

HOW SHALL WE ESCAPE?

Hebrews 2:1-4

We all heard it many times: “*How many times do I have to tell you!...*”

Followed by specific things our parents told us to do, or not to do.

Clean your room!

Be home by 10:00!

Don't play basketball in your school clothes! Don't pick on your little sister!

Some years ago “**Children: Fun or Frenzy?**” was popular.

“We teach our children it's O.K. to disobey the first 3 times we tell them something, by repeating instructions over and over.

When we finally punish the child, it's in frustration and anger.”

It suggests that we speak once, and enforce what we say firmly the first time.

Some people grow up with **parents who nag**, but never follow through with discipline.

By the time we finish our study of Hebrews, it will be clear that **God isn't a nagger!**

He doesn't keep *pleading* with us to *PLEASE* do what He wants us to do!

God announces His instructions.

He patiently waits, to give us a chance to conform our behavior to His plan.

Then He applies corrective measures to bring us into conformity to His plan.

He increases pain until He gets our attention & motivates us to conform to His plan.

But He doesn't change His mind.

Heb. 2:1-4 introduces the *first warning* God gives to His Hebrew readers.

Hebrews is an exhortation to continue growing in faith, rather than give in to persecution, throw in the towel, and return to Judaism.

Majority of book demonstrates **Jesus is better than Judaism 1-10:18**

His superiority to significant people of Israel's history 1-7

JESUS IS THE BEST REVELATION OF GOD 1-4:13

Jesus is better revelation than the prophets 1:1-3

God has spoken to us through His Son – He is the last word.

He gives a better revelation because He alone is Heir and Creator of all things.

He alone radiates God's glory & is exact representation of what God is like.

His revelation is greater than any prophet because he is God's *final Word*.

Jesus is better revelation than the angels 1:4-2:18

Greater name 1:4-5

Since He is God, He has a greater Name [= > "Son"]

Greater position 1:6-14

He occupies a higher position than the angels.

Since they recognize His superiority, they worship Him.

They're changeable servants but He's the unchangeable & eternal God.

[Finally, there's a...]

GREATER WARNING 2:1-4

Since His revelation is greater, we better listen & obey the revelation we received from Him. We better pay attention to what He says!

7 warning passages underline importance of not throwing in the towel.

They offer a **divine commentary on God's judgments in Numbers.**

5 warnings are derived directly from incidents where God judged His people for unbelief & disobedience.

This passage is 1st—the introduction to the warnings.

It's a summary of how God deals with His people in general.

If God was severe in dealing with those who rejected the angels' message, how much more should WE fear to turn from that revealed by His Son?

EXHORTATION 2:1

It's risky to hear warning & not pay attention!

"Therefore we must pay much closer attention to what we've heard, lest we drift away from it."

When we fly on our vacation, before the plane takes off, the flight attendant always begins with the same old spiel. We've heard it 100s of times.

They show us how to buckle our seat belt,
where exits are, & how to use our oxygen mask.

We hear it. But how many of us pay attention?

The danger is remote & the message familiar. It doesn't demand our attention.

Sometimes that's how God's people react on Sunday.

We've heard God's Word hundreds of times. It all sounds familiar.

The danger that God will do something about *our* disobedience seems remote.

Why worry about it? So we pay little attention to what He tells us.

The writer says *watch out!*

Pay close attention so we don't "*drift away*"

Swindoll asks, “How will history look back on our generation? What will it say about Christians of our generation?” He fears we’ll go down as *a generation of drifters*.

We don’t have a firm grip on truth, so we’re swept away by the current. **People are drifting in contemporary currents of doctrinal instability, lack of marital commitment, ministerial immorality, & lack of moral integrity.**

One of the main indicators of spiritual immaturity is instability—carried away by currents moving around us—subject to whatever wind blows by.

If we fail to heed the warnings of God’s Word, we’re subject to such drifting.

For persecuted saints, the current is strong, & persecution’s carrying them away.

Since we received better revelation than that of prophets or angels, we better pay attention to what God says, so we don’t “drift away!”

This word is used for a ring that slips off a finger

Or, to describe a boat drifting downstream, slipping by last spot you could throw a rope, before being swept into danger.

The image is frequent on our nightly news—an image of storm & flood, with raging waters sweeping away everything in sight.

God’s Word promises: when people begin to live godly lives, persecution follows.

Paul warns that “*Those who seek to live godly lives will be persecuted.*”

Warning: ***Be sure we’re securely tied to the dock, so we aren’t carried off downstream, by the flow of whatever current may be pulling against us.***

It reminds me of incidents with **shopping carts**, or even with the **car**, when I'm not paying attention, & leave it out of gear.

As I turn my back for a moment, I suddenly get this eerie feeling—something is moving, downhill, without a driver.

He warns US to pay attention, so WE don't neglect what's happening, & suddenly get eerie feeling that we're drifting down hill.

Current tugging at us may not be persecution, as it was for these believers.

However, in our generation, when numerous currents are pulling at us, we need the warning to stay attached to the solid rock, so we don't drift.

OLD TESTAMENT EXAMPLE 2:2-3a *"For since the message declared by angels proved to be reliable, & every transgression or disobedience received a just retribution, ³how shall we escape if we neglect such a great salvation?"*

What happened to people who ignored the angels' message?

