

Notes on the Greek New Testament
Day 306 – November 2nd – Hebrews 4:1-16

Works frequently referenced in these notes on Hebrews

Bruce, FF	<i>The Epistle to the Hebrews</i> , Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, 1964
Guthrie, Donald	<i>Hebrews</i> (Tyndale Commentary), IVP, Leicester, 1983
Hughes, Philip Edgcombe	<i>A Commentary on The Epistle to the Hebrews</i> , Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, 1977
Westcott, BF	<i>The Epistle to the Hebrews</i> , Macmillan, London, 1889

Hebrews 4:1-13

"Since Moses was unable to lead the Israelites into Canaan, the writer reflects on the position of Joshua, who did lead them in. But he shows that even Joshua did not secure for the people true rest. Joshua failed for the same reasons as Moses, that is, through the people's unbelief. This leads the writer to exhort his readers to seek that superior rest; which he goes on to imply is found in Christ." Guthrie

Verse 1

Φοβηθῶμεν οὐδὲν μήποτε καταλειπομένης ἐπαγγελίας εἰσελθεῖν εἰς τὴν κατάπαυσιν αὐτοῦ δοκῆ τις ἐξ ὑμῶν ὑστερηκέναι·

φοβηθῶμεν Verb, aor pass dep subj, 1 pl
φοβεομαι trans fear, be afraid (of)
μήποτε lest, otherwise
καταλείπω leave, leave behind

"The promise was left because no purpose of God can fall to the ground; and this was unfulfilled in the case of those to whom it was first given ... The writer takes for granted throughout that whatever God in his love has ever destined for man is brought within man's reach by Christ 'the heir of all things,' the fulfilment of human destiny." Westcott.
"In the language of Psalm 95, it is still 'today' as far as God's promise is concerned; and this indicates both opportunity in that we live in God's day of grace, and responsibility on our part not to despise or turn away from this privilege." Hughes.

ἐπαγγελία, ας f promise
εἰσερχομαι enter, go in, come in
κατάπαυσις, εως f see 3:11
δοκῆ Verb, pres act subj, 3 s δοκεω think
ὑστερηκέναι Verb, perf act infin ὑστερεω
lack, fall short of

Verse 2

καὶ γὰρ ἐσμεν εὐηγγελισμένοι καθάπερ κάκεινοι, ἀλλ' οὐκ ὠφέλησεν ὁ λόγος τῆς ἀκοῆς ἐκείνους, μὴ συγκεκρασμένους τῇ πίστει τοῖς ἀκούσασιν.

εὐηγγελισμένοι Verb, perf pass ptc, m nom pl
εὐαγγελίζω act. and midd proclaim the good news
καθάπερ as, just as
κάκεινος, η, ο contraction of και ἐκεινος
and that one, he also, they also
ὠφελω gain, profit, benefit
ἀκοῆς Noun, gen s ἀκοη, ης f hearing
συγκεκρασμένους Verb, perf pass ptc, m acc
pl συγκεραννυμι unite, put together

There are a 'bewildering variety of readings preserved in the manuscripts' (Metzger). Westcott suggests that this may reflect a primitive error. He suggests that if συγκεκρασμένους is adopted the sense is, "they were not united by faith with those that truly heard" i.e. with Moses, Joshua and Caleb. If συγκεκρασμενος is accepted (the reading of s and preferred by Hughes), it means "it was not incorporated by faith in them that heard."

πίστει Noun, dat s πιστις, εως f faith
ἀκούσασιν Verb, aor act ptc, dat pl ἀκουω

Verse 3

εἰσερχόμεθα γὰρ εἰς κατάπαυσιν οἱ πιστεύσαντες, καθὼς εἶρηκεν· Ὡς ὄμοσα ἐν τῇ ὀργῇ μου, εἰ εἰσελεύσονται εἰς τὴν κατάπαυσίν μου, καίτοι τῶν ἔργων ἀπὸ καταβολῆς κόσμου γενηθέντων,

εἰσερχομαι see v.1
πιστεω believe (in), have faith (in)

I.e. Christians.

