

January 24, 2010 by Steve Brandon



Open and Laid Bare

Hebrews 4:12-13

1. God's Word Cuts to the Heart (verse 12).

2. God's Eyes See into the Soul (verse 13).

We live in an interesting age. On the one hand, we are a society that has become increasingly more concerned with our privacy rights. There are privacy groups that are fighting with all their might that we might be able to secure our privacy. In the medical field, HIPAA laws have been passed, which greatly restrict those who have access to our medical records. In the financial world, laws have been passed, which protect the privacy of those who have investments. Confidentiality is a huge concern for many in the legal profession.

So concerned are those of our day with privacy that in 1988 the country of Australia passed The National Privacy Act, which has sought to address the privacy of personal information on a national level. It seems as if our world is paranoid with wanting our privacy. We put up privacy fences in our yards. We want our homes to be havens where no one may enter. We have "no-call" lists, which prohibit telemarketers from calling homes with business proposals. In our day and age, we want our privacy.

On the other hand, we are a society that is free and liberal with many of the details of our private lives. New blogs come out everyday in which people open their diaries and share them with the world. The Facebook phenomenon lets hundreds of our "friends" know many intimate details about our lives. We tell people when we are gone on vacation. We tell people what we watched on television yesterday. We tell people when we are having marriage difficulties. We tell people when we are depressed. We tell people when our child is potty trained. We show people pictures of our baby's ultrasound. We tell people how our homework is coming along. We tell people of how many hours of sleep we had last night. We tell people when we have a headache. We tell people what we had for lunch. We tell people when we have done well on a video game. We tell people what we dreamed about last night in our sleep. We tell people when we made new friends. We tell people of the funny things that our pets have done. We tell people when we have joined the Pancreatic Cancer Action Network. We tell people when we have stubbed our toe. We tell people when we almost got into a car accident. Such is the society in which we live.

We want our privacy. But, we want to tell everyone everything about our lives at the same time. Our exposition of the book of Hebrews takes us into chapter 4, verses 12 and 13. These verses talk about our privacy between us and the Lord. Quite frankly, there is none. God knows all about us. He uses His word to search us deep within. There is nothing hidden from Him. Instead, we are "open and laid bare" before God. He doesn't wait for us to post the intimate details of our lives on Facebook. He knows it all.

Let's begin by reading the text before us, ...

Hebrews 4:12-13

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. 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.

Verse 12 speaks of the penetrating nature of God's word. God's word searches us deep within. God's word cuts us open, so that even our thoughts are exposed. Verse 13 speaks of the penetrating nature of God's eyes. Nobody can hide from God. Nobody can erect privacy fences big enough to escape the gaze of God.

For those who know the Scriptures fairly well, these are well-known verses. They are often quoted to bring out the power of the Scriptures. God's word is powerful. God's word is alive. God's word is active in this world.

The Bible has a way of penetrating deep into each of our hearts and convicting us of sin, and showing us our need of the Savior. God's word is the means through which we come to know God. It's the means through which we grow in our knowledge of Him. And, in my message today, you will see how true this is. My hope and prayer for my message this morning is that you would come to feel the power of God's word.

This is all well and true, but, too often, these verses are spoken and believed and applied apart from the context in which they are found. People will often pluck them out of Hebrews and will have them stand alone. And yet, this isn't how we find them in the Scriptures. Before these verses come some thoughts. And after these verses come some thoughts. And they all string together for form a whole.

If there is anything that I want to pass on to all of you as a pastor, I want you to see the Bible as you ought. It's not a dictionary of important words that we need to be able to define. It's not an encyclopedia of arranged subjects for us to know about. No, the Bible is a story, given to us, in which each part relates to the whole. In our case this morning, we are looking at the book of Hebrews, which is like a sermon. It has a main point that it's attempting to drive home. And everything in it supports the writer's argument. See, the book of Hebrews isn't a bunch of statements merely thrown together. It's not like a political campaign speech today in which candidates merely string together a series of unrelated paragraphs, trying to put forth their positions on many subjects, trying to persuade the voters in their favor.

That's not the book of Hebrews. Instead, there's an argument to the book. It reasons from the beginning of the book until the end. It flows from one thought to another, ultimately arguing that Jesus is better.

