

24-1124p Transcript

24-1124p - *The Christian Standard, Part 2, Jim Lokenbauer*

Bible Reader: Tom Freed

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The Christian Standard, Part 2

Transcript (0:04 - 36:29)

Scripture Reading

Bible Reader: Tom Freed

(0:04) Good evening. I'll be reading Hebrews 4 verse 12. Hebrews 4 verse 12.

The word of God is living and (0:15) active and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing as far as the division of soul and spirit, (0:21) both joints and marrow, able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart.

Transcript

Preacher: Jim Lokenbauer

(0:31) Well, back again. Part two coming your way.

This morning we talked about (0:37) Christian standard being the word of God and how it is our tool to measure our spiritual growth. (0:48) And Tom just read for us Hebrews 4 verse 12 is a verse that really tells us a lot about (0:56) the word of God. It's not your normal spoken word.

Words spoken by God are different. (1:10) I'll read that again for you. For the word of God is living and active, (1:18) and sharper than any two-edged sword.

It penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, (1:28) joints and marrow. It judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart. (1:38) That's what the word of God does.

An entire sermon can be made just on this one verse. (1:49) And tonight I'm just going to highlight a few points in hope of giving you a better understanding (1:54) and appreciation of the word of God. The first phrase of this verse says, for the word of God.

(2:03) Many of us here are using the most popular translations of the Bible, such as the ASV, (2:11) the ESV, the KJV, the New King James Version, the NIV, and the Web, which is the World English

(2:21) Bible. In all of these versions you have the letter W in the word, word, (2:32) the lower case in those versions, making what the subject is a noun. Word is a noun.

It's a thing. (2:45) It's not a personal pronoun. So according to these versions, that makes the subject matter at hand, (2:53) the words that God speaks, being living and active.

And in light of the second phrase of (3:02) this verse, living and active, illustrates that God's words are alive. In some versions of the (3:13) Bible, such as the literal standard version, the Modern King James Version, the complete Jewish (3:20) Bible, and the literal translation version, the translators used an uppercase W for the word, (3:28) word, or word. Hope that's not confusing.

By doing so, they designated this word (3:37) as a personal pronoun, meaning Christ, because he's been called the word. (3:45) So when adding the second phrase to this verse, it makes Christ living and active, sharper than any (3:52) double-edged sword. And adding the rest of the verse, penetrate, even dividing soul and spirit, (4:00) joints and marrow, and another version says it is a discerner of thoughts and attitudes of the heart.

(4:08) So the Greek word for word is logos, and in both translated renditions, it's translated correctly. (4:18) Logos is word. So in order to get the proper idea of what the subject matter is, is that the words (4:26) Christ spoke, or was it Christ himself, helps to look in context, look at the next verse.

(4:34) So verse 13 reads, and there is not a created thing hidden before him. So the subject matter, (4:43) him, the word is talking about Christ. Christ is living and active, sharper than any double-edged (4:52) sword.

And don't we get that image in the book of Revelation, where Christ appears to the apostle (5:01) John and out of his mouth proceeded a double-edged sword, right? So both renderings are correct, (5:12) but one is just more correct. Which one? And that's the one where it talks about (5:19) personal pronoun. Christ is more correct, but they both work, if you know what I'm trying to say.

(5:26) So the first chapter of the Gospel of John, John writes about Jesus being the Word and being God. (5:37) In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. (5:42) And I checked over 25 versions of the Bible.

That's what's nice when you got a computer and (5:51) you can hit compare, and all the Bibles that you have show you that verse. And so it's a real (5:58) quick process. It's not like I had to open up 25 different versions and look for that verse.

(6:05) No, it was done instantaneously, just about. And they all have that capitalized. Word is capitalized.

(6:14) So as we see in the Gospel of John chapter 1, Word is talking about Christ. (6:24) And so when you take into consideration Hebrews 4.12, that W should be capitalized as well (6:35) in our most popular versions. Some versions have it.

Most don't. So does that mean that the words (6:44) Jesus spoke did not have the same attributes that verse 12 ascribes to Jesus? No. The words Jesus (6:53) spoke were from his mind and his heart.

They are true. They are powerful because he is God, (7:01) and they are his revealed will to us. So whether Christ or his words, it's something we pay (7:09) attention to, listen to, obey.

