

**"The Rest Available in Jesus Christ"**

**Part 8**

**Hebrews 3:7-4:16**

**Introduction:** Tonight in our study of Hebrews we shall look at our closing study on the "rest" which God has for each of His children. Tonight we have come to two very familiar verses.

**Notice Hebrews 4:12-13**

Verse 12 is quoted by many people and we have all heard messages based upon these two verses. But many of the messages based upon these verses do not contain the context in which the verses are given and I believe for that reason much of the meaning is lost. Tonight it is my desire to look closely at these 2 verses and help us to see them in the context in which they were written.

Therefore I need to set the stage so that we can grasp the context. The writer has been warning the Hebrew believers about the sin of "unbelief". The sin of "unbelief" in this text refers to not trusting God to provide and to give them victory over the test that was facing them. They were facing persecution for their faith in Christ and they were contemplating turning back to Judaism. The writer took them on a journey back into the wilderness wanderings with the Nation of Israel to show them the danger of not trusting God in the face of the trial that was before them.

Israel had approached the land of Canaan under the leadership of Moses and they refused to enter into the land because they did not believe the promises of God. God had promised that He would give them victory over the inhabitants but they would need to walk by faith in His promises. They refused and for that reason all the numbered men died in the wilderness. Their unbelief had kept them from entering into the land of rest.

The same thing could happen to the Hebrew believers if they refused to believe God as they faced the persecution. God had a rest for them if they were willing to mix faith with the promises which God had given to them. Faith was the key to entering into the rest God had for them. They needed to continue to press forward in their faith and they needed to believe that God would meet their needs in the midst of the trial. They were to stop trying in their own strength to escape the trial and they were to surrender to God's will and God's promises. The results would be an inner peace that would be indescribable.

**Notice Hebrews 4:9-10**

To cease from their works was to stop struggling in their own power and start walking by faith in the promises of God.

Then the writer goes on and tells them to "labor" to enter into God's rest.

**Notice Hebrews 4:11**

The "labor" is twofold. It is to labor in the Word so as to know the promises of God and it is to do the works which God had appointed for them to do under the control of the Holy Spirit.

Now at the end of verse 11 the writer brings up the warning again.

*"lest any man fall after the same example of unbelief".*

I. **The Warning**

**Part 7**

**Notice Hebrews 4:12**

Now as we come to this verse it seems to be out of context. The first word of the verse is a connective so the verse is a continuation of the previous thought of the writer. So this makes me ask a question, "Why does the writer here speak of the Word of God in connection with the warning he gives concerning the "rest" which God has made available to the believer?"

Let me refresh your mind about something which we briefly touched on earlier in this study.

**Notice Hebrews 4:1**

The word "fear" here is very important. This tells us that to not have faith in God's promises when we are faced with trials is a very serious matter. Now we have already looked at how unbelief is sin and therefore this is one of the reasons why the writer uses the word "fear" here. But there is something else in the mind of the writer and what he has in mind is why he had recorded the words 4:12-13. But we do not see the reason in verse 12 but we do in verse 13.

**Hebrews 4:13**

<sup>13</sup> Neither is there any creature that is not manifest in his sight: but all things are naked and opened unto the eyes of him **with whom we have to do**.

The phrase "***with whom we have to do***" could also read, "***before whom we shall one day give an account***".

Let me pull this together so we can see what the writer is saying here. His mind is on the Day of Accountability. He is fearful for these people because of future judgments. He knows the Judgment Seat of Christ is coming and they will, on that day stand before the Lord to give an account of their lives and he also knows that if there are any that were not truly saved there will be the Great White Throne Judgment. But this thought then raises another question, "Where does verse 12 come into this picture?"

**Notice Hebrews 4:12 again.**

When the writer speaks here of the Word of God he is letting them know that it will be the Word of God that will be used on the Day of Judgment. The actual thought here is concerning the SPOKEN Word of God. There is an application to the written Word but in this context the writer is warning them concerning the SPOKEN Word of God on the day of accountability.

He is speaking of the Word of God in the Judicial sense. In other words on the day of accountability it will be the Word of God that will be used by God as He judges believers and on the day when He judges unbelievers. You see in the passage we have just studied it was the SPOKEN Word of God that kept the Israelites from entering into Canaan.

**Hebrews 3:10-11**

<sup>10</sup> Wherefore I was grieved with that generation, **and said**, They do always err in their heart; and they have not known my ways.

<sup>11</sup> So I swear in my wrath, They shall not enter into my rest.)

So the warning to the Hebrew believers here is that on the day of accountability they will be judged by the SPOKEN Word of God. Let us look at what the writer says about the Word of God.

1. It is "quick".

**Notice Hebrews 4:12**

The word "quick" here means "alive" but there is another word that fits the meaning also and it is the word "*effectual*" which means "*capable of having the desired result or effect*". You may ask, "What does that have to do with me?"

Let me explain this to you because it is very important that we understand what is being said here. Today the Word of God is also QUICK/ALIVE and it is powerful. But today many people will suppress the Word of God when it confronts them with sin in their life. When you hear a message and it really convicts you then you have 2 options. You can humble yourself under the Authority of God's Word and make the changes that need to be made or you can suppress the TRUTH and not permit it to have its proper place in your life. If you do that then you have hindered the Word of God from doing the work God desired for it to do in your life. You have hardened your heart just like the Israelites did in the wilderness.

