

Christ is Superior to Moses
Hebrews 4:12-13
Part 11

Our hearts are going to be searched this morning. They are going to be searched thoroughly whether we want them to be searched or not and there will be nothing that will be left unexposed.

And what will be the means by which this search will be conducted? The word of God will be the means by which this search is conducted.

And who will be seeing the search results? God will be seeing the search results. And what will be the importance of this search? This searching of our hearts as we are exposed to the word of God will reveal to God not just the gory details but more importantly whether we, by our response to His word, possess believing hearts or unbelieving hearts or in other words whether we are saved or not saved.

And what is the implication of this truth for our lives. We better be diligent, when exposed to God's word, not to trifle with it, either through indifference or through resistance or through rebellion, for the word of God will be searching us and will be revealing those results to God. If those results are good then praise God! But if that result is bad, may God have mercy on our soul.

And hopefully this thought will come alive for us this morning as we return to our study of the Book of Hebrews, which was written to a group of Hebrew Christians who were suffering a great persecution and who under that persecution had begun to struggle in their faith.

And some of them had begun to struggle so much in their faith that they were even thinking about returning back to Judaism.

And how did the author seek to minister to them in this struggle? He sought to strengthen their faith. And how did he seek to do that? He sought to strengthen their faith by focusing on the superiority of Christ, which has led us to the question that we are now asking. How did the author of Hebrews see Christ as superior?

The author of Hebrews saw Christ as superior to the prophets (Hebrews 1:1-4).

The author of Hebrews saw Christ as superior to the angels (Hebrews 1:5-2:18).

And now we are in the process of seeing that the author of Hebrews saw Christ as superior to Moses (Hebrews 3:1-4:13). This section that we are presently examining goes from **Hebrews 3:1** to **Hebrews 4:13**. So, what have we seen so far within this section?

First of all, we have seen that Christ, as an example of faithfulness, is superior to Moses (Hebrews 3:1-6). We saw this in **Hebrews 3:1-6**. And why would the author of Hebrews have considered Christ to be superior to Moses as an example of faithfulness?

It was because the author saw Christ, the Son of the living God, as the faithful builder and overseer of the house of Israel while he only saw Moses as a faithful representative and servant within that house. This is why the author of Hebrews considered Christ, as an example of faithfulness, to be superior to Moses and his example of faithfulness.

So after the author of Hebrews had made this point in **Hebrews 3:1-6**, what did this lead the author to do next? Christ's superior example of faithfulness led the author to warn his readers against the sin of unbelief (Hebrews 3:7-4:13). This is the section we are now examining. And we have divided this section into two parts.

The first part of the author's warning against the sin of unbelief focused on Israel's past failure in the wilderness and subsequent judgment after they left Egypt (Hebrews 3:7-19). We saw this in **Hebrews 3:7-19**. So, what did the second part of this warning section focus on?

The second part of the author's warning against the sin of unbelief focused on the promise of rest "today" (Hebrews 4:1-13). This part started in **Hebrews 4:1** and goes to **Hebrews 4:13**. And it is this section of Scripture that we will finish today.

So how did the author begin this particular section? The author in Hebrews 4:1-2 provided a transitional statement linking what he had said about Israel's past failure to enter the rest that God had promised them and the ongoing promise of rest today.

And what was the point this author was seeking to make within this transitional statement? He wanted his readers, as well as himself, to fear God lest they like Israel might come short of their promised rest, not the rest in the Promised Land, but rather the promised rest that this author described as **“His rest”** or in other words **“God’s rest,”** which he implied in **verse 2** could only be accessed by faith in the gospel of Christ. So, what did the author do next?

The author in Hebrews 4:3-5 expanded on the nature of the rest that is available “today” through faith in the gospel of Christ. And what did we discover was the nature of that rest?

God’s rest, which is being offered today through faith in Christ, is a rest that flows from completion, when everything that needs to be done has been done and as has been done well, such as the rest that God entered into when He completed the six days of His creative activity in **Genesis 2:2**.

And what was the context that surrounded this particular point concerning the nature of God’s rest in **Hebrews 4:3-5**? The context that surrounded this particular point concerning the nature of God’s rest was one of argumentation.

