

Hebrews is the NT book to understand the OT. Difference b/t, law & Jesus. If you feel like the OT makes no sense to you, or is not something you even want to read or understand, Hebrews and the book of John is where to start.

Read Hebrews 2:1-4

Therefore we must pay much closer attention to what we have heard, lest we drift away from it. For since the message declared by angels proved to be reliable, and every transgression or disobedience received a just retribution, how shall we escape if we neglect such a great salvation? It was declared at first by the Lord, and it was attested to us by those who heard, while God also bore witness by signs and wonders and various miracles and by gifts of the Holy Spirit distributed according to his will.

Pray

Are you a beach family or a mountain family?

Phrase it another way: Sit-on-the-sand family or a sweat-on-the-trail family

Your family is on the beach, you go out in the surf – not paying attention... mile down the beach. You can't just swim back, you have to get out and walk.

Hebrew Christians were beginning to drift. Drift back into Judaism. Hebrews is a book written to Jewish Christians who are tempted to lose their way. The temptation is to be pulled back by the familiarity of the temple, the sacrifices, and maybe the strongest pull is to their old place in society.

So the author provides here in chapter 2 a command, a caution and lastly... confidence.

Command

Hebrews 2:1a *“Therefore we must pay much closer attention to what we have heard”*

This is the first command in the book Hebrews – we must pay attention!

Ch. 1 is explaining Jesus. How nothing created compares, even angels! The words “Heard & spoken” appear 4x here in v1-4, 3x in Ch. 1. It is defining God's revelation or how God reveals himself. God speaks, we hear.

Look at Genesis 1, John 1 – the Word, creates, sustains and saves. Heb 1 - 1st, God's speaks, salvation by law, 2nd, Jesus speaks, salvation by grace.

So we pay attention not to something less, but something greater because: **Hebrews 2:1b** *“lest we drift away from it”*

So our life of faith, or attention to God's words is a fight against drift. His revelation of Himself, now in Jesus, is an anchor against the current of our world.

One truth of life in the surf. If you get in the water and pay no attention to the shore, you will drift down the beach. One truth of life in the world, If you live in the world and pay no attention to the Word, you will drift away from Jesus. You must be paying “close” attention to Jesus to not drift away.

Your fickle heart, our world in rebellion is dragging you down the beach where the consequences and the trip back are more severe. If you never come into shore, you will eventually tire and be swept out to sea.

Resist drift by paying ridiculous attention to Jesus

So that is the command, but what is the caution?

Caution

Heb. 2:2 *“For since the message declared by angels proved to be reliable, and every transgression or disobedience received a just retribution,”*

So this message spoken through angels was the short way of referencing the Old Testament, or specifically the Torah, the first 5 books of the OT, where Moses received revelation from angels as he wrote. We get this from extra-biblical accounts of how the Jews understand the inspiration of the Torah and passages like Galatians 3:19 and Acts 7:38:

Acts 7:38 *“This is the one who was in the congregation in the wilderness with the angel who spoke to him (Moses) at Mount Sinai, and with our fathers. He received living oracles to give to us.”*

So building upon this, the author says that the prophets proved reliable because the blessings and curses, which are found in passages like Deuteronomy 28, have proven true. Every transgression received punishment.

This blessing and curse reality of the law is the reality the Hebrews lived in. They look back through their history and see God's hand of blessing and curses on their nation. Israel's history is evidence of a long-suffering, patient and merciful God blessing a people who constantly spurned His good gifts.

So God's law is not simply proven, the author calls it JUST. God is right to punish evil and reward good. So he concludes:

Heb. 2:3a

"how shall we escape if we neglect such a great salvation?"

Rhetorical question: We cannot escape judgment if we neglect this great salvation!

This has been set up (Ch. 1) to be in awe of Jesus, to see how he is superior to angels and their revelation. We are to pay ridiculous attention to him. But if we, in spite of that, still neglect it? **No escape**

David and Nathan. - 2 Samuel 12

Nathan confronts David about killing Uriah through an allegory about sheep. David got so upset at this theoretical man, because justice would be done to someone else. While at the same time, he was guilty of a far worse crime. David recognized his hypocrisy.

Do we recognize real justice? My brother was the justice seeker in our family. But our justice is very different than God's

<u>Our justice</u>	<u>God's justice</u>
Bends toward us	Rigid and fair
Based in our feelings	Based in God's nature
Ignores inconvenient facts	See's everything
Get what we deserve	Get what Jesus deserved

God's justice is amazing because it is perfectly fair and perfectly forgiving.