So in verse 12, whether personifying the words Jesus spoke or (7:21) referring to Jesus himself, both renderings are correct. Just one is more correct. Paul personifies (7:30) the Word of God in a similar way, showing us that the first rendering can be correct, where (7:39) the noun would be stressing the words rather than Christ, in 1 Thessalonians 2.13, (7:47) where Paul ascribes unique properties to the Word of God.

And listen, and we also thank God (7:57) continually, because when you receive the Word of God, which you heard from us, you accepted it (8:04) not as the Word of men, but as it actually is, the Word of God, which is at work in you who believe. (8:13) So there it is again. Hebrews says that the Word is living and active, and Paul here says (8:20) the Word is at work.

So he's giving human traits to the Word, and so this tells us that either are (8:31) correct, whether you're talking about the Word being Jesus, or his words from Jesus, they're (8:39) living and active. And living and active, working power of God's Word on the human heart is a (8:47) mystery. No human knows exactly how that works.

We're given little clues here and there that we (8:56) can piece together to give us an idea, but God doesn't come right out and tell us the process. (9:05) Jesus tells us humans the work of his Word in the heart of the hearer is a mystery. (9:11) Mark is the only gospel writer who recorded Jesus' parable called the growing seed that illustrates (9:20) this mystery.

In Mark 4, 26 through 29, he said, the kingdom of God, as if a man should scatter (9:32) seed on the ground and should sleep by night and rise by day, and the seed should grow, sprout, (9:40) and he himself does not know how. All by itself, the seed in the soil produces grain. First the (9:51) stalk, then the head, then the full kernel in its head.

As soon as the grain is ripe, (9:57) he puts the sickle to it, because the harvest has come. So this little parable Jesus explains (10:06) has a mystery in it, and the mystery is we don't know. The man who sows, like in this case me, (10:15) sowing the Word, I don't know how that is going to work in people's hearts.

Our job is to sow it, (10:24) to go to bed, to rise the next day, sow the Word, wait for the Word to have its work (10:30) on those who hear it. And we hasten the process? No. God gives the increase.

(10:38) God is the one who turns on whatever enzyme's inside that seed as it's breaking down (10:46) and mingling with the dirt which is nutrient-rich, producing life. Only God could explain that (10:54) process correctly. We can see the results through empirical evidence, (11:02) but God is the one who truly knows that mystery, and that's why His Word is always—an allegory is (11:11) used about a seed describing His Word, a parable of the sower.

You know, some seeds fell on rocky (11:20) soil. Some seeds fell along the path. Other seeds fell on good soil.

You know that story? (11:28) Well, same thing. The seed is going to grow because of God's will and power, (11:37) and the command He gave at the beginning—produce fruit, grow, multiply. That is a lifelong command, (11:47) and that shows the power of God's Word.

He sets laws in order. He sets these hidden (11:56) things from us in order. We don't have to know how they work, (12:01) although it's fun to try and figure things out.

But we see the results, and we trust Him (12:08) that when we spread His Word, He's going to give the increase. (12:13) Tom and I were talking about that earlier today. He was sharing the gospel with his grandson, (12:21) and little bits of seed fell upon his heart, and it produced questions, results.

(12:33) Praise God. So we don't know how the Word works upon the heart. It just does.

(12:39) Just as He puts in order all the secret processes, natural laws that we can't explain, (12:46) though we can observe them. And doesn't Paul mention in the second chapter of the (12:51) Corinthian letter that God frustrates the worldly wise? Those who are (13:00) unfamiliar with God's Word, it's total nonsense to them. (13:07) Total nonsense.

But to us, we see the results. We can trust God and His processes. I'm sure it's by (13:17) God's sheer power and will expressed through His Word that gets the results He desires.

(13:25) Scott mentioned one of the verses in a conversation before service began about how He speaks. The Word (13:32) goes out. It's got power, and it doesn't return to Him.

Void. It accomplishes what His intentions (13:40) are, and I believe that's Isaiah 55, 10, or 11, somewhere in there. Anyhow, He spoke everything (13:50) that exists into being out of nothing.

That's the kind of power in His Word. (13:58) And the reason God can't lie, did you ever think of that? Because what He says happens. (14:06) It's impossible for Him to lie.

That's the power of His Word. And that's also the power of His (14:13) self-control and His wisdom. He knows to hold His tongue.

Can you imagine if one of us had those (14:20) powers, and somebody cuts you off on the highway? Do you have the self-control and power over (14:27) the tongue to not blast that person into oblivion? God is wise. God is powerful. (14:38) And God is good, because He hasn't blasted me into oblivion.

