

## Hebrews 2:1-9 “The Solemn Warning”

Last week we learned that Jesus is superior to angels. He is superior in title as the Son of God. He is superior as the object of the angel’s worship. He is the King of kings and his angels are his servants. He is superior because he is the Creator, whereas angels are his creatures. Finally, he is superior because He is the heir of all things and all things will be in subjection to him. This is not true of the angels. Jesus is the supreme being. **Therefore**, we are given this solemn warning by the human and Divine authors of Hebrews.

***we must pay much closer attention to what we have heard, lest we drift away from it.***

There are a few things we need to point out about this warning before we continue unfolding the writer’s arguments. First, this warning is not for true believers. In verse 3 the writer asks, ***“how shall we escape if we neglect such a great salvation?”*** True Christians are never in any real danger of neglecting or drifting away from their salvation. It may appear at times that they are, but we must understand this is what we call “backsliding”. Truly saved people cannot lose their salvation if they have truly received it. This warning is to people who have heard it, intellectually assented to it, yet have never yet truly trusted in Christ for salvation. I pointed out last week that Hebrews was written to Jews who have been exposed to the gospel, some who have believed it and some who are still contemplating it. As a side note, you may be wondering why the author uses the word “us”. Does that mean he is not a Christian? No, the word “us” in this passage is a reference to nationality, namely Jews.

A second note to consider is that paying attention in this context means more than consider it closer. In Acts 16 when Paul preached the gospel to a group of women at the place of prayer by the river, the Bible says the Lord opened Lydia’s heart to “pay attention to what was said by Paul” (16:14). The very next thing she did was get baptized. There is a sense in the Greek that paying attention is receiving with the intent of trusting and obeying. So, the writer is saying to these Jews, the time for listening is over. It is now time to respond by trusting in the Supreme Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ.

Here is where we find our connection to this passage. There are many who sit under gospel preaching every week and never receive it. Many of these people are even aware they are doing it. We will discuss this further in our conclusion and application.

The author then begins to lay out reasons why his warning should be taken seriously. Those reasons are, the reliability of the Gospel message (2a; 3b-4), the certainty of judgment to come (2b;5-8), and the glorious Savior (3a;9).

### 1. The Reliability of the Gospel Message (2a; 3b-4)

Do not take the good news about salvation in Jesus for granted because it is a reliable message. You can and should bank on it because it is absolutely true. The proof is built upon the argument from angels.

*<sup>2</sup> For since the message declared by angels proved to be reliable (or unalterable),*

So, what was the message declared by angels? We mentioned last week that angels were connected to the giving of the Law at Mount Sinai. (**Acts 7:53 you who received the law as delivered by angels; and Gal. 3:19 the law was “put in place through angels).** The message that the angels delivered at Mt. Sinai was the law of Moses. The message of the Mosaic law was that **“every transgression or disobedience received a just retribution (2b).** No Jew would argue against the reliability of the Mosaic law in terms of its condemnation of sin. The author is saying that if they believe the Law was reliable and unalterable, then they need to understand the gospel is all the more because of its supremacy to the Old Covenant Law.

Knowing his hearers remember well all the signs and wonders that God gave to verify the reliability of the law, the writer now turns to the fact that God has done the same for the gospel message. He says,

***[3b] It was declared at first by the Lord, and it was attested to us by those who heard,<sup>4</sup> while God also bore witness by signs and wonders and various miracles and by gifts of the Holy Spirit distributed according to his will.***

It was first preached by Jesus himself. To deny is to call him a liar and to refuse to receive it is to deem him inferior. Secondly, it was attested by those who were with Jesus during his earthly ministry to a group that would have included the

writer of Hebrews. There was group that had received first hand testimony. How was it attested to others? ***God also bore witness by signs and wonders and various miracles and by gifts of the Holy Spirit distributed according to his will.*** When you read through the book of Acts you see over and over a phrase like, “many signs and wonders were being done”. This is how God built the New Covenant church.

The point being made here is the same point Paul made in 2 Timothy 2:11-12 *The saying is trustworthy, for: If we have died with him, we will also live with him; if we endure, we will also reign with him; if we deny him, he also will deny us;* So, do not neglect this message of the gospel. It is reliable. It is true.

## 2. The Certainty of Judgment to Come (2b;5-8)

The second argument the author puts forth is that there is a judgment to come and there is only one way to escape. Contrary to what they are thinking, it is not the sacrificial system of the Old Covenant temple worship.

