

“God’s Two-Edged Sword”

Hebrews 4:12, 13

God watches to see how we react to His word, in this way He judges the thoughts and intentions of our hearts. When He spoke to Israel in the Exodus His word revealed their unbelief and hostility toward Him. Their hearts lacked the kind of faith that would persevere through hardship and endure over time. It was not “mixed together with faith in those who heard” (4:2). And then when the good news about Jesus Christ came to Judaism (Israel and the diaspora) in the first century A.D. many received it gladly, but when opposition arose from family and synagogue it appeared that some might abandon Jesus and try to turn back to what they had before. This is why this letter was written: as a warning not to do so, but also as a means of encouraging those who were faltering in their faith, because the word of God does more than just expose the heart, it also strengthens it. Because it is “living and active” it builds faith, encourages repentance and enlightens us to see confusion and spiritual deception. So the author is preaching this word to them with the hope of rescuing those who might be backsliding. He warns them that no amount of subtle theological compromise about the nature of Jesus, or claiming to be merely returning to historic Judaism (works righteousness), or finding oneself “too busy” to gather with the church (not assembling; 10:25) will fool God or go unnoticed. The gospel of Jesus Christ is the “word of God,” in fact it is the most profound word He has ever spoken. So, if He dealt severely with the Exodus-generation, how much less toleration will He have for those who have “tasted the good word of God and the powers of the age to come” (He 6:5) and have then deliberately abandoned Christ (He 6:5, 6)? Anyone contemplating it should “fear” (4:1) the eternal consequences (10:26-31).

A. The Principle

When God speaks to us it forces a person to respond at the deepest level of their being and in doing so they show God what they truly believe and love. You might say God’s word brings with it a blessing and a curse. To the person who believes and obeys, it brings blessing, but it hardens those who reject it and ultimately brings judgment.

- 1) Reagent: Any substance which from its capacity for certain reactions is used in detecting, examining or measuring other substances.
- 2) The word carries with it the power of the Holy Spirit
 - Is the word “mixed together with faith” in our heart?

B. Ways we “hear” His word

- 1) Written
- 2) Preached
- 3) Prophesied
- 4) Sung
- 5) Dramatized, danced, painted
- 6) Inner voice of the Holy Spirit
- 7) Radiated “aroma of Christ” 2Co 3:2 (“living letters”)

Through these we hear: the gospel, commands, corrections, warnings, promises, guidance, encouragement, comfort, etc.



LIFE LESSONS

WITH DR. STEVE SCHELL

Teaching the Bible
practically & understandably
and seeing lives changed by
the truth of the Gospel

C. Listen to Jesus: Mt 12:22-37; 15:18-20

- 1) "For the mouth speaks out of that which fills the heart"
- 2) Blasphemy of the Holy Spirit
- 3) Here is an example of God's word being preached by actions

Lesson: Don't abandon your integrity, don't crush your conscience. Don't silence the voice of the Holy Spirit by saying it's the devil. You can damage yourself so severely that you lose the capacity to repent.

Then what should I do if I want to keep sinning? Say with integrity "I know this is wrong, but I like doing it so I don't intend to stop."

Remember Jesus said He wanted people to be "hot or cold," not lukewarm (Rev 3:15, 16).

D. Distinguish

- 1) Abandoning Christ (4:11)
 - To knowingly do this requires severe self-hardening (6:4-6)
- 2) Sins of weakness (4:15)
 - Our high priest invites us to come confidently to the throne of grace (4:14-16).
 - When people teach "once saved, always saved" they're often just trying to assure us the sins of weakness are covered.

E. So, how do I keep my heart right before God?

- 1) Regularly draw near the throne of grace (4:16) with my sins
- 2) Regularly invite His word to expose the thoughts and intentions of the heart.

F. Regular personal time in the Bible

God's word is a sharp two-edged sword, but what it does to us depends on our attitude toward it. If we resist it, it exposes and judges our heart. But if we welcome it, it heals and strengthens us. We have a choice: God will come to us as a soldier with a weapon, or a surgeon with a scalpel.

- 1) Attitude: Let the word judge you, not you judge the word.
 - Psalm 131
 - Yonggi Cho
 - We all need constant correction
 - 2) Practice: Let God speak to you through His word, often
 - The deepest form of prayer is not talking to God, but listening to Him and there's no better way to hear His voice than reading God's Word (Wayne Cordeiro).
 - SOAP:
 - Scripture
 - Observation
 - Application
 - Prayer
- ([The Divine Mentor](#), Wayne Cordeiro, Bethany House, 2007)

G. Questions

- 1) Name a time God's word corrected you.
- 2) What's the most unusual way God has ever spoken to you?