

Mind the Gap and Trust in Christ

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Preacher: Prof John A Macleod

[0 : 00] Let's turn together now to Hebrews in chapter 2, the chapter we read there. We can read from the beginning of the chapter for the moment.

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, 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.

There will be some of you here who have already, as we said to the children, you've heard the voice.

You've heard that voice that is quite unmistakable. You've heard that voice of the God speaking through his Son in the Gospel, and once you've heard it, you get a taste for it, and really you never lose it.

[1 : 22] There's something special about that voice. When I grew up in Ness, near the Atlantic Ocean there, there would be times when the breakers would be rolling in, and of course these waves began way, way out in the ocean.

But by the time they came and rolled in on Yorubi Beach there, they made their own distinctive sound, and you could hear them, especially the day after a storm.

And there was something special about it. That kind of voice as the sound of many waters. And that's the way Jesus describes his voice in Revelation 1.

He has this voice as the sound of many waters. John at that time was in the Isle of Patmos, and he was surrounded by the sound of the sea.

And there on that island, in the midst of all the waves, he on that day was brought to hear a sound, a voice that he had heard for probably 50 years.

[2 : 30] 50 years. By the time John wrote Revelation, he had probably been a Christian for around half a century. And that voice as the sound of many waters was special.

And those of you who are Christians, you know what I'm talking about. And you know what it's like if you're backsliding. When you somehow are turning away from that voice and listening to other voices, you're never at peace.

That's the one thing about a Christian. If they are turning away from that voice because they're becoming too worldly or some way compromising themselves, you never are at peace.

You're only ever truly at peace when you hear the sound that has brought you peace to begin with. And you soak it in. But there may be some of you here and you haven't really yet heard this voice.

Or if you've heard it, you haven't obeyed it. You haven't accepted the message that it brought. And I want to share with you today on the basis of Hebrews 2, this wonderful message that God wants you not just to obey him, not just to hear him.

[3 : 52] He actually wants you to trust him. He wants you to trust him. See, that's what the gospel is all about.

That's the difference between those who are Christians and those who aren't. Those who aren't Christians haven't yet trusted God in that special way with their own salvation.

And I'm saying that God wants you to trust him. So let's look first of all at the opening verses of chapter 2 here.

And later on, we'll look at the closing verses of chapter 2. These people, the Hebrews, to whom this letter was written, these have been Christians for quite some time.

But guess what? They're thinking of turning back. Why would they ever think of turning back? Because life was difficult. Things hadn't gone according to their plan.

[4 : 55] They were facing suffering. Some of their own families were probably making their lives a misery. Some of the unconverted Jews in their area were probably looking down upon them and making sure that they wouldn't get work.

It wasn't very easy for them. So what did they think they should do? Maybe turn back from following God openly. Be okay if they did in their hearts.

But let's not be too open about it. And this writer is asked by God to write to these people and say, No, this is not a time to turn away from the word.

Don't do that. He says in the opening verse, We must pay much closer attention to what we have heard, lest we drift away from it. You know what it's like when the storm comes, when the sea begins to move.

If you just go where the sea flows, you will often drift aimlessly. But when you listen to the voice of God himself, He wants you not to drift away, but to come to the harbor that he has provided for you.

[6 : 06] He doesn't want you to drift away. So he says, We must pay much closer attention to what we have heard, lest we drift away from it. And then he compares the message that they've heard with the message of the law.

Remember when God spoke to Moses on Mount Sinai? Well, that's the message that came by angels. In verse 2, the message declared by angels proved to be reliable.

Every transgression or disobedience received a just retribution. God spoke on Mount Sinai long ago, and he spoke the law. He spoke the Ten Commandments.

And ever since then, there has been retribution. In other words, God knows what he has spoken. He takes his own words seriously, and he wants people to obey that law.

But then he compares the giving of the law with the message of the gospel that brings salvation. In verse 3, how shall we escape if we neglect such a great salvation?

