

Hebrews 2: 1-4; “So Great a Salvation”, Sermon # 7 in the Series – “Holding Fast our Confession”, Delivered by Pastor Paul Rendall on January 22nd, 2012, In the Morning Worship Service.

Many people who call themselves Christians in our day do not understand the implications of Biblical truth when it comes to being saved and knowing God. They are not putting forth the great efforts which are necessary for them to learn their responsibilities to Christ and His Word; nor do they put forth much effort to learn to do all that Christ has commanded them. They rightly understand that salvation is the gift of God. They know that it is something that you either have, or you don't have; but they do not understand that it is possible that they might think that they have it when in reality they don't really have it. There are a number of passages in the book of Hebrews that warn us of this dread possibility; this is the first of them. Thinking that you are a Christian when you might not actually be a true Christian is a very dangerous position to be in. This was the position of many of the Jews which Paul was writing to. They were tempted to think that Christ and His glorious gospel were not as great in power and glory as Moses and the law. They were tempted to hold on to the law and not go on to know the Lord Jesus and follow Him. So he takes pains to show them their ideas of Christ and how great His salvation is, were too low. Warnings were in order for them because they had not understood the greatness of the glory of Christ, or the greatness of His salvation.

We will see that warnings are in order for us here this morning as well. But these warnings which we shall investigate, in the next few minutes, are not given simply to those who might be deceived as to their true state. They were not simply given to those who did not really know Christ. They were also given to true Christians as well. Do you notice that the Apostle uses the word “we” in relation to all the warnings that he is giving here? He is not distinguishing between who is a true and a false believer. He knows that that is a very difficult task. But he is saying “we” because He knew that it is possible for true Christians to have some of the same spiritual problems as those who profess to know the Lord, but who have never really come to know Him. This is really quite scary because some may be going to hell who think they are going to heaven. But then there may also be some who are resting satisfied with a very superficial relationship with God and Christ who really need take the initiative to do what the Bible is commanding them to do. And so, I pray that you will pay close attention to what is said here this morning so that you might really see and receive the truths that I have to deliver to you this morning. This salvation which I preach to you is really a very great salvation. Our God and our Christ, and His truth deserve your attention, your time, and all the strength that you can give to them. I am speaking of what you do with your mind or heart, now, in any given situation. If you truly believe that this is a great salvation that you have received, when you first believed in Christ, then you will be asking yourself 3 very searching questions on a regular basis. 1st – You will ask yourself often as you go through your Christian life – Am I drifting from the things that I have heard? (Verse 1) 2nd– You will ask yourself often, am I neglecting this great salvation? (Verses 2 and 3) And thirdly – You will ask yourself often, has my salvation been confirmed to me by my seeing the power of God at work in my life? (Verse 4) These are the great questions which will either prove or disprove the reality of whether you are walking with God and glorifying God with your life.

1st – Ask yourself – Am I drifting from the things that I have heard?

“Therefore we must give the more earnest heed to the things which we have heard, lest we drift away.” There is nothing casual about this statement at all. The “things which these Hebrews had heard were the things which were first spoken by the Lord in His three and a half year earthly ministry. Then, those sayings and truths of Christ's which God saw fit to preserve

for every successive generation until the Lord returns, were written down, as the writers of the various books were guided by the Holy Spirit. I am speaking now of the formation of the Bible, and especially the New Testament Scriptures. The New Testament Scriptures are the inspired, infallible, inerrant truth of God just as much as the Old Testament. The Jews of that day should have taken them to heart and have believed the teaching of the Apostles when it was preached to them. Some of them did, but others did not take heed and they drifted away from what they had heard preached and they perished. The generations which have followed have had many further opportunities to hear and to heed the gospel. All the things necessary to their being saved and coming to really know the Lord were written down by the Apostles and their helpers the Evangelists, so that every generation might know of this great salvation which I preach to you this morning.

Have you ever noticed that unbelieving people hardly ever pick up and read the Bible? It is the most important book in the whole world; in all of life, and they will not do it. The reason for this is found in 1 Corinthians Chapter 2, verse 14. "But the natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; nor can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned." This is the importance of coming to hear the preaching of the Word of God. You might be saved by hearing the Word preached. This is the importance of door to door evangelism and even ordinary Christians sharing the gospel. It is because "faith comes by hearing and hearing by the Word of God," as it says in Romans Chapter 10, verse 17. People cannot be saved without faith in Christ; they cannot be saved unless they call upon the Lord in prayer and ask Him for the free gift of salvation. And it says in verse 11 of that same Chapter in Romans 10, "For the Scripture says, 'Whoever believes on Him will not be put to shame.'" "For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek, for the same Lord over all is rich to all who call upon Him." "How then shall they call on Him in whom they have not believed?" "And how shall they believe in Him of whom they have not heard?" "And how shall they hear without a preacher?" "And how they preach unless they are sent?" "As it is written, 'How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the gospel of peace, who bring glad tidings of good things!'" "But they have not all obeyed the gospel." "For Isaiah says, 'Lord, who has believed our report?'"

