

A Greater Salvation

JESUS IS GREATER: An Exposition of Hebrews #2 - Pastor Gary Combs - October 8, 2023 - Hebrews 2:1-4

INTRO: Good morning church! We're continuing our series, "JESUS IS GREATER: An Exposition of Hebrews." Our theme verse is:

Hebrews 1:4 (NLT) This shows that the Son is far **greater than** the angels, just as the name God gave him is **greater than** their names.

Today, we'll be looking at Hebrews 2:1-4 in a sermon entitled, "A Greater Salvation." Yet, if as we learned last week, the Name of Jesus is greater and His salvation is greater why do we look for salvation on all the wrong places?

Need: If you're not a follower of Jesus today, perhaps you've been looking for salvation in other places because you just haven't heard the message of salvation through Jesus. So you're still searching for meaning, for purpose, for happiness. But you haven't really heard what Jesus offers. Or perhaps you have heard, but you still have questions and doubts and you've delayed trusting in Him. Or maybe you are a believer in Jesus, you've received His great salvation, but you've drifted away from the joy and assurance you once had. There are many reasons that we believers might drift away from the gospel. They might be described with these "F" words...

Forgetfulness. Our fallen natures are given to forgetfulness. We have to continually remind ourselves of the Good News. For we have forgetful hearts. Thus, the repetitive one word command we find throughout the Scripture is "Remember." Have you become forgetful of the Good News?

Familiarity. Forgetfulness isn't the only human tendency that causes our drifting. Familiarity is another. The longer we know and live with something, the more we tend to take it for granted. As the often heard cliché goes: Familiarity breeds contempt. Hearing the message of the cross over and over, we tend to zone out, thinking we've heard it all before. Like Eli's sons, we mishandle the holy message of salvation because we take it for granted.

Full plate. Our plates are so full, our schedules so busy, that we've allowed our attention to this great salvation to wane. We've given it a lower priority as our focus is spread over too many things. We give it fragmented attention.

Former things. We fail to apply the gospel to our lives, so that the former things of our old nature are not brought into contact with the gospel. As a result we fail to see any significant life change nor spiritual growth.

Trans: There may be other reasons for drifting from this great salvation offered to us in Jesus. But wouldn't you really rather hear how we can rightly respond to this great salvation as God would want?

BODY: In the book of Hebrews chapter 2, believers were warned to carefully heed the message of God's great salvation offered in Jesus, lest they drift away from it. We can carefully heed the message of God's great salvation offered in Jesus. How can we heed the message of God's great salvation offered in Jesus? The text gives **three ways** we can carefully heed the message of God's great salvation offered in Jesus

Read text: Hebrews 2:1-4 (ESV) ¹ Therefore we must pay much closer attention to what we have heard, lest we drift away from it. ² For since the message declared by angels proved to be reliable, and every transgression or disobedience received a just retribution, ³ 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, ⁴ while God also bore witness by signs and wonders and various miracles and by gifts of the Holy Spirit distributed according to his will.

SINCE WE HAVE BEEN OFFERED THIS GREAT SALVATION IN JESUS...

1. We must always give its message our greatest attention.

EXP: (1) Circle the phrase "we must pay much closer attention." To what? The message of the gospel "we have heard." Why? Because of the "therefore," which points back to ch.1—that Jesus is greater. He's the greatest Prophet, the great High Priest, and the greatest King. And he has the greatest Name. Also, because we have a tendency to "drift away." Drift from what? From "it," namely the gospel message. This verse contains both a command to obey and a warning to heed!

"**Therefore**" (1) - Points back to Heb. 1:14 that Jesus is greater than the angels and that angels now act as servants who "care" for those who "inherit salvation." That's us!

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Hebrews 1:14 (NLT) Therefore, angels are only servants—spirits sent to care for people who will inherit salvation.

“**Must**” (1) (δεῖ, *dei*) - must, ought, it is necessary, necessity lying in the nature of the case.

“**Pay much closer**” (1) (περισσοτέρως, *perissoterōs*) - more earnestly, more exceedingly, more in a greater degree, to keep much closer

“**Attention**” (1) (προσέχω, *prosechō*) - Lit., “to bring near.” Heed, take heed. (figuratively) to hold the mind, i.e. pay attention to, be cautious about, apply oneself to, adhere to.