[7 : 18] What does he say about this salvation? It was declared at first by the Lord. The second thing, it was attested to us, people like the writer and others, by those who heard the Lord.

In other words, apostles. And then thirdly, God himself, we're told, bore witness to this message in four ways.

Signs, wonders, various miracles, and gifts of the Holy Spirit. Let's think about that now for a moment. Let's just break it down into smaller pieces.

I'm saying God wants you to trust the message of the gospel. So what does he do? Does he just send a prophet from heaven to speak the message of the gospel?

No, he didn't. What did he do? He sent his own son, the one who's called Lord here, just declared at first by the Lord. Think of it.

[8 : 19] I mean, here's this amazing universe that God made through his own son. And they sinned. And they needed this message not only of the law on Mount Sinai.

And God in Persian did not come down to speak the law. God's son did not become incarnate to speak the Ten Commandments.

That was reserved for something even more special than the giving of the law. He came when the message of the gospel was to be fully proclaimed.

And the events of the gospel were to be fully carried out. Jesus came. Have you thought about that?

God's own son came into the world. And he not only lived the perfect life and died the sinner's death. He came to make the gospel possible.

[9 : 23] He came to speak the message more clearly than ever before so that people would trust in God. He came on behalf of God his Father.

This message was declared at first by the Lord. But then, for the people who are the readers of this letter and probably the writer, it was attested to us by those who heard him.

So I assume that the writer of this letter and his readers never saw Jesus. They never saw the Lord in person.

And in that sense, you and they have something in common. As do I. I have never seen Jesus in the flesh.

I have never been to heaven. Never. So how do I believe this message of the gospel? Well, I know God sent his son, who is the Lord, who spoke this message at the first.

[10 : 33] But there were people who heard him speak. The apostles. And Jesus made sure that there would be people who would listen.

Isn't that great? He didn't just come and live the gospel events and speak the gospel message. He prayed one night, as Luke chapter 6 tells us.

He prayed for a whole night. And then he selected 12 people who would be, he says, with him. With him so that they could hear and so that they could see.

And then, once Jesus had returned to heaven, who brings the message of the gospel out to Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and the ends of the earth, and over to these islands, the western isles.

Who brings the message of the gospel? It's those who heard him who began it all. The apostles. That's where we get the New Testament from.

[11 : 41] That beautiful message spoken by the Lord, spoken by the apostles, is then written down for us in Holy Scripture.

And one day, God sends somebody to you with the apostolic gospel. I mean, my job is in Edinburgh Theological Seminary.

And it's great to be at work there. It's great to see people coming so that they can learn more about the gospel, so that they can go out with that apostolic gospel to other nations, other peoples.

It's brilliant. You see young folks coming and doing that. I remember when Ballycha Vibal was put out in Bíbsi Alába. And the amount of letters we got at ETS over that was quite moving.

And there was one man from Ireland, if I remember, and he was a Methodist. And he wrote and he says, In the church that I belong to, he says, people only give themselves to working for the church when they've reached the fag end of their life.

[13 : 04] In other words, they've done their careers. And then once their career is over, then they might give themselves to serve the Lord. What I was amazed at is how the students that I saw there, they were giving the whole of their lives.

Some of these young men have just begun ministries in the islands here. And it's beautiful. Giving the whole of their lives to bringing the message of the gospel, the apostolic gospel, to people like ourselves.

God, you see, does this wonderful thing. He sends out truth through people.

He himself came in passion. Then the apostles who heard Jesus spoke in passion. And then those who learned the apostolic gospel go out in passion to share the gospel with others.

It's always people who bring the message of the gospel. Either through writing or through voice, through video, through text, whatever it is, it's people who bring it.

[14 : 24] This wonderful chain of people, a chain of testimony. And you know what's true of everyone who brings that gospel message? They themselves have learned to trust in God.

Now I know that there have been some people who have shared the gospel and they have told people, this is the gospel message.

Go to Christ for salvation. And I know what these people are doing. They're saying, I believe it to be true. I've not come there myself, but I want you to go to him for salvation.