Now, the big question is this: how do verses 12 and 13 fit into the context? How are they connected? How do they help the overall logic of the book? This is the question that initially captured my attention as I looked at them in preparation to preach this morning. I noticed that they appeared to be disconnected. But, upon further examination, their role in the text is clear. One of the first clues we have in the text is the way that verse 12 begins. It begins with the word, "for." "For the word of God is living and active and sharper than any two-edged sword." It brings to conclusion what came before, and provides a reason for the conclusion.

Verse 11 came before, "Therefore let us be diligent to enter that rest, so that no one will fall, through following the same example of disobedience."

In other words, we must be diligent to believe the promises of God, that we might not be like those in Israel who refused to believe that God was able to take them into the promised land.

When you seek to summarize these verses, you find that the word of God is powerful to expose us. It can open us up and show what we really are, deep within. The word of God is like an x-ray machine that can look at the condition of our bones. It is like an MRI. It can look deep within us and find the tumors of unbelief deep within us. It is like a full-body scan that can detect the presence of any foreign substances in our hearts.

The word of God is the divine heart surgeon, that can cut deep into our hearts, and open us up and lay us bare before His eyes. And that's why we need to fear not entering the rest of God (verse 1). That's why we need to be diligent to enter God's rest (verse 11). Because, we won't escape God's word. You may deceive your parents if you are cunning enough. You may escape the punishment of the principle of your school if you can keep quiet. You certainly can deceive your pastor if you aren't straightforward and honest about what's going on in your life. You may escape a policeman if you run for it. But, you won't escape God's word. If you have heard His warnings and have neglected them, know that the blood is upon your hands. You won't escape.

That's the point of verses 12 and 13. They form the concluding thoughts of the warning section of Hebrews we are in. I trust that you remember that Hebrews consists of a discussion of how great Jesus is. He is better than anything else that you might turn to. He is greater than the prophets. He is greater than the angels. He is greater than Moses. Jesus is greater than the high priests. Jesus is the better promise. Jesus is better than Melchizedek. Jesus is better than the Old Covenant. Jesus has a better tabernacle. Jesus is a better sacrifice.

In no way does the book of Hebrews ever lower Jesus and place Him as inferior to anything that has ever been revealed to us. No, Jesus is better. And so, the call to us is to press on by faith, and if we fail to do so, we certainly won't escape. Why? Because we have the word of God, and we have heard its message. And nothing escapes the notice of the word of God. The reason why we are to be diligent to enter the rest of God is because of the power of God's word to search us and find us out.

By way of outline this morning, I have two points, one for each verse of the text. Here's my first point, ...
1. God's Word Cuts to the Heart (verse 12).

This is the big idea of verse 12. Each phrase in this verse speaks about the active work of God's word to penetrate deep within us. This morning, I want to pick out each phrase in this verse and shed some light on it. We see that the word of God is ...

a. Living

You see it right there in verse 12, "The word of God is living." In other words, there's a vitality to this book. There is a life to the words that we have before us.

Now, it's not that there is something special or sacred about my Bible, or about your Bible, or about any Bible that might sit in front of a church. There is nothing holy about the pages themselves. No, it's the truth of the Scripture that lives. It's the message of the Bible that has life. As a result, it is life giving.

Perhaps you remember the time when Jesus was in the wilderness fasting and praying for 40 days. At the end of that time, when Jesus was at His most vulnerable point, Satan came up to Him with three temptations, tempting Jesus in His weakness. Each time, Jesus answered the temptation with the word of God, which became alive to Him and strengthened Him to obedience. But, this is especially apparent in the first temptation. Satan said to Jesus, "If You are the Son of God, command that these stones become bread" (Matt. 4:3). But, Jesus answered and said, "It is written, 'Man shall not live on bread alone, but on every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God'" (Matt. 4:4). With these words, Jesus is quoting Moses in the wilderness, when He was reflecting upon the reality of wandering for 40 years in the wilderness. God fed them with the manna (Deut. 8:3). God sustained their clothing from wearing out (Deut. 8:4). God protected their health (Deut. 8:4). They lived upon the word of God. God was taking care of them, according to His word.

Stephen, the church's first martyr referred to the words that God gave Moses as "living oracles" which were passed on to the Jews for generations (Acts 7:38). Such is the testimony of many Biblical writers. Jeremiah said, "Your words were found and I ate them, and Your words became for me a joy and the delight of my heart" (Jer. 15:16). The point here isn't that God's word is a candy bar. No, the point here is that God's word is alive and life-giving. It is sweet and delightful.

