

**Sermon Title: The Discernment of the Scriptures**

**Sermon Text: Hebrews 4:11-13**

**Sermon Purpose: To call the hearer to an honest examination under the scrutiny of God's Word.**

**Sermon Proposition: There are 5 discerning functions of the Word of God, in the Christian's life.**

- I. There is the **warning** function of the Word of God. V.11
- II. There is the **impactful** function of the Word of God. V.12a
- III. There is the **searching** function of the Word of God. V.12b
- IV. There is the **discerning** function of the Word of God. V.12c
- V. There is the **revealing** function of the Word of God. V.13

**Introduction:** If you look at the world, you will be distressed. If you look within you will be depressed. If you look at God you'll be at rest. – Corrie Ten Boom

**(Exodus 17:2-7; Psalm 95:7-11; Hebrews 3:7-12, 13-19)**

**I. There is the **warning** function of the Word of God. V.11**

**A. The warning to **urgently** enter His rest. V.11a (**1 Corinthians 10:1-13**)**

**Matthew 11:28-29** "Come to Me, all *you* who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. **29** "Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls.

**Isaiah 30:15** For thus says the Lord GOD, the Holy One of Israel: "In returning and rest you shall be saved; In quietness and confidence shall be your strength." But you would not,

The theme of urgency and obedience are combined in a clear invitation to the hearers and readers. It is the Word of God which must be believed and obeyed.

It is the Word of God that will judge the obedient and disobedient.

1. For New Testament believers God's rest includes his peace verses the peace the world offers.
2. It offers confidence of salvation.
3. It offers strength and assurance of a future heavenly home (**Matthew 11:29**).
4. It offers rest from our works of self-righteousness.

With diligence, urgency, and reverential fear we are to enter God's rest found in Jesus Christ, therefore each of us are to examine ourselves continually about our spiritual condition.

**1 Corinthians 10:11-12** Now all these things happened to them as examples, and they were written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the ages have come. **12** Therefore let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall.

**2 Corinthians 13:5** Examine yourselves *as to* whether you are in the faith. Test yourselves. Do you not know yourselves, that Jesus Christ is in you?-- unless indeed you are disqualified. To actively and intentionally press for commitment on the part of others.

**Jude 23** but others save with fear, pulling *them* out of the fire, hating even the garment defiled by the flesh.

- B. The warning to urgently fight against **disobedience**. V.11b  
 The writers paint a comparison between the Old Testament and the New Testament Jewish saints, is that like the Jews who left Egypt (3:16-19), his generation had also received the proclaimed message of God of the gospel – they had been evangelized.  
**Matthew 13:14-17** "And in them the prophecy of Isaiah is fulfilled, which says: 'Hearing you will hear and shall not understand, And seeing you will see and not perceive; **15** For the hearts of this people have grown dull. Their ears are hard of hearing, And their eyes they have closed, Lest they should see with *their* eyes and hear with *their* ears, Lest they should understand with *their* hearts and turn, So that I should heal them.' **16** "But blessed *are* your eyes for they see, and your ears for they hear; **17** "for assuredly, I say to you that many prophets and righteous *men* desired to see what you see, and did not see *it*, and to hear what you hear, and did not hear *it*."

## II. There is the **impactful** function of the Word of God. V.12a

The Word of God is not the word of man; it is living, effective, and self-fulfilling; it diagnoses the condition of the human heart, saying as someone has said, "Thou ailest here and here (p.2 of notes)"; it brings life and blessing to those who receive it and obey it by faith and pronounce judgment on those who disregard it.

- A. The 1<sup>st</sup> impact – the Word of God is **living**.  
 (Zon) The spiritual newness of the new life implanted by the Holy Spirit to produce the new birth is unailing and permanent. Through or by the Word of God, the Holy Spirit uses the Word of God to produce life.  
**Isaiah 40:6-8** The voice said, "Cry out!" And he said, "What shall I cry?" "All flesh *is* grass, And all its loveliness *is* like the flower of the field. **7** The grass withers, the flower fades, Because the breath of the LORD blows upon it; Surely the people *are* grass. **8** The grass withers, the flower fades, But the word of our God stands forever."  
**1 Peter 1:23** having been born again, not of corruptible seed but incorruptible, through the word of God which lives and abides forever,  
**Acts 7:38** "This is he who was in the congregation in the wilderness with the Angel who spoke to him on Mount Sinai, and *with* our fathers, the one who received the living oracles to give to us,
- B. The 2<sup>nd</sup> impact – the Word of God is **effectual**.  
 (energis) effective, powerful, active some translations say. The Word of God is active (effectual) in the senses that it speeds to fulfill the purpose for which it has been uttered.  
**Isaiah 55:11** 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. Spiritual life and growth is always marked by an insatiable growth craving for God's Word, and delights in the nourishments it provides. The true believer does so with the intensity of baby craving for its mother's milk. (**Psalm 19:7-11**)  
**Job 23:12** I have not departed from the commandment of His lips; I have treasured the words of His mouth More than my necessary *food*.  
**Jeremiah 15:16** Your words were found, and I ate them, And Your word was to me the joy and rejoicing of my heart; For I am called by Your name, O LORD God of hosts.
1. The effectual working of God's Word is the new man's source of life.
  2. The effectual working of God's Word promotes a desire to eliminate sin from our lives. (James)
  3. The effectual working of God's Word causes the believer to admit his need for God's Word. (1 Peter 2:2; Matthew 4:4)
  4. The effectual working of God's Word demands a pursuit of spiritual growth.