And maybe that's what you're like. Maybe you as yet have not come to Christ, but maybe you're saying to people, you go to Christ. It's true.

I haven't obeyed. I haven't trusted. But I want you to trust. Well, that's very good of you to point them to Christ.

[15 : 32] But you know, it makes an awful lot more sense to ask them to come to your Christ. And that's what really should be happening.

If you take this message so seriously, you yourself should be hearing the voice and saying, it's true. And it's true for me.

This message is good. And it's good for me. I want to trust in this message myself. And then I will invite my wife or my husband or my children or my grandchildren or my neighbor.

I'll say, come to my Lord, to my gospel. I trust in him. But you see, God does more than that.

He wants us to trust him. He doesn't just come in person and speak as the Lord. He doesn't just send apostles and apostolic witness. Notice verse 4.

[16 : 41] God also bore witness by signs and wonders and various miracles and by gifts of the Holy Spirit. Think of it. God so much wanted people to trust in this message in the first century.

What did he do? Lots of miracles. Why were there so many miracles when Jesus spoke? Why were there so many miracles in Galilee and in Jerusalem?

Why is it that Jesus would come into a village like Nazareth? And Nazareth probably had 400 people. Tiny, tiny wee village.

And people would be healed there. Why is it that Jesus would come to Capernaum? Another small village. And lots of miracles would happen there.

Why is it that there were so many signs and wonders? I.e. Why were there so many miracles? Well, this was God's way of saying this is from me.

[17 : 50] Man can't make these miracles happen. This is my power and I'm doing these things because the message is one I want you to believe.

Trust that message. That's why these miracles are happening. Now you might say, well, wouldn't it be great if we had miracles today in point?

Wouldn't it be great if we had miracles and signs and wonders happening? And then you would say, well, then I would know God's power is at work. I'll believe in the message.

Well, you don't have these kind of miracles. You don't have that. You've actually got much, much greater ones.

Much greater miracles. Have you ever seen a converted person recently? Have you ever seen somebody whose life was going that way and they were turned and they were brought to follow the Lord?

[18 : 59] Have you ever seen somebody who's a Christian and they're going through such suffering and they're bearing it so graciously? Have you ever seen a Christian praying in the dark when they feel they've got so little to hold on to but they can't turn away?

Have you ever seen Christians who are able to smile in the midst of tears? the Lord gives. The Lord takes away.

Blessed be the name of the Lord. See, when you're seeing conversions and the lived Christian life, you're seeing miracles.

Greater miracles. Greater works than these will you do, says Jesus, greater than the miracles. Yes, because I go to the Father.

All these miracles are happening around you and the Lord wants you to look at them. But there is something that you do have. God can work a miracle.

[20 : 13] God can work the other kind of miracle whenever he wishes. But one of the things he does do is the last part of that paragraph.

God bore witness by gifts of the Holy Spirit distributed according to his will. Do you know a Christian without spiritual gifts?

There's no such thing. No such thing. See, when someone becomes a Christian, the first thing God does, he puts them into the body of Christ, i.e.

into his church. What else does he do? He gifts them. He gives them gifts that they are able to use to minister to one another so that they can strengthen one another.

Or he gives them gifts that they can use to bring the message out to those who are outside. He gives them gifts. gifts. And that's the great thing, you see.

[21 : 20] God gives these gifts to ensure that there are people who can share the gospel with their own generation. That's why we pray for the children as they went out to Sunday school there.

We're praying that those who are teaching them both in the hall and also in the home that they will hear this message from those who trust the Lord and that they will become Christians themselves because there are gifted people sharing the message with them.

You will have your gifts in the home sharing the message of the gospel with them. You will have gifts that maybe help this church to keep on doing what it's doing.

God is the one who's bearing witness through these spiritual gifts. It's as if God is saying I so want you to believe the message.

I send my own son to speak it. I ensure there are apostles to hear it and pass it on. And I ensure that there are miracles in the first century.

