

God's Word

Hebrews 4:12-13

If you come to this church for any length of time you will notice that we tend teach the bible verse by verse, chapter by chapter, and book by book.

Every now and again I will take on particular topics or issues, but even on those Sundays you will find that there is a portion of God's word that we work through.

We don't pick a topic and then pull a verse from here and there and everywhere to try and prove the point.

We pick a passage read it and then seek to the best of our ability to bring out the meaning of the text in a clear manner.

The technical terms for what we do is called 'expository preaching' which means our goal is to expose/bring forward the meaning of a text.

In order to do that we also need to have the right method of interpretation.

Not all methods of interpretation are correct or even good.

We use what is called the historical grammatical approach to understanding the bible.

What that means is that our goal is to understand the Bible means as the original authors intended and convey that same meaning today.

I've been asked many times over the years, "Why do you preach that way?"

The most honest answer is weakness.

I am not very creative and I lack imagination. Trying to think up a different subject week in and week out would not be sustainable for me.

Also, if left to myself I would avoid difficult subjects, but when you go verse by verse there is no getting out of hard conversations that come up in the text. The goal of any preacher must be to preach the whole of God's word and not just what is comfortable for people to hear.

Lastly, if I came up with various topics I would likely end up twisting the bible to fit my subject which is the exact opposite of what we should do when we come to God's Word.

As long as I have my faculties I will remember what my mentor Byron Wheaton said to me over 20 years ago.

He said, "Mike you have to come to the Bible as a listener. Don't come to the Bible with your own ideas looking for support. Come to the bible to have your thoughts shaped by what it says."

I am strongly convinced that happens best verse by verse chapter by chapter.

Doing that puts the emphasis of authority on the Scriptures rather than the preacher. That is so critically important because of what the Bible is.

[That is the subject of our text this morning in **Hebrews 4:12-13**. In these two verses we are told some absolutely bedrock truth about the Bible. According to these verses **the Bible is more than a**

book. It is uniquely and fully the Word of God, which is always at work according to God's power, and is the standard by which every thought and action is judged. First, let us see in the first few words of verse 12 that...]

Point #1 – God's word is unique.

When we hold a bible in our hands we are holding the word of God and no other book can be regarded as such.

Look with me at the beginning of verse 12. It says, "For the word of God."

The word 'the' here is very important.

It implies uniqueness. There are not many words of God. The Bible is not a word of God.

The Bible is the word of God.

Those words absolutely destroy any notion of universalism being compatible with the Christian faith.

If we say that the Bible is 'the word of God' we are automatically rejecting every other bit of writing that makes that claim.

And the reverse is true as well, if we accept any other source as the word of God, then we are automatically rejecting the Bible, because that is what the Bible is claiming about itself.

In addition to the Bible being 'The Word' it is also 'The Word of God.'

That is a phrase of ownership. The LORD is the One Who owns His word.

He is the One Who has determined what it is. No one then has the right to add or subtract from it.

No one has the right to try to change its meaning if we do then we are no longer proclaiming God's word but our own and calling it God's word which is utter foolishness and can only bring destruction upon both the preacher and the hearer of such nonsense.

[How many people have fallen victim to autocorrect? This can be particularly bad when you use a talk to text function on your phone. You type one thing and it automatically changes it to something else. Isn't that frustrating? Don't you hate when your phone does that to you especially if it says something way out there?]

God neither needs nor does He want us to attempt some kind of autocorrect on His word.

It is written how He intended it, He affirmed beyond question that this book is His word when He raised Jesus Christ from the dead.

He accomplished its writing over 1500 years, with over forty authors, in three languages, and across three continents.

Despite time, language, and geography the Bible tells one cohesive story about the redemption of God's people through His One and Only Son.

[No other book is like it. It is uniquely the word of God and our task is not to try and change it. Our task is to believe it, know it, and obey it in our lives. God's word is unique. Secondly we see here that...]

Point #2 – God's word is working.

The scriptures are much more than ink and paper they are words empowered by the Holy Spirit to accomplish the plans and purposes of the LORD.

Let's read a few more words from **verse 12.**

We need to be careful to get the right picture of 'living' in our minds here.

In our modern times many would take the word 'living' as applied to a written text and suggest that means the document should be constantly reinterpreted to suit the times.

If we do that then it would be impossible to call this book 'The Word of God' in any meaningful sense because we would be robbing it any authority it has in and of itself and we would be setting ourselves up in authority over it.

This can never be for those who call themselves servants of Christ.

What then does it mean that God's word is 'living?'

It means that God's word reflects God's nature.

The LORD is repeatedly called "The living God" in Scripture and yet it also says that He does not change.

God can neither increase nor decrease in His perfections He remains the same from age to age.

In the same way God's word being alive does not mean it changes, but rather it means that His word always remains.

Jesus said this exactly when He said, "Heaven and earth shall pass away but my words will never pass away.

The Word continues to speak the same life giving message of eternal life through repentance and faith to the glory of Christ from generation to generation.

We should be amazed every time we open this book because every time we read it we are reading God's word to us even though it was originally written to someone else thousands of years ago.

We know it is alive because it says here it is "active."

God's word does not change, but His unchanging Word changes us.