“**Drift away**” (1) (παραρρέω, *pararreō*) - to glide by: lest we be carried by, pass by, flow by, i.e. (figuratively) carelessly pass (miss):—let slip (KJV). From (ρέω, *rhēō*) is used to flow (“run”; as water):—flow. Or to leak out as water. Like a leaky vessel. “Our minds and memories are like a leaky vessel, they do not, without much care, retain what is poured into them.” (Matthew Henry)

ARG: Remember who you were before and who you are now in Christ, so that you don’t drift away.

Colossians 1:20-23 (NLT) ²⁰ ...He [God] made peace with everything in heaven and on earth by means of Christ’s blood on the cross. ²¹ This includes you who were once far away from God. You were his enemies, separated from him by your evil thoughts and actions. ²² Yet now he has reconciled you to himself through the death of Christ in his physical body. As a result, he has brought you into his own presence, and you are holy and blameless as you stand before him without a single fault. ²³ But you must continue to believe this truth and stand firmly in it. **Don’t drift away** from the assurance you received when you heard the Good News.

We can have great confidence and hope in the gospel as an “anchor for our souls,” lest we drift.

Hebrews 6:18-19 (NLT) ¹⁸ ...Therefore, we who have fled to him for refuge can have great confidence as we hold to the hope that lies before us. ¹⁹ This hope is a strong and trustworthy **anchor for our souls**. It leads us through the curtain into God’s inner sanctuary.

ILL: I remember canoeing on Smith Mtn. Lake with Robin and some other college friends. When we put in at the dock, we barely had to paddle, we just floated slowly along with the current. But after a short while, we had drifted quite a distance. We couldn’t even see the dock. When we started back, it was rough going, we had to paddle against the current with all our might. Plus as I recall, not only were we battling the current, the wind was blowing in our faces, causing Robin to have trouble with her contacts. Now, I was paddling alone. We barely made it back. It’s easy to drift away, but it can be quite an ordeal to get back!

APP: Will you give the message of salvation, which is the Good News, your greatest attention?

2. We must take seriously the **danger of neglecting it.**

EXP: (2-3) Circle the word “neglect” (3). Look what happened to God’s chosen people when they “neglected” the law as “declared by angels” (2). Let that be a warning to us of the danger of neglecting this great salvation!

“**For since...if we**” (2-3) (εἰ, *ei*) - a primary particle of conditionality; if, whether, that, since. The author is offers what the Latins called: *Argumentum a Fortiori* or an argument from lesser to greater. If it’s true in the lesser example, then even more weight must be given to the greater example. Ie “Since this happened when the Jews neglected the law which was only given via angels, “how shall we escape if we neglect this greater message (“Great salvation”), given by a greater Messenger with a greater reward/retribution?”

“**Message declared by angels**” (2) (ἀγγέλων λαληθεῖς λόγος, *angelon laletheis logos*) - Lit., “Of messengers (angels) spoken word.” What is this message declared by angels? The law (See Gal. 3:19).

Galatians 3:19 (NLT) ...God gave his law through angels to Moses, who was the mediator between God and the people.

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“**Proved to be reliable**” (2) (βέβαιος, *bebaios*) - Stable, firm. Stedfast, proven, “Legally binding” (HCSB).

“**Transgression**” (2) (παράβασις, *parabasis*) - violation:—breaking, transgression. Lit., “a going over”

“**Disobedience**” (2) (παρακοή, *parakoē*) - Lit., “hearing amiss.” inattention, disobedience.

“**Just retribution**” (2) (ἐνδικον μισθαποδοσίαν, *endikon misthapodosian*) - according to right, righteous, just... requital (good or bad):—recompence of reward. payment of wages due, recompence.

“**Escape**” (3) (ἐκφεύγω, *ekpheugō*) - to flee out of, flee away, to seek safety in flight, to escape

“**Neglect**” (3) (ἀμελέω, *ameleō*) - Lit., “not care.” Careless of, neglect, make light of, negligent. “A failure to provide for, look after, care for properly.”

“**Great salvation**” (3) (τηλικαύτης σωτηρίας, *tēlikoutes sōtērias*) - So great, so mighty, of great magnitude... salvation, deliverance, preservation, safety. This is the message of the gospel.

ARG: Those who hear and keep God’s instruction, not neglecting it, are blessed.

Proverbs 8:32-34 (ESV) ³² “And now, O sons, listen to me: blessed are those who keep my ways. ³³ Hear instruction and be wise, and **do not neglect** it. ³⁴ Blessed is the one who listens to me, watching daily at my gates, waiting beside my doors.

