

The Five Warnings of Hebrews

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CHAPTER 2

THE DANGER OF DRIFTING, Hebrews 2:1-4

Incorporated within the very framework and message of the book of Hebrews are five danger signals. These are like stop signs on the boulevard of backsliding. They are warning posters placed on the freeway of disobedience.

Chapter 2 -- The danger of drifting

Chapter 3-4-- The danger of not entering into rest.

Chapter 5-6-- The danger of not going on to maturity.

Chapter 10 -- The danger of willful sin

Chapter 12 -- The danger of indifference to the point of denial.

There is a progression in these warnings. It starts with being careless about salvation and indifferent to spiritual things until finally one comes to be perfectly satisfied with being indifferent.

W. H. Griffith Thomas has stated for these five warnings: "Don't drift, disbelieve, degenerate, despise, depart." For our study we will follow the following order.

Drifting, 2:1-4.

Doubting, 3:7-4:13.

Deformity, 5:11-6:20.

Despising, 10:26-31.

Denying, 12:15-29.

Each one of these danger signs is part of the truth of this Epistle. The author stops in each case to apply the truth he has already presented to the lives of his hearers. It is not enough to know. There must be a performance of what is known. Knowledge bears responsibility.

Basic to any understanding of these warnings is to first understand that the Hebrews to whom the writer is speaking in this Epistle are saved.

The recipients of this letter were Hebrew believers who had trusted JESUS CHRIST for their salvation, but were in danger of going back to the Temple in Jerusalem and to the Temple worship in order to escape the persecution that was being brought upon them at this time by the

unsaved Hebrews.

INTRODUCTION, 1:1-3.

The theme of the Epistle is that GOD has spoken in His Son. We need to consider who this Son is, what He has done, and what the message is to us today.

Before, GOD spoke at sundry times and in divers manners. Some of these ways GOD used to reveal Himself were:

1. *By His creative acts.* Psalm 19:1-4, **"The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament sheweth his handywork. Day unto day uttereth speech, and night unto night sheweth knowledge. There is no speech nor language where their voice is not heard. Their line is gone out through all the earth, and their words to the end of the world."**

Paul at Lystra (Acts 14:15-17) said: **"Sirs, why do ye these things? We also are men of like passions with you, and preach unto you that ye should turn from these vanities unto the living God, which made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and all things that are therein: Who in times past suffered all nations to walk in their own ways. Nevertheless he left not himself without witness, in that he did good, and gave us rain from heaven, and fruitful seasons, filling our hearts with food and gladness."**

Paul at Athens (Acts 17:24-30) wrote: **"God that made the world and all things therein, seeing that he is Lord of heaven and earth, dwelleth not in temples made with hands; Neither is worshipped with men's hands, as though he needed any thing, seeing he giveth to all life, and breath, and all things; And hath made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth, and hath determined the times before appointed, and the bounds of their habitation; That they should seek the Lord, if haply they might feel after him, and find him, though he be not far from every one of us: For in him we live, and move, and have our being; as certain also of your own poets have said, For we are also his offspring. Forasmuch then as we are the offspring of God, we ought not to think that the Godhead is like unto gold, or silver, or stone, graven by art and mans device. And the times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth all men every where to repent."**

Romans 1:18-22, **"For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness; Because that which may be known of God is manifest in them; for God hath shewed it unto them. For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse: Because that, when they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened. Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools."**

Here GOD tells us that heathenism has a revelation of Himself. They were given up by GOD, not passively but actively, because they changed the truth of GOD into a lie. They refused to acknowledge GOD and worship Him.

There was a limitation to the knowledge of GOD in creation. Man could know only GOD's being and His power, but not His person. Thus GOD began to reveal Himself further.

2. *By the patriarchs* (Noah, Job, Abraham).
3. *By the angels* (to Abraham and Moses).
4. *By the prophets* (who gave us Old Testament revelation).

Still the various methods of revelation were inadequate to reveal GOD as a person. In order to do this adequately and fully, it would take a person who was Himself GOD as well as man. Such a person was JESUS CHRIST. The Father sent the Son in order to reveal the Father.

John 1:18, "**No man hath seen GOD at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him.**"

John 14:8-10, "**Phillip saith unto him, Lord, shew us the Father, and it sufficeth us. JESUS saith unto him. Have I been so long time with you, and yet hath thou not known me, Philip? he that hath seen me hath seen the Father; and how sayest thou then, Shew us the Father? Believe thou not that I am in the Father, and the Father in me? The words that I speak unto you I speak not of myself: but the Father that dwelleth in me, he doeth the works.**"

All that we know of the Person of GOD is found alone in the Lord JESUS CHRIST. He came to reveal the Father.

