

Hebrews 4:12-16

“The Word Of God Is...”

What an encouragement Ch 4 of the book of Hebrews has been. In reality I've been blessed and blown away by the book of Hebrews in general (of course being the word of God how can it be anything less than amazing)? But we've been really exhorted, really encouraged to trust *in*, depend *upon*, and draw *from*, the promises of God's Word. God has promised a rest for you and me, a rest for our souls, not only a rest of salvation, but also a further rest found in submission. Whereby I'm not trying to gain God's acceptance based upon the merits of my own works, if I do this, and am apart of that, and don't do the other any more God will finally be pleased with me. Hey, the glorious truth of Heb Ch 4 is that my acceptance before God is not based upon the merit of what I *do*, but rather it's based upon the merit of what Christ has already *done* for me.

Now all I have to do to be in that place whereby God sees me, is pleased *with* me and blessed *by* me is believe in Jesus Christ for His atoning work upon the cross on my behalf. and I just rest there. and Again it's not that rest in Christ is a place of passive inactivity, we've been created in Christ Jesus for good works which God has created beforehand that we should walk in them. But my motive for works has nothing to do with trying to earn salvation, or even merit sanctification, it has nothing to do with my trying to gain God's acceptance. It's simply a matter of my overflow of love for God responding to the work that He's done for me and, “Now God here's my life, use it for your glory.” You see works don't save you, but saving faith will work in your life, it'll spill out *through* your life in letting Christ have His way *in* your life. God has promised a rest for you, the only thing that will rob you of that place of rest is unbelief, that's what we've been talking about. Trusting the word of God, entering in to the rest that God has made available to you and to me...look at Vs 11.

Vs11

This is the point we want to pick up on and move forward from as we begin our time together in God's word today. “Let us therefore be diligent to enter that rest.” Labor to enter the rest, sounds almost like a contradiction in terms doesn't it? But the general idea here is as we mentioned last time; that we're to make it our aim, our agenda, our objective to enter in to the rest God has provided for us in Christ. To trust *in* and rely *on* the word of God for our lives. But I'm not going to stand here and try and convince you that it's never a battle, that there's not an enemy who wants to do any/everything he can to keep you from being in that place of peace, resting in the finished work of the cross. Hey, were there battles in the Promised Land? You bet, were there enemies who didn't want the Israelites to occupy that place of promise, who did everything they could to resist them, to keep them from moving forward in faith, trusting in the Lord? Absolutely. Even so Satan would love to keep you pigeonholed in that place of always striving, always stressing, always seeking to work to gain God's acceptance, never thinking you've done enough, you've got to do more, and you never rest in what He's done.

Remember Mary and Martha? There they were, Jesus had come to their house! Can you imagine? and Here was Martha running around like a chicken with its head cut off (I've seen it, it's crazy) and she was serving, and slaving, busy about seeking to do this, and prepare that, wanting no doubt to impress the Lord, serve the Lord, and be pleasing *to* the Lord. But her sister Mary was simply sitting at the feet of Jesus, resting there, basking in His word, enjoying His presence. and Martha got ticked! We read she was actually *distracted* with much serving, and she approached the Lord and said, “*Lord, do You not care that my sister has left me to serve alone? Therefore tell her to help me.*’ And Jesus answered and said to her, *‘Martha, Martha, you are worried and troubled about many things. But one thing is needed, and Mary has chosen that good part, which will not be taken away from her.’*” Luke 10:40-42 That part, that place of resting *before* the Lord, soaking in the word *of* the Lord.

Listen, don't buy the lie, “you need to do more!” You don't need to *do* anything, the work is *done*, now be diligent to enter that rest. You see this takes us full circle, faith is not a passive thing, it takes diligence, and it takes desire. You have to want to enter the rest, it's there for you, God's provided it, but He doesn't make you enter in to it, you have a choice. You want to live your life in relative misery, wandering around in the wilderness, never really satisfied, always stressed, and striving, that's up to you. God won't force His rest upon you, you must “enter in” by faith, by diligent faith, it takes diligence to cling *to*, trust *in*, and rely *on* the work of Christ on our behalf. It's easy to drift, (remember the danger of drifting, Ch 2 Vs 1) it's easy to go with the flow, comes quite naturally, but to walk in the Spirit, to trust in the Lord, and enter the rest takes discipline, takes diligence.