Do you realize that God uses the foolishness of the preaching of the Scriptures to save those who will believe? Do you realize that your believing in Christ is an act of obedience which God expects of every man and woman; child and young person on the face of the earth? This is truly a great salvation. Whoever believes in Christ will not be put to shame. They will not be put to shame because it is a real salvation; it is real deliverance from God's righteous wrath; His wrath which abides on you now if you have never believed in the Son of God. But it is good tidings for all sinners who believe because the Lord is rich to all who call upon him. It does not matter what kind of background or upbringing that you have had. It does not matter whether you have been moral and compliant as a young person, or head-strong and rebellious; the same Lord Jesus Christ, who is Lord over all, is rich to all who will call upon His name; to give them the grace that they need to change, and to become a person who is forgiven, and justified; a person who will become holy through faith in Christ and faith in the truth of His blessed Word. The person believing in Christ has peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. There is no more enmity against God, and no more wrath of God against you, when you believe in the Savior. This is the best of news. It means that God will always and forever be for you, because of Christ, and not against you. He will work in your heart and change that sinful, uncaring, unthinking person that you were into a person who loves Him, and loves other people just as much as you used to only love yourself. Truly this is a great salvation.

But there is a warning given here to all who say that they have believed in the Lord Jesus. It is that you "take more earnest heed to the things which you have heard, lest you drift away from them." Notice the strength of the wording: you must take more earnest heed. What is it to take

more earnest heed? I believe that it means two things for us today. It means that you and I do more than merely come and listen to the preaching of the Word. It means that we become sincere and serious about meditating upon what we have heard so that the good truth of God will have its due effects upon our mind and heart. And secondly it means that we become sincere and serious about doing everything commanded of us, when we have heard. Now as to the first, you must ask yourself whether you are giving the Word of God its place in your life, that you should. You may show up here on Sunday morning to hear the Word of God, but have you duly prepared yourself to receive the Word of God? Have you prepared your heart on Saturday night by trying to go to bed at a reasonable hour? Have you risen up on Sunday morning to spend a few moments in prayer that you might receive what God has to say to you through the preacher on this day? Have you so prepared your work that you might cease from it on the Lord's Day, and give yourself completely to the spiritual things that will come to you, and the things that you will seek out and do on this holy day? This is the New Testament, New Covenant Sabbath Day – Sunday. Our Lord Jesus Christ has risen from the dead. It is not a day for watching sports on television in the afternoon and evening, or going to worldly entertainments so that you drift away from the things that were preached to you on Sunday morning. This is not a day for students to pursue their personal studies while the Bible is completely neglected. You say that you are a Christian. Then live like one. Remember the Sabbath Day to keep it holy.

And then, if you are earnest, you should listen to the preaching of the Word, and read the Bible for yourself, with a view to doing what you have been taught. It does no good to say that you are a Christian and you neglect all the duties and many of the commandments of the Christian faith. It does no good to say that you have a relationship with Jesus Christ, and yet you do not do what He says. He says that if you believe you should want to be baptized. He says that if you believe that you should want to follow Him by joining the church and becoming a member of this local body, with others. He says that if you love him you will keep His commandments and that His commandments are not burdensome. You should want to abide in His Word that you might be useful to Him, and bear fruit for Him. Each of us needs to ask ourselves whether we are really sincere about following Jesus; whether we are really serious about following Jesus. It costs something to be an earnest follower of Jesus. Don't just drift away from what you have heard here. Instead pray to receive it, meditate upon it, and do it.

Now 2ndly – If you truly believe that this is a great salvation that you have received, you will often be asking yourself, am I neglecting this great salvation?

