

Do Not Neglect the Gospel (Hebrews 2:1-4)

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[0 : 0 0] This week we're going to be continuing in our study of the book of Hebrews. And while I was thinking about this passage, a story came to mind that actually happened! in my and Catherine's life years ago when we lived in North Carolina. It was before we had kids.

And well, actually, Catherine was seven months pregnant with Jacob when this happened. But we were asked to chaperone a senior trip for the school that Catherine worked at. And it's interesting to look back now, why in the world would they ask us to do that? Because at the time, we were about six years removed from being high school seniors ourselves. And so they're asking us to go and chaperone this trip. And so we went and we were having a good time and quickly realized why they asked us to chaperone this trip. Because the more mature adults who were on the trip were the first ones to get kicked out of go-karts. They had more fun on the trip than any of the other students were having. And you know the adults that I'm talking about, that when they are chaperones and they go on a trip like this, they're the ones who instigate things. They're the ones that get things going, Chad Hicks. But they're the ones who are able to really get and enjoy the kids and have that fun with them. But we all enjoy that time. But it quickly realized that one of the parts that became very stressful for me during this trip was when they gave me a whistle and put me on lifeguard duty at the beach. And so they said, you know, go out there to the beach. We were in the outer banks of North Carolina and the sea and the ocean is pretty rough there. And they said, go out there and make sure that the students don't go too far out. I'm like, okay, that sounds simple enough. But when you have a big of a group like that of senior boys and girls that are on the trip, everybody's trying to impress somebody. And so everybody's trying to push the boundary a little bit to go a little bit further out. And I kept having to yell for these students to say, come back in, come back. And I was waving at them saying, move over this way, stay right here, come back in a little bit closer. And it finally got to the point where they were out so far, they couldn't hear me. And I realized why they gave me a whistle. So I'd whistle and tell them to stay closer, to come back. And finally just got fed up with it. And I had everybody come back in, blowing the whistle saying, come back in. And I said, guys, let me explain something to you. There's these things in an ocean that are called currents. And if you're not paying attention, they're going to take you out further. If you go out past the point where you can stand and plant your feet on the ground, if you go out to that point and you're just treading water, these currents are going to take you. They're going to take you further away. They're going to take you further out. And before you realize it, you're going to be so far out there that it's going to be really difficult for you to come back in. It's going to be really difficult for you to be at a place where you can actually make your way back in. I told them, you have to pay attention to where you are. Otherwise, before you even realize it, you're going to be so far gone, it's going to be difficult to get back. In fact, much of the warning that I was giving these high school seniors, much of this sounds like the first verse of Hebrews chapter two, where it says, therefore, we must pay much closer attention to what we have heard, lest we drift away from it.

Without doing anything at all, except for treading water, these students were drifting away. And it's the same in our Christian life. Drifting often happens very easily and often undetected.

And for this reason, we must pay attention so that we don't drift away from what God has called us to do. And so as we begin thinking about that this morning, I would like to invite you to follow along as we read these first four verses of Hebrews chapter two. Hebrews chapter two, verses one through four says this, therefore, we must pay much closer attention to what we have heard, lest we drift away from it. For since this message was declared by the 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. And so in this passage, we see several warnings that should be clear to us this morning. We see several warnings that the author is giving to us that that should be something that sinks into each of our lives. And so the first warning, the first thing that we see in this passage is the danger in drifting. The danger in drifting. Therefore, we must pay much closer attention to what we've heard, lest we drift away from it. One of the things that we often say when it comes to studying God's word and one of the things that's important in our reading of God's word and understanding what it says is whenever there's a therefore in scripture, we want to stop and pause and think about what it is there for. Whenever you see that therefore, think about why it's placed in this passage. And so this therefore causes us to go back and think about what was just communicated in chapter one. In chapter one, the author wants us to clearly see who Jesus is. We talked about this last week. Last week, we mentioned all the things we are told about Christ just in a few verses right here, just in these first few verses, we are reminded that Christ is the Son of God. He's the revelation of God, the fulfillment of God's revelation in the Old Testament. He's the heir of all things. He's the agent of creation, the radiance of God's glory, the expression of God's nature, the preserver of all creation. He's the purifier of God's people. He's the mediator for God's people. We are told that clearly that Jesus is the Son of God, the long-awaited Messiah who came to seek and save the lost.

[6 : 40] In chapter one, we are reminded over and over again that Jesus is better than anything and everything in this world. Chapter one is all about us trying to get a clear picture of who Jesus is. That's why we said several times that when discipline becomes drudgery or when our reading of God's word becomes done more out of obligation and more out of just habit and forcing oneself to do it, sometimes it's good to pause for a second. Go to Hebrews chapter one. Read through Hebrews one and be reminded of who Jesus is and fall in love with him over and over again as we catch a glimpse of his glory.