David said of God's words in Psalm 19, "They are more desirable than gold, yes, than much fine gold; Sweeter also than honey and the drippings of the honeycomb" (Ps. 19:10). When Peter described our coming to faith, he said, "You have

been born again not of seed which is perishable but imperishable, that is, through the living and enduring word of God" (1 Peter 1:23). The word of God is alive. And thus, the word of God is life giving.

When Paul described the Scripture, he said that it was "God-breathed." That is to say, the Scriptures were given life from the very mouth of God. And as breathed out by God, Scripture will be like God and never die. Isaiah said, "The grass withers, the flower fades, but the word of our God stands forever" (Is. 40:8). There is something immortal about the word of God. It is living. There is a life to God's word. That's why Moses said in Deuteronomy 32:46-47, "Take to your heart all the words with which I am warning you today, which you shall command your sons to observe carefully, even all the words of this law for it is not an idle word for you; indeed it is your life."

The word of God is living. We see another characteristic of the word of God in verse 12. The word of God is ...

b. Active

Literally, the word of God is "energetic." It has an energy about it. It's not merely a book that sits on the shelf and collects dust. Rather, it sits on the shelf like a battery, waiting to be discharged. And when it is read and proclaimed and heard, it is like the energizer bunny that keeps going and going and going. Your Bible may sit on the dust and collect dust. But God is using other Bibles across the globe to get His message out. First of all, the Bible is the most-printed book ever in the world. More Bibles are printed than any other book in any language. And this is not an accident. God has so ordained it. His book is not left to perish deep in the confines of the library of congress, never to be discovered again. No, His word is out accomplishing His purposes.

The Lord says it this way, ...

Isaiah 55:10-11

For as the rain and the snow come down from heaven, and do not return there without watering the earth and making it bear and sprout, and furnishing seed to the sower and bread to the eater; 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.

In other words, when God's word is spoken or read or preached or printed, it will always accomplish the purposes of God.

I love the perspective of Martin Luther. He was the catalyst by which the Reformation took shape and came into being; that movement of God that restored the gospel to its rightful place, not hidden in clutches of a corrupt church run by corrupt priests. But, to hear Martin Luther speak, he gives all credit to the word of God. Luther said, "I opposed indulgences and all the papists, but never with force. I simply preached, and wrote God's Word; otherwise I did nothing. And while I slept, or drank Wittenberg beer with my friends Philip and Amsdorf, the Word so greatly weakened the papacy that no prince or emperor ever inflicted such losses upon it. I did nothing; the Word did everything." [\[1\]](#)

This is the way that God's word works. It actively works in the souls of men to accomplish all of God's good pleasure. God's word is so active and powerful that even the creation itself is subject to God's word. When God speaks, the universe comes into existence (Genesis 1). As God speaks, He holds the universe together. Remember what the writer said back in Hebrews 1:3, speaking of Jesus, "And He is the radiance of His glory and the exact representation of His nature, and upholds all things by the word of His power." Jesus is speaking and sustaining the world. Such is the active force of the word of God.

God's word is living and active. It is also, ...

c. Sharp

In the days of the New Testament, the sword was one of the most important instruments of war. They didn't have guns. They didn't have canons. They didn't have grenades. They had swords and bows and arrows and horses and chariots.

In this instance, the word of God is compared with a two-edged sword. Imagine that you are holding a two-edged sword. It is sharpened on both sides, ready for combat. You look at it and what do you think about? You think of strength and power and war and fear. You don't want to trifle with anyone brandishing such a sword. Now, this is a metaphor for the word of God. It's a powerful, offensive weapon that conquers its enemies.

Throughout the New Testament, this imagery is given of the Scriptures. In speaking of the battle that we face as believers in this world, Paul put forth a description of our armor in Ephesians, chapter 6. He said, "Take up the full armor of God, so that you will be able to resist in the evil day" (6:13). He pictured our loins as girded up with truth (verse 14). He pictured our breastplate as righteousness (verse 14). Our feet are to be shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace (verse 15). We take up the shield of faith and the helmet of salvation (verses 16 and 17). Finally, he finished with the "sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God" (verse 18). There you see the imagery. The word of God is likened to a sword which is to be used in spiritual warfare.