(Verses 2 and 3)

What does it mean to neglect so great a salvation? It means that you are neglecting His Word, and therefore you are neglecting Christ Himself because of this neglect. And the implication of this kind of neglect that is being spoken of, is that the person who neglects so great a salvation by not believing in Christ will finally perish in their sins. This kind of neglect, if not repented of, is an eternally fatal sin. It is when you are neglecting to do what God and Christ expect you to do; to trust and obey the Lord in conjunction with the truth of His Word. You can see this from the text itself in verse 2. "For if the word spoken through angels proved steadfast and every transgression and disobedience received a just reward, how shall we escape if we neglect so great a salvation, which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord and was confirmed to us by those who heard Him." Now, here we find here the Apostle comparing what took place in the Old Testament times when the law was given to Moses and the children of Israel, with what you and I have been given in New Testament times. He is reasoning from the lesser to the greater and he is saying that if every transgression and disobedience received a just reward; a just recompense or pay back which was meted out under that Dispensation; neither will we escape if we neglect so great a salvation in New Testament times.

How did they neglect the word of God to them in those Old Testament times of Moses? Well turn with me over to Hebrews Chapter 4, verse 1. "Therefore, since a promise remains of entering His rest, let us fear lest any of you seem to have come short of it." "For indeed the gospel was preached to us as well as to them; but the word which they heard did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in those who heard it." This was the major reason that the preaching of God's word to them by Moses did not avail the children of Israel so as to really save them from their sins. They did not mix faith with it. Mixing faith with everything you hear of the true gospel and the Word of God being applied to your heart and mind, is a very essential part of receiving the Word so that it will save you and do you good. This is what happened at the church at Thessalonica when they received the Word. It says in 1 Thessalonians 2: 13 – "For this reason we also thank God without ceasing, because when you received the Word of God which you heard from us, you welcomed it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God, which also effectively works in you who believe." So, having faith in Christ in exercise enables you to go about to do and to keep God's commandments because the word of God is effectively working in you. It enables you to have fellowship with the living risen Christ which will lead you into many avenues of obedience to Him.

We can also see that it is very possible to neglect dealing with the lusts and passions of your heart and mind because you are not paying attention to the duty of mortifying the sins of your heart and mind which lead to outward transgressions if not checked and repented of. In verse 2 of our text it says that under the Old Covenant, "every transgression and disobedience received a just reward." (A just retribution or penalty it says in the margin) It is the Christian's duty to Christ to be very seriously concerned with keeping God's commandments and thus observing them; not allowing himself to neglect so great a salvation and tolerate sin in his heart and mind. All the promises of God are 'yes' and 'amen' in Christ Jesus. He is faithful even when we are faithless; it is wonderfully true. But you and I who are Christians have a responsibility to turn from every sin, and put every sin to death. Turn with me over to 1 Corinthians Chapter 10, verse 1. "Moreover, brethren, I do not want you to be unaware that all our fathers were under the cloud, all passed through the sea, all were baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea, all ate the same spiritual food, and all drank the same spiritual drink." "For they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them, and that Rock was Christ." "But with most of them God was not well pleased, for their bodies were scattered in the wilderness." "Now these things became our examples, to the intent that we should not lust after evil things as they also lusted." "And do not become idolaters as were some of them. As it is written, 'THE PEOPLE SAT DOWN TO EAT AND DRINK, AND ROSE UP TO PLAY'." "Nor let us commit sexual immorality, as some of them did, and in one day twenty-three thousand fell; nor let us tempt Christ, as some of them also tempted, and were destroyed by serpents; nor complain, as some of them also complained, and were destroyed by the destroyer."

The law of God was spoken through angels in the time when the children of Israel left Egypt and wandered through the wilderness for 40 years. That is the angels were the ones who helped to demonstrate God's mighty acts of power when Israel left Egypt in their deliverance from their bondage in Egypt. It was probably the angels who helped orchestrate the plagues upon Egypt; the waters becoming blood. They were there responding to the rod of Moses, the power given to him by God to stretch out his hand over the waters of Egypt, and cause them to become blood. They were there helping God to orchestrate the frogs and the lice which came forth so abundantly that they came up into the bedrooms and beds of those in unbelieving Egypt. They were there striking the cattle and the livestock of Egypt. They were there helping God to orchestrate the hail and fire which came upon Egypt and helped God in bringing the locusts to destroy the crops of the Egyptians. These were plagues upon unbelievers. I surmise that this is what they did. But the angels were also there at Mt. Sinai in the giving of the law to Israel. One

of them sounded the trumpet and the Lord descended upon the top of the mountain and gave Moses His law in the ten commandments which were written by the finger of God. Were there angels helping in this? It may have been so, and later on as well when Israel was both blessed with miracles and punished for their unbelief and disobedience during their wilderness wanderings. The angels were God's servants in these things. The words of promised deliverance were uttered by God to Moses, but when the actual blessings were bestowed and the words of cursing and death were uttered by God; the working out of the promise in either case, came through the acts and deeds of holy angels. In this holy sense, then, the word was "spoken through angels". But God was not pleased with many of the children of Israel in those days. Why? Because they did not deal with their own hearts and their sinful passions. They coveted a different kind of worship; of a golden calf which they gave their jewelry for, and which Aaron cast for them. They committed immortality and became "party animals" and 23,000 died in one day. They tempted Christ Himself by not believing that He would give them water to drink and good bread to eat. They tired of seeing the Lord's miracles and wanted to go back to Egypt's food. They complained and were destroyed by the destroyer. (A destroying angel)