God's judgment on people who reject His messengers is severe!

People zapped by lightning, earth swallowed them up, leprosy consumed them.

Entire generation died in the wilderness!

Law bears witness: you can't ignore God's warnings & walk away unharmed!

How would we respond if God's intervention were that observable today?

We have an even greater revelation through the Son.

How much greater will our judgment be, if we don't listen?

WARNING TO US 2:3-4 *“How shall we escape if we neglect such a great salvation? It was declared at first by the Lord, & it was attested to us by those who heard, ⁴while God also bore witness by signs & wonders & various miracles & by gifts of the Holy Spirit distributed according to his will.”*

“Neglect” is a broad, general word, ranging from outright rejection of truth, to failure to respond appropriately to it.

In either case, the consequences of neglect are serious.

If we turn from the truth, we’ll face severe consequences.

This warning isn’t pointing to loss of salvation, or spending eternity in hell.

The author includes himself among those who risk this danger:

“How shall WE escape, if WE neglect such a great salvation?”

O.T. warnings deal with times when God brought *physical judgment* on His people for disobedience & unbelief.

For their generation, the **destruction of Jerusalem** would be even *more severe*.

The **holocaust** is just a sequel to what happened to that generation! *He warns them repeatedly that by returning to Judaism they will subject themselves to the judgment God is about to bring on that generation for rejecting His Son.*

3 REASONS WARNING IS SO SEVERE:

- 1. This message was ANNOUNCED by CHRIST Himself.**
- 2. The message was CONFIRMED by those who heard it directly from the Lord— by EYEWITNESSES.**

The word “*confirmed*” is a legal term used for a *guaranteed* assurance.

These eyewitnesses *guaranteed* the validity of their testimony.

3. The message was AUTHENTICATED by miraculous signs from God’s Spirit.

God places His personal seal of approval on the revelation, authenticating the message with supernatural signs.

Men can’t reproduce them by their own efforts. *God is with them!*

They were “many-faceted” evidences. It’s evident this is *God’s* work.

This passage is crucial to our understanding of spiritual gifts.

THREE TRUTHS about spectacular gifts God gave to His church:

1. *THEIR PURPOSE*: God uses signs to affirm the message of those who proclaim Christ.

They aren’t to glorify the Holy Spirit.

They aren’t to glorify the gifted.

They aren’t to identify certain people who are “super-spiritual.”

They’re intended to confirm the good news about Jesus.

They affirm God’s message about Jesus.

2. *THEIR TIMING*:

Tenses indicate this occurred in the past.

Doesn’t say God is *presently* doing this.

Even when he writes this letter, he indicates that God had spoken through eyewitnesses, & confirmed their message by these signs.

Gives no indication it’s still going on in his day.

Doesn’t mean God *couldn’t* use such signs if He chose to.

It just indicates that it isn’t *the author’s present* experience.

3. *THEIR SOURCE*: he injects a thought to remind us that God is God.

H.S. decides where, when, & to whom to give spiritual gifts.

He seems to sense need to add what Paul says in 1 Cor:

Gifts aren't given to those who seek them because *WE* want some gift.

God distributes gifts *according to HIS will—NOT ours!*

The point in this passage is not about spiritual gifts. It's a *warning*.

Angelic messages were severely enforced.

The weight of testimony & affirmation for the FINAL Word is greater!

Jesus Himself revealed it.

Eyewitnesses affirmed what they saw.

Their testimony, confirmed by **the Holy Spirit**, *increases* our responsibility, and **the severity of God's judgment**, if we fail to pay attention.

If it was dangerous to ignore the angelic message,
how much more dangerous will it be to ignore the Son?!!

God has spoken. We had better listen.

We need to be firmly rooted in what God has said.

We are not to be just "*hearers of the Word*;" we are to be "doers of the Word."

We too frequently take lightly what God has said.

God has spoken. This is the last Word.

We had better pay attention!

That's true in a general sense about all of Scripture.

This warning is more specific:

How shall we escape if we ignore such a great salvation?

TWO IMPLICATIONS FOR US:

1. Because God has spoken through His Son,
we should trust Him to receive God's gift of eternal life.

God *is* working today, drawing people to Himself.

Scripture makes clear that God won't keep calling forever.

Peter warns that people fail to understand the reason He delays judging sinners immediately, zapping us with lightning: His patience.

2 Pet 3:9 *"The Lord... is patient toward you, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance ...¹⁵ count the patience of our Lord as salvation"*

He's patient because He wants us to come to the Son.

But *He won't wait for ever!*

Paul warns us: *"NOW is the accepted time . . . TODAY is the day of salvation!"*

He's offering salvation, through His Son, the last Word, God, come in flesh.

We can know we have eternal life, if we trust Him.

We can KNOW IT'S WELL WITH OUR SOUL—That we're well with Him.

"There is no other name given whereby we must be saved!"

It's the name of Jesus, God's only and unique Son.

How shall we escape, if we neglect such a great salvation?!!

2. Because God has spoken through His Son, there are ongoing implications:

we should remain faithful to Him—even in the midst of adversity!

Don't throw in the towel!

Don't give up in the midst of the storm!

Continue to trust Him & remain faithful to Him.