

Hebrews Chapter 4B

Will Rogers: “you will never get a second chance to make a first impression.”

- I must have made a good impression at my first job interview; when I asked if the establishment was hiring, the manager asked me if I had a TIE. I said yes and he replied, “*go home and get it and come right back.*”
- But my ties have not always helped me make a good first impression.
- It actually took me several months to convince my wife that her first impression of me was totally wrong.
- I shared before, she thought I was a geek. I realize that you may find that hard to believe, but I assure you it is true.
- You see, I arrived at this small church wearing a suit and tie, and (*at that time*) the church consisted of a couple dozen young people in their 20’s who worshipped in their blue jeans and tee shirts. (*note the suit prevailed*)
- Think about the first impressions you experienced with your spouse, was it love at first sight. Did you click from the start with your best friend?
- I heard to a sermon on Friday evening in which the Pastor shared his first impression of God. Think about that.

His first impression of God came, not from a church, not from any individual Christian but from God’s Word when he first opened the book of Genesis.

Genesis 1:1 **In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth. 2 The earth was without form and void, and darkness was over the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters. 3 And God said, "Let there be light," and there was light.**

- His described His first impression in this way: God who created of all things is a God who SPEAKS.
- As he continued reading in the book of Genesis his first impression was confirmed.

Genesis 1: 6 **And God said, "Let there be an expanse**

Genesis 1: 9 **And God said, "Let the waters under the heavens be gathered together**

Genesis 1: 11 **And God said, "Let the earth sprout vegetation,**

Genesis 1: 14 **And God said, "Let there be lights in the expanse of the heavens**

Genesis 1:20 and 24 This Vocal God continued to create the material universe using only his spoken voice.

And then in Genesis 1:26, God reaches out with his hands and forms out of the dust of the earth the first man, created to be the very image of the majestic creator.

Genesis 1: 26 **Then God said, "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness. And let them have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over the livestock and over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the**

earth." 27 So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.

I have found in my own life not only did the Word of God have the power to create everything that exists; IT also has the power to Re-Create, to renew that which has been corrupted through sin.

1Pe 1:23 you have been born again, not of perishable seed but of imperishable, through the living and abiding word of God;

As we return to Ch 4 in the book of Hebrews this morning we will focus on Vs 12-13. These are verses that I encourage you to commit to memory if you haven't already done so. From these 2 verses we will consider two very elementary points:

1. What the Bible is.
2. What the Bible does.

Even though you may know these things and be very familiar with these verses I encourage you to ponder them again with me.

Our first point "What the Bible IS" actually contains 4 sub-parts:

1. It is the Divine Word.
- 2 It is the Living Word
3. It is the Powerful Word
4. It is the Sharp Word

1 The Divine Word – It is "The Word of God."

During the Last funeral that I performed a self-proclaimed Catholic Scholar came up to me after I presented the Gospel and said, "*You do know that the Scripture that you were quoting is only the words of men that were gathered together by a counsel of men and presented to men.*"

- To which I replied, I am extremely glad that the deceased did not believe the doctrine that you espouse because today would have been a day of great distress and weeping, she would have faced the fires of eternal torment. I thank God that through repentance of sin and faith in the Lord Jesus as they are clearly described in God's Word she has inherited eternal life and is with the Lord.

The record of scripture is not the word of man, it is not the wisdom of man, it was not a fabrication of man.

2 Peter 1:21 For no prophecy was ever produced by the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.

- More than 40 men penning the works of 66 books all carried along by the ONE, self-same Spirit have provided us with a cohesive message that originated in the heart and mind of God himself.
- The Apostle Paul writes:

2 Timothy 3:16 **All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, 17 that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work.**

- The Bible is the divine Word, it IS the truth of God, it declares the message of God, it teaches the wisdom of God.
- It accurately describes our human origin and condition and makes known to us the way of salvation. It reveals God's will for our lives and God's standards for our fellowship with one another.

2 God's divine Word is a LIVING Word.

Hebrews 4:12 **For the word of God is living** The Living God speaks a Living Word.

- If you were to read this particular phrase in the original language in which it was given it would read something like this:
 - "LIVING for the Word of God is."
- In the Greek language when you want to emphasize a certain word in a sentence, if you desire to highlight a word giving it prominence you frontload it, position it first in the sentence.
- SO the prominent thought regarding the Word of God in this verse is that it is LIVING! Of course this idea is found in many other places in the Scriptures:

John 6: 63 **The words that I have spoken to you are spirit and life.**

Acts 7: 38 (speaking of Moses Luke writes) **He received living oracles to give to us.**

1 Peter 1: 23 **you have been born again, not of perishable seed but of imperishable, through the living and abiding word of God;**

The only way for man to receive true spiritual life is by the Living Word of Life.