But what of New Covenant believers? These verses say that these Old Testament stories of how God's covenant people were given as an example to us here today. In verse 11 and following it says, "Now all these things happened to them as examples, and they were written down for our admonition upon whom the ends of the ages have come." They were written for our warning and instruction. Then it says, "Let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall." "No temptation has overtaken you except such as is common to man; but God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make a way of escape, that you may be able to bear it." How shall we escape being eternally punished if we neglect so great a salvation? And how shall we escape being disciplined by the Lord if we are a true believer and we neglect the duty of putting sin to death in our heart and in our actions, and thoroughly repenting of it? Romans Chapter 8 verse 12 says, "Therefore, brethren, we are debtors—not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh." "For if you live according to the flesh you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live." Ask yourself this morning, those of you who believe that you are Christians, if this is what you are engaged in? This holy activity of mortification of sin? And do you also pray for the other side of sanctification and see it working in your life? Do you pray for vivification? Do you pray for the life of Christ to be working in you; for Christ to be teaching you and leading you into the truth? Is Christ presently satisfying your soul? Do you pray for Christ's power and His mighty grace, and His presence to be with you to help you in your times of temptation? How shall we escape if we neglect so great a salvation? But if we pursue the Lord and His grace, each and every day, He shall make the way of escape. He will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able. You will be able to bear it. And you will make progress in holiness.

And then thirdly – If you are sincere serious Christian, you will ask yourself often, has my salvation been confirmed to me by my seeing the power of God at work in my life? (Verse 4)

Do I have the power to abide in the Word of God, and make progress in holiness in my life? When the Word of God was first given, back in the days when the Book of Hebrews was written, it was confirmed to those who heard the Lord Jesus speak. It was confirmed with "signs and wonders, with various miracles, and gifts of the Holy Spirit according to the Lord's own will." We no longer have the Lord Jesus physically with us. We no longer have the Apostles with us. God is no longer witnessing the preached truth with signs and wonders as He did in the times of the early Church. But what is it that He is doing nowadays? What is it that He does do to confirm to us the Word that is being spoken to us? He gives us the Holy Spirit and bids us pray to see the greatest of miracles take place in our own heart and in the hearts of people around us.

It is the greatest confirmation that the Word of God is true; when any person's heart is regenerated, when they are born again by the Spirit of God. It is the greatest of miracles when the Holy Spirit comes into the heart and life of a believer and abides with him forever. It is the greatest of miracles when a person who has been fighting the idea that God expects him to keep His commandments and to live His life for the glory of God and to help other people; changes to do just that. That is the power of God at work in their life. That is the kind of confirmation which many of us need this morning. Let us not be looking to speak in tongues, or to be able to prophesy in order to confirm that we are spiritual and have been baptized by the Spirit. Let us go about to do and keep God's Word; not allowing ourselves to drift away, not allowing ourselves to neglect so great a salvation and so great a Savior. But rather, let us find the true liberty and real power in living the Christian life; holding fast the Word of God, and going about to do and to keep it by the power of the Holy Spirit. Listen to James Chapter 1, verse 21 in closing – "Therefore lay aside all filthiness and overflow of wickedness, and receive with meekness the implanted word, which is able to save your souls." "But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves." "For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man observing his natural face in a mirror; for he observes himself, goes away, and immediately forgets what kind of man he was." "But he who looks into the perfect law of liberty and continues in it, and is not a forgetful hearer (one who drifts away) but a doer of the work, this one will be blessed in what he does." Look how practical James is about this. He goes on to say in verse 26 – "If anyone among you thinks he is religious, and does not bridle his tongue but deceives his own heart, this one's religion is useless." "Pure and undefiled religion before God and the Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their trouble, and to keep oneself unspotted from the world." Is this what you are doing to promote true religion? Watch what you say to other people, and about other people. Visit widows and orphans to see how you might help them, and then keep yourself unstained from the world. Let us, both individually and together, prove just how great a salvation has been given to us. Let us take more earnest heed to the things which have been spoken to us.