Thank you, Lord. (14:49) That's our all-powerful God. When it comes to the free will that He gave us as humans, (14:55) the general rule is we're free to choose and to accept or reject our belief in Him, (15:02) in anything for that matter.

There are exceptions to the rule, because He did raise up some of the (15:09) world leaders during biblical times, such as Pharaoh and such as Nebuchadnezzar, the King of (15:17) Babylon, for demonstration purposes, to do things that He wanted done. Through them, He exemplifies (15:31) that He's the only true sovereign God. He showed the world that there is a distinction between (15:38) worldly people and the people of God.

He showed His people that when they worship false gods, (15:45) He would punish them by neighboring countries. Later, when given the choice to believe in Jesus (15:53) as the Messiah and accept His Word, the Gospel, He even hardened some of the Jews' hearts (16:02) intentionally. That was against their will.

But God's will be done. God can raise up (16:13) people for His express purpose to use them as a demonstration of His power, of His goodness, (16:21) of His holiness, of His sovereignty. Isn't that what He did with Pharaoh before Moses took the (16:30) children of Israel out of Egypt? He hardened His heart.

God credits Himself for hardening (16:37) that man's heart. In Romans 11, 7 through 11, it says, What then? But Israel sought so earnestly (16:46) it did not obtain, but the elect did. The others were hardened as it is written.

God gave them a (16:54) spirit of stupor, eyes so that they could not see and ears so they could not hear to this very day. (17:02) David says, May their table become a snare and a trap, a stumbling block and a retribution for (17:10) them. May their eyes be darkened so they cannot see and their backs be bent over forever.

(17:18) Again, I ask, did they stumble so as to fall beyond recovery? Not at all. Rather, (17:27) because of their transgression, salvation has come to the Gentiles to make Israel envious. So God (17:37) will make people and their attitudes certain ways in order to accomplish something.

He hardened (17:49) a lot of the Jews' hearts so that during the persecution, the preachers and those (17:59) spreading the gospel would spread out and take it to the Gentiles. If it wasn't for (18:06) the Jews with their hardened hearts persecuting the first century Christians, (18:14) there'd only be Christians in Jerusalem. But God's purpose, to harden their hearts, (18:23) produced billions of Christians because of that.

So God is wise, though. As it says, (18:33) even though he hardened their hearts, are they lost? No, they have a chance to be saved. (18:40) They just need to repent like everybody else needs to.

The Jews tried to be righteous on their own, (18:48) following the traditions of men and the law, while rejecting God's grace through the gospel. (18:57) The Jews who believed Jesus' teachings, accepted the gospel, (19:02) and received his grace and righteousness, became the elect of God, as Paul mentions here. (19:12) The elect are the true believers, those who use the Word of God as their standard to live by.

(19:21) They're transformed by the Word. Romans 12 says, do not conform any longer to the pattern of this (19:32) world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and (19:39) approve what God's will is, his good, pleasing, and perfect will.

First, what transforms us exactly, (19:49) and what renews our minds? Isn't it Holy Spirit working with the Word of God in our heart that (19:57) gets us to change? Isn't that also what happens at repentance, a similar process? We hear the (20:05) Word of God and process what we've heard, decide if we believe it, and if we do believe what we've (20:13) heard, we think differently afterwards. And that's actually what the Greek definition of (20:21) repentance is. When you hear something, you think differently afterwards.

That's repentance. So when (20:29) you hear the Word of God, you process it like, you know what, I believe that. Guess what? Your mind's (20:35) been changed.

You've repented. During that same time of repentance, faith is created. I believe. (20:46) By hearing and believing the Word of God, the more we learn and put into practice his Word, (20:51) our minds are healed from the damage done by ungodly thinking, by worldly thinking. (21:00) We start

thinking and behaving differently. We can figure out what God's will is, his good, (21:07) pleasing, and perfect will for us, and we start to transform into the image of his Son.

(21:16) Holy Spirit does that. We don't have to do that. We don't have to suddenly try to take on the (21:23) personality, you know, walking around saying, verily, verily.

No. I've seen mentally ill people (21:32) do that. I used to work at the Sheriff's Department, and for a year that I worked there, (21:37) I worked where the criminally insane were.

And we had a handful of guys who wrapped their blankets (21:43) around them, walking around saying, verily, verily. They had a Jesus complex. It was the (21:51) oddest thing, especially when the two would be varying at each other.

