

Hebrews Chapter Four (vv.11-13) & Priesthood

Our Responsibility in View of God's Rest (vv.11-13)

Hebrews 4.11-13 conclude the warning of Hebrews 3.7-4.13. Verse 11 is a final exhortation before vv.12-13 show that any amongst them who were merely professing faith in Christ could not escape the penetrating discernment of the **word** (Hebrews 4.12) and **eyes** (Hebrews 4.13) of God.

11 Let us labour therefore to enter into that rest, lest any man fall after the same example of unbelief (disobedience).

Verse 10 has stated that true believers shall cease entirely from their works of faith (cf. 1 Thessalonians 1.3, Revelation 14.13) as God ceased from His works on the seventh day of creation (Genesis 2.1-3). However, now was not the time to sit back and relax!! In this present wilderness scene we are to be 'zealous' and 'diligent' in our labours for the Lord. We are to work to the end (Luke 19.13). Are we serving the Lord as diligently as we might? 1 Corinthians 15.58: Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord. The Greek of this verse suggests that we should be 'super abounding' with 'endless energy' in the Lord's service. In other words, 'always at it and in it', 'surpassing what is required or necessary' for Him. The word 'labour' means 'absolute exhaustion'. Does this characterise us?

Why all this diligence and hard work? Amongst other things it proves the reality of our faith. Genuine faith is demonstrated by steadfast service and faith (belief) to the end. In this regard the warning note is sounded to the Hebrews once more and the writer does not, this time, include himself – 'lest any man'. Those who did not have genuine faith would 'fall' (cf. Hebrews 3.12, apostasy is 'falling away') and prove to have a heart of disobedience as the wilderness generation.

12 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.

'For' continues the argument. Why is the 'sword' of the word of God introduced at this point? Any mere profession or insincerity on the part of the Hebrews could not be hidden from the piercing knife of the word of God (v.12) or penetrating gaze of the eyes of God (v.13).

The Word of God – What It Is

Quick
zao
Means 'living'. The word of God is both life giving (Psalm 119.25) and life sustaining (John 6.63). It is by the word of God that we were born again (1 Peter 1.23).
The word of God takes its character from God Himself as He is the living God (Hebrews 3.12, 9.14, 10.31, 12.22).
The present tense suggests that the word of God is actively and constantly alive (Matthew 24.35).

Powerful
energes
Means 'divine power in action'. The word of God is energising and energetic (Isaiah 55.11).
Note. Divine power is active in us through prayer (James 5.16), love (Galatians 5.6), spiritual gifts (1 Corinthians 12.11) and the word of God. *1 Thessalonians 2.13: God's Word, a power in the lives of you who believe.* PHILLIPS.

Sharper
tomoteros
Means 'sharper than the sharpest double-edged sword'.
Here the word of God is likened to a **sword**. It is also likened to: a hammer (Jeremiah 23.29), fire (Jeremiah 23.29), water (Ephesians 5.26), a mirror (James 1.23), pure milk (1 Peter 2.2) and seed (Psalm 126.6) amongst others.
The sword of the word of God is 'a formidable instrument of war (judgment) and surgery (discernment)'. The spoken word of God has judicial power and shall destroy Messiah's enemies in a coming day (Revelation 19.15) and could discern that which needed commendation and/or condemnation in Pergamos (Revelation 2.12).
The sword is double-edged as it has a double-edged ministry: it **rebukes and restores**, it **approves and disapproves**. *It has an edge to apply to myself as well as an edge to apply to others.*

The Word of God – What It Does

Pierces
diikneomai
Means to 'penetrate'. It also 'divides asunder' or 'cuts in pieces' the whole man (soul and spirit, joints and marrow). This is the work of the surgeon's knife and is suggested by Leviticus 1.6.
The 'soul' is connected with desires, emotions and affections. It is the **sphere of life** and can make us carnal (dominated by the flesh) or unspiritual.
The 'spirit' is associated with the mind, intellect and conscience. It is the **sphere of God** and allows communion with Him (Philippians 3.3).

	The 'joints' represent the outward form whilst the 'marrow' is the inward reality.
Discerns <i>kritikos</i>	Means to 'act as a judge', 'sift out' and 'analyse'. The word of God therefore judges our 'thoughts' (inward reasoning, passions, feelings) and 'intents' (thoughts and ideas). All of the passions and motives that drive my actions (heart) are analysed by the word of God.

The verse is clear. Nothing can be hidden from the piercing knife. The whole person is laid bare and cut in pieces, by the word of God. Any mere profession or insincerity is revealed. God knows who is genuine and who is false, who is faithful or unbelieving, who is spiritual or carnal. Is there too much about us which is carnal? Is there too much outward façade and not enough inward reality? Let us submit to the searching of the Word of God in our gatherings and personal lives.

13 *Neither is there any creature that is not manifest in his sight: but all things are naked and opened unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do.*

We might be able to fool each other, but we cannot fool God. Nothing can be hidden from Him. All things are 'naked' ('without covering') and 'opened' before Him. The word 'opened' means 'to have the throat exposed' and has reference to an athlete grasping his opponent by the throat, or the exposing of the neck of a sacrificial victim at the altar. This speaks of the total exposure and submission of all creation to the all seeing eye of God (Psalm 33.13-15). Why is this significant? All mankind shall one day give account to God (Romans 14.12, Hebrews 13.17, 1 Peter 4.5). The word has the idea of 'rendering accounts for goods and services received'. How have we responded to that which we have received from God's hand? We have the word of God, spiritual gifts and grace upon grace!

Our Great High Priest (vv.14-16)

The writer has ended his (long!) parenthesis and second warning. Now he resumes the theme of the priesthood of Christ which forms the main subject of the whole epistle. Why? *Acts 6.7: And the word of God increased; and the number of the disciples multiplied in Jerusalem greatly; and a great company of the **priests** were obedient to the faith.*

We are introduced to priesthood in Hebrews 2.16-18 where a Merciful and Faithful High Priest has met our need in relation to the **throne** (2.17) and the **wilderness** (2.18). Hebrews 4.14-16 emphasises the heavenly character of our Great High Priest. There is the superiority His **office** (v.14), **position** (v.14), **Person** (v.14, manhood and deity combined), **ministry** (v.15) and **qualifications** (v.15). Note. The **Mediator reconciles** man (1 Timothy 2.5). The **Advocate restores** man (1 John 2.1). The **Priest sustains** man (Genesis 14.18).

The *prophet* was characterised by **speaking**. He would **reveal** God to man. The *king* was characterised by **sovereignty**. He would **reign** for God over man. The *priest* was characterised by **service**. He would **represent** man before God. There were king-prophets (David), priest-prophets (Samuel) and even a king-priest (Melchizedek) but Christ combines Prophet, Priest and King in One glorious Person.

His **first Advent** emphasises Christ as Prophet. *Deuteronomy 18.15: The LORD thy God will raise up unto thee a Prophet from the midst of thee, of thy brethren, like unto me; unto him ye shall hearken.* The **millennium** emphasises Christ as King. *Revelation 19.16: And he hath on his vesture and on his thigh a name written, KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS.* The **day of grace** emphasises Christ as Priest. *Hebrews 2.18: For in that he himself hath suffered being tempted, he is able to succour them that are tempted.*