

OUR FINAL AUTHORITY

Hebrews 4:11-16

4:1-11 exhorts us to stop churning, stop trying to work it all out ourselves, stop struggling, & TRUST HIM. *Enjoy His rest!*

“But we can’t leave it all in His hands! We have to do *something!*”

Certainly God sometimes asks us to take action.

But *OUR* problem: we’re prone to take matters into our own hands!

We have to help God out; otherwise He might “blow it!”

God says “Trust me with this.”

We respond that’s not reasonable. It costs too much!

Too often in reality we have another source of authority.

So, how does this relate to our study of Hebrews 4?

Hebrews speaks to people about to throw in towel because of affliction.

He reminds us: God’s Word is *final* authority. Listen to Him.

God has spoken.

Therefore, we had better pay attention to what He has said.

[Hebrews demonstrates that...]

Jesus’ revelation of Father is superior to Moses’ 3:1-4:13

3:1-6 His revelation is superior because He is greater than Moses.

3:7-4:13 Since Jesus’ revelation is superior,

it’s *more* important that we hear & obey His Word.

Warning based on Israel's experience 3:7-19

That generation missed the blessing God wanted to give them.

They didn’t experience His rest.

They *died* in the wilderness.

Because they didn’t believe Him, they hardened their heart & refused to enter His place of blessing & rest.

Promise concerning God's rest 4:1-11

If Israel failed to believe & missed God's rest,
 it's even more important that WE trust Him & obey.
 Our revelation is superior; consequences of unbelief are more significant.

Last week we considered 1st part of Heb. 4,
 the rest God has provided for His children.

We observed how to enjoy God's peace & rest.
 Do you want to enjoy God's blessing in your life?

Stop churning & start resting!

Stop trying to fight the battle ourselves.
 Entrust ourselves & our battles to Him.

We decide to trust Him & enter His rest.

We can trust Him with the stressors in our life.

We must trust Him with our concerns to enjoy His peace.

As we consider verses 12-13, note that it begins with "**for**."

It explains truth in **4:2-3** "*Good news came to us as to them, but the message they heard didn't benefit them, because they weren't united by faith with those who listened.* ³*For we who have believed enter that rest, as he said, "As I swore in my wrath, 'They shall not enter my rest'" although his works were finished from the foundation of the world.*"
 & **4:9-11** "*There remains a Sabbath rest for the people of God, ¹⁰for whoever has entered God's rest has also rested from his works as God did from his. ¹¹Let us therefore strive to enter that rest, so that no one may fall by the same sort of disobedience"*

Israel learned hard way:

it's dangerous to take God's Word lightly.

They suffered severe consequences of disobedience.

They knew that His Word is living and effective

–it's not something to play around with!

Now he builds on that idea . . .

If WE want to enjoy His rest, WE must pay attention to His Word & make it our final authority

It isn't MY word or any other *human person* we need to hear.

When we're facing stressors of life, we need a word from God. *His Word* makes difference; *His Word* gives peace & rest.

That's point in next few vss of Heb 4: **4:11-13** *Let us therefore strive to enter that rest, so that no one may fall by the same sort of disobedience. ¹²For the word of God is living & active, sharper than any 2-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul & of spirit, of joints & of marrow, & discerning the thoughts & intentions of the heart. ¹³No creature is hidden from his sight, but all are naked & exposed to the eyes of him to whom we must give account."*

Danger of disobedience:

For Israel, danger came from not trusting God & not entering land.

It resulted in not entering the place of blessing & rest.

For us, the danger comes from not remaining faithful.

–Not “hanging in there” in the face of opposition.

–Not living by His revealed Word & standing firm for Him.

It results in churning, struggling, fighting for our way, but *NOT* in rest!

If we refuse to obey His Word,

God judges His people today as He did in Moses' day.

In the wilderness, when Israel failed to trust God & obey Him, they missed His rest.

But even worse, when they tried to go ahead on their own,

Num 14 says that they fell by the sword.

Now people who fail to enter His rest, face ***His Word***, which is ***sharper than any two-edged sword***.

The sword, however sharp it may be, only deals with the body.
 God's Word penetrates innermost part of our being. *It cuts deep.*
 [To help us see how important that warning is, he reminds us of...]

7 things we know are true of God's word:

1. God's Word is alive.

When it lands on good soil, it produces fruit.

2. God's Word is active (energetic)

Root <= "energy." => It is *effective*.

It produces change, transformation in life of person who receives it.

If we listen to God's Word, it will change our life. *It is powerful!*

3. God's Word is sharper than any double-edged sword

It has sharp edge—sharper than sharpest instrument

It can cut through anything that stands in its way & bring conviction

Kent Hughes: "**God's Word cleaves through our hard-shelled souls like a hot knife through warm butter.**"

4. God's Word penetrates to the depth of our being.

It penetrates our innermost parts.

