

This Great Salvation

Hebrews 2:1-4

Last week I told you that Paul is writing to Jewish believers in Jerusalem who, though they came to Christ and started out strong, they hit the pause button ... they stopped growing ...

... even worse some of them were turning away from the teachings of Christ and going back to Old Testament temple worship.

Paul tells them they have become “dull of hearing.” He writes ...

... by this time, you should've become teachers feeding on the meat of the word, but you have reverted backwards ... you need someone to re-teach you ... you need milk not solid food.

Paul says, “this is a problem, this has to change...”

Therefore, leaving the elementary teaching about the Christ, let us press on to maturity, not laying again a foundation of repentance from dead works and of faith toward God, (Heb. 6:1)

This is the grand theme undergirding the whole book of Hebrews.

Paul says “We need to press on to maturity” ...

In this book, Paul is going to show us that this “spiritual maturing” comes from **looking at and meditating upon** the glory of Christ.

Christ who is prophet, priest, and king.

There have been other prophets, other priest, and other kings ... but Jesus is better, greater, and more excellent than all of them!

In fact, Jesus is more than better ... He is in an entirely different category!!!

That is the point that Paul is making throughout the book of Hebrews.

Now Paul is using the word “better” because he knows that the people he is writing to have great respect for the Law of God, Moses deliverances, the miracles of the Old Testament ...

... in fact, some of them have such a high view of those things they are being tempted to not realize how wonderful Jesus really is.

So, Paul has to keep saying, “Jesus is better!” (repeat)

Throughout this letter Paul has to keep pressing home two things:

First, the truth of the supremacy and all sufficiency of Jesus Christ.

(Heb. 1:4-13) ⁴ having become as much better than the angels, as He has inherited a more excellent name than they. ⁵ For to which of the angels did He ever say, "YOU ARE MY SON, TODAY I HAVE BEGOTTEN YOU"? [Psalm 2:7]

And again, "I WILL BE A FATHER TO HIM AND HE SHALL BE A SON TO ME"? [2 Samuel 7:14]

⁶ And when He again brings the firstborn into the world, He says, "AND LET ALL THE ANGELS OF GOD WORSHIP HIM." [Psalm 97:7]

⁷ And of the angels He says, "WHO MAKES HIS ANGELS WINDS, AND HIS MINISTERS A FLAME OF FIRE." [Psalm 104:4]

⁸ But of the Son *He says*, "YOUR THRONE, O GOD, IS FOREVER AND EVER, AND THE RIGHTEOUS SCEPTER IS THE SCEPTER OF HIS KINGDOM. ⁹ "YOU HAVE LOVED RIGHTEOUSNESS AND HATED LAWLESSNESS; THEREFORE GOD, YOUR GOD, HAS ANOINTED YOU WITH THE OIL OF GLADNESS ABOVE YOUR COMPANIONS."¹⁰ [Psalm 45:6,7]

¹⁰ And, "YOU, LORD, IN THE BEGINNING LAID THE FOUNDATION OF THE EARTH, AND THE HEAVENS ARE THE WORKS OF YOUR HANDS; ¹¹ THEY WILL PERISH, BUT YOU REMAIN; AND THEY ALL WILL BECOME OLD LIKE A GARMENT, ¹² AND LIKE A MANTLE YOU WILL ROLL THEM UP; LIKE A GARMENT THEY WILL ALSO BE CHANGED. BUT YOU ARE THE SAME, AND YOUR YEARS WILL NOT COME TO AN END."¹³ [Psalm 102:25-27]

¹³ But to which of the angels has He ever said, "SIT AT MY RIGHT HAND, UNTIL I MAKE YOUR ENEMIES A FOOTSTOOL FOR YOUR FEET "? [Psalm 110:1]

These seven passages are descriptive of Jesus Christ as “Son,” from His Incarnation to His Glory.

- The first two verses refer to His Sonship;
- the third to His Coming;
- the fourth and fifth to His Exaltation and Rule;
- the sixth to His Millennial Reign,
- and the seventh to the Culmination of all things.

(Heb. 1:14) Are they not all ministering spirits, sent out to render service for the sake of those who will inherit salvation?

Notice the phrase “inherit salvation.” [This is the first of 7 times “salvation” is used in Hebrews.]

The words “salvation” refers to a past, present, and future effect ... in other words salvation takes care of the past penalty, the present power, and the future presence of sin.

Paul’s use of the phrase, “inherit salvation,” points forward to something that is yet to be possessed ...

When anyone comes to Christ they are fully and completely redeemed ... their sins are cast away into the sea of God’s forgetfulness.

