children of Abe)

Children of the Promise (vs. children of the flesh) Rom. 9:8

Harvest/Harvesters

Sons of Zion

Overwhelming Overcomers!

Persecuted

Sufferers

Cross-carriers

Partakers of the heavenly calling

Living stones

Walks with integrity (Proverbs 20:7)

His Flock/Lambs/Nursing Ewes

His Family

Light of the world

Attendants of the Bridegroom

Chosen Race

Royal Priesthood

Holy Nation

Shrewd as serpents

Innocent as doves

Forgiving

Proclaimers

God's Own possession

Chosen

Chosen instruments of God

Apostles

Prophets

Evangelists

Shepherds

Teachers

Heirs of God (fellow heirs with Christ)

Warriors (per Ephesians 6:10ff)

Athletes

Farmers

Salt

Light

Fruit producers

Followers

Fishers of men

Holy/Godly

Abiding

In Christ

Blameless

Redeemed

Forgiven

Washed clean

Saved

## Disciple

"[Disciple](#)" (which means "learner") is common in the [Gospels](#) and [Acts](#), and is the "characteristic name for those who gathered around Jesus during his ministry".<sup>[2]</sup> It is also frequently used in the Book of Acts but not in the [New Testament](#) epistles.

## Beloved of God

**1 Thessalonians 1:4** ...brethren beloved by God, His choice of you;

## Brothers / Holy Brothers

The term "brother" occurs in verses like [Acts 18:27](#). The [King James Version](#) renders the plural form used here as "brethren", while modern English versions have "brothers" ([ESV](#)) or "brothers and sisters" ([NIV](#)). The term comes from the theological concept of [adoption](#), which says that believers are made part of God's family, and become his children. The use of "brother" as a designation for Christians has become restricted to members of religious communities (the [Catholic sense](#)), or as an honorific for [pastors](#) (often used in [Baptist](#) churches).

## Saint

The [Epistle to the Ephesians](#) is written to the "[saints](#) at Ephesus" ([Ephesians 1:1](#)). In the New Testament the word is used to refer to Christians generally, but [Robert S. Rayburn](#) notes that "the name survived as a general title for Christians only through the second century." Rayburn suggests that the "juxtaposition of sainthood and martyrdom" in [Revelation 17:6](#) may have resulted in the word becoming an "honorific title for [confessors](#), [martyrs](#) and [ascetics](#)."<sup>[3]</sup> In Orthodox and Catholic teachings, all Christians in heaven are considered to be saints, but some are considered to be worthy of higher honor, emulation, or veneration, with official church recognition given to some saints through canonization or glorification.<sup>[4][5]</sup>

## Believer

[Belief in Jesus](#) is a central aspect of Christianity. Rayburn notes that verses such as [2 Corinthians 6:15](#) "substantiate its technical use as a title for Christians".<sup>[3]</sup>

## Follower of the Way

In the [Book of Acts](#), Christianity is referred to as "The Way". The [NIV](#) renders Paul's words in Acts 24:14 as "I admit that I worship the God of our ancestors as a follower of the Way, which they call a sect." Rayburn suggests that this was a Christian self-designation, although it did not survive as a title.<sup>[3]</sup>

## Friend

Rayburn notes that the phrase "the friends" (*hoi philoi*) occurs in [Acts 27:3](#) and [3 John 15](#), but that it is uncertain whether this means "Christians in general or merely actual acquaintances". Rayburn goes on to note that the designation was used by the [Friends of God](#) and the [Religious Society of Friends](#).<sup>[3]</sup>

## Nazarene

The title "[Nazarene](#)" is used once in the New Testament to refer to Christians, in [Acts 24:5](#), where [Tertullus](#) calls Paul "a ringleader of the sect of the Nazarenes". In rabbinical and contemporary [Israeli Hebrew](#), "*Notzrim*" is the general official term for "Christians".

## The Elect

In Colossians 3:12 Paul calls Christians "The Elect" Put on therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, longsuffering

## CONTRAST!!!

### \* See God's defining & description of: Satan's

- ~ 1st John's Definitions & descriptions
  - \* Liars
  - \* Deceivers
  - \* Antichrists
  - \* Children of the Devil
- ~ Dead in sin...
- ~ Enemies of God
- ~ Biblical fool
- ~ Wolves (sheep's clothing... amongst)
- ~ False teachers (Titus & Jude)
- ~ Hypocrites (per Jesus)

- ~ False Gospel-ers (Galatians 1:6-10)
- ~ Self-absorbed (vs. our Servant-King)
- ~ “DO-ers” & “builders” cf. Matt. 7:21ff
- ~ Church-goers & leaders... cf. Acts 20:29

- ~ Unrepentant
- ~ Unrighteous
- ~ Divisive
- ~ Workers/Gratifiers of the FLESH: **Gal. 5:19-21**
  - Sexual immorality
  - Impurity/unrighteousness
  - Sensuality
  - Idolatry
  - Sorcery
  - Enmity
  - Strife
  - Jealousy
  - Fits of Anger
  - Rivalries
  - Dissensions
  - Divisions
  - Envy
  - Drunkenness
  - Orgies
  - “and things like these”

➤ \*\*\* “I warn you, as I warned you before, that those who do such things will not inherit the kingdom of God.” – **Galatians 5:19-21**