εἶρηκεν Verb, perf act indic, 3 s λεγω

"Christ has brought this rest within the reach of His people." Westcott

ὄμοσα see 3:11
καίτοι yet, and yet, although
καταβολη, ης f beginning, creation

γενηθέντων Verb, aor pass dep ptc, gen pl
γινομαι

'the works (of God) were finished from the creation of the world.' "God Himself had entered into it, though it still remained that His people should share it according to His purpose." Westcott.

"The futurity relates not to God's rest as such but to the enjoyment of it by his creatures." Hughes.

Verse 4

εἶρηκεν γάρ που περι τῆς ἐβδόμης οὕτως· Καὶ κατέπαυσεν ὁ θεὸς ἐν τῇ ἡμέρᾳ τῇ ἐβδόμῃ ἀπὸ πάντων τῶν ἔργων αὐτοῦ,

εἶρηκεν see v.3

πού enclitic adv somewhere

Cf. 2:6. Probably means 'as we know' or 'to quote familiar words.'

ἐβδομος, η, ον seventh

οὕτως thus, in this way

καταπαυω rest, cease

Verse 5

καὶ ἐν τούτῳ πάλιν· Εἰ εἰσελεύσονται εἰς τὴν κατάπαυσίν μου.

παλιν again, once more

The emphasis is upon entering *God's* rest.

Verse 6

ἐπεὶ οὖν ἀπολείπεται τινὰς εἰσελθεῖν εἰς αὐτήν, καὶ οἱ πρότερον εὐαγγελισθέντες οὐκ εἰσηλθόν δι' ἀπειθειαν,

ἐπεὶ since, because

ἀπολειπω leave behind; pass. remain
(impers it remains)

πρότερον adv προτερον before, first of all,
originally

εὐαγγελισθέντες Verb, aor pass ptc, m nom pl
εὐαγγελιζω see v.2

ἀπειθεια, ας f disobedience

"Unbelief is manifested in disobedience (contrast 3:19). The two are placed in close connexion, Rom 11:20ff, 30ff; comp John 3:36." Westcott. See also John 15:1ff.

Verse 7

πάλιν τινὰ ὀρίζει ἡμέραν, Σήμερον, ἐν Δαυὶδ λέγων μετὰ τοσοῦτον χρόνον, καθὼς προεῖρηται, Σήμερον ἐὰν τῆς φωνῆς αὐτοῦ ἀκούσητε, μὴ σκληρύνητε τὰς καρδίας ὑμῶν·

παλιν see v.5

ὀρίζω decide, determine, designate

σημερον see 3:7

ἐν Δαυὶδ Westcott takes to mean 'in the person of David' rather than 'in the book of David.'

"The fact that *long afterward*, centuries after Moses' day, God *through David* demarcates a *certain day* as '*Today*' indicates, further, that the promised rest was still remaining, unentered, when Psalm 95 was composed." Hughes.

τοσοῦτος, αὐτη, οὐτον correlative adj so

much, so great, so large

χρονος, ου m time, period of time

προεῖρηται Verb, perf pass indic, 3 s

προλεγω say beforehand, warn in
advance

See 3:7 and 8.

Verse 8

εἰ γὰρ αὐτοὺς Ἰησοῦς κατέπαυσεν, οὐκ ἂν περὶ ἄλλης ἐλάλει μετὰ ταῦτα ἡμέρας.

Ἰησοῦς is here 'Joshua.'

καταπαυω cause to rest; intrans rest,
cease

ἂν particle indicating contingency

ἄλλος, η, ο another, other

λαλεω speak, talk

"What our author is saying is that God's promise of rest did not and does not have a merely earthly fulfilment, but is rather eschatological in purport, and therefore still awaits the people of God in all its fulness. And this accords perfectly with the insistence later in this epistle (11:13-16, 35; 12:18ff.) that the expectation of God's people has never been tied to material or earthly objects, 'for here we have no lasting city, but we seek the city which is to come' (13:14). Hence the propriety of the manner in which our author here, many centuries again after the Psalmist's day, continues to treat the promised rest, in its consummating fulness, as future and as a constant hope and incentive for the Christian pilgrim." Hughes.