Romans 2:1-5

"Therefore you have no excuse, O man, every one of you who judges. For in passing judgment on another you condemn yourself, because you, the judge, practice the very same things. We know that the judgment of God rightly falls on those who practice such things. Do you suppose, O man—you who judge those who practice such things and yet do them yourself—that you will escape the judgment of God? Or do you presume on the riches of

his kindness and forbearance and patience, not knowing that God's kindness is meant to lead you to repentance? But because of your hard and impenitent heart you are storing up wrath for yourself on the day of wrath when God's righteous judgment will be revealed."

Both passages show our inability to judge ourselves rightly and the result is we condemn ourselves if we neglect this great salvation.

We are warned, cautioned:

Do not neglect this great salvation.

So I hope that leaves you begging God in this moment, "How can we be confident of what we have heard about salvation?" How can we be confident about Jesus?

Confidence

Heb. 2:3b-4 *"It was declared at first by the Lord, and it was attested to us by those who heard, while God also bore witness by signs and wonders and various miracles and by gifts of the Holy Spirit distributed according to his will."*

So first let's clarify that "the Lord" is Jesus, the one who called men to follow him because in him is life eternal. Then the author had Jesus' words confirmed by "those who heard him", which are the Apostles. Then, as if that wasn't enough, Father God testified to the truth of his messengers, both Jesus and apostles, by miracles and gifts from the Holy Spirit!

This author of Hebrews wanted to show God's glory revealed in Jesus, the one superior to angels. Who has been confirmed in the Scriptures by eye witnesses, so that it would not be neglected by all of his readers including YOU!

We can stand on the rock solid historical fact of Jesus' life, death, and resurrection.

So in light of our command, caution and confidence, lets turn back to v1.

Hebrews 2:1 *"Therefore we must pay much closer attention to what we have heard, lest we drift away from it."*

Drift away from the truth. - Jesus is the final revelation, the best.

This passage about drifting away, is the first of 5 warning passages in the book of Hebrews. Each proclaiming another warning that to neglect salvation through Jesus Christ would be foolish and dangerous. Each time

saying to us, “don’t go back!” Why would you go back?

In Hebrews, Jesus is better than... Angels, Moses, and Aaron (priest). Better than spiritual beings, the greatest prophet and the greatest priest. What can the old ways offer you now that you have seen the salvation of Jesus?

Jesus doesn’t just give us a recipe for salvation or a list for intellectual assent. He gives us a masterpiece of redemption. It pulls together outcasts and murderers, thieves and prostitutes, resistant prophets and shepherds. All of which points to a God who reveals himself in a wonderful Savior, a savior full of glorious grace. And because of God’s justice we know that Jesus saves us in full view of our sin, but in full view of God’s mercy.

You see there are three readers of Hebrews then, and three readers of Hebrews now. You are one of these.

Faithful Believer – need to be encouraged and reminded that the Good News is always good. Never stop rejoicing and paying ridiculous attention to Jesus. You can drift. You will drift.

Drifted Believer – those who have drifted away from the truth and neglected this good salvation. Those who had slid back into Judaism, back into their old ways because it is comfortable or avoided persecution. You will not escape, so come back!

Non-Believer – They needed to see his good salvation. Follow through in obedience to their creator God, through faith in Jesus and baptism. What he commanded.

No matter your category:

Do not return to your foolish ways.

Each of us has different “foolish ways” in our past. For the Hebrews it would be to value the old ways, the old covenant, over Jesus. The temple sacrifices were bloody but familiar. But there was never enough blood to stop the need for more. For some of us it would be a return to a life before Jesus with:

Anger -murder, Laziness, Pornography, Addiction, Greed, Crime, In all sin – Unbelief – ALL OF THESE are a return back to the grave. Like digging six feet down, jumping in and covering yourself with dirt again.

If you are in Christ, you are also a dead person brought back to life.

My greatest fear for our church is not our doctrinal statements, which are important, it’s not our budget, which is important, it’s not our kids ministry, which is important. My fear is that we simply have too many people neglecting their salvation, returning to their foolish ways.

Charles Spurgeon, great 19th cent. Baptist Preacher

“One need not go to the trouble of despising salvation, or resisting it, or opposing it. One can be lost readily enough simply by neglecting it. In fact, the great mass of those who perish are those who neglect the great salvation.”