[22 : 39] And I ensure that there are gifts that will enable the gospel to be heard in every century. There is never a century as long as the world exists in which there will not be a gospel shared by those who have spiritual gifts.

And I'm not only talking about preachers. I'm talking about all the Lord's people using the gifts that they have been given, God given, to share the gospel.

Why did God give you the gift? Because he wants people to trust him, to trust the message. So that's the first thing.

Can we now jump, jump now to verse 12. We can read that verse in the middle of verse 11.

That is why he is not ashamed to call them brothers, saying, I will tell of your name to my brothers. In the midst of the congregation, I will sing your praise, and again, I will put my trust in him, and again, behold, I and the children God has given me.

[23 : 57] Here, Jesus is spoken of as somebody who has brothers. And of course, brothers in this kind of context always means sisters as you know yourselves.

That is why he is not ashamed to call them brothers. Jesus Christ and all his brothers, including his sisters, they all have one thing in common.

What's that? What is it that you have in common with Christ? Christ? I mean, he died for your sins, so you never have to die for your sins.

So you don't have that in common. Your death will be a very different death to his death. What is it that you have in common then?

I mean, both of you are sons of God, children of God. Yes, but his sonship is different. He was son of God from all eternity. By nature, you've been adopted into God's family by grace.

[25 : 07] So it's not that. What is it that Christians have in common with Christ? What is it that you're doing right now and that Jesus is doing in heaven at this precise moment?

God. This is what it is. You're trusting God. You're trusting God. See, Jesus, in heaven at this moment, he is God and man, two distinct natures, one person forever.

And he is trusting God. God. See, in verse 12, Psalm 22 is quoted from, I will tell of your name to my brothers.

In the midst of the congregation, I will sing your praise. Psalm 22, you know very well, I'm sure. This is a psalm of a righteous sufferer.

This is somebody who came under God's judgment. somebody who is suffering, somebody who is going through the pains and the agonies of hell itself.

[26 : 28] And it was so hard to bear as he cries out in Psalm 22, why aren't you hearing my cry? I'm roaring by day and by night and you're not hearing me.

And Christ is in these moments going through the agonies and the judgment, not for his sins, but for the sins of his brothers and his sisters.

And he's going through all of these things and probably being tempted by Satan. Give up on God. Sin.

Don't trust him. Do you think it was easy for Jesus to be on the cross at Calvary? bearing your sin and suffering? Do you think it was a doddle for him to do that?

Do you ever say, ah, but he's God the Son, that's so easy for him. It was never easy for God the Son to be there and it certainly wasn't easy for the Son of Mary to be there.

[27 : 37] It wasn't easy. He plunged into the horrors of hell before he physically died. His body and his mind bore the weight of suffering, of sin before he died.

He took it all upon himself and in the midst of it all he wasn't conscious of the nearness of God because it was hell.

God but Satan is never afraid to trespass and Satan comes and I'm sure he was there where Jesus was on the cross in the midst of the hours of darkness.

The prince of darkness would be present and guess what he would be doing. It's what he always does trying to stop his people trusting in God and he would surely be trying just like he did in the temptations trying to get Jesus to stop trusting but he doesn't.

Even in the midst of hell you read Psalm 22 he calls God holy but thou art holy he says thou art holy he confesses God as holy even when he's bearing the sins of his people into the deepest darkest moments of hell.

[29 : 19] My God my God why have you forsaken me? And then when he's come through when he's come through that terrible suffering and when his prayer has been answered when he said to God save my soul from the lion when God answered what did he then say?