5. God's Word judges our thoughts and motives.

It discerns our thoughts & attitudes correctly.

It knows what's going on in our mind & deals with root of the problem.

When we turn away from God, His Word hounds us & shows us where we turned aside.

6. God's Word is impossible to hide from;

It finds us, wherever we try to hide!

We can't get away from His Word. Hiding is futile.

We think we're going underground; but can't hide from God's Word.

People get upset that somebody told me about your problem!

How do I know? I don't.

God's Word knows where we're hiding & goes after us.

We can't hide from it!

7. God's Word uncovers everything. *"all are naked & exposed to the eyes of him to whom we must give account"*

Everything is stark naked before Him.

We can't keep secrets from His Word.

It finds out exactly where we are & speaks to what we're doing.

2nd expression lit. means "to twist the neck" or "take by the throat."

It provokes images from slaughter by cutting the jugular vein.

All creatures are in God's grip, vulnerable, *helpless, defenseless*, totally exposed before Him & in His hands.

That is true of His Word.

We are totally exposed and defenseless before it.

We can't fool it. Duplicity and hypocrisy won't work.

Chinese businessman visiting England, was fascinated by powerful microscope. Looking through its lens to study crystals & flower petals, he was amazed at beauty & detail. He purchased 1 to take back to China. He enjoyed it, until 1 day he examined rice he was planning to eat. He discovered tiny creatures crawling in it. Since he was fond of his staple food, he wondered what to do. He concluded there's only 1 way out of dilemma: smashed microscope. People do that with God's Word. We want to get rid of it because it reveals our nature.

God's Word uncovers every area of our life.

It works on us, poking & prodding, until we're transformed into what God wants us to become.

In the Word we see God, and we see how God sees us.

We see ourselves as we really are.

God's Word won't leave us alone.

Since God's Word is living & effective,

we ought to listen to its message & respond in faith.

We'd be wise to listen, to conform to God's plan, enjoy His peace,
before it cuts in to do it's corrective surgery in our life.

Do we wonder why we're uncomfortable when we get off the path?

If we're God's children, His Word is going to pursue us
no matter where we hide, or what secrets we hide from it.

Only way to find rest: recognize authority of God's Word & live by it.

Saying from Isa. captures idea: ***"There's no rest for the wicked."***

Are WE avoiding Word because WE don't like what we hear?

We'll never find rest that way!

The struggle goes on. Stressors increase.

It's going to keep getting worse—until we stop fighting

Have we had enough? Are we ready to stop and rest?

It's time to surrender to God & His Word—let Him have *His* way

Then—we'll know what it means to enter into His rest.

In the storm, isn't time to flee from the book!

That's time to cling to it! . . . to trust the Author & DO what He says!

COME WITH CONFIDENCE!

Hebrews 4:14-16

Because of Jesus' death for us, He's able to serve as our
High Priest. That's the theme Hebrews develops in **4:14-16**

*"Since we have great high priest who has passed through the heavens,
Jesus, the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession. ¹⁵For we do not
have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses,
but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without
sin. ¹⁶Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that
we may receive mercy & find grace to help in time of need."*

[Writer moves on to 2nd major doctrinal theme:

Not only is Jesus superior to other leading people in Israel's history

because He's best revelation of the Father, but also because . . .]

JESUS IS THE BEST HIGH PRIEST 4:14-7:28

Have you ever traveled away from home and needed a doctor,
when you didn't know anybody in town?

Can you imagine finding yourself in that situation in a strange town, at
2:00 in the morning?

Hebrews tells us we have a High Priest in God's presence
anytime we need help, day or night! Even at 2 a.m.!!

We can call with confidence, not fear, knowing He's there for us,
ready to come to our side to assist us—whenever we need help.

Why is He able to do this for us so effectively?

Reasons for our response the basis of his exhortation

We have a great High Priest.

Writer suggests 4 reasons we can call on Jesus in time of need.

4 reasons He's qualified to serve as our High Priest

—to intervene on our behalf.

1. He has passed through the heavens 14a *"Since then we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus, the Son of God..."*

High Priest passed through veil in the temple.

He went from man's sphere in the world, into God's presence.

In same way, Jesus, our High Priest, passed through the heavens.

He's been on both sides—ours and God's

He's been on our side; He's now seated on God's side.

He's lived among us, faced same temptations we face,

and then ascended from here to the Father's right hand.

He's High Priest whose influence isn't limited to this world.

He passed through heavens & now sits at the Father's right hand.

He has influence with the Father because He is God's own Son.

Imagine having lobbyist who's son of the President.

Talk about being able to cut through red tape & get to the top!

That's what **God's Son** is able to do for us in God's presence!

2. He's able to sympathize with our weakness. **4:15a**

"For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses..."

He can sympathize with our affliction because He's experienced it

"Sympathize" lit., to feel together with another person what they feel.