There is no command in chapter one. It's just all adoration. It's all about who Christ is. And now in chapter two, we understand in light of who Christ is, what it is that we are supposed to do. And understanding of who Christ is, now we're going to see what we're supposed to do. It is, chapter one is, this is who Christ is. Therefore, this is what you are called to do.

Al Mohler says it like this. He says, given the superiority of Christ over the angels and his identity as the divine son of God, Jesus both demands and deserves to be heard. We are told in chapter one that our great and glorious savior speaks. And now we are commanded to make sure that we listen to what he says. Chapter one was all about who Christ is, this great and glorious savior who speaks to us. Now we're told to make sure that you pay attention and listen to what he says to you. The first command given in the book of Hebrews is this. We must pay much closer attention to what we have heard. And we've heard that Jesus is better, but there's a difference between hearing something and understanding something. There's a difference between just hearing something and understanding something. And wives feel free to amen this. There are things that we hear all the time, but just because it was loud enough to be audibly heard. And just because we may acknowledge the words enter our ears with a, uh-huh does not mean that we pay much closer attention to what was said.

And so we have to look at this passage and understand that yes, Jesus is speaking, but it's more than just having the ability to hear the words. It's letting those words sink in and paying much closer attention to what is said. Because here's the thing. Most of us, we don't have a problem with the listening part. We are all listening to something. And the question becomes, what are we listening to?

[9 : 38] What are we listening to? We all listen to something. We all make provisions to, to listen to what we think is important. For example, if we want to listen to a concert, then we buy tickets and we make every effort to travel to wherever the concert is. If we want to listen to the news, then we make sure that we turn on the TV at just the right station at just the right time, or we pay for a streaming service so we can watch the news whenever we want to watch it. If we want to know what an author has to say about something, then we purchase the book or the subscription that allows you to download the book and to listen to it.

And if you go into my office, you will realize that a lot of provisions have been made for me to hear what different authors have to say about those things. Catherine would probably say too many

provisions have been made for, for me to listen to what all these authors have to say. And I just want to say, if you're ever in my office and Catherine is in there, don't say, have you read all these books, Brett? Because she, she tells me that all the time. I don't need to buy any more books until I read the ones that I have. But we, here's the thing. We make provisions for what is important for us. We make the effort to listen to what is important for us. How many of us have gone out of the way and changed plans and made every effort to be near a TV or a radio on Saturdays during the fall? We make those extra efforts to make sure that we listen and are able to hear what it is that is important to us. The list goes on and on. We all listen to something and we make plans for our listening. And we buy things to go to places and do all sorts of things to make sure we hear what we want to hear and are not distracted from it. So how does all of this compare to our listening to God's word? Are we as intentional with listening to his word as we are with so many other things? Unlike with many things that we're listening to, there's a warning that goes along with not listening to God's word. There's a danger that we're reminded of here that if, if we don't pay much closer attention, if we don't listen to God's word, then there's a real danger that the author is communicating to us here. And that is this, that we tend to drift away from it. We tend to find ourselves drifting away from it. You see, it's not just people who are paddling in the wrong direction that will never reach their desired destination. It's also people who aren't rowing at all. It's not just people who are paddling in the wrong direction that will never arrive at their desired destination. It's also people who are doing nothing, who aren't paddling at all, who aren't rowing at all. There are only two options in the

Christian life where either sell forward in faithfulness or we can drift backward into faithlessness. There's no such thing as, as standing still in the Christian life. Now, to be clear, someone who is truly saved, who is truly a Christian cannot ultimately lose their salvation. Although they may have periods of disobedience or what sometimes we call is backsliding. However, we are given this warning to examine ourselves. Michael Kruger knows, he says, there's a danger that we may think we are believers but end up proving by our estrangement from Jesus that we never really knew God. If the message last week was to see Jesus clearly, if the message last week of chapter one is to see Jesus for who he is, that he is better than everything, if it's to see him clearly, then the message this week is to listen to him carefully. See him clearly, listen to him carefully. We must listen to the truth so we don't believe a lie. We must be well grounded in God's word. We must be firmly planted in God's word with our feet in his word to make sure that we don't drift from it. And so as we continue, let us continue listening to the truth that is declared in this passage. So that being said, the next warning that I want us to see is really a statement about God's character, about who he is. And the next thing that I want us to clearly see this warning is to clearly see that God's justice is unchanging. His justice is unchanging. Verse 2 says,

