

# The Tragedy of Neglecting Salvation

Hebrews 2:1-4

*“Therefore we ought to give the more earnest heed to the things which we have heard, lest at any time we should let them slip. 2 For if the word spoken by angels was stedfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just recompence of reward; 3 how shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation; which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them that heard him; 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?”*

## INTRODUCTION:

- **The Lack of Taking Christ Seriously**
  - **Hell is full of people who were never actively opposed to Jesus Christ, but who simply neglected the gospel**
  - **It is these kinds of people that Paul writes to at this point**
  - **They know the truth of the Gospel**
    - **They even believe the truths—as factual**
    - **They are well-aware of the good news of salvation that comes only through**

**Jesus Christ—but they are not willing to commit themselves to Him**

- **So they drift by the call to salvation**
  - **Ignoring the call**
  - **Not taking it serious enough to do anything about it**
  - **They drift off into eternity—facing eternal damnation**

- **Paul’s Teaching Demands a Response**

- **Paul has been teaching about the person of Christ**
  - **We have learned that He is what God has been speaking about—from the very beginning of Creation**
  - **He is God’s ultimate revelation**

**Hebrews 1:1-2a**—*“God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, 2 hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son”*

- **God first spoke through the prophets about His Son—but in these last days has spoken through His Son—*The Lord Jesus Christ***

**Hebrews 5:39-40**—*“Search the scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of me. 40 And ye will not come to me, that ye might have life.”*

**NOTE:** Christ is the crux of God’s revelation. For a person to miss Christ—is to miss everything that God has to say.

○ **Paul’s Description of Christ**

- **He is before all things—Creator**
- **He is the end of all things—Heir**
- **He is in the middle of all things—Sustainer**
- **It is He—who is in the beginning, middle, and end—that Has purged our sins, by His own death on the Cross—Who sits at the Right Hand of God—in full authority—ruling all Creation**
- **His Character**

*“who being the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person”*

- **Paul points out that Jesus is God in the Flesh**
- **When you look at Jesus—you see God**

**Colossians 2:9**—*“For in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily.”*

**I Timothy 3:16**—*“And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory.”*

○ **Jesus is greater than the angels**

- **Paul’s reason for addressing the issue of angels—was because of the significant connection they have to the Old Testament—the Old Covenant**

- **They were considered mediators to the Old Covenant**

**Psalm 68:17**—*“The chariots of God are twenty thousand, even thousands of angels: the Lord is among them, as in Sinai, in the holy place.”*

**Deuteronomy 33:2**—*“The Lord came from Sinai, and rose up from Seir unto them; he shined forth from mount Paran, and he came with ten thousands of saints: from his right hand went a fiery law for them.”*

**Acts 7:38**—*“This is he, that was in the church in the wilderness with the angel which spake to him in the mount Sina, and with our fathers: who received the lively oracles to give unto us”*

**Vs. 53**—*“who have received the law by the disposition of angels, and have not kept it.”*

- **Angels were significant in the Jewish mind**
- **As we mentioned last week, they were overly exalted—because of their significance with the giving of the Law—even to the point that they were worshipped**

- Paul's argument—is that Jesus is greater than the angels—and he pulls out 7 OT passages that the average Jew would have been familiar—to prove His point
  - Superior in Title, (Called Son)
  - Superior in Worship (Worshipped by the Angels)
  - Superior in Nature, (God—they are His ministers)
  - Superior in Existence, (Existed Before Them)
  - Superior in Destiny (Sit at the right hand of God, they are servants)
  
- If Jesus is greater than the angels, than His covenant is greater than the angels' covenant
  
- Paul's interjection into these glorious truths about Christ—It demands a response
  - This is Paul's invitation to those who have yet not responded to the claims of Christ
    - They are intellectually convinced, but they have not moved forward by faith
    - There are 3 groups of Jewish people Paul is addressing in this letter
      - The first—those who have trusted Christ—yet are having

trouble moving forward—  
because of the fear of men

- The second are those who have been very much exposed to the claims of Christ—yet have done nothing with Him
- The third are those who know nothing of who Christ is

- It is the second group of people that Paul is writing to in this passage

*Vs. 3—“how shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation”*

- They are becoming guilty of neglecting this great salvation
- They are not taking it seriously
- They are not truly weighing out the benefits and consequences of their decision (or lack of decision)

- Paul gives them 3 reasons why they need to take the claims of Christ seriously

- 3 reasons why they should embrace Christ wholeheartedly
- 3 reasons why they should be saved
- 3 reasons why they should move forward—NOW!

**NOTE:** Someone described this section of the letter as a “powerful shove” toward Jesus Christ. Paul is strongly urging these on-the-edge Jews to embrace Christ.