(21:58) Okay, this is interesting. Let's see how this is going to play out. (22:02) Anyhow, Holy Spirit does the work.

He does the subtle changing and transforming. (22:11) It's up to us, though, to get our nose in the Word, to know what God says. The more information (22:18) is, if you read the first chapter of 2 Peter, there's a process there.

I presented a lesson (22:27) a year or two ago about that process. The more knowledge, you know, if you notice in the first (22:34) chapter of 2 Peter 1, the whole chapter is about knowledge and what it does for us, knowledge of (22:42) the Lord. The more knowledge in, the more grace you receive.

The more knowledge in, the more you (22:49) change. When you add practicing all of that, the bigger the change, and the more grace you receive. (22:57) It's like this continuous cycle.

Why are we given more grace when we learn more about God? (23:06) I had a lesson on tests. Guess what? The more you know, God's going to test you. (23:13) Okay, let's see if you get that test on patience.

(23:18) God with his microphone. Okay, cue the guy cutting you off in traffic. Let's see if he (23:23) raises that hand.

Oh, he passed. Good. Good boy.

You got it. He's not shaking his fist angrily. (23:34) More knowledge, more grace, more tests.

It's just the way it is. (23:44) So that's how we transform. Holy Spirit transforms us, giving us fruits of the Spirit of joy, (23:54) peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control.

(24:02) All of those godly virtues mentioned in the Bible, brotherly kindness, (24:08) Holy Spirit will change us. By believing the Word of God and doing what he says, (24:14) it's like following the footsteps of Jesus. The transformation process starts (24:20) taking place and we become like him.

And so striking was the transformation process in the (24:29) first century, upon the first century Christians, what started out as an insult to them by the Jews (24:38) and the Gentiles, they accepted as a compliment. They were derisively called Christians, (24:48) meaning little Christ. Oh, look at the little Christ.

They wore that as a badge of honor. (24:56) God probably smiled and said, results, they're getting it. They are little Christians, (25:04) little Christ.

That's what we're supposed to be. That's the transformation process. (25:11) So with persistence, we slowly transform into the image of our Savior.

(25:17) And with the Spirit's help, we start bearing good fruit to God for his glory. That's the game plan. (25:26) Paul confirms this transformation process in 2 Corinthians 3, 17 and 18.

He says, (25:35) how the Lord is the Spirit. It shows the oneness between Jesus and Holy Spirit. (25:43) And where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom.

And we who with unveiled faces all (25:49) reflect the Lord's glory are being transformed into his likeness with ever-increasing glory, (25:57) which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit. Through Jesus, through the Holy Spirit in our (26:06) heart, working with the Word transforms us into Christ's image. So how do we actually become a (26:17) child of God to receive Holy Spirit into our hearts? Of course, you all know.

I know you know. (26:24) But let's picture there were a whole bunch of non-believers in here. (26:31) John 1, 12 and 13 says, yet to all who received him, to those who believed in his name, he gave (26:38) the right to become children of God.

Children born not of natural descent nor of human decision (26:46) or a husband's will, but born of God. So when we receive Christ, when we take him into our heart, (26:56) his Word, we have the right at that point to become a child of God. Just by hearing you're (27:04) not a child of God yet, we have to believe and receive him into our lives.

We must be born of (27:12) God. So how does that process work? Jesus tells Nicodemus that process. In John 3, we'll look at (27:20) verses 3 and 5 through 7, Jesus says in reply, he declared, I tell you the truth, no one can see (27:29) the kingdom of God unless he is born again.

I tell you the truth, no one can enter the kingdom of God (27:39) unless he is born of water and the Spirit. Flesh gives birth to flesh, but the Spirit (27:47) gives birth to Spirit. You should not be surprised at my saying, you must be born again.

(27:55) So far in this conversion process, we need to be born of God, which is being born again, and to be (28:03) again is to be born of water and the Spirit. Peter further explains in 1 Peter 1, 22 through 25, (28:13) he says, now that you have purified yourselves by obeying the truth so that you have sincere love (28:21) for your brothers, love one another deeply from the heart. For you have been born again, (28:27) not of perishable seed, but of imperishable through the living and enduring word of God.

(28:35) For all men are like grass, and all their glory like the flowers of the field. The grass withers (28:41) and the flowers fall, but the word of the Lord stands forever. And this is the word that was (28:48) preached to you.

