

CONVICTIONAL COMMENTS | HEBREWS 4:11-16

The writer gives three “therefore” comments that both conclude chapter four’s warning and convict the nation to respond to the Messiah.

THEREFORE.... (VV. 11-13)

- Verse 11 is the writer’s prayer for the people of God: *Oh that we might be diligent to go into that “completely stopped” state, so that none of us might fall into the same example of disobedience.*
- Clearly, the writer and the recipients had NOT entered the rest. To equate the rest as being salvation (or heaven) creates a works based soteriology that is at odds with Christian theology.
- Verses 12 and 13 are an argument for the urging of diligence in v. 11. The people of God should be diligent because:
  - God’s Word will not fail! (v. 12)
    - It is **quick**, an archaic form meaning “living,” This word *zao*, is the word for life (having breath) but is not exclusive to materialistic life. For example, there is "living bread" (John 6:51) and "living water" (Jn 4:10).
    - It is **powerful**. This is the word from which we get "energy." *Energas* is translated "powerful" in KJV, or "effectual" by KJV in 1 Cor 16:9 and Philemon 6.
    - It is **piercing**. Literally, "to go all the way through, completely."
    - To the **dividing asunder**. The Greek *μερισμός* [*merismos*] is based on *meros*, a section or a division, with the suffix *ismos*. This suffix means “the result of” its root word. Therefore, the Word results in division of the **soul and spirit**.
  - God’s eyes are not dim (v. 13)
    - **Opened unto the eyes** is the word *τραχηλιζω* [*trachelizo*] (from *trachelos*) is literally, "to bend the neck back" as a wrestler would do in a wrestling match to defeat his opponent.

THEREFORE...(VV. 14-15)

- The writer continues to encourage the nation to receive her Messiah, who is her High Priest, and who has completed His redemptive task.
- The text does *not* say “let us hold fast **our** profession” (v. 14)
  - KJV italicizes, NASB does not
  - It is literally, “The profession” not “our profession”
- KJV uses the outdated “profession,” which is accurate as “that which we profess,” but not accurate in the more modern, “that which is our career.”
  - *Homologia*, to speak the same things.
- The nation must confidently hold fast to that which it professes: The Messiah will come and establish the throne of David, and the people must repent before he will come.

THEREFORE...(V. 16)

- Based on the character and work of the High Priest, the strength of the Word of God, and the manner in which God sees everything, *therefore* the nation must “draw near with confidence...”

- These verses build upon the exhortation of Hebrews 4:14-16
- The High Priest: ἀρχιερεύς [*archiereus*] is *arche* (first) and *hieros* (that which is holy or sacred). Our English word hierarchy comes from the same term, and was originally only used of the clergy.
- The appointment of the High Priest: **Ordained** is the word καθίστημι [*kathistomi*] is *kata* (a prefix which takes its adjoining word to the ultimate degree) and *histomai* (to stand). Thus, the word is "the ultimate stand" before God. The word always implies an "in charge" kind of leadership of one who is assigned, appointed, or ordained to a particular task on behalf of another.
- The work of the High Priest was to offer the **gifts and sacrifices**. Under Levitical Law, there were both "offerings" (here "gifts") and "sacrifices." The difference: a sacrifice involved the shedding of blood.
- The demeanor of the High Priest: **have compassion**
  - The word μετριοπαθῶ [*metriopatheo*] is to have a "measured feeling," that is, he acts in mercy because he himself is in need of mercy.
  - He does this because he is **compared with infirmity** (not "beset with weakness" as in NASB). It is used in Mark 9:42 as "hanged about his neck." **Infirmity** is *asthenia*. The Greek *sthenos* is strength (from which we get calisthenics), negated by the prefix *a*. Thus, the High Priest is "surrounded by lack of strength."
- The need of the High Priest: Even though the Priest has made "the ultimate stand before God on behalf of men," since he is surrounded by weakness he is not immune to an obligation to sacrifice. The sacrifices are as much for him as for the people.
- The Call of the High Priest:
  - One must take care not to build a doctrine of the call to ministry on this verse. This is a discussion of the Old Testament Priesthood, not the New Testament Pastor. The word "call" is not mysterious, but simply means to be "named," as in Revelation 12:9, a passage which clearly says a "calling" is not mystical or spiritual, but simply a reality.
  - The reality is that no Old Testament Priest sought after the position. Rather, it was a matter of birth, as in a royal family. The only person who was "called" a Priest by God was the rightful heir to Aaron's ministry.
  - Note that in the dispensation of the church, a man may "desire the office of a bishop," and such desire is commendable (1 Timothy 3:1-2). There is no requirement for a mystical call from God, but rather a Christian character and an orderly family. The church is now the one who "calls" someone as their minister.