Verse 9

ἄρα ἀπολείπεται σαββατισμὸς τῷ λαῷ τοῦ θεοῦ·

"This unclassical use of ἄρα in the first place of a sentence as defining a conclusion from the previous words is found in the Synoptists (Matt 12:28; Lk 11:48) and in St Paul (Rom 10:17; 1 Cor 15:18 etc), especially in the form ἄρα οὖν (Rom 5:18 etc.), but it is not found in St John or in the Catholic Epistles." Westcott

ἀπολειπω leave behind

σαββατισμος, ου m a Sabbath's day's rest

"Not an isolated sabbath but a sabbath life" Westcott – the eternal sabbath. "The final rest of man answers to the idea of Creation, realised after the Fall by Redemption."

λαος, ου m people, a people

"Israel was the type of the divine commonwealth." Westcott

Verse 10

ὁ γὰρ εἰσελθὼν εἰς τὴν κατάπαυσιν αὐτοῦ καὶ αὐτὸς κατέπαυσεν ἀπὸ τῶν ἔργων αὐτοῦ ὡσπερ ἀπὸ τῶν ἰδίων ὁ θεός.

εἰσερχομαι enter, go in, come in
καταπαυσις, εως f see 3:11

The αὐτοῦ refers to God – 'whoever has entered into His rest.' Cf. Rev 7:9ff; 14:13.

καταπαυω see v.8

ὡσπερ as, even as, just as

ἰδιος, α, ον one's own

Verse 11

σπουδάσωμεν οὖν εἰσελθεῖν εἰς ἐκείνην τὴν κατάπαυσιν, ἵνα μὴ ἐν τῷ αὐτῷ τις ὑποδείγματι πέσῃ τῆς ἀπειθείας.

σπουδαζω do one's best, work hard at, be eager

The thought is of active exertion, eager and earnest endeavour. It expresses the paradox of a resting from our own works the entrance into which requires earnest endeavour – it is not 'let go and let God.'

Note the first person plural: the author associates himself with his hearers.

ἐκεῖνος, η, ο demonstrative adj. that

ὑποδειγμα, τος n example

πέσῃ Verb, aor act subj, 3 s πιπτω fall

Westcott says there are two ways of understanding this phrase, 'falling into the same type of disobedience' or 'falling after the same type ...'. He thinks the latter the more likely meaning.

ἀπειθεια, ας f disobedience

Verse 12

Ζῶν γὰρ ὁ λόγος τοῦ θεοῦ καὶ ἐνεργῆς καὶ τομώτερος ὑπὲρ πᾶσαν μάχαιραν δίστομον καὶ διῆκνούμενος ἄχρι μερισμοῦ ψυχῆς καὶ πνεύματος, ἁρμῶν τε καὶ μυελῶν, καὶ κριτικὸς ἐνθυμήσεων καὶ ἐννοιῶν καρδίας.

The word here is not Christ himself but what God has spoken (1:1-2) which now has its focus and end in Christ. It is the word that proceeds from his mouth (see Rev. 1:16). Nevertheless, by this token, the action of the word in the heart is the activity of Christ.

"The main thought in the description of 'the word of God' is not that of punishment ... but of its essential nature as it enters into, permeates, transforms every element of man... The five successive epithets (ζῶν ... ἐνεργῆς ... τομώτερος ... διῆκνούμενος ... κριτικὸς ...) applied to 'the word' mark with increasing clearness its power to deal with the individual soul. There is a passage step by step from that which is more general to that which is more personal. Life is characterised by activity: the activity takes the special form of an internal examination, which reaches to the very foundations of our organisation; and this is not physical only but inspired by a moral force, all-pervading, all-discovering, for it is indeed the force of God." Westcott.

ζωω live, be alive

Living in its energies and actions, it reflects the character of God himself. Cf. Is 55:11.