In the book of Revelation, the apostle John saw an appearance of Jesus. He was clothed in a robe, reaching to His feet

(Rev. 1:13). He was girded across His chest with a golden sash (Rev. 1:13). His head and His hair were white like white wool, like snow (Rev. 1:14). His eyes were like a flame of fire (Rev. 1:14). His feet were like burnished bronze (Rev. 1:15). His voice was like the sound of many waters (Rev. 1:15). He held seven stars in His right hand (Rev. 1:16). His face was like the sun, shining in its strength (Rev. 1:16). This is what John saw, "Out of His mouth came a sharp two edged sword" (Rev. 1:16), as if to symbolize the power of the words He speaks.

Later, when writing to the church of Pergamum, Jesus threatened them in their disobedience. He said, "Repent; or else I am coming to you quickly, and I will make war against them with the sword of My mouth" (Rev. 2:16).

In each of these instances, the sword is identified with the word of God. And each time, it represents the power of the word.

John Bunyan wrote the classic, "Pilgrim's Progress." Near the end of part 2, he told of how Mr. Valiant-for-Truth showed Great-Heart his sword. Valiant said, "Let a man have one of these blades, with a hand to wield it, and skill to use it, and he may venture upon an angel with it. He need not fear its holding, if he can but tell how to lay on. Its edges will never blunt. It will cut flesh, and bones, and soul, and spirit, and all." [\[2\]](#)

What a great saying about God's word: "Its edges will never blunt." That's the idea of this characteristic of the word of God. It is sharp and powerful.

We see the fourth characteristic at the end of verse 12. God's word, ...

d. Pierces

We read that God's word pierces "as far as the division of soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow."

Not only can the word of God club down an enemy approaching. It can also dissect, to the tiniest degree, soul and spirit, joints and marrow. The word of God is like a surgeon's scalpel. It's the syringe that can cut deep within. I think that this is the point of "the division of soul and spirit" and the division of "joints and marrow." It pierces deep within our hearts. Or, as I have said, "God's word cuts to the heart."

Paul said it this way, "All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof for correction, for training in righteousness" (2 Tim. 3:16). It's the Scriptures that have the power to convict us of our sin. It's the Scriptures that have the power to show us the way to righteousness. We have several Biblical illustrations of this taking place. Fifty days after the death of Jesus, Peter was preaching to a crowd of Jews in Jerusalem on the day of Pentecost. He called out ...

Acts 2:22-24

Men of Israel, listen to these words: Jesus the Nazarene, a man attested to you by God with miracles and wonders and signs which God performed through Him in your midst, just as you yourselves know - this Man, delivered over by the predetermined plan and foreknowledge of God, you nailed to a cross by the hands of godless men and put Him to death. But God raised Him up again, putting an end to the agony of death, since it was impossible for Him to be held in its power.

Peter then went on to explain how the Scriptures, such as Psalm 16 and Psalm 110 had prophesied of His resurrection. He concluded his message with these words:

Acts 2:36

Therefore let all the house of Israel know for certain that God has made Him both Lord and Christ--this Jesus whom you crucified.

And upon making that statement, those who heard "were pierced to the heart" (Acts 2:37). They asked Peter, "What should we do?" (Acts 2:37). He told them to "Repent and be baptized" (Acts 2:38). Three thousand of them did so. There's an illustration of how the word of God convicts and leads to salvation.

A few chapters later in Acts, the word of God brings the same conviction. But, this time, it didn't lead to salvation. Rather, it led to hardening. I'm talking about the sermon that Stephen preached to the Council, recorded in Acts, chapter 7. Stephen brought many, many Scriptures before the men as he traced the dealings with God in history. From Abraham's call in Haran to God's dealing with Joseph in Egypt. From God's call of Moses in Midian to the wandering of the tabernacle in the wilderness. He finished his sermon with these words, ...

Acts 7:51-53

You men who are stiff-necked and uncircumcised in heart and ears are always resisting the Holy Spirit; you are doing just as your fathers did. Which one of the prophets did your fathers not persecute? They killed those who had previously announced the coming of the Righteous One, whose betrayers and murderers you have now become; you who received the law as ordained by angels, and yet did not keep it.

Listen to the response.

Acts 7:54

Now when they heard this, they were cut to the quick, and they began gnashing their teeth at him. Soon afterwards, they were so angry, that they killed Stephen by pelting him with rocks until he died.