Martin Luther – *“The Bible is alive, it speaks to me, it has feet, it runs after me; it has hands and it lays hold of me.”*

- How many times have you sat in a Bible study where you were confronted by the living Word of God? I still remember being a young man with racing hormones sitting in Bible Study Wednesday night when the teacher read from 1 Cor 6:

1 Corinthians 6: 19 **Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, whom you have from God? You are not your own, 20 for you were bought with a price. So glorify God in your body.**

- The Word of God assaulted my conscious like my 3rd grade teacher who wielded a powerful ruler.

Spurgeon – *“This book has wrestled with me, this book has smitten me, it has confronted me. The book has smiled on me, the book has comforted me, the book has frowned on me.*

It has clasped my hand and warmed my heart. The book weeps with me, Sings with me, it whispers and preaches to me. It is a living book. It is all Life.”

Steve Lawson said, *“I have read many books, this book reads me.”*

3 The Powerful Word

Hebrews 4:12, **For the word of God is living and active,**

- The Word is Living and ACTIVE (Greek - ENERGES – energy or power)

Over the past 10 years there has been an energy boom in the state of Pennsylvania. The fracking process (like it not) has opened up a great reservoir of natural gas.

- Companies have moved in to our state and drilled deep down into the ground to unleash this newfound power.
- So it is in our lives when we dig deeply into the Word of God it unleashes the power to live a new life. The Word possesses a transforming power that enables us to continually change into the image of our Savior.

The Word of God has the POWER to:

- Stabilize the insecure, to strengthen the weak, to sanctify the crudest of sinners, to satisfy the hungry with good things.
- Peter calls new believers to fill themselves with the nourishing Word of God because it has the power to bring about healthy growth.

1Pe 2:2 **Like newborn infants, long for the pure spiritual milk, that by it you may grow up into salvation.**

Here at Harvest We whole-hearted believe in the transforming power of the Word of God and that belief shapes our philosophy of ministry.

- You won't find a multitude of programs that rely on the wisdom of man to bring about life transformation.
 - While there may be a little benefit in some programs we believe that the Gospel is the Power of God unto salvation and we believe that God answers the prayer of the Lord Jesus from John 17:

John 17:17 **Sanctify them in the truth; your word is truth.**

- It is the Word of truth that powerfully sanctifies all true believers, AND that powerful word is also a SHARP Word.

4 The razor sharp Word

Hebrews 4: 12 **For the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword,**

As we observed the Apostle Peter employed the Sword of God's Word on the day of Pentecost and that Word powerfully cut the heart of the crowd with one single blow.

- It is sharper than any surgeon's scalpel, Sharper than any butcher's knife.
- Years ago I managed grocery stores in a family run business and I was often called upon to run butterfly bandages back to the meat cutting room when one of the butchers sliced himself on a newly sharpened knife.
- BUT I also remember many conversations in that same meat room when the Word of God cut deeply into my heart. You see the butcher was also a Bible college graduate.
- A two-edged sword is a blade with NO blunt side. Every way that you turn it, it cuts.

IN chapter 1 in the book of Revelation the glorified Lord is described in this way:
Revelation 1:16 **In his right hand he held seven stars, from his mouth came a sharp two-edged sword, and his face was like the sun shining in full strength.**

- After that powerful introduction the Lord spends the next two chapters using the sword of his mouth as a sharp instrument of correction in the 7 churches of Asia Minor.

The Two-Edged Sword of God's Word cuts two ways:

- It both convicts and comforts
- Tears down and builds up.
- Both softens and hardens different hearts
- It saves and it damns, it justifies and judges.

2 What the Bible does.

Once again here we find 4 things that the Word of God does:

1. Pierces the Soul
2. Judges the thoughts
3. Exposes the heart
4. Binds the conscience

Hebrews 4: 12 **For the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and of spirit, of joints and of marrow,**

- The Sword of God's Word slices through all of the facades, all of the surface images that we attempt to portray.
- It cuts down to the very core of the inner man like a skillful surgeon laboring to remove that hidden cancer of sin that lies deep within.
- It uncovers the secrets of the heart and makes me accountable before God.