ἐνεργῆς, ες active, effective

τομώτερος, α, ον sharper; comparative of τομος

μάχαιρα, ης f sword

δίστομος, ον double-edged

There is no blunt side to it.

"As the instrument of God's mighty acts it is more powerful and penetrating than the keenest instrument devised by man. Paul simply calls the word of God the sword of the Spirit (Eph 6:17), again placing it in a category distinct from and far above any merely human weapon." Hughes.

διῆκνομαι go all the way through, penetrate

ἄχρι (and ἄχρις) prep with gen until, as far as

μερισμος, ου m division, separation

ψυχη, ης f inmost being, life, 'soul'

The list that follows is simply illustrative of every aspect of man's being. The word of God "penetrates to the innermost depth of man's being." Hughes. Or as Calvin expresses it, "There is nothing so hard or firm in man, nothing so deeply hidden that the efficacy of the word does not penetrate through to it."

ἄρμος, ου m joint (of the body)

τε enclitic particle and; τε και and also

μυελος, ου m marrow (of bones)

κριτικος, η, ον able to judge

ἐνθυμησις, εως f (inmost) thought, idea, imagination

ἐννοια, ας f attitude, thought, purpose

"Nothing could be more inaccessible and intangible, humanly speaking, than the notions and motives concealed in the furthest depths of man's mind... Only God's word can pierce through to this intangible realm, and it does so in a manner that is both dynamic and critical." Hughes.

Verse 13

καὶ οὐκ ἔστιν κτίσις ἀφανῆς ἐνώπιον αὐτοῦ,
πάντα δὲ γυμνὰ καὶ τετραηλισμένα τοῖς
ὀφθαλμοῖς αὐτοῦ, πρὸς ὃν ἡμῖν ὁ λόγος.

"The fact that the word of God penetrates, like a sharp sword, to the innermost centre of man's selfhood means that every single detail and aspect of the human person is fully and inexorably open to the gaze of God." Hughes.

κτίσις, εως f creation, what is created
ἀφανῆς, ες hidden, able to be hidden
ἐνώπιον before, in the presence of
γυμνος, η, ον naked, bare
τετραηλισμένα Verb, perf pass ptc, n
nom/acc pl τραηλιζομαι be laid bare,
be exposed

πρὸς ὃν ἡμῖν ὁ λόγος 'To whom we must render account. "The man who acknowledges that he is now and that he will be hereafter 'naked and exposed to the eyes of the One with whom we have to reckon' (NEB), and that the discernment of God is always without error and his judgment righteous and equitable (Isa 11:3f), is a man who is standing on the threshold of divine grace; for it is against the background of human guilt and powerlessness that the grace of God which, in Christ, brings forgiveness and victory is most particularly displayed; and it is to this theme that our author now turns." Hughes.

4:14-9:14 A Superior High Priest

"The Law of Moses had recognized and made provision for a high priest who could mediate between God and man. But the priesthood of Aaron had several weaknesses and the writer shows that the high-priesthood of Christ is of a superior kind... Closely linked with this theme is that of the New Covenant which is shown to be superior to the Old." Guthrie

Verse 14

Ἔχοντες οὖν ἀρχιερέα μέγαν διεληλυθότα
τοὺς οὐρανοὺς, Ἰησοῦν τὸν υἱὸν τοῦ θεοῦ,
κρατῶμεν τῆς ὁμολογίας·

ἀρχιερεὺς, εως m see 2:17
μεγας, μεγαλη, μεγα large, great
διεληλυθότα Verb, perf act ptc, m acc s
διερχομαι pass through, go through

"That is to say, in contrast to the high priest of the levitical order who once a year passed from the sight of the people as he took the blood of atonement into the earthly sanctuary, Jesus, our great high priest, at his ascension passed from the sight of the watching apostles as he entered once for all into the heavenly sanctuary, there to appear on our behalf (Acts 1:9; cf. Heb 8:1ff.; 9:11ff. and 24ff., where the theme is developed more fully)." Hughes.
He has entered into his rest.

κρατῶ hold, hold fast, seize

Seems to imply a need to seize and retain hold.