What's the alternative? Disaster, “lest anyone fall according to the same example of disobedience.” To obey God's word brings blessing, to disobey brings disaster. The lack of diligence will lead to disaster. God takes pleasure in those who trust in Him, but unbelief invites His penalty, His chastening, His discipline, notice Vs 12.

Vs12-13

What a powerful portion of scripture that we're blessed to be in this morning. (Read Vs 12) This is the revealing nature of the word of God. It's been said that the Word of God will turn the inside of a sinner out, and let him see all that is in his heart.

At least 5 attributes are drawn to our attention here that help us categorize or characterize the word of God. (Which is one thing I guess we want to acknowledge right off the bat here that what we have before us is the very written word of God Himself.) This isn't simply some book of musty stories and myths that every now and then gets pulled off the shelf to have the dust blown off of it so that we can kinda rifle through it and then put it back up for a few years. This is the very word of the living God. We've said it before, it's worth saying again, “*All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work.*” 2 Tim 3:16-17

We're not talking here about some story that some man contrived in the imagination of his mind. The bible says that of the making of many books there is no end, and much study brings weariness to the flesh. and That's true, but we're not talking here about 1 in a literal sea of books that are available to peruse *through* and ponder *on*. This is the word of God, and as such there are certain qualities, certain characteristics that are unique to it.

If you take notes or like to underline in your bible you might jot these down or draw attention to them some how. #1 God's Word Is Living, #2 God's Word Is Powerful, #3 God's Word Is Sharp, #4 God's Word Is Piercing (or Penetrating) and #5 God's Word Is Discerning.

#1 God's Word is Living, it's actually pulsating with life with vitality. Again it's not some book full of musty stories and myths. It's the living and vibrant word of God. and You need to know that. When we come together and open God's Word, and subtly or perhaps suddenly something starts stirring in you, conviction, or confirmation begins to work in to you, you're being challenged or changed. It's not what you had for breakfast coming back to haunt you, or what you had before bed last night revisiting you. It's the word of God alive in you as by the Spirit of God in you permeating you, infiltrating you, working in you, it's alive.

Every now and then someone will be moved by God's Word and after the service they'll feel inclined to want to encourage me, and God bless them for that, I truly appreciate that. But occasionally though I know what they're trying to say it'll come out something to the effect of, "You just make the bible come alive." Listen, I don't bring life to the Word of God, the Word of God brings life to me, and it brings life to you. It's really hard to bring forth a boring bible study week after week after month after month, some people seem to be really skilled at it but you have to work hard at that, you really have to get in the way of God's Word to pull that off because believe me when I tell you God's Word doesn't need my help. It does fine on it's own, it's living, it's vivacious, it's vibrant. All you have to do is step aside and let God's Word speak and people's lives will be changed. Isa 55:10-11, "*For as the rain comes down, and the snow from heaven, And do not return there, But water the earth, And make it bring forth and bud, That it may give seed to the sower And bread to the eater, So shall My word be that goes forth from My mouth; It shall not return to Me void, But it shall accomplish what I please, And it shall prosper in the thing for which I sent it.*"

It's like a seed, over and over again the bible likens the Word of God to a seed. and Somehow and in some way a seed has within it intrinsically the ability to produce and bring forth life. When it's planted into the soil, life springs forth, there's the inherent ability to impart, bring forth and give life abiding within it. and Like that seed the Word of God as it's scattered over the soil of the human heart has a way of working it's way deep down in there, taking root and sending up a shoot and bringing forth fruit...of giving new life, of imparting the life of Christ to you and to me. Remember Jesus said, "*It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh profits nothing. The words that I speak to you are spirit, and they are life.*" John 6:63 Peter said, "... *having been born again, not of corruptible seed but incorruptible, through the word of God which lives and abides forever,*" 1 Peter 1:23

God's word gives us life. But listen not only is it living, it's also energizing, it's enabling; translation: it's "powerful" it's full of power. God's word gives us the ability, the power to do what God desires/requires us to do. God's enlistings are God's enablings, His callings are His equippings. The word of God isn't alive yet dormant in your life like a bear that's hibernating for the winter, it's active in you, energizing and enabling you, it's your life blood.

