

Hebrews 2:-1-4

Craig Crawshaw

Hebrews 2:1-4 *For this reason we must pay much closer attention to what we have heard, so that we do not drift away from it. For if the word spoken through angels proved unalterable, and every transgression and disobedience received a just penalty, how will we escape it 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, 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.*

Paraphrase: We must give greater attention to our salvation, so we don't let our life get off-track from what God has planned for us. The Old Testament law was rigid, and disobedience was met with swift judgment. So, do we think it will be OK with God if we just "slide by" in our spirituality? No way. God first spoke the salvation message through Jesus, and then it was reiterated by the apostles' teaching, and confirmed to be authentic by both miraculous miracles and Spirit-given supernatural abilities to believers. Wow – pay closer attention!

2:1

"for this reason" The "reason" is the SALVATION last referred to in the previous verse. The beginning of verse 3 also shows that "salvation" is to be subject of our greater attention. The giver of our salvation has been shown to be the Son of God, God Himself and Lord of all – and named all three by God the Father. This is meant to ignite the flame of our interest in this great salvation and its great giver, our Lord Jesus.

"pay must closer attention" The writer knows that we, as believers, are indeed paying attention. But the challenge is that we must give much greater attention to this salvation. There is so much more to learn and to apply to our lives. It is as if we are drinking "milk" but need to eat "meat."

"to what we have heard" This is explained in verses 3a and 4. We have "heard" the words of Jesus, reiterated in the teachings of the New Testament authors. But we really need to hear them again and again until they sink in deeper. This implies continual reading and study of God's Word, and thoughtful application to life's actions and reactions. We can never hear it enough.

"drift away from it" This is the danger of not hearing enough and paying attention enough. To drift is to do nothing. Or to say it another way: if I put my spiritual life on "cruise control" I will drift away from God and His salvation power. It takes active engagement to keep from drifting away.

Let's "camp out" on this thought for a moment, for it is the central issue of God's challenge.

DRIFTING

Joanne and I enjoy kayaking in the Santa Barbara harbor and out to the buoys on which sea lions lounge. We paddle maybe 10 to 15 minutes out to the buoy, and then stop paddling to rest and watch the seals. Then what happens? In a very short time we find that we have drifted with the wind and the tide and we are no longer next to the buoy. What have we done? Nothing! We have just rested and not paid attention to that which pulls us away from our focus. And to get back to the buoy, we must paddle even harder than it took to get us there, for we must now paddle directly against the wind and the tide.

So let's apply this illustration spiritually. You and I, somewhere back in our lives, discover Jesus,

and we make a commitment to live our life for Him. We become “born again” and are saved. We read the Bible, go to church, attend Bible studies, get involved in ministries and we mature in our faith. Then we read, attend, study and minister again and again and we grow even more. And we get to a place where we gratefully know we are further along in our faith than when we started. We are glad for the journey and for our progress, yet know there is much more to learn and grow.

And then circumstances cause us to miss a few church services, or temporarily dropout of that ministry, or forego the Bible time – just for a few. No big deal – life happens. I’m strong in my faith. No warning signs go off. If I hadn’t eaten, my stomach would talk to me. If I overslept, my alarm would bug me. If I failed to put gas in my car I would be quickly reminded on the side of the road. No, there are no immediate warning signs for spiritual apathy. Or else the “still small voice” is so still and small that I miss it. But sooner or later I would find myself less patient, or less inclined to thank God for a circumstance, or more inclined to choose something over Bible reading or a church service. No big deal. I’m OK – I’ll get back to it soon. And pretty soon the “new norm” is occasional church, or occasional Bible, or occasional prayer, or occasional bursts of spiritual fervor. And then will the alarm go off? Maybe – maybe not.

DRIFTING is NEGLECTING

The author of Hebrews will go on in his letter to mention many specific areas that we should not “neglect” in our spirituality.

Hebrews 4:16 *Therefore let us draw near with confidence to the throne of grace, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.*

Hebrews 6:1 *Therefore leaving the elementary teaching about the Christ, let us press on to maturity...*

Hebrews 10:24-25 *And let us consider how to stimulate one another to love and good deeds, not forsaking our own assembling together ...*

Hebrews 12:1 *Therefore, since we have so great a cloud of witnesses surrounding us, let us also lay aside every encumbrance and the sin which so easily entangles us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us.*

Hebrews 13:15 *Through Him then, let us continually offer up a sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of lips that give thanks to His name.*

In summary, these challenges urge us not to neglect ... PRAYER, BIBLE STUDY, ENCOURAGING OTHERS, CHURCH FELLOWSHIP, CONFESSION, PERSEVERANCE and THANKFUL PRAISE

DRIFTING is TODAY

It’s interesting that the Bible makes “TODAY” the time for spiritual activity.

