

The Word of God  
Hebrews 4:11-16

Isaiah 55  
John 15:1-17  
Responsive Psalm 24.

So far as we have been going through this book of Hebrews there seems to have been a pattern that is forming, there is instruction, then admonition and warning. The first 3 chapters was focused on the superiority of Christ, showing that Christ is superior to the Law, and to Moses and showing that all of those things were pointing to Christ, the one who is the fulfillment of all of those things. Then in chapter 3 he set forth his admonition having instructed in the superiority and importance in Christ alone being central to the Christian Faith he said to heed the calling of the Holy Spirit Today, if you hear his voice and do not harden your heart as Israel did in the wilderness.

So we see, instruction, and warning, and even in the warning it teaches the same lesson from the negative. What I mean by that, is that the Author here is instructing his readers that there is nothing outside of Christ, the law, the traditions even the promises given are nothing without Christ being the fulfillment of them. So if you are putting your faith, or your trust in the law, or in works, or in traditions, or the church and not in Christ that puts you in a hopeless state, just as Israel was in the wilderness because of their rebellion against God. So as we can see, even the warning here, to not harden your heart, to listen and respond today is another way of cementing in the argument of the Superiority of Christ in all things. First instruction is given, and then the warning if the instruction is not heeded. In many ways the issues that the Author here is dealing with, namely the superiority of Christ to all things is central and paramount to a true, vibrant living faith. I can not stress this enough, for this seems to be one of the besetting errors of churches throughout all of history, and it is on this point that many who claim to believe fall short having putting their trust in something other than Christ alone.

Far to often we see even today things being elevated in importance in the life and practice of believers that it almost seems to rival Christ himself. We see this definitely in the Catholic church, with their veneration of Mary, their practices of Priesthood with the clergy, their focus on atonement through mass, all of these things taking the focus away from Christ which is a deadly error. But, not to only pick on the Catholic church, we can see the same practices in protestant churches as well, albeit not in such a formal organized sense, but there are those who elevate baptism to be a rite required for salvation, putting it equal to the necessity of the blood of Christ. Or an over focus on social issues, and politics within the assembly which should be dedicated to worship and the preaching of the word but has instead been hijacked pushing political agendas. Or the use of the bible to gain wealth and fame as we see some preachers do. While it manifests itself in many different ways, the error is the same, putting anything above Christ. This message here as I have said over and over again these past few weeks is just as relevant today as it was written to these Hebrews who as we find out in chapter 1 were being at the very least, tempted into angel worship. Into elevating angels to a point worthy of worship just as Christ.

So then, continuing this trend of instruction, and warning we see the same thing last week as we started out here in chapter 4, which expands on what was started in chapter 3, and that is to be sure that you are found to be in the rest of God. And again there is the stark line drawn between those who are found to be in the rest of God and those who are not. This is not a “there are many different ways to God” as many want to believe today, there is only one way and anything else is to misunderstand and not believe in the superiority of Christ. And as this Author here sets forth, if you are outside of Christ, if you are not in the rest that he provides then you are lost in your rebellion and sin just as the Israelite in the wilderness.

And that brings us to our passage today, we will be looking at verse 11-14, so let us read this morning as always, starting back where we were last week and reading to verse 14, so chapter 4, verse 1 through 14. So again, here in verse 11 we see the Author here setting forth the earnest importance of being found within the rest of God. He says that we are to be diligent to enter into that rest, to strive for, to actively pursue. This plays into the life of the Christian, and is just another reason why the Christian walk produces good works, it is not that the works justify or bring merit, it is the outcome flowing out of a heart that resting in God, it is the diligent, and intentional striving to live a life according to the word of God. As the author said in chapter 3, verse 14, “For we have become partakers of Christ” We are one with, we are a part of, we are a member of the body of Christ, “if we hold the beginning of our confidence steadfast to the end” Diligently striving, living a life that is holy and reverent to God, not just when we first claim to believe, but throughout the remainder of our lives. Resting steadfast in the same confidence that we had when we first believed knowing that it is God through Christ who first loved us that brought us to the faith that we claim, keeping Christ central, to that faith and not letting anything else sneak in and take his place.

Not only are we to be diligently striving toward the mark as Paul would say, what we see here in verse 11 is again instruction into the urgency entering the rest, the salvation, provided by God. He had said already, don't wait, but rather respond today if you hear his voice, and the same urgency is in place here as well in the statement to let us therefore be diligent to enter that rest. Using again Israel's example in the wilderness saying “lest anyone fall according to the same example of disobedience. Reiterating again, that one should be concerned not only for themselves, but for others that they do not fall short of entering this rest, and we should not allow ourselves to fall into a spirit, or state of complacency when it comes to this faith. 3 times in chapter 3, he quoted Psalm 95, saying Today if you hear his voice that you should respond, do not wait, do not be complacent, be diligent and respond in faith and belief.

Again pointing to the abject importance of this doctrine, drawing again a stark line between those who do enter that rest, and those who do not because of their disobedience. As I said earlier, the consequence of not heeding the call of the gospel, as it is called Today, the consequence of not diligently striving to be sure that we are indeed in the promised rest is eternal, this is not some passing issue, but it is eternal, you are either in, or you are out there is no middle ground here. Also here in verse 11, we get a hint that this warning is really directed to a small group within this group of Hebrews. For he again addresses them as brethren, as fellow believers in Christ when he says, Let us, equating himself with them. This again brings forth the issue of the deceitfulness of sin, and the danger of it's corruption if left unchecked. Hence the urgency, and the call to be diligent tying back to the warning in chapter 3 verse 12 and 13, “Beware brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief in departing from the living God. But exhort one another daily, while it is called today, lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin.” The corrupting nature of sin can spread among an assembly of God's people like a cancer. It can come in through false teaching, leading God's people astray, or it can come through the example we set in our lives.