So after the author expanded on the nature of God’s rest, in this context of argumentation in **Hebrews 4:3-5**, what did the author do next? The author in Hebrews 4:6-11 presented a further argument in support of his belief that God’s rest was still available through faith in Christ.

And what was the heart of this argument? The heart of this argument was if King David, based on Psalm 95, offered the promise of God’s rest to his generation 400 years after Israel had failed to enter God’s rest in the Promised Land, then the promise of God’s rest is still available.

And what was the author's conclusion, based on his argumentation? His conclusion was **“So there still remains a Sabbath rest for the people of God.”**

And why did the author refer to the rest that was still available to the people of God, through faith in Christ, as the Sabbath rest? He did this in order to draw their attention to the kind of rest that God Himself entered into on the seventh day following His six days of creative activity. And why would the author have wanted to draw attention to do that? He wanted his readers to understand that if an individual truly exercises faith in Christ, he himself will also enter into that same kind of rest that God enjoys or in other words that rest of completion, knowing that through Christ's death, God has done everything that needed to be done and nothing else needs to be done, other than what has been done through Christ's death. And this was made very clear in **Hebrews 4:10**, which then led to the author's exhortation in **Hebrews 4:11**, **“Therefore let us be diligent to enter that rest, so that no one will fall, through following the same example of disobedience.”**

Just because we may believe that we have entered God's rest through faith in Christ and are now enjoying the blessedness of that thought, does not mean that we should take that so-called fact for granted, but rather we need to exercise diligence, making sure as best as we can that we, unlike Israel, are continuously listening to the voice of God and responding to the voice of God, as He speaks to us through the word of God, so that one day we might not like Israel find ourselves having fallen short of it.

God's word cannot be trifled with it. As God speaks to us through His word, we must listen to Him as He speaks to us through His word and we must respond to Him in obedience as He speaks to us through His word for God's word is powerful. And this thought brings us to the conclusion of the second part of this warning section against the sin of unbelief. And how did the author conclude this second part of this warning section?

The author in Hebrews 4:12-13 concluded the second part of the warning section against the sin of unbelief by emphasizing the power of the word of God. So now let me read these verses for you and see if this is not so.

“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. (13) 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.” So did the author in **Hebrews 4:12-13** conclude the warning section against the sin of unbelief by emphasizing the power of God’s word? Absolutely! This is exactly what he did.

The wilderness generation trifled with the word of God when they refused to listen God’s word or in other words the voice of God, as spoken to them by His servant Moses and that was a huge mistake. For they, in trifling with the word of God, were trifling with a degree of power that they did not fully understand. And this author did not want his readers to make the same mistake.

So, what did the author believe about the word of God that made it, in his mind, so powerful?

The author of Hebrews believed that the word of God was powerful because the word of God exposes the deepest recesses of the heart (Hebrews 4:12). So now let me read for you **Hebrews 4:12** and see if this is not so. **“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.”** So did the author of Hebrews see God’s word as powerful because it exposes the deepest recesses of the heart? Yes! Absolutely! This is exactly what the word of God does. When we are exposed to the word of God it exposes the deepest recesses of our hearts.

Is that something that we can do? No! This is not something we can do. We cannot expose the deepest recesses of the heart. We cannot expose the deepest recesses of other people’s hearts and we cannot expose the deepest recesses of our hearts. We can try to do it and there is nothing wrong with us in trying to do that, but we must remember that we do not have that kind of power. But God through the power of His word does have that kind of power.

What did the Apostle Paul say to the Corinthians in **1 Corinthians 4:1-4**? **“Let a man regard us in this manner, as servants of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God. (2) In this case, moreover, it is required of**

stewards that one be found trustworthy. (3) **But to me it is a very small thing that I may be examined by you, or by any human court; in fact, I do not even examine myself. (4) For I am conscious of nothing against myself, yet I am not by this acquitted; but the one who examines me is the Lord.**” So did the apostle Paul believe that others had the power to examine the deepest recesses of his heart? No! Did he believe he had the power to do that? No! But Paul believed that God could examine his heart. And how would God be able to examine his heart based on what the author of Hebrews said in **Hebrews 4:12**? He would be able to examine his heart through the power of His word.

So now let us look at this verse more carefully and see if this is not so. And how does the author begin this verse? He begins this verse by telling his readers that the word of God is **“living and active.”** So, what does this mean?