2 Corinthians 6:2 *Behold, now is “the acceptable time,” behold now is “the day of salvation.”*

Luke 9:23 *And [Jesus] was saying to them all, “If anyone wishes to come after Me, he must deny himself, and take up his cross daily and follow Me.”*

Hebrews 3:13 *But encourage one another day after day, as long as it is still called “Today”...*

We might retire from employment, or take a vacation from our day to day schedule, but we can never retire or take a vacation from being a follower of Christ. Our commitment to pursue Him with heart, soul, mind and strength must never waver.

DRIFTING is OMISSION

Notice that “drifting” or “neglecting” is not a sin of COMMISSION – meaning something action I take in disobedience, like lying, cheating, gossiping or being selfish. Rather this sin of “drifting” is a sin of OMISSION – failing to do what is right.

James, the brother of Jesus, specifically defines this sin in his letter.

James 4:17 *Therefore, to one who knows the right thing to do and does not do it, to him it is sin.*

We know that the right thing to do is to regularly go the throne of God in confession and petition and praise. We know that the right thing to do is to read and study our Bible, both individually and with others. We know the right thing to do is to be a committed part of a local church where we can grow in fellowship and ministry with others. So to not do these things consistently and with intention is sin. And to not do these things will result in drifting from and neglecting our God and His glorious salvation.

As a full-time pastor of 43 years, I have noted that neglect of prayer, Bible and church is the #1 cause of Christians moving away from their Lord. It is true in my life, and it is true in yours.

2:2

“the word spoken through angels” refers to the giving of the Old Testament Law by God through Moses, which the Word tells us was accompanied by 1000s of angels. Stephen the martyred apostle refers to the disobedient Jews this way:

Acts 7:53 *You who received the law as ordained by angels, and yet did not keep it.*

And here how Moses blessed the people, describing the giving of the law:

Deuteronomy 33:2 *[Moses] said, “The Lord came from Sinai ... and He came from the midst of ten thousand holy ones; at [God’s] right hand there was flashing lightning for them.”*

Paul, in his letter to the Galatians, regarding angels at the giving of the Law:

Galatians 3:19 *Why the Law then? It was added because of transgressions, having been ordained through angels by the agency of a mediator [Moses] ...*

The Hebrew author’s point is that the Old Testament Law, ordained through angels, always met disobedience with penalty.

2:3

So the New Testament salvation, first spoken about by the Lord Jesus – so much greater than angels – should be expected to bring even greater penalty if neglected. This is meant to be a further warning to us to “pay much closer attention to what we have heard.”

The word “neglect” is introduced here, especially the neglect of our salvation. NEGLECT is what causes DRIFTING. To NEGLECT is to DRIFT. And what are we warned to not neglect – our great salvation. And thus, verse 3 (“neglect”) syncs with verse 1 (“drift”) in that they are both connected with not closely regarding our salvation.

2:4

This next verse simply continues the confirmation of Jesus word, confirmed by the teaching of the apostles – now also confirmed by signs and wonders in the apostolic age and by the giving of individual spiritual gifts to each believer.

1 Corinthians 12:7 But to each [believer] is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good.

All these confirmation are also meant to warn us to “pay much closer attention” to our salvation.

OUR GREAT SALVATION

So in conclusion to this message, let’s examine what is this “great salvation” of which we are to pay “much closer attention” so as not to drift from God, and to which we are not to “neglect” at expense of spiritual loss.

First, we can speak of the CROSS of Christ –God’s gift of His only Son to pay for our sin.

Then we can speak of the RESURRECTION of Christ – the confirmation of our hope of resurrection after death.

We can speak of God's free gift of FAITH, which allows us to accept the GRACE of God in providing for our salvation apart from any work that we might do (Ephesians 2:8-9)

But let us speak of "our great salvation" in this simple and helpful three-fold reminder:

Saved from HELL

My sin disqualifies me from ever achieving God's presence, but by His grace and Jesus' sacrifice to pay the penalty of my sin, I am saved from perishing in hell and am given the glorious promise of eternal life with God in heaven!

Saved from SIN

Not only am I saved from the penalty of sin – hell – but I am saved from the very power of sin as I live this life. In Christ, for the first time I can live knowing that I am FORGIVEN and TRANSFORMED into a new person. I no longer HAVE to sin, for the power to withstand sin has been given me through Christ. I am free from being controlled by the power of sin, and free to choose the righteous path, because Christ lives in me. (Galatians 2:20)

Saved from SELF

In addition, I am no longer a prisoner of my past or present – I have been reborn to a present and future of great hope and promise. My greatest enemy has always been the "devil within" – myself. And I now have the new life to overcome my selfish, "me first" attitude. I can see outside myself much more clearly, and with the Holy Spirit living in me, I am able to put others first and live for God rather than self. I can also forgive myself, because God has forgiven me. And I can believe in my new self because God believes in me.

If you don't know and possess this great salvation – I invite you to receive Jesus Christ as your Savior and Lord today – don't put it off. I guarantee, by the promise of God, that your simple faith in Jesus' death and resurrection for you will work a miracle in your life.

This truly is a GREAT SALVATION – and I must not neglect it, but give it full and daily attention, lest I drift away from its power and promise, and in doing so drift away from the God I love.