[14:18] What we see here is that God holds people accountable. And this isn't a new attribute of God. This isn't something that just developed here at the time of this writing. This is something that has always been the case. It has always been who God is. God is a just God. His justice is perfect. In the Old Testament, the nation of Israel would experience this all the time. You see these cyclical nature of this pattern that was taking place of God blessing the nation of Israel, them taking their eyes off of him and turning to the things of this world, becoming dull of hearing, not listening, not paying much closer attention to what they were told. And then they start drifting away and God sends judgment. He sends this judgment to bring them back. And all of a sudden, they realize that, hey, we need to repent and we need to come back to God. And so they repent and they turn to him and God continues to provide. You see it over and over again throughout the Old Testament. And if you want to see a really clear, condensed place where you can see this happen over and over again, just look at the book of Judges. The book of Judges is fascinating. In fact, it's a book that I would love to go through on Sunday mornings at some point where we see this taking place over and over, where the people are crying out for God's deliverance. They repent and God sends a Savior.

He sends this judge to save his people. And all of a sudden, they start praising God and blessing him for this salvation. But before long, they start taking their eyes off of God. And the shiny things of this swirl become more and more attractive. And they start following after them. God sends his judgment.

And they cry out in repentance and ask for a deliverer. God provides. And you see this happening over and over again in the book of Judges. We think oftentimes, and the problem is we often think

about God differently now. We find ourselves thinking about the God of the New Testament being different than the God of the Old Testament. We think about the Old Testament God is just all about wrath and judgment. And the New Testament God is all about grace and love. But listen to this very next verse. And we'll get into it more in just a moment. But it says this, how shall we escape if we neglect such a great salvation? The point here is clear that if we reject the message of Jesus, we too will be held accountable. The cross not only speaks about our sin, but it also speaks about God's holiness. Not only does it speak about God's love and his grace and his mercy, but it also speaks of his justice and his wrath.

Because he is perfect in his justice, he can't ignore sin. You see, God doesn't exalt one of his attributes. He doesn't exalt his love and his grace and his mercy at the expense of his justice and wrath.

But no, we see all of those coming together at the cross. This should be a sobering reality for us. What this means is that apart from Christ, we are all objects of God's wrath. Apart from Christ, we're all subject to his justice, his perfect justice over sin. Probably as clear as anywhere you'll find in scripture, you see this in Ephesians chapter 2, where it says, and you were dead in your trespasses and sins in which you once walked, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience, among whom we all once lived in the passions of our flesh, carrying out the desires of the body and the mind, and were by nature children of wrath like the rest of mankind. Because God is just, we can be assured that a price will be paid for sin. This is not only a sobering thought for us in our walk with Christ, it's a reality that should cause us to run to Jesus. It's a reality that should cause us to say, God, I need you more than anything, but it's also a sobering thought for us to think about the billions of people in the world with no access to the gospel. What are we going to do about that? How are we going to use our lives to tell others about Jesus? Try and think of it like this. If your son or your daughter or someone you dearly loved was on the other side of the world in grave danger, you would do everything you could to help them. You would do everything you could to make sure you would help them.

[19:21] Money would be no hindrance to you going and taking care of them. Time would not stop you from going. Safety or a lack of concern, none of those things would stop you from doing everything you could to help them. But let me tell you that every single person with no access to the gospel is someone's son or daughter who is as precious in their parents' eyes as your kids are in your eyes. And so we must live with a sense of urgency of getting this message to people who have never heard the name of Jesus.

The final warning that I want to bring our attention to in this passage is this. Do not neglect the gospel. Do not neglect the gospel. Do not neglect the greatest news the world has ever heard. 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. The author is wanting to make something very clear to us. This message of salvation is clear. It's trustworthy.

It is reliable. Not only is this message great, but this message is absolutely true. And he does this by declaring several things about this message. He says it was first declared by the Lord. This message is so important, so life transforming that Jesus himself declares it. That Jesus himself comes to share this message. Think about it in our own lives. If there's something that is really important to us, that we want to make sure is clearly communicated, we don't send somebody else. We go ourselves.

And Jesus is coming. He's declaring this message first by himself. But then it also says it was attested to us by those who heard. Those apostles who were with Jesus heard from him these words are now testifying to the validity of it. If this were something that they were making up, if this were something that they just came up with, then they wouldn't have laid down their lives for this message. But they saw and heard with their own eyes and ears this message and are now bearing witness to it. But we also see that this message was attested to it. It was, it was, God used many signs and miracles to confirm this message. We read about many of those miracles and those signs as we read through the gospel accounts, as we read through scripture we see about it. But also I want you to consider the words of John at the very end of the gospel of John, where he says this, Now there were also many other things that Jesus did, where every one of them to be written. I suppose the world itself could not contain the books that would be written. And so what we see here

