

“JESUS IS SUPERIOR TO...” SERIES

HOLD FAST YOUR SALVATION

HEBREWS 2:1-4

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

Introduction

As a way of introducing the second chapter, it is important to know that there are five warning passages found in the Book of Hebrews. They are: 2:1–4; 3:7–4:16; 5:11–6:20; 10:19–39; 12:18–29. There is a consistency in the passages. 1) Exhortation or command. 2) Warning. 3) A reasonable explanation of his reasoning.

Paul exhorts the believers to draw close to God and in each case there is a warning or danger sign. The purpose of these warnings or admonitions is to “encourage all readers to pay attention to God’s Word and obey it.”¹ The first of these warnings is found in our text today, namely: Hold Fast Your Salvation.

People put their trust in many things; property, job, finances, savings and good works. In this passage, Paul warns the reader to pay close attention to what they had been taught concerning their salvation. They have trusted the message by angels, eyewitnesses and the Lord himself.

Paul was brought up in the finest schools and so he follows the normal Jewish standard for an argument; that is the argument progresses from the lesser to the greater argument. He begins by looking at the Mosaic Law and then to the danger of neglecting a great salvation.

¹ Wiersbe, W. W. (1996). *The Bible exposition commentary* (Vol. 2, p. 282). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

DO NOT DRIFT FROM THE MESSAGE

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

“Therefore” – “Therefore” links two sections; 1:5-14 and 2:1-18. What was presented in the previous verses (chapter 1: Jesus is superior to the angels), is connected to the next portion of his argument.

“...we must pay much closer attention to what we have heard” – it is evident that this warning is written to believers, as the writer includes himself, “we.” Hold fast to what you have learned and do not sway from it. I think we can read between the lines. Had the believers, who had heard the Gospel and responded to the grace of God now begin to waiver? Were they beginning to question their own salvation because of persecution or the call of the world?

Throughout my years in the ministry, one of the common issues for believers centers on their losing their salvation. This nagging doubt plagues many people even today. There may be some in this audience that are doubting your salvation. Questions like: “Did I really mean it?” “Did I do it the right way?” “I continue to sin, does that mean I am not a Christian?” “The passage in Matthew, keeps me up at night.

Matthew 7:21-23 21 Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven. 22 Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? 23 And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity.

“...lest we drift away from it” – “drift away” carries the idea of a boat that is anchored and then the anchor gets free and the boat is carried away by the waves. The anchor is what we have learned about God and our salvation.

The writer of Hebrews would declare to you today: “Hold fast to what you have learned and do not sway from it.

Hebrews 2:2 For since the message declared by angels proved to be reliable, and every transgression or disobedience received a just retribution,

“For since the message declared by angels proved to be reliable” – The question just begs to be asked, “What message is the writer talking about?” Luke and Paul both communicated that the angels delivered the commandments of God (Deuteronomy 33:2, Acts 7:53 and Galatians 3:19). I believe that the writer is speaking about the interactions of the angels during specific announcements. For example:

- The angels that appeared before Abraham before the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah.
- The angel that stopped Abraham from plunging the knife into his son Isaac.
- The angels declaring that the Messiah was born this day in the city of David.

“...and every transgression or disobedience received a just retribution” – Transgression and disobedience are two separate acts. Transgression simply means to refuse to follow orders or the Law. Disobedience means refusal to heed the Law. The result of transgression or disobedience of the Law as given by the angels, would be “just retribution.” That is an interesting phrase meaning that the transgressor would receive their just wages, or be rewarded. It also carries the idea in the legal realm of approved sanctions.

*“Every act of disobedience merits retribution—all sin merits punishment.”*²

In the 21st century, man no longer feels that they are under the law, but are above the law. I am continually amazed that breaking the law is no big deal. Linda and I eat at Rosa’s several times a month. And almost every visit, we see parents who do not buy soft drinks but order water. Once they are out of the eye of the employees, they fill the cups with soda. They are cheating, and they aren’t bothered one bit. This is our society today.

Do Not Neglect the Great Salvation

Hebrews 2:3 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,

“How shall we escape if we neglect such a great salvation?” – Once again, reading between the lines we could translate this as “There is no escape if we neglect salvation.”

“It was declared at first by the Lord, and it was attested to us by those who heard” – The Gospel of Salvation was first heard from the lips of Jesus and then once accepted, the Gospel spread by those who would speak it to those that would hear it.

² Crossway Bibles. (2008). *The ESV Study Bible* (p. 2363). Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles.

The disciples heard Jesus speak every day for about 3 ½ years. It is their witness that started the early church. Peter preaching in Jerusalem on the day of Pentecost, clearly giving the Gospel message. They were faithful to repeat the Gospel and the church grew and flourished.

The Apostle Paul wrote to his young apprentice on this subject.

1 Timothy 2:5-6 For there is one God, and there is one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, who gave himself as a ransom for all, which is the testimony given at the proper time.

Salvation comes by the testimony of Jesus! Amen!

Hebrews 2:4 while God also bore witness by signs and wonders and various miracles and by gifts of the Holy Spirit distributed according to his will.

“...while God also bore witness by signs and wonders and various miracles” – God showed His approval to the plan of salvation by signs, wonders and miracles. Jesus had the power of God on His life as He did many things with signs, wonders and miracles. He raised the dead. He gave sight to the blind, hearing to deaf, fixed broken bodies and delivered the message, “Repent; for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.” All of this was accomplished by Divine appointment. God’s hands are all over the work of Jesus and the Disciples.

“...and by gifts of the Holy Spirit distributed according to his will” – The truth of the Word of God is seen in Jesus, His followers, God’s direct influence and now by the gifts of the Holy Spirit upon the believers. The working of the Holy Spirit upon the disciples at Pentecost enabled them to speak to people of different languages which they heard Peter’s message in their own tongue.

“According to his will” - As he chose.

Conclusion:

The essence of this passage is simply; "The gospel has been promulgated to man in a solemn manner. It was first published by the Lord of glory himself. It was confirmed by the most impressive and solemn miracles. It is undoubtedly a revelation from heaven; was given in more solemn circumstances than the law of Moses, and its threatenings are more to be dreaded than those of the law. Beware, therefore, how you trifle with it, or disregard it. It cannot be neglected with safety; its neglect or rejection must be attended with condemnation."³

Bob Crowder

³ Barnes, Albert. *Albert Barnes Notes on the Bible. Digital* – SwordSearcher 7.1