Such is the piercing work of the word of God as it goes forth. It's able to pierce deep within our hearts. Now, in some instances, it will bring conviction of sin that will lead to salvation, ... as on the day of Pentecost. And in other instances, it will bring conviction of sin that will lead to hostility toward God and His messengers.

I love the way that Paul puts it in 2 Corinthians 2.

2 Corinthians 2:14-17

But thanks be to God, who always leads us in triumph in Christ, and manifests through us the sweet aroma of the knowledge of Him in every place. For we are a fragrance of Christ to God among those who are being saved and among those who are perishing; to the one an aroma from death to death, to the other an aroma from life to life. And who is adequate for these things? For we are not like many, peddling the word of God, but as from sincerity, but as from God, we speak in Christ in the sight of God.

In other words, as we proclaim God's words, there are some who hear and love it. And there are others who hear and hate it. The same message brings two different responses. Light to the traveler at night comes as a blessing. Light to the cockroach come as a curse. It's the piercing work of the word of God. It cuts us deep into the heart. The word of God is living and active. It is sharper than any two-edged sword and it pierces deep. And now, the fifth phrase here in verse 12. The word of God is ...

e. Able to judge

It says there in verse 12, "the word of God is ... able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart." At this point we can instantly think that God's word is out to get us. God is coming to us as our judge. He is coming to us to convict and condemn. Now, there is truth to that. After all, we are in a warning section in Hebrews. These words are to come as a warning. And these are the concluding words of the warning. We have a judge, who sees all. We will give account to Him (as verse 13 says). But, I believe that the point here is bigger than merely condemnation. I believe that the point is discernment.

God's word is able to discern "the thoughts and intentions of the heart." And when the thoughts and intentions come back unbelieving, then certainly judgment will come. But, when God discerns faith and obedience, then it won't end in judgment. It will end in entering the rest of God. Hebrews 4:3 tells us, "We who have believed enter that rest." God knows our faith. God can discern even when our faith is like a mustard seed. God's word can find it there. He comes to the struggling soul and helps us. Look at Hebrews 4:15, "We do not have a high priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but One who has been tempted in all things as we are, yet without sin."

The book of Hebrews doesn't come merely as a threat of death. God knows our weaknesses, better than we know them. God knows our struggles, better than we know them. God knows our sins, better than we know them. God knows our wickedness, better than we know it ourselves. But, here is the good news. God doesn't stand afar off and say, "Deal with it yourself." No, if your heart comes to the Lord humble and broken, He will sympathize with you. If you "draw near ... to the throne of grace," then you will receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need (4:16). In that regard, we can find great comfort in the probing scalpel of God's word.

Well, there's verse 12: God's Word Cuts to the Heart (verse 12). Here's verse 13.

2. God's Eyes See into the Soul (verse 13).

Hebrews 4:13

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.

This verse says the same thing that verse 12 says, only it uses a different metaphor. Verse 12 uses the metaphor of a surgeon. The job of the surgeon is to cut and expose and repair. Verse 12 describes how God's word cuts and pierces and penetrates and discovers what's in our hearts. Verse 13 uses the metaphor of a scientist. The job of the scientist is to observe and take notes and know everything that's going on in his experiments in the laboratory. Verse 13 describes how God's eyes are observing everything that's taking place in our lives. Nothing is escaping His notice. God created the world. God knows everything that's going on in the world.

We see this clearly in Psalm 139. God knows when you sit down (Ps. 139:2). God knows when you rise up (Ps. 139:2). God knows all of your thoughts (Ps. 139:2). God evaluates the ways that you live (Ps. 139:3). God knows all about you (Ps. 139:3). God hears everything that you

say (Ps. 139:4). God even knows what you are going to say before you say it (Ps. 139:4). You cannot run from God. Wherever you are, God is (Ps. 139:7-9). If you are in America, God sees you. If you are in Australia, God sees you. If you are deep in a cave, God sees you. If you are on the moon, God sees you. Our lives are open and exposed before God.

Proverbs 15:3 says this, "The eyes of the LORD are in every place, watching the evil and the good." God knows full well what's going on in all of our lives. Such a truth ought to have an effect upon our lives.

J. C. Ryle wrote a great essay entitled, "Thoughts For Young Men." Several fathers are just beginning to read it to their sons. He said this, ...