very clearly is that the many signs and wonders were done to show the validity of this, to give it this credibility. But it also says this message was also confirmed by gifts of the Holy Spirit distributed according to his will. You see, God has gifted each and every one of us, each and every Christian in some special way that allows us to bless the body, to bless the church, but also the world around us, to use those gifts in powerful ways to bring his name, honor, and glory. And one of the things that reassures us most in our faith is when we see the spirit at work in believers' lives around us. [23 : 25] It gives us boldness and it gives us confidence in the gospel message. This is one of the reasons that I love to read Christian biographies of missionaries and reading about how God used their lives, used their giftings that he gave them to accomplish his purposes. It gives us assurance. It gives us the ability to say, this is what we believe. This message is true. This message is great. It's incredible. Now, what are we going to do with it? What are we going to do with this message? This passage tells us to pay close attention to it and not neglect this great salvation that's being talked about.

What the author is telling us to do should be easy. This command here should be easy. This is the greatest news the world has ever heard. This is the news that brings us joy more than anything else in this world. This is the news. This is the message that transforms our life like nothing else can. This is the message that takes us from death to life. And now the author says, how can we escape if we neglect such a great salvation? How can we escape if we neglect this? The answer is we can't. The answer is there is no hope apart from Christ, but the command should be easy. The author is saying, don't neglect the greatest news the world has ever heard. Yet all too often in our lives, we trade the greatest news for things that are here today and gone tomorrow. All too often we trade this message that brings hope to us when nothing else could bring hope. Oftentimes we trade this message that transforms not only our lives here in this world, but transforms our eternity. And oftentimes we trade that message and we start focusing on things that are only here and now. That in a year from now, two years from now, five years from now, 50 years from now, will not matter whatsoever. And so let us keep our eyes fixed on Jesus. Let us not neglect this greatest news the world has ever heard. The author saying this message of the gospel is true. He's saying this message of the gospel is great. This message of the gospel is exclusive. Believe this message. Give your life to dwelling on this message and share this news with everyone. The message that we are clinging to, the message that we're holding on to is that we serve a God who is just and his justice requires, it demands that a price be paid for sin. And the hope that we are clinging to is that Jesus paid that price for all who believe. For those of us who place our faith and our trust in Jesus, then what he accomplished on the cross counts for us. Here we are reminded that our salvation is not only great, but it is absolutely true. Not only must we never lose sight of that in our own wall, but we must never lose sight of the fact that we are given to a mission to take this news to a lost and dying world.

And so as we close, I want to ask you two questions this morning. First question is this. Have you believed this before? Have you believed this message before?

Have you understood this message before? How shall we escaped if we neglect such a great salvation? And the answer is we can't. We don't escape apart from Jesus.

Have you given your life to this message before? Have you stopped trying to save yourself and realize there's nothing you can do to save yourself and giving your life to Jesus and say, Lord, I need you.

[27 : 33] I believe this message. I want to give my life to this message. And so I want to encourage you, if you've never done that today, do that today.

Come down after the service. Talk with me. I would love to have that conversation with you. Go find someone that maybe you came with today. Maybe a parent. Maybe someone who invited you and say, how can I know Jesus?

How can I believe this? What do I need to do to give my life to him? But the other question that I want us to ask ourselves is for those of us who have placed our faith and our trust in Jesus.

And that question is, what are you doing to spread this message? What are you doing to make sure that everybody hears this message? What are you doing to make sure those loved ones in your life that you deeply care about that maybe live across the street or in your neighborhood or or across town or across the world?

What are we doing to get this message to those who do not believe? How has this message changed your life? May we think about those things and genuinely answer those questions.

[28 : 47] Father, I thank you so very much that you have changed our life, that you have given us a message worth sharing, a message that changes our life and sets us on a new mission.

And so, Lord, as we think about this book of Hebrews, as we're reminded over and over again in the first chapter, Lord, that you are greater than anything in this world, that you created it, you sustained it, you gave your life for us, Lord, help us to see you for who you are.

Help us to catch a glimpse of your glory. And so that we say, God, I want more. I want to see you more. I want to magnify your name. I want to catch a glimpse of who you are and understand that there's so much more yet to be seen.

And, Lord, I pray that as we think about that, that we would give our lives to that. That this first command we see here, this therefore, we must pay much closer attention to what we have heard lest we drift away from it.

Lord, help us to pay attention to you. Help us to see you clearly and listen to you carefully. If you're working and moving in someone's life, Lord, I pray that you give them the boldness and courage to step forward to say, Lord, I need you.

[30 : 12] Lord, may you continue to work in our lives to say, God, here's my life. Take it and use it for your honor and for your glory. We ask all this in Jesus' precious name.

Amen. I want to invite you to stand. We're going to sing a song of invitation. If God is speaking to you this morning, won't you respond as we stand together and sing?