I suppose that with all this talk about the active aspect of God's Word in your life it bears us dipping into the question, "In what way specifically then *is* God's word active in me?" I'm glad you asked, but I regret to inform you that there's no way we can exhaust the fullness of that question. However we can definitely bring forth enough to keep us busy for quite some time should we choose to search it out and study up on it later. For instance through the pen of the Psalmist the Holy Spirit informs us that the word of God will bring strength, stability and success into our lives (Ps 1:3). Now when I speak of success I'm not referencing material success though God can certainly do that, but rather you'll be fruitful in your walk and in your relationship with God. The bible inform us that God's word is cleansing in it's nature, that if we take heed to God's word that our way will be cleansed (Ps 119:9, Jhn 15:3, Eph 5:26). Ps119:11, the word of God hidden in our heart keeps us from sin. Ps 119:24 God's word is our counselor, as we delight ourselves in the word of God it becomes for us a rich source of guidance and counsel. I would just encourage you to read through Ps 119, it's rich regarding the reality of the word of God in your life. You'll find there that God's word will light your path, that it brings illumination to you, it makes wise the simple, it's a source of life, and a source of strength. It gives peace to those who love it, they are secure and standing is a safe place.

The Word of God has inherent power and authority over demonic powers (Luke 4:36). Of course Jhn 1:14 teaches us that Jesus is the Word of God incarnate, if you're into the Word of God you're into Jesus, you can't separate the 2, they're like hand in glove.

In Jhn 8:31 Jesus said that abiding in His word was evidence of true discipleship. Jhn 17:17 God's word is the means to sanctification. In the book of Acts we come to see God will at times to amazing and miraculous things as His Word is being proclaimed. The book of Romans teaches us that faith comes by hearing and hearing by the word of God. Eph teaches us that the word of God is the sword of the Spirit by which we wage wise warfare against the wicked one. 1 Thess 2, it works *effectively* in those who believe. You see, on and on we could go, the bottom line is that the word of God is *active in* you, it brings the *enabling to* you regarding all that God calls you to, it's powerful.

It's sharp, sharper than any 2 edged sword. What I want you to see here is that it's not a matter of blunt force trauma. It seems as though some folks feel as though it's their express duty to beat people senseless with the word of God. Jesus never spoke of *beating* His sheep, He spoke of *feeding* His sheep. How are you and I fed spiritually? The word of God is surgical in its nature. It's able to get right down in there and separate that which is right on, from that which is way off, or even slightly off.

It's penetrating, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow. Meaning it's able to sweep away all the peripheral junk that we try to hide behind and get right down to the root of the matter. It's able to get in there and divide that which is soulish, the emotional aspects of our nature where we so often stop and feel satisfied with and tend to and take care of the needs of our spirit. Many people feel as though if they've been touched emotionally, they've been ministered to powerfully, but nothing changes in their lives. The word of God separates, divides that which is soulish from that which is truly spiritual, it feeds and tends to the inner man, it cuts to the quick.

How often we have that experience whereby the Pastor is teaching the word of God and it's almost like a spot light shines on us and we feel as though he's speaking directly to us, like he knows something, or someone told him about us, he's got the inside scoop. "Man he's talking straight to me!" But no one tells me about you, and I definitely don't try to calculate our time in God's word around what you may or may not have done this week. That's the sharpness of the word of God getting right down into the deep recess of your heart, and it's cutting, convicting, seeking to work repentance in your life. It's the precision, penetrating power of the word of God.

Finally God's word is discerning, it divides the issue and discerns the heart. Even the thoughts and *intents* of the heart, the motives of my heart. Now, as a side note just so that you know there is no spiritual gift of discernment, every now and then you hear someone tout their "gift" of discernment. Well, the bible speaks of the gift of discerning of spirits, but not a general gift of discernment, it's God's word that gives discernment. God's Word sets the standard of right and wrong, acceptable or not acceptable, the more you grow in the Word of God the greater your ability to discern a situation will be. Obviously the Holy Spirit in you will work in your life when you've stepped out in to blatant sin if you're willing to hear Him. But it's God's word that will teach you discernment. It's a "discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart." God knows why you do what you do. Now that can be a good thing, something didn't go as well as I wanted it to, as it could have or perhaps should have, but God knows the motive of my heart. But then again something may've looked great on the outside, but the motive of my heart wasn't right, I *wanted* to be seen as great, or super spiritual before man, so I did what I did to gain the "ooo's and awe's" of man. God knows that to. Jesus said we're to guard against that.