As we have already seen the message delivered by the angels was a reliable one. It was the Mosaic Law that made clear ***every transgression or disobedience received a just retribution.*** Like I already said, no Jew argued against that. James taught whoever keeps the whole law yet fails in one point is accountable for all of it (James 2:10). The Law was that serious. If you broke any part of it, you paid the penalty for all of it. The Jews knew that a broken law, no matter how big or small, was an offense directly against a Holy God. They also knew that accountability to it was certain.

The Jews would not have argued the fact that a judgement is coming when everyone will have to stand before God as Judge and give an account of their lives. But what they did not understand was that Jesus is going to be the standard of the judgment. The Jews were living in the moment trusting in the temporal sacrifices, but did they have a long-term plan. By that I mean a plan for eternity. The author is going to argue to them later in the epistle that *it is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins* (Heb. 10:4). He will tell them, “*every priest stands daily at his service, offering repeatedly the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins* (Heb.10:11). He tells them these things right after he told them “*just as it is appointed for man to die once, after that comes judgement*” (Heb. 9:27).

<sup>5</sup> *For it was not to angels that God subjected the world to come, of which we are speaking.* <sup>6</sup> *It has been testified somewhere,*

*“What is man, that you are mindful of him,  
or the son of man, that you care for him?  
<sup>7</sup>You made him for a little while lower than the angels;  
you have crowned him with glory and honor,  
<sup>8</sup> putting everything in subjection under his feet.”*

*Now in putting everything in subjection to him, he left nothing outside his control. At present, we do not yet see everything in subjection to him.*

Do not take Jesus for granted. Do not neglect the good news you hear every week about how he can save you from your sins. A time is coming when everything will be in subjection under his feet. To be under the feet of a king is to be a defeated foe. If you are his enemy you will be right there with everything else that lived in rebellion to his lordship.

### 3. The Glorious Savior (3a;9)

*<sup>3</sup> how shall we escape if we neglect such a great salvation?*

Jesus is the Great Salvation. He is the only salvation. Neglecting Jesus is neglecting the only hope you have of escaping the fiery wrath of God at the final judgement. This is a thread that runs through the very fabric of this epistle. Today, if you hear his voice do not harden your hearts in unbelief. Strive to enter into that rest of eternal life with Jesus.

Look at Hebrews 6:4-8 *<sup>4</sup>For it is impossible, in the case of those who have once been enlightened, who have tasted the heavenly gift, and have shared in the Holy Spirit, <sup>5</sup>and have tasted the goodness of the word of God and the powers of the age to come, <sup>6</sup>and then have fallen away, to restore them again to repentance, since they are crucifying once again the Son of God to their own harm and holding him up to contempt. <sup>7</sup>For land that has drunk the rain that often falls on it, and produces a crop useful to those for whose sake it is cultivated, receives a blessing from God. <sup>8</sup>But if it bears thorns and thistles, it is worthless and near to being cursed, and its end is to be burned.*

Why? Because if you refuse Jesus, you refuse the only rescue there is.

*At present, we do not yet see everything in subjection to him.*

*<sup>9</sup> But we see him who for a little while was made lower than the angels, namely Jesus, crowned with glory and honor because of the suffering of death, so that by the grace of God he might taste death for everyone.*

Conclusion:

We do not see the sovereign reign of Christ with our eyes today. We see unbelief and rebellion running rampant in our world today. Based on what we see we would be inclined to think that Jesus is powerless over this world today. This is why so many people hear the gospel and choose to reject it, whether by decision or by practice. But we need to remember what faith is. The writer of Hebrews says its, “the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen” (Heb. 11:1).

These arguments can only lead a person to intellectually agreeing that these spiritual truths are facts, but even the demons believe that. We need the work of the Holy Spirit to bring us to respond to these arguments in faith.

I said in the beginning of this study that there are many who sit in pews weekly and never realize they only believe the gospel intellectually. Intellectual faith alone does not save. Faith is belief acted out in life and evidenced by works. The way we can know if our faith is genuine is by the fruit of our lives. I urge you just as Paul urged the Philippians to work out your own salvation with fear and trembling. Jesus will return but it will not be to deal with sin. He has already done that on Calvary. He will return to judge the living and the dead. Today is the day of salvation for us. If you hear his voice do not harden your hearts. Receive the gospel as the only hope of salvation you have. Trust in Jesus and follow him.