The easiest example of this that comes to mind, would be the consumption of alcohol, in itself is not sinful right? But what if there is someone in your congregation who struggles with alcoholism? And through your actions, and sort of carefree attitude toward the use of alcohol, they end up falling back into their sinful struggle with alcohol because they see you as a pillar in the church and an example. It is easy to become complacent in our walk, and if we were to all be honest with ourselves we have all been here at one time or another. So that is why it is so important that we be diligent in our walk, diligent in our faith, making sure that we are not setting our examples to be a stumbling block to others, and we must also be diligent to exhort and encourage one another to not allow ourselves to fall into the deceitfulness of sin. we

This was Christ's teaching to his disciples that we read this morning in John, he warned his disciples that a branch can not bear fruit unless it abides in the vine, in other words the life that does not abide in Christ is unfruitful, because if it is separated from him it is not capable of anything, but instead is like a worthless dead branch which in the end dries up and is thrown in the fire. Verse 12 here tell us that the tool used to bring salvation, is also the same tool that prunes the dead branches from the vine. "For the word of God is living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discernor of the thoughts and intents of the heart. The word of God is living and active, this bible is not just some ancient esoteric writing from a time past, but it as we have pointed out is just as relevant today in it's teaching and admonition as it was when it was first written. The effectiveness of the word comes from the one who gives it. Which is God himself, the sovereign creator of all things, who's word was given to fulfill his purpose, and his will in his creation. Just as God told Isaiah, "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."

The word of God can do no other thing than that which he intends for his purpose and plan, his word will never fail, or disappear for it is eternal just as he is eternal, it is Just as he is just, and righteous and infallible just as he is. The word of God has been revealed throughout scripture in 3 major themes showing his power over all. First off, in Genesis as we all know, that God used his word to create the world, he said.. let there be light, and there was. The creative power of God's word is expressed in the creation narrative of Genesis. We also see that God's word sustains his creation, and his promises. Hebrews 1:3 "who being the brightness of his glory and the express image of his person, and upholding all things.....by the word of his power." and 3<sup>rd</sup> we see God's word has a regenerative power, 2 Cor 4:6, For it is the God who commanded light to shine out of darkness, who has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. God, by his word creates, sustains, and regenerates his creation. It is not something that was one said and is done, but is as this verse were says, it is a living and powerful word. Which is sharper than any two edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and joints and marrow, and is a discernor of the thoughts and intents of the heart.

I don't have to tell anyone here who has ever experienced the conviction of the holy spirit working in them to explain this metaphor of the word of God being a 2 edged sword that cuts to the very core. We see it in ministry and witnessing as well, this dual edge of the word which to one is the savor of life, and to another the stench of death. His word both heals, and destroys, With the same word that brings a new life and blessing to those who are called according to his purpose, it also brings death, destruction, judgment and damnation to those who are the son's of perdition, who in their rebellion revel in their sin. And there is no fooling God, for he does not merely judge on your actions, his word does not merely instruct you to certain action, but it pierces to the core, and is a judge of the thoughts, and intents of the heart.

As verse 13 says, “And there is no creature hidden from his sight, but all things are naked and open to the eyes of him to whom we must give account.” The word of God peircing to the very heart of mankind sinks deep past any outer shell we put forth. There is nothing hidden, every single action done, every single thought, or even the intent and why we do something is judged and weighed against God's word. On that basis alone it is obvious that salvation can not be earned by any merit of mankind, for even his intent would therefore be selfish, self preserving and self serving. Even our attempt at morality is empty without the effective word of God working in us to do so, otherwise it is just us, serving ourselves. And no one will get away, there is no creature, none in his creation that escape his discerning word.

God having created all things, there is nothing that could be unknown or hidden to him. Which plays into the sustaining power of his word, for it is by his word that the sun rises and the sun sets, without his word sustaining his creation, it would cease to exist. So to bring this all around full circle, the author here has just been building step by step the superiority of God and his Son Jesus Christ above everything. How can anything be worthy of praise or worship or be held equal to the one who by his word created, sustains, regenerates, and condemns lost souls? There is nothing above God and his word for all things were created by him, and for him. I hope that this study today brings maybe some encouragement into your lives, for as we all know this life seems to be nothing but one struggle after another and it seems that the world is crumbling around us and it seems that darkness and sin have been given the reigns. But remember, the very word that created you, and called you, bringing you from death to life, also promises that he will never leave nor forsake you. No matter what this world may bring, no matter the disappointment, the pain, or the suffering we have a God who is above it all on our side, who is not only able, but willing to carry us through.

IF ever there was a time for God's word, it is today. We see so many who are claiming the word of God that are falling into rebellion and sin, rejecting the very word they claim to keep. We need to stand, even more upon this word, determined to be messengers of the word rightly given, to stand upon the truth of the gospel, for if we seek to water it down, or to cave to the social pressures in the name of ministry it is no longer the gospel of God that we are sharing, and living by, but something else entirely different. WE must remain steadfast, we must remain true, and we must remain faithful and put our trust in the one who sustains all of creation through his word.