You've got to have the word in your hearts. Peter adds to the process about being (28:58) born again that we must be born of the imperishable seed, which is the word, so that makes hearing and (29:05) believing the word of God. Plus being born of water and born of the Spirit.

And we're born (29:15) by our mothers, we're born of the flesh. That's our first birth. But to be born again, we have to (29:25) be born of the Spirit.

We're begotten by God in this sense, and it's through a water birth. (29:37) When we are plunged into baptism, that's where we're being born again. (29:47) We die there, but guess what? We're born again.

Our old self is nailed to the cross, our old, (29:57) sinful, fleshly, old man, all of those interesting terms you can call our feudal way of life of the (30:05) past, nailed to the cross. It died in the waters. And when you come up out of the waters, (30:14) you're born again.

You are anew. You've been born of the Spirit. The Holy Spirit (30:21) comes in you at that point, as we know, Acts 2.38. When asked, brothers, what should we do? Peter (30:29) said, Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ, for the remission of (30:37) your sins.

Guess what the result is? You will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. (30:46) So Holy Spirit is now our seal of redemption. And though we, being a living creature, we have (30:56) Spirit in us, that's what animates our flesh, now He has a different role inside of us.

Because we've (31:04) accepted the Word, accepted Christ as our Savior, Holy Spirit can now start working on us to (31:12) transform us into the image of Jesus. Romans 8, 12 through 17 says, Therefore, brothers, (31:26) we have an obligation, but it is not to the sinful nature to live according to it. (31:32) For if you live according to the sinful nature, you will die.

But if by the Spirit you put to death (31:39) the misdeeds of the body, you will live. Because those who are led by the Spirit of God are sons (31:46) of God. For you did not receive a Spirit that makes you a slave again to fear, but you receive (31:54) the Spirit of sonship.

And by Him we cry, Abba, Father. The Spirit Himself testifies with our (32:01) spirit that we are God's children. Now if we are children, then we are heirs, heirs of God and (32:12) co-heirs with Christ.

If indeed we share in His sufferings, in order that we may also share in (32:19) His glory. A lot happens for us because of baptism. A lot happens when we accept Christ.

(32:29) The Holy Spirit inside of us gets busy, busy on our hearts. But we got to get busy and read His (32:37) Word, study His Word, practice what it is we're learning. If you know yourself to have a short (32:45) temper, work on it.

If you know yourself to be an impatient person, (32:53) work on it. We know those are all proofs of the Spirit. Being patient, being kind, being loving.

(33:04) We can look into the perfect law that gives freedom, the mirror of God you can call it, (33:11) or as James calls it, and see exactly what you look like through the eyes of God. (33:21) And where it says the Word of God convicts your heart, that's because it works on your conscience. (33:30) You read something in the Bible and you say, ooh, that's mean.

I gotta change. (33:38) You've just looked at yourself. Though you're starting to look like Jesus, (33:43) wow, there's this great big wart there.

Work on that wart. It'll tell you exactly what you look (33:55) like in the eyes of God. We know our own shortcomings.

We know what trips us up, what (34:05) triggers us. And those are the things that we know we need to work on, and God knows as well. (34:14) He's gonna test you on it.

So have sharp pencils. Now you're a Christian and you have a new (34:22) standard to live by, and that's the Holy Living Word of God who can transform. (34:32) The leopard can change his spots by help of Holy Spirit.

And having been born again, (34:42) we've been born into a marvelous hope. Here's another, born to benefit through the Word of (34:50) God, our standard. Listen to Peter.

1 Peter 1, pray, Blessed be the God and Father of our (34:57) Lord Jesus Christ, who according to his great mercy caused us to be born again to a living hope (35:05) through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. So our hope is to be united with our (35:12) Father in heaven. Jesus was raised from the dead because he was found righteous in the sight of the (35:20) law, and he shares his righteousness with us so that we too can rise from the dead in the (35:28) resurrection of life.

God's Word and Spirit are at work inside of us, shaping and conforming us (35:37) to the image of his Son. It is living and active inside of us, and it has the power to change us. (35:47) Old dogs can learn new tricks.

Spirit will do the transformation for us. (35:55) We just have to make sure not to get in his way and resist him in any way by clinging to our old (36:02) ways. Walk in the light as he is in the light.

Have fellowship with him. The Spirit will change you. (36:12) When you look into God's mirror, the Bible, do you see Christ's image looking back at you? (36:18) If you don't, you need to change.

If you need the prayers of the saints, (36:24) we'll be glad to pray for you. This is the invitation. Come if you need it.