

Let's jump right into exposing a false teaching common in some Christian circles today. The issue here pertains to the nature of humanity. You may or may not be familiar with the following doctrine, however, all of Christianity has been influenced by it to some degree.

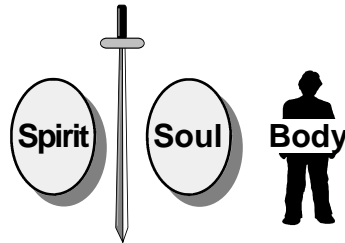
This doctrinal error begins with a misinterpretation of Hebrews 4:12. The King James Version of the Bible states this verse as follows:

For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any twoedged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.

From this verse a teaching is sometimes brought forth which shows the sword (which is the Word of God) being dropped between the soul and the spirit of a person, dividing these two parts of a person's being one from the other.

Escaping Dualism

MISUNDERSTANDING OF HEBREWS 4:12



This is a “dualistic” mindset. The word *dualistic* simply means “two-sided” or “two-fold.”

Dualism may sound reasonable to many of my readers at this point, but I hope you will follow with me to see how subtly destructive this way of thinking becomes. Many Christians today have been indoctrinated completely into this philosophy, while others have been pulled in gradually without considering the implications. Some have been taught dualistic perspectives, even though Hebrews 4:12 never was used as the specific Scripture to promote it. To whatever extent a person has embraced dualistic patterns of thought, I want you to see some of the negative results in people’s lives. But first I must show you how it has no basis in Scripture.

To cut at the very heart of this false doctrine, we need to see what the original manuscripts of the New Testament, which were written in the Greek language, literally say in Hebrews 4:12. Where we are told that the Word of God pierces even unto the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, the Greek word for “spirit” here is *pneumatōs*. The first half of this

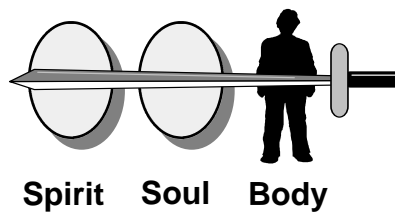
Dividing Asunder Correctly

word, *pneuma*, means *spirit*. The ending on this Greek word is, *atos*, which indicates possession. The word *pneumatos* therefore, is not to be translated *spirit*, but rather *of the spirit*.

This small distinction, which was overlooked by the translators of the King James Bible and a few other versions, has profound implications when we consider exactly how the Word of God divides. The correct interpretation of Hebrews 4:12 must indicate that the Word of God pierces even to the dividing asunder *of the soul* and *of the spirit*, of the joints and of the marrow. The passage does not say that the soul and spirit are divided one from another. It says that *both* of them are divided. The soul is divided and the spirit is divided.

In our diagram of a person's three-part nature, the sword must cut horizontally into a person, rather than vertically between the soul and spirit. The Greek literally tells us in Hebrews 4:12, that the Word of God pierces even to the depth of souls and to the depth of spirits in such a way that they themselves are divided.

CORRECT UNDERSTANDING OF HEBREWS 4:12



Escaping Dualism

Any serious study in the original Greek Bible will confirm this. Let me quote from the Greek New Testament scholar Wuest in his *Word Studies in the Greek New Testament*:

Piercing is the translation of “diikneomai” which means “to go through”. The words “the dividing asunder of soul and spirit” do not mean, “the dividing asunder of the soul from spirit”. Nor is it “the dividing asunder of the joints from the marrow”. The case in Greek is the genitive of description, defining the action in the verb in this case. It is a going through the soul, a going through the spirit.

Wuest is a dichotomist* in his thinking; however, it is critical that we take note as to what the Bible actually says in Hebrews 4:12. Although the Greek Bible is clear concerning this, some Christian teachers today deny scholarly studies of the Greek language by continuing to teach that the soul should be divided from the spirit.

The understanding of Hebrews 4:12, which sees the soul and spirit being pierced within rather than divided from one another, is consistent with the rest of

* The dichotomist’s view is that we are two-part beings rather than three-part beings. This is explained in Chapter One of Vol.

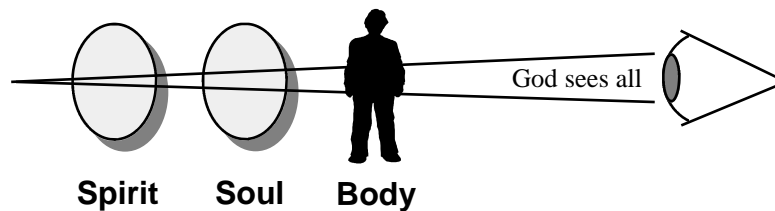
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II, entitled, *The Breath of God in Us*, the Bible. The very next verse, Hebrews 4:13, goes on to tell us:

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 gives us a contextual understanding of how God is able to see into the depths of a person's being, even into his or her spirit.

GOD SEES INTO THE DEPTHS OF ONE'S BEING



Similarly, in other passages we are told that the Word of God “pierces into,” rather than separates the soul from the spirit. For example, when Peter preached on Pentecost Day, we are told that the word “pierced to the heart” (Acts 2:37). The Word of God has to penetrate into the spirit of the non-Christian; otherwise, the seed never could be planted within and salvation would be impossible. Even in the Christian's life there must be an ongoing planting of the Word of God within the spirit and soul. We must,

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therefore, think of the sword of God going into the person rather than dividing him or her in half. Nowhere in the Bible is there any passage which indicates that the soul and the spirit should be divided one from the other.

Why is this so important? In the following chapters I will show you implications that dramatically shift the way Christians live.