ὁμολογια, ας f see 3:1

Verse 15

οὐ γὰρ ἔχομεν ἀρχιερέα μὴ δυνάμενον
συμπαθῆσαι ταῖς ἀσθενείαις ἡμῶν,
πειρασμένον δὲ κατὰ πάντα καθ' ὁμοίότητα
χωρὶς ἁμαρτίας.

δυναμαι can, be able to, be capable of
συμπαθῆσαι Verb, aor act infin συμπασχῶ
suffer together, share the same
suffering

'be touched with the feeling of'.

ἀσθενεια, ας f weakness, illness

"Such weaknesses can be characterised by the circumstances of the Lord's life, natural weaknesses, disappointments, the feeling of desertion, shrinking from pain ... From temptations through such weaknesses the Hebrew Christians were suffering." Westcott.
"It was precisely our weaknesses that he embraced and made his own when he took our nature upon himself." Hughes.

πειρασμένον Verb, perf pass ptc, m acc &
n nom/acc s πειραζῶ test, tempt
ὁμοιότης, ητος f likeness; κατὰ πάντα καθ'
ὁ. in everything the same way (we are)
χωρὶς without, apart from
ἁμαρτια, ας f sin

"We may represent the truth to ourselves best by saying that Christ assumed humanity under the conditions of life belonging to man fallen, though not with sinful promptings from within." Westcott.
"The sinlessness of Jesus does not consist in an absence of human weakness, but in an ever renewed victory over temptations." Hering.

"His sinlessness meant that the temptations came to him with a sharpness far greater than is known to us whose minds and wills have become dull through frequent failures. This sinlessness, it should be stressed, is not something passive, a mere state of being, but the achievement of Christ's active conquest of temptation. Indeed, it is entirely synonymous with the complete *obedience* learned by him through all he endured, by which his *perfection* was won and established, and which fitted him to become the source of our eternal salvation (Heb 2:10; 5:8f.; 7:26; 1 Pet 3:18; 1 Jn 2:1; 3:3,5)." Hughes.

ἔλεος, οὐς n mercy, compassion
εὐρωμεν Verb, aor act subj, 1 pl εὐρισκω

"Man needs mercy for past failure and grace for present and future work." Westcott

εὐκαιρος, ον suitable, timely
βοηθεια, ας f help

Verse 16

προσερχώμεθα οὖν μετὰ παρρησίας τῷ θρόνῳ
τῆς χάριτος, ἵνα λάβωμεν ἔλεος καὶ χάριν
εὐρωμεν εἰς εὐκαιρον βοήθειαν.

προσερχομαι come or go to, approach

Cf 7:25; 10:1,22; 11:6.

"In the levitical system that had prevailed up till the time of Christ's advent only the high priest was permitted to approach into the sanctuary of God's presence, and then only once a year, on the Day of Atonement, when he passed from sight into the holy of holies. The people, however, were excluded from the divine presence because of their sinfulness and prohibited from drawing near. But the atonement effected by Christ's sacrifice of himself on the cross opened the way that had hitherto been closed. This was dramatically symbolised by the rending of the temple curtain from top to bottom at the time of the crucifixion, indicating that through an act of divine grace access into the holiest place was now available to all the people of God (Mk 15:38; Mt 27:51; Heb 10:20). The reality corresponding to this symbolic event is pressed home by our author here. Sinners are no longer commanded to keep their distance in fear and trembling, but, on the contrary, are now invited to *draw near*, and to do so *with confidence*." Hughes.

παρρησια, ας f boldness, assurance

"Only Christianity can give sinful creatures the boldness to present themselves before God." Spicq.

θρονος, ον m throne

Cf 8:1; Matt 19:28; Prov 12:23. "The genitive in each case seems to express that which is shewn in a position of sovereign power. Thus the 'throne of grace' is that revelation of God's Presence in which His grace is shewn in royal majesty. Of this revelation the glory over the mercy-seat was a faint symbol." Westcott.

λάβωμεν Verb, aor act subj, 1 pl λαμβανω