He said don't do your charitable deeds, your good works to be seen of man. If you do them for the recognition of man, then soak it up when it comes because that's all you're going to get out of it. If you do your good works in secret, then your Father who sees in secret will one day reward you openly. God is searching your heart, He's searching my heart. Why? Because it's out of the heart that our actions are prompted. You might say that the hand does what the heart thinks, the heart thought it well before the hand did it. Remember Jesus said, *"For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies."* Matt 15:19 You see before it ever surfaces as a real time event it's swimming around in our heart, so God dives right down in and deals with the deep recesses of the heart, and His word discerns the very thoughts and intents therein.

This word, "Discerner" literally speaks of a critic, it's the word "*Kritikos*" from where we get our word "critic." How many people criticize God's Word, the reality is that God's word criticizes/judges us. and We do well to submit ourselves to it's criticism, what's God's Word say about our thoughts, our actions, our opinions, let God's word deal with us now and God won't have to deal with us later, remember the words of Jesus? *"He who rejects Me, and does not receive My words, has that which judges him — the word that I have spoken will judge him in the last day."* John 12:48 How much better to simply receive the Lord, and receive His word today, lest He deal with us on that final day when it's too late? Notice

Vs13

Couple things to note here before we move on, #1 We will give account to God, there's no circumventing it, no way of getting out of it or around it, the bible is clear that we're appointed once to die and then the judgment. Those who've received Christ will be ushered into the resurrection of life, those who've rejected Him to the resurrection of condemnation, everlasting separation from God. So as God is dealing with you, speaking *to* you, it's important that you respond to Him and receive His word, because the day of giving an account is inescapable.

There is no creature hidden from His sight, all things are naked and open before the eyes of Him to whom we must give account. Of course with language like this we can't help but reminded of the fall, there they were, Adam, and Eve. Sin entered the equation and suddenly they realized that they were naked and they sought to cover themselves. But listen, don't think it was simply a physical nakedness that they were seeking to cover, it's not just that their bodies were bare, but there was a sudden awareness, a nakedness and shame of the soul that they were seeking to cover, they realized they were exposed before God, and they were ashamed. But there was no hiding was there, their sin was found out...why? Because all things are naked and open to the eyes of Him to whom we must give account.

Remember David said, *“Where can I go from Your Spirit? Or where can I flee from Your presence? If I ascend into heaven, You are there; If I make my bed in hell, behold, You are there. If I take the wings of the morning, And dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea, Even there Your hand shall lead me, And Your right hand shall hold me. If I say, ‘Surely the darkness shall fall on me,’ Even the night shall be light about me; Indeed, the darkness shall not hide from You, But the night shines as the day; The darkness and the light are both alike to You.”* Ps 139:7-12

This word, “Open” is an interesting word, it speaks of one’s head lifted up and their neck exposed whereby they’re ready to be slain. It was used in the sense of an animal sacrifice, holding up the head and slitting the throat. The idea is that we’re laid completely bare and made totally vulnerable in the eyes of God. My son (Isaiah) will occasionally cover His face with a blanket, or a towel, whatever is lying around and say, “You can’t see me!” Because his face is covered he’s convinced I can’t see him, there’s no “hiding our face” from God. He can see me, He does see you, our face is lifted up, and our hearts are open, laid bare before Him.