... but there is a future awaiting every child of God when every influence, temptation, and power of sin will be fully and completely eradicated ...

Throughout this letter Paul has to keep pressing home two things:

One of the keys to personal spiritual victory, deep intimate communion with God is to [by faith] embrace the absolute supremacy and all sufficiency of Jesus Christ. **[That’s the first thing that Paul keeps telling us.]**

... Jesus has saved you, and in that last final day he will redeem you for Himself and you will be just as HE is!

The Second thing Paul presses is this: there is a deeper, closer, more passionate walk of Faith with God than we have yet experienced.

In this letter, while Paul is stressing these two things. five times he moves away from the flow of the letter to warn and exhort the reader.

Chapters	Background	The Sin
2:1–4	Sinai and Calvary	Neglect (Don't drift)
3:7 to 4:13	Wilderness and Rest of God	Unbelief (Don't disbelieve)
5:11 to 6:20	Canaan and Fruits of Land	Spiritual immaturity (Don't degenerate)
10:26–39	Sanctuary and Its Entrance	Willful sin (Don't despise)
12:15–29	New Jerusalem and Mount Zion	Obstinate refusal/indifference (Don't depart)

I want you to notice: Paul uses something from the Old Testament to make each point and the 5 sins that Paul warns us about are progressive.

Here is what I mean: Neglect will give place to unbelief, unbelief to spiritual immaturity, spiritual immaturity to willful sin, and willful sin to indifference.

Today I want us to look at the first one of these warnings/exhortations.

Paul's pattern throughout the book is to give the doctrine, apply that doctrine, and then exhort us to follow it.

The Word of God never gives dry doctrine and then leaves it laying on the table ...

... God's word always applies its teachings to us, our life, our eternal destiny.

In the first chapter of Hebrews there are no commands ... we are not told to do anything.

... The whole chapter is a declaration and celebration of God's final word to the world — Jesus Christ the Son of God.

However, after having spent a chapter on the supremacy and sufficiency of Jesus Christ Paul writes this:

(Heb. 2:1) For this reason we must pay much closer attention to what we have heard, so that we do not drift away from it.

1. Pay Attention and Don't Drift!

After a whole chapter of declaration Paul's first thing in chapter two is to give us a command.

... Because Jesus is prophet, Savior, Priest and King we need to pay close attention to what we have heard so that we DO NOT DRIFT!

Drifting can be defined as an unconscious process of gradually moving away...

- a loss of desire to study and meditate on God's Word
- a loss of passion for prayer
- loving the things of the world more than the things of God
- a growing admiration of self ... growing pride

Paul says, "look at who Jesus is" "look at what Jesus has done" ... pay attention to it OTHERWISE you will drift.

You say, "it doesn't matter Nathan, all Christians are eternally secure..."

FIRST, if you are not concerned about drifting ... I'm concerned about your salvation.

- **Abraham** drifted and lied about his wife ... two times.
- **Lot** drifted and ended up living in Sodom

- **David** drifted and ended up in bed with Bathsheba, kill her husband to cover it up, and burying a baby.
- **Jonah** drifted and ended up in the belly of a great fish.
- **Peter** drifted and ended up denying Jesus 3 times.

Drifting is dangerous ...

Leonardo da Vinci, when painting "The Last Supper," went looking for models to sit for the various disciples and for Jesus. He found a handsome and innocent looking man in a choir in one of the churches in Italy. He painted him as Jesus in the great painting. The man's name was Pietro Bandinelli.

Years passed as da Vinci continued to work on the painting. He left the face of Judas Iscariot till the last. Leonardo went out into the streets of Rome and looked for the most forlorn person he could find.

At last he saw the man whom he wanted for the disciple that betrayed Christ. His face was drawn and villainous. He hired the man and brought him in to sit for the face of Judas. When he had completed the work, he was about to dismiss the man when he asked, "By the way, sir, what is your name?" The poor gentleman said, "Don't you know me? I am Pietro Bandinelli. I also sat as your model for the face of Jesus."

Drifting starts when a person forgets (or thinks less) about who Jesus is and what He has done ...

... that's why we take the Lord's Supper every week—TO REMEMBER!

I don't imagine there is anyone here today who would deny or reject Jesus Christ ...

... we wouldn't take God's name in vain.

... we wouldn't steal or cheat on our husband or wife ...

But given enough time drifting ...

... AND BY THE WAY, no one drifts toward holiness!

... you see we never drift toward what is better, when we drift we drift toward what is worse.

They say there are four things that causes people to lose passion and vision: passing of **time**, boredom with **familiar** things, **busyness** of life, and **habit**.