Man's view of God sees Him above & far from our affliction.

Pagans view God as an angry God to be satisfied.

Greeks view Him as "apathetic," unfeeling.

Jews view Him as different, holy, far above us.

We, too, think: "*A holy God, could never understand what I'm going through. He can't identify with me—can't feel what I feel.*"

Some people think we need *another* intermediary,

—someone who understands our feelings—to intervene for us.

Hebrews tells us Jesus *IS* that somebody.

He knows what we're going through—because He's been there!

People who've lost a child, go through depression, an auto accident, unfair criticism, or financial burdens, feel it with others.

We sympathize with them; we know feeling. We've been there!

What encouragement it gives to know that no matter how down we may be, no matter how pressured, how despondent, *Jesus understands*. He's felt that pain too.

If we're feeling betrayed, he knows the feeling. He was betrayed.

If we're falsely accused, he knows the feeling. He was accused.

If we're under attack, he knows the feeling.

If we don't get what we deserve, . . .

If we're discouraged, alone, abandoned, . . .

...He knows all about it! He's been there!

How strange it must've been for Creator to experience human frailty.

But He endured it, so that when we come near His throne,
we will never tell Him something that seems foreign to Him.

Jesus is able to sympathize with us in our affliction.

He knows what it feels like. He's experienced it too.

3. He was tempted like we are. 4:15b *"One who in every respect has been tempted as we are,*

He has been tempted in every area of life we will ever experience.

Satan threw everything at Him that he throws at us,
and more intensely; the stakes were much higher!

Jesus knows all about what we're going through.

Only difference: because of His character, Jesus never struggled with sin on inside, as we do, for He had no sin.

He never gave in to temptation, so He experienced greater pressure than we endure. We give in under much less pressure.

A man who gives in to temptation after five minutes simply does not know what it would have been like an hour later. . . .

Christ, because he's the only man who never yielded to temptation,
is the only One who knows to the full what temptation means.

Jesus didn't live a sheltered life;

He endured greater pressure than we can imagine!

4. He never gave in to temptation. 4:15c *"...yet without sin"*

He never sinned. He never threw in the towel.

He knows what it takes to triumph over temptation

—specifically *this* temptation Hebrews are facing—He faced it.

He was tempted the same way they are—every way we're tempted—without sin.

Doesn't mean he experienced every individual temptation we do.

He experienced same kinds of temptation, much more intensely.
 Since He knows how great the pressure can be,
 He has greater compassion for people who are tempted
 than any sinner could ever have!

Our response to these reasons

How should we respond to such a High Priest?

1. Let us hang on to our profession 4:14b

“let us hold fast our confession”

They’re tempted to go underground—act like crowd—avoid affliction.
 He exhorts us not to throw in towel & join crowd returning to Judaism.
 Jesus knows feeling. He was tempted to throw in towel.
 But He endured affliction. He can help us do the same.

Hang in there! Never give up! Don’t throw in the towel!

Continue to live for God; trust Him to handle the obstacles!

2. Let us draw near with confidence & get help we need.

4:16a *“Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy & find grace to help in time of need”*

Since we have this kind of High Priest, we can approach Him confidently to seek help when the pressure mounts.

Let’s draw near to him!

Results of our response

When we hang on to our profession... When we draw near boldly...

Two things happen:

1. We receive mercy 4:16c “...that we may receive mercy”

We receive mercy because He knows what it’s like. *He’s been there!*

2. We find grace to help us when we need it.

4:16c *“& find grace to help in time of need”*

The throne we come to is a throne of *GRACE!*

This isn't a throne of condemnation.

Jesus doesn't sit in courtroom, scowling down from His bench with angry look, waiting to crack His gavel when we confess failure. *He sits on throne of grace.* We approach without fear of rejection.

He's a compassionate, loving God, who understands what it's like. When we draw near God's throne, we receive mercy & find grace to help in time of need. He hears need & supplies what's lacking. Jesus understands what we're going through.

He has unequalled capacity for sympathy. He knows what it *feels* like. He's standing by, waiting for us to come, ready to help!

HOW SHOULD WE RESPOND?

"Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace..."

We can go into the throne room. We can get help when we need it. Theologically, we know we're *always* in His presence!

Practically, have we gone to His throne when WE face hard times?

When WE face hard times, do we churn and struggle?

Do we try to "tough it out?" Or, do we turn to Jesus for help?

He *wants* us to come. In fact, He *commands* us to come.

Come to our great High Priest. Come to Him, and rest.

Wesley's hymn, *Amazing Love*, one verse concludes:

"Bold I approach the eternal throne."

That's the result of His amazing love!

He's the perfect High Priest.

He's been on both sides of the veil.

He is ready to pour out His mercy and help us,

when we hang on to our confession, and draw near to Him.

Let's draw near with confidence!