I will tell your name to my brothers in the midst of the congregation I will sing your praise see the people for whom I suffered Lord I'm going to speak of you to them I suffered under your hand for my brothers I bore their sins the sins of my brothers and sisters and I'm not ashamed of you the God who made me suffer I'm not ashamed of you the God who hid his face from me I'm not ashamed of you no I trusted in you as I bore their sins in hell and now in resurrection I still praise you and I'm going to praise you with my brothers for whom I suffered in the Old Testament to praise God is virtually equivalent to to trust

God so when Jesus is saying here I will tell of your name to my brothers in the midst of the congregation I will sing your praise he's essentially saying I will proclaim you and I will trust you in unison with all my brothers and sisters so you see if you're a Christian you're trusting the same God that Jesus trusts the same God in whom he trusted in the darkness of hell and in the morning light of the resurrection and the glorious light of God's glory in heaven right now he's trusting and he wants you to trust in him that's why he always says doesn't he come to me he never says go he always says come and then there are two quotations again

I will put my trust in him behold I and the children God has given me both of these come from Isaiah and chapter eight and these are spoken by a prophet called Isaiah and Isaiah was living at a very difficult time when those who were supposed to be God's people were living in a very different way they were really living as if things were very worldly they had lost sight of God himself that's why God speaks to them through Isaiah and he says the ox knows its owner but my children don't know me so what does God do through Isaiah he says there's going to be suffering there's going to be judgment but then after the suffering and judgment there's going to be salvation and that salvation will take place through a son that will be born a child that will be given one that will be called

Emmanuel God with us when Isaiah is given that message and he preaches that message guess what nobody listens nobody listens is interested Isaiah is there proclaiming this message of judgment and they laugh he proclaims a message about future salvation and they just don't make any sense of it so what does Isaiah do he has children and he had one child and he called him Maharshalal Hashbas and the second child he called him the first child Maharshalal Hashbas talked about judgment hasten to the booty run to the spoil and the second one a remnant will return salvation so he named one of his children as it were after the message of judgment and the other child after the message of salvation behold

[34 : 40] I and the children that God has given me I will put my trust in him it's going to be suffering it's going to be judgment then there will be full salvation I'm going to wait for God I'm going to trust God he gave me this message to speak and I'm going to wait for God you know what I was saying to my students on Friday if we know our history Isaiah do you know how he died he was cut in two sawn asunder probably the one that Hebrews 11 speaks of cut in two now that's not the way you would expect the Old Testament apostle to die somebody who preached the most wonderful message you wouldn't expect somebody who stood up and in the name of

God spoke Isaiah 53 to die that way but he did but you know he trusted God he never stopped saying the message even when it meant suffering he kept on saying the message speaking the message because he knew God is going to bring salvation beyond the judgment and he was content to wait for God's timing and he did he did it before his death in his death and after his death and Jesus according to the writer of the Hebrews he's saying see what Isaiah said I will put my trust in him behold

I and the children God has given me it's as if Jesus is saying Amen I'm with Isaiah I am the son I am the child and I trust that God will bring salvation after the judgment how true how true see Jesus see when he rose from the dead he rose as a worshipper when he was on the cross he died as a worshipper even at the very moment of his death what does he say father into your hands I commit my spirit he lays down his life in obedience to God as a worshipper he's absolutely certain that God will raise him from the dead in a few hours time father

I trust you into your hands I commit my spirit and then when he rose from the dead peace boy does he experience peace and he says peace I give to you peace be unto you these are the first words he speaks to the gathered apostles nothing can keep me out of heaven he says to the women go and tell them I am ascended to my father and your father my God and your God I want to go to heaven I want to ascend to heaven on the day of the resurrection I want to see my father your father I want to see my God your God why because I love him I trust him and you go and tell my brother she said to Mary and that's what's been happening ever since one person has told another person he's gone to heaven and he wants you to know that he trusts

God Jesus is safe he's come through the cross he's risen from the dead he's alive forever more and he is the keys for Hades he is the one who can set people free and he asks you to trust God couldn't do better why on earth would you not come to this savior god wants you to god asks you to god commands you to god even begs you to he urges you you will never be able to meet him and say you never wanted me and when you meet him surely be lovely to meet him as one you obeyed whose voice you trusted the voice that said mind the gap you listened and you said i'm trusting that voice surely that's the most beautiful future you could ever have for yourself and the one that you will then have with christ forever as you trust god together may the lord bless his word let us pray pray