So let us, first of all, take the word “living.” The word “alive” (ZON) was used by this author to communicate to his readers that God’s word was not “dead” or in other words irrelevant. It still exists as a dynamic force with which one must reckon (very much like God who is also described in **Hebrews 3:12** as living).

So now let us consider the word “active.” The word “active” (ENERGES) speaks of the effectiveness of God’s word to accomplish its intended purpose (Isaiah 55:11). What does God tell us in **Isaiah 55:11**? **“So will My word be which goes forth from My mouth; it will not return to Me empty, without accomplishing what I desire, and without succeeding in the matter for which I sent it.”**

So, what did the author believe was God’s intended purpose for speaking forth His word based on **Hebrews 4:12**? Let us continue to read the verse. **“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.”**

So, based on this verse what did the author believe was God’s purpose in sending forth His word that was described by him as **“living and active”** word? Based on Hebrews 4:12 the author clearly believed that God’s

purpose in sending forth His word that he described as “living and active” was to expose the deepest recesses of the heart, by slicing and dicing down to the very core of our being.

And how did the author choose to communicate this truth to us. He chose to communicate this truth to us by comparing God’s word to a double-edged sword that is so sharp that it is able to penetrate with such force that it is able to pierce as far as the division of soul and spirit, as well as both joints and marrow. Isn’t this exactly what the author said in **verse 12**? Yes! Absolutely! So, what did the author this mean by this?

When author referred to the word of God as piercing as far as the division of soul and spirit and of joints and marrow, he was speaking about its ability to penetrate into both the immaterial and material parts of man.

This is the point the author was seeking to make and he was not seeking to make any other point. Or in other words, he was not in any way trying to make a point about whether a man is made up of two parts (body and soul) or three parts (body, soul and spirit). But someone might say that certainly it must be three parts because we see three parts represented in **Hebrews 4:12**. But this is not necessarily so for if we would do a word study of these two Greek words we will clearly see that they are used interchangeably throughout the Scriptures. So most likely this author was using these two terms as synonyms to speak of the immaterial part of man, just as he used joints and marrow that are not in fact even contiguous to each other to speak of the material or physical part of man.

And what was the author’s point in speaking about the word’s of God ability to penetrate both the immaterial and material part of man? The author’s point was because the word of God pierces both the immaterial and material parts of man, it is able to expose the “thoughts and intentions of the heart” or in words the subconscious motives of the heart.

So did the author believe that the word of God was powerful because it exposes the deepest recesses of the heart? Yes! This is exactly what he believed.

Now we might immediately jump to the conclusion that the reason why the author made this point about the power of God’s word was to emphasize the

power of God's word to expose the deepest recesses of our hearts to us. And certainly the word of God is able to do that very thing if we, being filled with the Spirit, open ourselves up to Him.

The author of Hebrews believed that the word of God was powerful because the word of God exposes the deepest recesses of the heart not us but rather to God (Hebrews 4:13). And where do we find this thought? We find this thought in **Hebrews 4:13**. So now let me read this verse for you. **“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.”** So does the word of God expose the deepest recesses of our hearts? Yes! And when the deepest recesses of our hearts are exposed, to whom are they exposed? They are exposed to God and doesn't this make total sense for we really cannot separate God from His word, and this connection is certainly being made here in **Hebrews 4:13**. And what is the result?

The result of having the deepest recesses of our hearts exposed to God leaves us totally uncovered and helpless before Him, the very one who we will not be able to ignore.

For He is the one who judges us and who will ultimately determine whether our hearts are believing hearts or if our hearts are unbelieving hearts, and based on that determination whether we will enter His rest or not enter His rest.

Whenever we approach God's word our hearts will be searched. The deepest recesses of our hearts will be searched. And who will see the results of that searching? God will see the results of that searching.

So when we approach the word of God, approach the word of God carefully, for it is powerful and will do what it was sent to do, which is to determine in the sight of God whether our hearts are believing or unbelieving. So, what is our hope, and what is our prayer?

When the deep recesses of our hearts are being exposed by the piercing power of God's word, may God see our hearts as believing rather than unbelieving so that we might continue to enjoy the blessings of His rest rather than His judgment.