The eye of God! Think of that. Everywhere, in every house, in every field, in every room, in every company, alone or in a crowd, the eye of God is always upon you. ... They are eyes that read hearts as well as actions. ...

How many things are done continually, which men would never do if they thought they were seen! How many matters are transacted in the chambers of imagination, which would never bear the light of day! Yes; men entertain thoughts in private, and say words in private, and do acts in private, which they would be ashamed and blush to have exposed before the world. The sound of a footstep coming has stopped many a deed of wickedness. A knock at the door has caused many an evil work to be hastily suspended, and hurriedly laid aside. But oh, what miserable driveling folly is all this! There is an all seeing Witness with us wherever we go. Lock the door, draw down the blind, shut the shutters, put out the candle; it matters not, it makes no difference; God is everywhere, you cannot shut Him out, or prevent His seeing. [\[3\]](#)

This is the reality of verse 13. God sees it all.

Over the past few weeks, we have seen this. For the last four weeks, I have preached some difficult messages. They have been difficult because they have been very pointed. They have all come out of this warning section of Hebrews, which began back in chapter 3, and verse 7, and are just concluding in chapter 4, verse 13. My first message was entitled, "Don't Harden Your Hearts." This came from Hebrews 3:7-11. In this message, we looked at the terrible ways in which the Jews grumbled and complained against God. They had seen His miracles. They had seen His provision for them. They had seen the way that He rescued His people from the land of Egypt. They had every reason to trust Him for the future. Instead, they grumbled against the LORD. And the terrible promise came, "They shall not enter My rest."

It's at this point that the word of God does its piercing and exposing work in our lives. It happened to them. Will it happen to me? Will it happen to you? That's the question that God's word will work in our hearts. It will show us our sin. It will give us a clear view of our hearts. It will give us a good opportunity to respond. If we are at all thinking right, we will plead with the Lord, "Please Lord, protect me from a hard heart!"

My second message in this warning section came from verses 12 and 13. We saw how it is that we need to "Care For Our Hearts." We are all susceptible to an unbelieving heart. We need to constantly be encouraged by others. "Take care, brethren, that there not be in any one of you an evil, unbelieving heart that falls away from the living God. But encourage one another day after day, as long as it is still called 'Today,' so that none of you will be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin" (Hebrews 3:12-13). To withdraw or try to do a Lone-Ranger Christianity will not help our hearts. We need each other in this process. I need you. You need me. We need to encourage one another to press on, that we might not be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin.

My third message was entitled, "Examine Your Hearts," from Hebrews 3:14-19. In preaching through these verses, we considered the tragedy that took place at Kadesh Barnea. God had told the people to take the land of Canaan, so Moses sent 12 spies into the land to spy it out. Ten of them returned unbelieving. Only Joshua and Caleb believed, and the people followed the ten. They weren't believing. And so, they were laid low in the wilderness. Everyone over 20 perished in the wilderness over those 40 years, because they didn't believe. And just as they failed to enter the rest of Canaan, so also may we fail to enter the rest of heaven, if we are in a similar state of unbelief.

When we walked through this passage, I asked you two questions: The questions are these: Are you holding fast? Are you believing? .

As I preached those words, God's word was at work. I have had several people speak with me and say how convicted they have been in their hearts through these messages. Those who have come have come with soft hearts that have feared the word of God (as verse 1 instructs us to). They have been directed toward the Lord to diligently pursue their rest (as verse 11 says). This is how God's word works. How kind God is to give us such a word to help us see our hearts. That's what the word of God does. It opens us up and lays us bare before the Lord.

When you come to grips with this truth, you can respond in one of two ways. You can draw into hopelessness regarding your sin, because God knows it all. Or, you can confess your sin and draw near to God (as verse 16 says).

That's what David did in Psalm 139. Do you remember his response after reflecting upon the all-seeing eyes of God? He said, ...

Psalm 139:23-24
Search me, O God, and know my heart;
Try me and know my anxious thoughts;
And see if there be any hurtful way in me,
And lead me in the everlasting way.

This is a good prayer for us to pray when we see our sin before the Lord.

This sermon was delivered to Rock Valley Bible Church on January 24, 2010 by Steve Brandon.

For more information see www.rvbc.cc.

[1] Luther's Works

[2] John Bunyan, *Pilgrim's Progress*.

[3] J. C. Ryle, *Thoughts for Young Men*.