Paul's not denying that these Jewish Christians do good things and live good lives ... He is saying that they've taken their focus off of what Jesus HAS DONE

“The English explorer, William Edward Parry, once took a crew to the Arctic Ocean. They wanted to go farther north to continue their chartings, so they calculated their location by the stars and started a very difficult and treacherous march north. They walked hour upon hour, and finally, totally exhausted, they stopped. Taking their bearings again from the stars, they discovered that they were farther south than they had been when they started. They had been walking on an ice floe that was moving south faster than they were walking north.”

How many people think that their good deeds, their religiousness, are taking them step by step to God, when in fact they are moving away from Him faster than they are supposedly walking toward Him?

Drifting is the slow death of having less spiritual momentum than the world around you.

(Heb. 2:2-3) ² For if the word spoken through angels proved unalterable, and every transgression and disobedience received a just penalty, ³ how will we escape if we neglect so great a salvation? After it was at the first spoken through the Lord, it was confirmed to us by those who heard,

Paul's point is this. If the disobedience of God's people in the Old Testament resulted in God justly judging them for their sins, what will happen if you reject the way of salvation that He has provided for you in Christ Jesus?

2. Don't Neglect this Great Salvation!

Drifting is dangerous.

Oh, that I could waken you all to be joyfully vigilant in living the Christian life ... looking to Jesus, considering Jesus, and listening to Jesus.

But, if we neglect this great salvation, and drift into the love of other things, then we will not escape. ... We will perish.

The mark of the true child of God is that that he/she does not drift for long.

If you are drifting this morning, one of the signs that you are a child of God is that you hear this and you are thinking ... this cannot continue.

If you hear what I am saying and feel no desire to guard against drifting that is probably a good indication that you need to be saved.

“The mark of the true child of God is that he does not drift for long.”

Paul writes: *“The word spoken through angels proved unalterable, and every transgression and disobedience received a just recompense.”*

In other words, in the Old Testament God gave His word through angels but if someone disobeyed that Word they were judged.

Now God has spoken, not through mere angels, but through someone much greater ... HIS son Jesus Christ...

This is not the code of Hammurabi ... This is not the law given to Moses ... God has spoken through HIS SON!!!

... if we neglect this great word, we are much more guilty than the Old Testament people ...

To whom much is given much is required ... and we have been given the full revelation of the Father in Christ Jesus.

(Heb. 2:3b, 4) After it was at the first spoken through the Lord, it was confirmed to us by those who heard, God also testifying with them, both by signs and wonders and by various miracles and by gifts of the Holy Spirit according to His own will.

This congregation to whom Paul is writing is not a congregation of early Christians who had direct or firsthand knowledge of Jesus.

What they knew about Jesus they learned from the apostles and others.

Paul writes, it's been confirmed, and God Himself has testified to it.

Do you see it???

The truth of the gospel is not a revelation I got in my prayer closet ... It's not something I read in a book or the teachings of some philosopher ...

No! I'm preaching the same truth that thousands of other ministers are preaching around the world and have been preaching for over two thousand years...

... this is the gospel in Acts, preached by the apostles, based on the life and ministry of Jesus Christ Inspired by the Holy Spirit...

... this is the everlasting, eternal, unsearchable riches of Christ Jesus!

... that ought to thrill your soul!

And then Paul says in verse 4 that not only God Himself has confirmed the truth ... He has one confirmed it with signs and wonders and miracles.

Miracles prove this gospel is true. Whether it was miracle during the ministry of Elisha, or the preservation of God's Word over 6000 years of human history.

We embrace this glorious gospel, not just because it is good ... but because it is true and time and time again God has proven this.

The worst thing that could happen would be for us ... God's people ... to neglect it and drift away from it.

Have you watched the news lately?

There is a lot of drifting going on.

... Even in our evangelical Southern Baptist Churches **social justice** has become MORE important than **the gospel**.

Oh, but Nathan, just this week J.D. Gear, the president of the SBC, said that social justice is the gospel ...

... and some scientist said that Pluto wasn't a planet anymore.

A lot of people say a lot of things ... let me set the record straight.

Social justice is not the gospel ... the gospel is the gospel!

I believe it is good to feed the hungry, clothe the naked and provide shelter for the homeless...

But food, clothing and shelter is not humanity's greatest need ... Jesus is!

Paul is very clear there are only 2 kinds of people ... Jews and Gentiles ... and we are reconciled to one another (not through political structures and social laws) ...

... we are reconciled in Jesus Christ.

The good news is **not that everybody gets a fair deal** ... the good news is that God so loved the world that he gave