ILL: **Examples of neglect:** Child neglect is considered abuse and has legal consequences. Broadly speaking, there are 4 types of child neglect: Physical - failure to provide food, clothing, and shelter. Educational. Emotional. And Medical. Elder neglect warning signs: malnutrition, untreated health problems, unsafe living conditions, no human contact, etc. Property neglect: unmowed yard, dilapidated, paint-peeling, broken windows... house. Emotional neglect in a relationship or marriage is when a partner or spouse consistently fails to notice, attend to, and respond in a timely manner to a partner or spouse's feelings.

Neglecting this great salvation: For the unbeliever: It means putting it off or not seeing it as important or rejecting it. The consequence is eternity separated from God in a place called Hell. For the believer: It means not caring to focus and grow in it or to fail to share it with others. The consequence is drifting away in assurance or growing cold in your love of God and others.

APP: Will you take seriously this great salvation offered to us, not neglecting it, but giving it your full attention?

3. We must always remember how it was declared to us.

EXP: (3-4) Look at v. 3 again, “It was declared.” What was declared? The message of salvation. Declared by whom? “First by the Lord” Jesus. God spoke this great message of salvation through His Son! Indeed, it has been declared to us by many witnesses...

“**Declared at first by the Lord**” (3) (ἀρχή, *archē*) - beginning, origin, the person or thing that commences, the first person or thing in a series, the leader, that by which anything begins to be, the active cause.

“**Attested to**” (3) (βεβαιώω, *bebaiōō*) - to make firm, established, confirmed. The apostles who had seen the risen Lord Jesus “attested to” the facts of the gospel to “those who heard.” This included the human author of Hebrews. It also includes all who read the NT. For it is their written record attesting to the gospel.

“**God bore witness**” (4) (συνεπιμαρτυροῦντος, *synepimartuountos*) - Participle. Lit., “God also bearing witness with...” at attest together with, to join in bearing witness, to unite in adding testimony.

“**By signs, wonders, various miracles...**” (4) - How God bore witness: By signs, wonders and miracles of different kinds. Also...

“**And by gifts of the Holy Spirit**” (4) - By distributing gifts to the saints via the Spirit, which are still actively enabling us to hear the gospel and share the gospel today!

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ARG: Paul listed several eyewitnesses who could “attest” to the claims of the Gospel:

1 Corinthians 15:1-8 (NLT) ¹ Let me now remind you, dear brothers and sisters, of the Good News... ³ I passed on to you what was most important and what had also been passed on to me. Christ died for our sins, just as the Scriptures said. ⁴ He was buried, and he was raised from the dead on the third day, just as the Scriptures said. ⁵ He was seen by Peter and then by the Twelve. ⁶ After that, he was seen by more than 500 of his followers at one time, most of whom are still alive, though some have died. ⁷ Then he was seen by James and later by all the apostles. ⁸ Last of all, as though I had been born at the wrong time, I also saw him.

Whoever does not believe the witness of God has called God a liar.

1 John 5:9-12 (ESV) ⁹ If we receive the testimony of men, the testimony of God is greater, for this is the testimony of God that he has borne concerning his Son. ¹⁰ Whoever believes in the Son of God has the testimony in himself. Whoever does not believe God has made him a liar, because he has not believed in the testimony that God has borne concerning his Son. ¹¹ And this is the testimony, that God gave us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. ¹² Whoever has the Son has life; whoever does not have the Son of God does not have life.

We remember best by being witnesses of the gospel to others.

Acts 1:8 (ESV) But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and **you will be my witnesses** in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.”

ILL: Like Timothy, whom Paul said was raised in the Scriptures by his mother and grandmother, Lois and Eunice, I was raised hearing the gospel from my mother and grandmother, Wilda and Ettie Elizabeth. From who whom did you hear the gospel?

APP: Do you remember how the gospel message of this great salvation came to you? Perhaps the best way to remember it, is to pay it forward by declaring the message to others. Will you?

CONCLUSION: The message of God’s great salvation offered to us in Jesus requires our active response. We can not afford to neglect it, nor allow ourselves to drift away from it.

Will you decide today to...

- 1) Always give it your greatest attention, lest you drift away from it?
- 2) Take seriously the danger of neglecting it?
- 3) Always remember how it came to you and how you might best remember it be sharing it with others?

Let’s pray.