Consider Who the Son is, 1:2-3.

1. Heir of All: "**Whom he hath appointed heir of all things.**" He is the focal point of all the universe. Colossians 1:16 tells us: "**All things were created . . . for him.**"
2. Creator of the Ages: "**by whom also he made the worlds**" i.e., "the ages." He is the beginning point of all the universe. He brought time into being and all things connected with time. Time is His creation and is subject to Him.
3. Co-Essence of Deity. "**who being the brightness of his glory.**" The word "**brightness**" signifies to "*flash forth*" and thus "*to radiate*." The Son is the outshining of Deity to a world in darkness. He is the true Shekinah Glory of GOD.
4. True Personality of Deity. "**and the express image of his person.**" He is the exact reproduction of His essence. All that is in the Father is in the Son. He stands separate from the created universe, and a distinct person of the Godhead.
5. Sustainer and Governor of the Universe. "**and upholding all things by the word of his power.**" He is active today within the universe in order to have all creation accomplish His purpose and program. He is master of ceremonies for all that occurs.
6. Redeemer of Men. "**when he had by himself purged our sins.**" This was not done by speaking nor by being, but by dying. He provides complete and perfect redemption for the

universe. He alone provided -- no one else helped or contributed to it.

7. Sovereign of Men. "**sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high.**" His work is finished. He is seated above the universe as its Sovereign and Judge. It is His right to reign and He shall some day put down all opposing rule and authority. His present position reveals His absolute authority.

This is the One who is the THEME of our study: "Consider Him"!

A. SUPERIOR TO THE ANGELS, 1:4-2:18.

1. In His Deity, 1:4-14 As Son OF GOD.

By seven quotations, the Son is shown to be superior to the angels who are referred to in the Old Testament as Sons of GOD.

- a. Greater in name, 1:4-5. - Angels are called sons, but never Son.
- b. Greater in worship, 1:6-7 - The angels worship GOD; He accepts their worship.
- c. Greater in majesty, 1:8-9 - The angels serve at the throne; the Son owns the throne.
- d. Greater in duration, 1:10-12 - The angels serve for a time; the Son owns the time.
- e. Greater in authority, 1:13-14. - He is the Sovereign; they are servants.

Since the Son is superior to angels, His revelation is superior to their revelation. This is important and is the basis of the first warning given in 2:1-4. It is the application of the truth of His Person.

Notice the connection, marking or underlining the key words: "**God . . . hath . . . spoken . . . by His Son . . . Therefore we must give the more earnest heed to the things which we have heard . . . for if the word spoken by angels was steadfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just recompence of reward; How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation . . .**" (Hebrews 1:1-2; 2:1-3) from this One who is so much greater than the angels.

There is a double danger involved. The first is physical and represents judgment in time; the second is spiritual -- the hearing of these great truths of the Gospel and doing nothing about them. It is a danger that is for both saved and unsaved. The revelation of angels to Lot concerning the destruction of Sodom was true, but the same revelation which saved Lot destroyed Lot's wife because of unbelief. Now look at Hebrews 2.

:1 "**Therefore**" -- on account of this. That is the greater person who has come to give revelation to us in these last days.

"**we ought.**" It is a logical necessity.

"**give the more earnest heed.**" This is the kind of heed needed by all -- myself, you, everyone who has ears to hear. Thus this exhortation and warning is for all.

"to the things which we have heard, lest at any time we should let them slip" - might drift away from them or let them slip from us.

The truth is represented as being anchored. It will never change because it was given by the Changeless Person who changes not. Since the truth will not change, the whole danger is on OUR SIDE that we change through a careless attitude of indifference, and we drift away from it by the force of an opposing current operative in the world.

The point is this: The greater the REVEALER, the greater the responsibility to that revealed, and the greater the penalty for not giving heed. Revelation through the Son carries with it, by the very intrinsic nature of the revelation, a far more solemn obligation to its recipients than Old Testament revelation.

:2 -- **"For if (as was true) the word spoken by angels was steadfast."**

It never was changed, or failed, or slipped from being grounded in fact. How much could be said on this one point alone from the giving of the Law down to the father of John the Baptist, Zacharias to whom Gabriel said: **"And, behold, thou shalt be dumb, and not able to speak, until the day that these things shall be performed, because thou believest not my words, which shall be fulfilled in their season"** (Luke 1:20). It was in every case exactly fulfilled as revealed, of which the revelation by the angel Gabriel to Daniel is another example.

The major revelation in the writer's mind here in Hebrews however is that the Law -- the old covenant -- which was given by angels (Deuteronomy 33:2; Acts 7:53).

"and every transgression and disobedience."