### III. There is the surgical function of the Word of God. V.12b

While the Word of God is comforting and nourishing to those who believe and obey, it also is a tool of judgment and execution for those who have not committed themselves to Christ, or are living in habitual disobedience. It also brings conviction upon those who may believe, but are only going through the motions. On those who intellectually persuaded, but not convicted.

**1 Samuel 16:7** But the LORD said to Samuel, "Do not look at his appearance or at the height of his stature, because I have refused him. For *the LORD does not see* as man sees; for man looks at the outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart."

**1 Peter 4:5** They will give an account to Him who is ready to judge the living and the dead.

A. The Word of God is a modern day scalpel.

B. The Word of God cuts the surface.

C. The Word of God invades the inner sanctum.

1. The division of soul and spirit.

A. B. Davidson points out "the idea of dividing the soul and spirit suggests the examination of the innermost nature and substance of a man." [A. B. Davidson, *The Epistles to the Hebrews* (Edinburgh, 1882), p.96]

Paul wants us to understand that the Word of God is designed to probe, prick, and pick to pieces the innermost recesses of our spiritual being and brings the subconscious motives to the surface. (**Romans 7:7-14**)

**1 Corinthians 4:5** Therefore judge nothing before the time, until the Lord comes, who will both bring to light the hidden things of darkness and reveal the counsels of the hearts. Then each one's praise will come from God.

**Matthew 15:17-20** "Do you not yet understand that whatever enters the mouth goes into the stomach and is eliminated? **18** "But those things which proceed out of the mouth come from the heart, and they defile a man. **19** "For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies. **20** "These are *the things* which defile a man, but to eat with unwashed hands does not defile a man."

**Matthew 12:33-37** "Either make the tree good and its fruit good, or else make the tree bad and its fruit bad; for a tree is known by *its* fruit. **34** "Brood of vipers! How can you, being evil, speak good things? For out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks. **35** "A good man out of the good treasure of his heart brings forth good things, and an evil man out of the evil treasure brings forth evil things. **36** "But I say to you that for every idle word men may speak, they will give account of it in the day of judgment. **37** "For by your words you will be justified, and by your words you will be condemned."

**Mark 7:17-23** When He had entered a house away from the crowd, His disciples asked Him concerning the parable. **18** So He said to them, "Are you thus without understanding also? Do you not perceive that whatever enters a man from outside cannot defile him, **19** "because it does not enter his heart but his stomach, and is eliminated, *thus* purifying all foods?" **20** And He said, "What comes out of a man, that defiles a man. **21** "For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, **22** "thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lewdness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness. **23** "All these evil things come from within and defile a man."

#### IV. There is the discerning function of the Word of God. V.12c

The Word of God is a discerner of hearts, thoughts, motives, and intents. E. K. Simpson who in his survey of the use of the adjectives (kritiko) where we get the English word (critic) means “quick to discern.” [The vocabulary of the Epistle to the Hebrews, EQ18 1946, p.37f]

He went on to say, “In all the examples of its use, it means a sifting process that is at work; and what winnowing fans can vie with the gales of the Holy Spirit blowing through the Word.

Therefore, the intents of heart are known and revealed by God’s Word and the Holy Spirit.”

**Acts 1:24** And they prayed and said, "You, O Lord, who know the hearts of all, show which of these two You have chosen

**Acts 15:8** "So God, who knows the heart, acknowledged them by giving them the Holy Spirit, just as *He did* to us,

#### V. There is the revealing function of the Word of God. V.13

The word “open” had two distinct uses in biblical terms.

A. The face to face revealing.

In ancient times a wrestler would take his opponent by the throat. In this position the two opponents were face to face. (James 1:22-25) This is the mirror effect.

B. The judicial revealing effect.

This word was also used in criminal trials. “A sharpe dagger would be bound to the neck of the accursed, with the point just below his chin, so that he could not bow his head, but had to face the court. Both uses had to do with grave face-to-face situations. When an unbeliever or believer come under the revealing examination of God’s Word, he will be unavoidably face-to-face with the perfect truth about God and about himself.”

We can hide our inner being from those outside, we can even deceive ourselves, but nothing and no one can escape the searching, revealing scrutiny of God and His Word, before him everything and everyone lies exposed and helpless.

Therefore, our final account of what is true or false must be rendered before God and the Scriptures. We are cut open and all our false beliefs, heresy, hypocrisy, and false deception of ourselves lies exposed. While on the positive side all that is pure, true, and of God is exposed to provide comfort, peace, and rest. Therefore believers should make every effort to urgently attain and maintain God’s rest.