

Hebrews 7.13-16

Contending Earnestly

This morning I want to explore the structure of the idea, the manner in which the writer of Hebrews builds his argument is nuanced. And that argument itself has something to tell us - the emphatic manner in which the sentence is constructed demonstrates that the writer is showing something of extreme importance. The words he uses and the pugnacious manner in which he presses the obvious minutiae is instructive. He doggedly pursues the case that the differences Christ manifests from what has gone before are the very reason why his audience should understand. He has not let this line of reasoning go and is circling around it again. He has a different focus in this pass (the idea that the newness of Christ's position and person demands an end to the old ones - and we will explore that idea more fully next week) but what seems important to me before we move on is to note the willingness he demonstrates to defend truth, to challenge the status-quo and to even appear argumentative for the sake of the truth, regardless of what is the generally accepted line of understanding.

- Evident, manifest, unarguable, obvious ... that Christ arose from Judah - a new priestly line
- AND (already we have seen the newness of the priesthood of Judah but there is more that needs to be seen and understood.)
- FAR MORE evident, FAR MORE manifest, FAR MORE unarguable, FAR MORE obvious that this new priest is according to the order of Melchizedek - and this means that the rules have changed and will never be the same again.

It is the common wisdom among many in the church today that we should not be seen as combative. That a willingness to be dogmatic and clear on the details of what God has said in His Word is just too "mean spirited". There is a generalized push to silence the clear and powerful teaching of the Word of God. "Live and let live" is the reigning motto of the era and acceptance of all ideas and inclusion of all perversions is man's way of getting ahead. But God has spoken and we are obligated to declare His Word and not man's.

I. SATAN IS ALWAYS ATTACKING TRUTH

1Peter 5:8–11

- A. He will shift his focus from one front to the next with hardly a pause
- B. He will attack today what he seemed to ignore yesterday, and will ignore tomorrow what he sought to destroy today.
- C. The church must be aware of the shifting battle lines and hold fast to the truth.
- D. The place of attack becomes the present truth that must be defended
- E. The place of defense becomes the ground of persecution wherein
 1. God tries our faith
 2. Our obedience
 3. Our patience

II. TRUTH MUST BE UNDERSTOOD

2 Timothy 1:13–14 (NKJV) ¹³ Hold fast the pattern of sound words which you have heard from me, in faith and love which are in Christ Jesus. ¹⁴ That good thing which was committed to you, keep by the Holy Spirit who dwells in us.

Romans 15:4 (NKJV) ⁴ For whatever things were written before were written for our learning, that we through the patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope.

A. We must be fluent with the Word of God
2 Timothy 3:16–4:2 (NKJV) ¹⁶ All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, ¹⁷ that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work. ¹ I charge you therefore before God and the Lord Jesus Christ, who will judge the living and the dead at His appearing and His kingdom: ² Preach the word! Be ready in season and out of season. Convince, rebuke, exhort, with all longsuffering and teaching.

B. We must be aware of the trends of the world and the church at large

C. We must be conscious of the threats against the truth -

1. In Paul's world it was the Judaizers. Those who wished to enslave the church to the principles of the Levitical law... a trend which is rearing its ugly head again in our day...
2. In John's sphere, it was the Gnostics... dispensers of "secret knowledge" that did not come from God; nor was it consistent with the given word of God. It included many false ideas about Jesus being pure spirit without

actual flesh, or conversely merely a "wise man"

3. In the realm of the early spread of the church we find men like Simon the sorcerer who sought to buy and sell the gifts of God,
4. And always there were men like alexander the coppersmith, who did Paul "much harm" and who he warned Timothy to "beware of him, for he has greatly resisted our words"

(2Timothy 4.14-15)

- D. We must be willing to engage in the conversation between the word and world
1. This is not about preferences
 2. This is not about style
 3. This is about content and truth.
 4. What does the WORD OF GOD say? And we must keep the discussion (Argument? Fight?) AT THAT POINT! The very second we veer off into the weeds of our preferences, or our traditions, or our opinions we have lost the ground which can be safely defended. The church's job here (and thus YOUR job here) is to stand firm on the Word of God

III. WE MUST FIGHT FOR TRUTH

A. To press its advance against old ideas

Galatians 2:3–4 (NKJV) ³ Yet not even Titus who was with me, being a Greek, was compelled to be circumcised. ⁴ And this occurred because of false brethren secretly brought in (who came in by stealth to spy out our liberty which we have in Christ Jesus, that they might bring us into bondage),

B. To defend it by the Word of God against new assaults.

2Peter 2:1–3 (NKJV) ¹ But there were also false prophets among the people, even as there will be false teachers among you, who will secretly bring in destructive heresies, even denying the Lord who bought them, and bring on themselves swift destruction. ² And many will follow their destructive ways, because of whom the way of truth will be blasphemed. ³ By covetousness they will exploit you with deceptive words; for a long time their judgment has not been idle, and their destruction does not slumber.