"Transgression" refers to a positive offense: someone doing what they were not supposed to do under the law.

"Disobedience" refers to a negative offense: someone failing to do what they were supposed to do.

"received a just recompence."

A recompence is a payment of wages. The law gave man exactly what he deserved. It was a system of justice. This revelation of angels in the Old Testament, carried with it its own intrinsic authority. It did not have authority because man sanctioned it, but by its very nature. No one could pass judgment upon it, and yet it did pass judgment upon all.

:3 -- Now the question is given: **"How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation?"**

The neglect was actually then taking place. They had the gospel and in the case of the Hebrew Christians, many of them were no longer meeting with the believers because of the persecution they were suffering, and some were even ready to go back to the Temple and its worship. It was a matter of complete indifference. It was the attitude of Lot's wife on a massive scale.

Remember, you cannot neglect something you do not have. The only way you can neglect your child is to have a child. To neglect salvation in the case of the believer is to have it and be completely indifferent concerning Church attendance and fellowship with other believers, personal reading and study of the Word and prayer, and so forth. It is that attitude: "I'm saved, so I don't have to worry. I'm all right." The truth is just the opposite. You are all wrong. This **"so great salvation"** is not a mere ticket to Heaven in which you can live just anyway down here on earth.

The writer of Hebrews will point out that it is a life where **"the just shall live by faith: but if any man draw back"** from going on and living this kind of a life to which he has been called in salvation **"my soul shall have no pleasure in him"** (Hebrews 10:38). GOD's wrath is against the unbeliever, but His displeasure is against His sinning child and He personally will discipline and discipline severely. This is why the writer says: **"The Lord shall judge his people."** He is speaking about judgment of believers who are His people but who are indifferent to the revelation given. And he adds: **"it is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God"** (Hebrews 10:30-31). This is addressed only to believers.

There is no one of us this day that can escape this warning. It includes me, and it includes you. It includes those who say they are believers and are not here this morning nor are they anywhere even though they are not now sick nor are they in a casket. But they are going to be sick, and if they do not give heed to this sickness, they will be dead.

The question is asked: "How shall we escape?" But the question is not answered, neither in the book of Hebrews nor in all of Scripture. Here is a question no demon in hell, nor even Satan with all of his knowledge, can answer. There is no prophet or wise man, there is no one among us today nor has ever been among us who can answer it. It is unanswerable, and it is this that gives the solemnity to the warning.

The superiority of this new revelation is threefold:

1. In its original announcement, 2:3b. **"which at the first began to be spoken by (through) the Lord."** This was from the Lord Himself, not from angels. It was from One far superior to the angels.
2. In its convincing proclamation, 2:3c. **"and was confirmed unto us by them that heard him."** The Apostles give authentic testimony of what was truth.
3. In its divine attestation, 2:4. **"God also bearing them witness, both with signs and wonders, and with divers miracles, and gifts of the Holy Ghost, according to his own will?"** Here was the divine confirmation given to the message of the Apostles to confirm the truth of their proclamation.

Now let me ask you who have heard the gospel. You know exactly what it is.

- CHRIST has died for your sins.
- He was buried.
- He rose again the third day just as He said He would.

- And He has been seen.
- He is alive today effecting salvation for all who will come unto GOD by Him.

You know this intellectually, and even perhaps emotionally you have been stirred by it, but you have neglected to respond to it personally yourself.

You are NOT saved because you know the gospel; you are NOT saved because you even have or have had at some time an emotional response to the Gospel. You are ONLY saved when you act upon what you know because you believe it is true.

As an act of your "will" you "call upon the name of the Lord" because you know He can save you. As an act of your "will" you confess with your mouth the Lord JESUS believing in your heart that GOD has raised Him from the dead. You are willing to come out and confess Him openly regardless of what it means, even if it means the firing squad, or death at the stake by burning.

You can put it off; you can neglect the facts and the truth, spurning the invitation, but let me ask you one question which I dare you to think about:

"How shall you escape?"

You can't answer, can you? In fact, you do not even want to think about it. You want to dismiss it as far as possible from your mind. But you can't do it.

Oh, how wonderful it is to be able to announce that the invitation is still open. Today is still "**the day of salvation.**" It is still "**the accepted time**" when you can be saved. There may never be a tomorrow for you. There may never be a tomorrow for this age of grace whereby you can be saved without dying for your faith in CHRIST or enduring unto the end of the tribulation period in order to be saved.

Come while it is still called "**to day**" in Scripture. The time will come when the ark of GOD's grace will be closed and judgment is for all who have spurned GOD's grace.

How shall you -- put your name there -- escape if you neglect so great salvation?

~ end of chapter 2 ~