As the Lord Jesus expounded on the Law of God in Matthew 5 He said:

Matthew 5:21 **"You have heard that it was said to those of old, 'You shall not murder; and whoever murders will be liable to judgment.' 22 I say to you that everyone who is angry with his brother will be liable to judgment; whoever insults his brother will be liable to the council; and whoever says, 'You fool!' will be liable to the hell of fire.**

- Jesus addressing the Pharisees who prided themselves on obeying the Law. They were certainly not murders.....
- On the outside I may not appear to be a murderer but when the word cuts deep into my soul it exposes the bitter anger that lies under the surface.
- I can't tell you how often these Words of Jesus have cut my heart as I drive down route 422 declaring all of my commuting brothers to be FOOLS!
- The ongoing work of sanctification that is performed by God's word is the surgical removal of everything that is within us that is contrary to the image of God.
- As we are daily exposed to God's scalpel he opens our soul and drains the poison of our flesh.

In 1993 I was in a motorcycle accident in which I suffered an extremely deep wound. That needed to be kept open so that it would heal from the inside out. Everyday my faithful wife had the gruesome task of cutting me open again so that the poisons within would slowly drain out.

The Word of God Pierces the inner man and Judges our thoughts.

The author of Hebrews writes: **It discerns the thoughts and intentions of the heart.**

- The word translated "discern" is KRITIKOS – The obvious translation is to critique; this word speaks of one who's business is it to judge or evaluate.
- You see, the Word of God is the standard by which all of our THOUGHTS and every one of our MOTIVES must be evaluated.
- Are my thoughts in line with God's Word? (am I meditating) **upon those things that are true, things that are honest, things are just, things are pure, things are lovely, things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, Think upon these things.** (Phil 4:8)
- OR are my thoughts driven by various lusts, greed or self-promotion? The Word of God is able to discern my thoughts from afar.

Finally: The Word of God exposes the heart and binds the conscience.

13 And no creature is hidden from his sight, but all are naked and exposed to the eyes of him to whom we must give account.

- This is a very interesting word picture that is drawn from the Ancient Greek Olympic Games.
- The word translated "Naked" is actually the word GUMNOS from which we receive our word gymnasium.
- You see back in the first century when an athlete competed in the Olympic games he would strip down completely naked so that there would be nothing to encumber his performance.
 - No toga to trip over, no pantaloons to resist the wind. The runner was naked and fully exposed.

Through the powerful Word of God my whole person is laid bare before God. Nothing hinders the open evaluation of my life. I am fully exposed to the penetrating gaze of the Holy Spirit. Everything is uncovered to the eyes of him to whom I must give account.

And That word “exposed” also comes from the ancient games. It depicts a wrestler one who has overcome his opponent having his hands fixed securely around the neck.

- This is an image of complete vulnerability, the head is bent backward, the neck is fully exposed to the awaiting Sword.

SO what have we learned? The Word of God is active, it moves me into a position of utter vulnerability.

- And in this place the sharp two-edged sword does its work in my conscience bearing witness of my need for repentance.

God has spoken, His word is living, it is powerful it is sharp. IT Pierces the Soul, Judges the thoughts, Exposes the heart, Binds the conscience

When you consider these two verses in the context of Hebrews chapter 3 and 4 you realize the severity of the warning that is aimed at anyone who would harden his heart to the Word of God.

Hebrews 3: 15 *As it is said, "Today, if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts as in the rebellion."* 16 *For who were those who heard and yet rebelled? Was it not all those who left Egypt led by Moses?* 17 *And with whom was he provoked for forty years? Was it not with those who sinned, whose bodies fell in the wilderness?*

18 *And to whom did he swear that they would not enter his rest, but to those who were disobedient?* 19 *So we see that they were unable to enter because of unbelief.*

The sword of God’s Word separates the unbelieving from the believing; It does this by piercing the soul, exposing the heart and binding the conscience.

Hebrews 4: 2 *For good news came to us just as to them, but the message they heard did not benefit them, because they were not united by faith with those who listened.*

The powerful RECREATING VOICE of God comes through the Word of God.

Please remember the reoccurring warning that plays such a HUGE part in the context of these verses.

Heb 3:7 *Therefore, as the Holy Spirit says, "Today, if you hear his voice,*

Heb 3:15 *As it is said, "Today, if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts*

Heb 4:7 *again "Today, if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts."*

Rejecting the Good News, hardening your heart, refusing to believe the call of God when it falls upon your ears is to be like unbelieving Israel.

- All that remains is the futile life of a walking dead man. There is no rest only a pointless wondering the wilderness until you return to the dust from which you came.

BUT for those who believe God's powerful Word there is rest, there is peace with God and eternal unending abundant hope.

Will you believe the Word of God today? Repent of your sin and trust in the God who speaks today through His glorious Son, Jesus Christ.