C. To stand, even it means standing alone, against all who would undermine the Word of God as the ground and definition of truth.

Jude 3–4 (NKJV) ³ Beloved, while I was very diligent to write to you concerning our common salvation, I found

it necessary to write to you exhorting you to contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints. ⁴ For certain men have crept in unnoticed, who long ago were marked out for this condemnation, ungodly men, who turn the grace of our God into lewdness and deny the only Lord God and our Lord Jesus Christ.

D. This also means that we must often stand even against those who claim to be brothers to us, but who are in fact enemies of the truth...

Acts 20:25–31

E. We must learn to see those who obey and those who don't, and know the difference!

Philippians 3:17–20 (NKJV) ¹⁷ Brethren, join in following my example, and note those who so walk, as you have us for a pattern. ¹⁸ For many walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ: ¹⁹ whose end is destruction, whose god is their belly, and whose glory is in their shame—who set their mind on earthly things. ²⁰ For our citizenship is in heaven, from which we also eagerly wait for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ,

IV. WE MUST LIVE THE TRUTH

A. Holiness is important to God, and important to the fight.

Philippians 1:27 (NKJV) ²⁷ Only let your conduct be worthy of the gospel of Christ, so that whether I come and see you or am absent, I may hear of your affairs, that you stand fast in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel,

B. God boasts the glory of His eternal plan in the church

Ephesians 3:10–11 (NKJV) ¹⁰ to the intent that now the manifold wisdom of God might be made known by the church to the principalities and powers in the heavenly places, ¹¹ according to the eternal purpose which He accomplished in Christ Jesus our Lord,

C. The Character of Christ is the goal of our lives

1Timothy 6:11-14(NKJV) ¹¹ But you, O man of God, flee these things and pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, gentleness.¹² Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life, to which you were also called and have confessed the good confession in the presence of many witnesses. ¹³ I urge you in the sight of God who gives life to all things, and before Christ Jesus who witnessed the good confession before Pontius

Pilate, ¹⁴ that you keep this commandment without spot, blameless until our Lord Jesus Christ's appearing,

D. The fight changes US

2Peter 1:5–15

E. The fight empowers us through the difficulties

2Corinthians 13:1–6

V. WE MUST BALANCE THE DIFFICULTY

A. Grace is still required, for The Law had been the word of God unto Israel for 1500 years

B. Israel had been commanded to abide in the law lest they be struck with a curse...

Malachi 4:4–6 (NKJV)4 “Remember the Law of Moses, My servant, Which I commanded him in Horeb for all Israel, With the statutes and judgments. 5 Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet Before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the LORD. 6 And he will turn The hearts of the fathers to the children, And the hearts of the children to their fathers, Lest I come and strike the earth with a curse.”

C. The Jews saw the law as their privileged status above all the nations of the earth

D. But the truth that they so often missed was that all of the prior things were given as testimony of Christ...

Hebrews 3:5–6 (NKJV) ⁵ And Moses indeed was faithful in all His house as a servant, for a testimony of those things which would be spoken afterward, ⁶ but Christ as a Son over His own house, whose house we are if we hold fast the confidence and the rejoicing of the hope firm to the end.

E. The replacement of the law with the intercession of Christ IS a shift of the deepest, and most fundamental design, but it must NOT be ignored nor belittled for it is ALSO the eternal plan of God that has been purposed from all eternity.

Hebrews 2:2–4 (NKJV) ² For if the word spoken through angels proved steadfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just reward, ³ how shall we escape if we neglect so great a salvation, which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed to us by those who heard Him, ⁴ God also bearing witness both with signs and wonders, with various miracles, and gifts of the Holy Spirit, according to His own will?

VI. WE MUST BE LOYAL TO GOD ALONE

A. He always brings us back to the ground of the cross

1Corinthians 2:2 (NKJV) ² For I determined not to know anything among you except Jesus Christ and Him crucified.

B. God is the mover in our salvation

1Corinthians 1:30 (NKJV) ³⁰ But of Him you are in Christ Jesus, who became for us wisdom from God—and righteousness and sanctification and redemption—

C. God is the ordainer and fulfiller of all that He has purposed to accomplish in Christ

Ephesians 1:3–12

D. He has revealed Himself and His purposes in His word, and will never speak in any manner contrary to that revelation.

E. His progressive revelation of His plan of salvation has ALWAYS pointed to the cross of Christ. It is our one hope, our one aim, our one boast...

Galatians 6:14 (NKJV) ¹⁴ But God forbid that I should boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world.