Vs14-15

Now we’ve already brushed with the reality of Jesus as being our High Priest back in Ch 2 and Vs of Ch 3. But beginning here the writer is going to begin to develop this thought more fully, and he does so initially by drawing our attention to some of the unique characteristics of Jesus as our High Priest. For instance we note that He’s given the title, “our Great High Priest” now Aaron was a high priest, but he was never ascribed the title, “Great High Priest” there’s no OT high priest given such a position or title. Now the high priest was as sacred of a position as one could hold under God in the Levitical law. There were all kinds of priest, but there was only 1 high priest, and we’ve spoken of this before and we’ll no doubt develop it further in future studies but it was his responsibility to represent God to the people, and the people to God. He “stood in the gap” if you will. and As wonderful as a person or position that it was, Jesus exceeds and excels beyond them all, He’s our great High Priest. Who’s “passed through the heavens” literally, as He ascended right there in the sight of His disciples after the resurrection, remember there He was ministering to them, speaking words of encouragement to them. Telling them to go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that He’d commanded them, and that He would always be with them, with us (His disciples) even to the end of the age and then He ascended before them and a cloud received Him from their sight. He’s passed through the heavens.

No other High priest have been given the title “great” no other high priest has passed through the heavens, no other high priest has been fully man and fully God, “Jesus” pointing to His humanity, “The Son of God” pointing to His deity. He’s well able, well equipped to do all that He’s said He will do, His sacrifice is sufficient to both save and sanctify you and me, therefore “let us hold fast our confession.” Of course the words “hold fast” speaking of not letting go, but rather keeping to carefully and faithfully. You’ve come to trust Christ, hey, don’t let go of Him, don’t turn away from Him, hold fast *to* Him, continue to trust *in* Him, your Great High Priest, who’s passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God.

Vs15

There’s just no way to give these Vs their just due with the time we have left, we’ll look to examine them a little further next time. But here’s the deal, Jesus was fully God, but He was also fully Man, therefore He can *sympathize with*, that is have *compassion on* you and me because He knows the struggles, the trials and temptations that come along with living in these bodies. He was tempted just like you and I are tempted. Satan tempted Him concerning the lust of the flesh (turn these stones to bread), the lust of the eye (all these kingdoms can be Yours if You’ll only bow), and the pride of life (throw Yourself down from the pinnacle of the temple for it is written His angels shall bear You up lest You dash Your foot upon a stone). But as to where you and I have given in to temptation in times of weakness, Jesus never did, He’s felt the full brunt of it having never given in to it, He knows what you experience, even to a greater degree. He’s been there, done that, therefore He’s able to have compassion upon you, and upon me.

Vs16

Again we’ll consider this more carefully next time, but for now lets just realize and understand that since we serve a compassionate Savior who can identify with your weaknesses, my weaknesses, the restraints can come off. We can come freely to the throne of grace knowing that He will dispense mercy, and grace to help us in our time of need. What is mercy?

It’s not getting what you deserve, I deserve judgment, condemnation, even eternal separation from God. But in His mercy He doesn’t give me that; what is grace? It’s getting what I don’t deserve, what I don’t deserve is forgiveness, what I don’t deserve is His love, what I don’t deserve is everlasting life in the very presence of God, yet in His grace He gives it all to me and to you. In His grace He’ll strengthen me in the inner man, sanctify me, set me apart for His plan, His purpose for my life. What’s your need today? Pardon? Purity? Healing? These are the things that flow freely from the throne of grace, come boldly, with out reservation and receive. If you’ve been struggling in your walk and relationship with the Lord, receive restoration today, if you’ve never given your heart to the Lord, receive His salvation today, come boldly to the throne of grace, that you might obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need.

Prayer Points:

God we're so thankful that Your resource of grace and mercy are inexhaustible, unquenchable, that where sin abounds, grace abounds still more. That if while we were sinners You were willing an eager to reconcile us, how much more as we struggle, or stumble and fall as Your children is Your supply of grace and mercy readily available to restore and renew us? God we're blown away, refresh us in your grace today. and May our lives be led in an ever increasing likeness of who You are Jesus. We thank You for the power of Your word, that by Your word You give us life, You give us power, and God as You cut into and convict our hearts, penetrating to the deep recess of who we are... May we receive it, be thankful for it, and changed forever by it.

If God's Word is dealing with you and you've never given your heart to Christ, you need to know that mercy and grace is available to you. It's by grace that we're saved through faith, and that not of ourselves it's the gift of God. Receive the grace of God today, turn from your sin, give your heart to Christ.