This was exactly what the Hebrews believers were wrestling with in their lives. They could let the Word have its proper place and do its work or they could harden their hearts and step back into Judaism.

But here in verse 12 when the writer uses the word "quick" he is reminding them that on the day of accountability the Word of God WILL NOT BE SUPPRESSED! When God speaks His Word on that day (whether it be at the Judgment Seat of Christ or at the Great White Throne Judgment) His Word will accomplish His purpose.

Not only is God's Word alive but:

**2. It is powerful.**

**Notice Hebrews 4:12 again.**

The word "powerful" means it is "energetic". The idea here is that while we may resist the working and the power of the Word of God here, no one will be able to stand against the Word of God on the day of accountability. It is and will be far too powerful to resist. Let me show you a picture of the power of God's Word.

The night in which Jesus was arrested we get a look at the power of His Word.

John 18:4-6

*<sup>4</sup> Jesus therefore, knowing all things that should come upon him, went forth, and said unto them, Whom seek ye?*

<sup>5</sup> They answered him, Jesus of Nazareth. Jesus saith unto them, I am he. And Judas also, which betrayed him, stood with them.

<sup>6</sup> As soon then as he had said unto them, I am he, they went backward, and fell to the ground.

These men were unable to stand against 3 words spoken by our Lord. Let me show you yet another example which comes from the return of our Lord at the end of the Great Tribulation.

### **Revelation 19:15, 20-21**

<sup>15</sup> And out of his mouth goeth a sharp sword, that with it he should smite the nations: and he shall rule them with a rod of iron: and he treadeth the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God.

<sup>20</sup> And the beast was taken, and with him the false prophet that wrought miracles before him, with which he deceived them that had received the mark of the beast, and them that worshipped his image. These both were cast alive into a lake of fire burning with brimstone.

<sup>21</sup> And the remnant were slain with the sword of him that sat upon the horse, which sword proceeded out of his mouth: and all the fowls were filled with their flesh.

The Battle of Armageddon will be won when Jesus speaks His Word.

Here is the point we need to gather from this. There will not be one person who will be able to resist His Word on the day of accountability. On that day we will witness the power of the Word and He speaks into our own hearts.

### **3. It is sharper than any twoedged sword.**

#### **Notice Hebrews 4:12**

The idea here is that God's Word is a Sword and it is sharp both on the front edge and on the back edge. In other words it will cut both ways. Now let me give you something to consider with the twoedged Sword of God's Word.

The one edge will convict and convert while the other edge will damn and destroy. But the point here that we need to pay attention to is its sharpness. The writer goes on to illustrate how sharp the Sword of the Spirit really is.

***"piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit"...***

The soul and the spirit of man are so closely meshed together no one could separate the two. Let me define the soul and the spirit of man. The soul of man is that which refers to his "lower self" or the animal side of man. The spirit of man refers to the "higher part" of man which has accepted the Spirit of God. These two parts of us are so woven together that we would not be able to know the difference. But the Word of God is so sharp that it can get into the inner part of man and separate the two.

Let me give you an illustration that may help.

Have you ever had a desire to do something for God but you could not tell if it was the desire of your soul or the desire of your spirit as you were moved by God? It was a good idea but you were just not sure if it was your idea or God's idea. A similar situation would be when David desired to build God a Temple and Nathan told him that was a great idea. But David later found out that it was not God's will for him to build the Temple. It was a great idea but it was not of God.

Sometimes it is very difficult to know if the ideas in your mind have come from God or from your own desires because the soul and the spirit are so closely woven together.

But when it comes to the day of accountability God's Word will expose why we did what we did. It is so sharp it will separate the soul from the spirit and all of our motives will be exposed. The writer goes on even deeper.

**"piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart."**

The idea here is that when the day of accountability comes nothing will be left unexposed. Every thought and every intent of the heart will be laid bare. Our works will be judged and we will be rewarded not on what was accomplished by our works but by the motives and the intents of the heart. In other words God will expose **why** we did what we did.

### **1 Corinthians 3:13-15**

<sup>13</sup> *Every man's work shall be made manifest: for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire; and the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is.*

<sup>14</sup> *If any man's work abide which he hath built thereupon, he shall receive a reward.*

<sup>15</sup> *If any man's work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss: but he himself shall be saved; yet so as by fire.*

On the flip side of this the unbelievers will also be judged by the same piercing, penetrating Word.

**Revelation 20:11-13**

*<sup>11</sup> And I saw a great white throne, and him that sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away; and there was found no place for them.*

*<sup>12</sup> And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works.*

*<sup>13</sup> And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them: and they were judged every man according to their works.*

**Notice Hebrews 4:13**

There is just one word that I need to comment on here. The writer tells his readers that everything is naked and opened unto the eyes of God. The word "opened" has two interesting thoughts with it.

- a. It speaks of pulling the head of a victim back to look into the eyes before the knife was placed to the throat.
- b. It was also used to describe a criminal under judgment. There would be a dagger strapped directly under his throat so that he could not bow his head. He would be forced to look into the eyes of the judge.

**Conclusion:**

There is coming a day for the saved and the unsaved when we will all stand before the God of this universe and we will give an account. On that day we will not be able to look away but we will be forced to look into His eyes as He speaks His powerful, penetrating, sharp cutting, Word into our lives. There will be no excuses. There will be no one to pass the blame to. It will be me and God. Therefore we must not harden our hearts but we must humble ourselves under His mighty hand and continue to press forward no matter what we face. We must walk by faith in the promises of His Word.