[In Luke 8 Jesus compares the word of God to seed. It gets sown into the heart and for the genuine believer it takes roots, it grows, and produces fruit. His point there is to say that God's word planted in us changes us.]

No one knows or understands God's word fully when they are first saved.

In fact, none of us on this side of eternity know or understand God's word perfectly.

But as the days and years go by, the more we read, the more we think upon, the more we memorize, and the more we are changed the more we understand.

One of the most fascinating things about the bible is that its main message about salvation in Christ is easy to understand.

By God's grace a child can understand that he/she is a sinner under the God's wrath, a child can look to the cross and believe that Jesus paid his/her debt, and child can look to the empty tomb and believe that death has been defeated.

Oh but the wonders of that fountain of grace, the glories of the attributes of God, and the wonders of the person of Christ can captivate the greatest of minds forever.

[Because the word is 'living and active' it changes and grows us up in Jesus. That raises a question. What are the limits to the living and active word of God? How much can it accomplish in us and in whom can it accomplish its work? The next part of verse 12 shows us how deep the word of God can go by showing us that in addition to God's word being unique and at work it shows us that...]

Point #3 – God's word is penetrating.

As the Spirit wills, every word and letter in the bible can reach to the deepest parts of who we are as human beings.

Here it is likened to a being like a sword. (Verse 12)

But this is no ordinary sword. It is sharper than any two edged sword.

It does what no other cutting instrument can do.

A normal sword can cut through flesh and bone with the usual intention of bringing about a person's death.

But the Word of God makes it past skin and bone doing its work upon our hearts without shedding one drop of blood.

[I am often amazed at the medical advances that have been made in our world. Today we are able to do amazing things on operating tables. Doctors can replace hips and knee joints, they can do kidney and heart transplants, even brain surgery. It's amazing. But for all surgeons can do today they are limited. They can cut things out and sow things together but they can't make a body heal itself that is God's design. More than that no matter how many things they can help in the body

they can do nothing about the condition of a person's spirit. No scalpel is sharp enough to operate on the soul, but that is what the Word of God does!]

This brothers and sisters is our only hope in proclaiming the gospel of Jesus to a fallen world.

What hope is there for someone hardened in their sin to turn to the living God?

It is certainly not in the power of a preacher to persuade.

It is certainly not in the eloquence of the words employed.

Our hope is in the penetrating power of the word of God!

That the Holy Spirit can cut into the heart and soul of even the most hardened sinner and breath spiritual life into them through the living and active word of God.

[These truths demand of us that we hold a high view of the Bible. It is the perfect, unique, inerrant, infallible, word of God. We must look to the Scriptures as our authority, as our absolute foundation of truth. The moment the word of God begins to diminish in our sight we begin to deny what it is, not only what it is but its power as well. God's word is unique, it is working, it is penetrating, and lastly we see here that...]

Point #4 – God's word is inescapable.

Whether we believe it or not and whether we like it or not everything that we have ever done, thought, felt, or said will be weighed against what is revealed in the Bible.

You can't hide from God, nor can you hide anything from God according to Verse 13.

He can see through the thickest of walls and the greatest of all darkness.

There is 'nothing is hidden from His sight.'

The writer here gives us two word pictures to drive home the point.

First it says, "Everything is uncovered"

That phrase literally means stripped naked.

The point here is that there is nothing capable of covering something from the knowledge of God.

Nothing escapes His sight even the blackest dark is as light to the LORD according to Psalm 139.

He emphasizes his point by saying, "Everything is laid bare"

The sense of that verb is to have your head forced back to expose your neck.

Your neck is one of what we would call the vital areas of your body.

When someone forces your head back to expose your neck, you are at the mercy of that person.

So it is with God, we are completely exposed before Him and totally at His mercy.

The fact that God knows everything is both comforting and sobering.

It is comforting because it means that God knows our struggles.

He sees our struggles and our suffering.

God is concerned about the suffering and faithfulness of His people and He has promised a great reward for everyone who endures hardship for Christ.

Because we know that God sees all that is done in faithfulness to Him, we can be sure of the eternal rewards He has promised.

That is a great comfort and a powerful motivation to hold on to Christ.

But God knowing everything is also a sobering thought.

It is sobering because it means that not one of our sins has gone unnoticed before His holy gaze.

[Most of us have likely had the experience of being in trouble either at home or school or work. I saw it a thousand times on construction sites. Something would go missing or something would get broken and the questions would begin. Who did this? Amazingly everyone on the site said, "I wasn't me!" We might be able to pull the wool over the eyes of people, but never the LORD.]

God knows all the wrong that we've done, the wrong that we have said, and even the wrong that we've thought and felt.

It says here that we have to give an account before God for all that.

Without an ounce of favouritism God will hold every single person who has ever lived accountable according to His perfect and holy word.

That would be hopeless if not for our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

With Jesus' blood washing away our sin we do not need to hide from the LORD, nor despise His word.

Instead we can rejoice for all eternity in the faithfulness of the Son of God, we can rest knowing that He has placed upon us His perfection.

Don't ignore this.

Don't think that you can brush the Bible aside without consequence.

Don't think that you can treat the Scriptures like an ordinary book, as mere ink and paper.

The Bible is more than a book. It is uniquely and fully the Word of God, which is always at work according to God's power, and is the standard by which every thought and action is judged.