## **CIT: Why Should We Take the Message of Christ Seriously?**

### **I. We Should Take It Seriously Because of Who Christ**

**Is (vs. 1)**—“*Therefore we ought to give the more earnest heed to the things which we have heard, lest at any time we should let them slip.*”

#### **A. The Key Word “Therefore”**

1. It is Used for the purpose of directing us back to what was just said
2. The main reason we should take the message of salvation seriously—is because of what was just said of Christ

- a. Christ is what it is all about
- b. What we learned of Christ in chapter one

- i. His divine names—Son, Lord, God
- ii. His divine works—creates, sustains, governs, redeems, and purges from sin
- iii. His divine worth—he is worshipped by the angels and all of creation

iv. His divine attributes—omniscient, omnipotent, unchanging, and eternal

c. Because of Who Christ is—we ought to take “the more earnest heed” to the message of salvation

**B. Take It Seriously**—“*Therefore we ought to give the **more earnest heed** to the things which we have heard, lest at any time we should **let them slip.**”*

#### **1. “More earnest heed” and “Let Slip”**

a. Perissoteros and Prosecho—to give the more earnest heed

i. Perissoteros—more earnest

- Means—superabundantly
- More adamant
- Extreme
- More frequent

ii. Prosecho—give heed

- Means—to hold the mind to
- To pay attention to
- To be more cautious about
- To adhere to

iii. To give the more earnest heed to

- This is not to be taken lightly
- This is the most important thing in the world
- We should not take the chance of missing out in Christ

**NOTE:** We often see people who do not take Christ seriously at all. They aren't against Him. They may even attend church on Sunday morning. They probably would tell you that they believe that Jesus is the savior of the world. But He has yet to become Lord of their heart. They don't take His claims seriously for themselves.

**ILLUSTRATION:** Prostitute that came to see the pastor—that was strung out on drugs. She wanted a change but was not willing to give up her life. She admitted that she must not really want Jesus that much.

**b. Pararheo—let slip**

- Means—to flow by
- To carelessly miss
- Its usage
  - Used of a ring slipping off a finger
  - Something slipping down and getting caught in a difficult place

- Used of a ship that has been allowed to drift past the harbor because the sailor forgot to attend to the steerage

**NOTE:** When we don't take Christ seriously—eventually those things will slip away (or we will slip away from them). Most people don't just jump right into Hell—they slide into it—they drift into it—because they never took the claims of Christ seriously.

**C. Their Exposure—“the things which we have heard”**

**1.** These people who were slipping away from Christ—had been very much exposed to Christ

- They had heard a clear presentation of the message
- They weren't ignorant about the claims of Christ

**2.** How much they heard

*“which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them that heard him; 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?”*

- They heard from the very ones who had witnessed Christ Himself

- b. God even confirmed the message for them—signs and wonders
- c. They would not be able to stand before God and claim ignorance—**they knew**

**NOTE:** YOU KNOW TOO! Don't let Christ slip away from your fingers!

## II. We Should Take It Seriously Because of the Certainty of Judgment (vs. 2-3a)—“*For if the word spoken by angels was stedfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just recompence of reward; 3 how shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation*”

### A. The Certainty of Judgment Upon the Old

1. Paul takes these hearers back to the Old Testament—and shows How seriously God took the Old Covenant

a. Paul points again to the angelic origin of the Old Covenant

i. Paul is referencing what he has just addressed about the angels—in chapter one

- The angels were important to the Jews

- The angels were considered the mediators of the Old Covenant

- God gave to them (angels) the Law
- The angels passed that Law to man—Israel

b. That Law was “Stedfast”

i. Means—firm, stable, secure, sure

ii. God took a strong stance upon it—it was not to be taken lightly

c. How seriously God took it—“*every transgression and disobedience received a just recompence of reward*”

i. God made sure **every** violation of the Law was adequately punished

**NOTE:** There was no escape from the Law. Every sin, every act of disobedience had with it a punishment.

ii. There are many portions of the Old Testament Law that are laid out for the purpose of how transgressions and disobedience were to be dealt with

- If a person committed adultery—the punishment was to be stoned
- If a person worshipped false gods—the punishment was stoning

**Leviticus 24:10-16**—“*And the son of an Israelitish woman, whose father was an Egyptian, went out among the children of Israel: and this son of the Israelitish woman and a man of Israel strove together in the camp; 11 and the Israelitish woman’s son **blasphemed the name of the Lord, and cursed.** And they brought him unto Moses... 12 And they put him in ward, that the mind of the Lord might be shewed them. 13 And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying, 14 **Bring forth him that hath cursed without the camp; and let all that heard him lay their hands upon his head, and let all the congregation stone him.** And thou shalt speak unto the children of Israel, saying, Whosoever curseth his God shall bear his sin. 16 And he that blasphemeth the name of the Lord, he shall surely be put to death, and all the congregation shall certainly stone him: as well the stranger, as he that is born in the land, when he blasphemeth the name of the Lord, shall be put to death.”*

**Numbers 15:30-31**—“*But the soul that doeth ought presumptuously, whether he be born in the land, or a stranger, the same reproacheth the Lord; **and that soul shall be cut off from among his people.** 31 Because he hath despised the word of the Lord, and hath broken his commandment, **that soul shall utterly be cut off; his iniquity shall be upon him.**”*

### **The Text Applied**

**Vs. 32-36**—“*And while the children of Israel were in the wilderness, they found a man that gathered sticks upon the sabbath day. 33 And they that found him gathering sticks brought him unto Moses and Aaron, and unto all the congregation. 34 And they put him in ward, because it was not declared what should be done to him.*

*35 And the Lord said unto Moses, The man shall be surely put to death: all the congregation shall stone him with stones without the camp. 36 **And all the congregation brought him without the camp, and stoned him with stones, and he died; as the Lord commanded Moses.**”*

**Numbers 25:1-9**—“*And Israel abode in Shittim, and the people began to commit whoredom with the daughters of Moab. 2 And they called the people unto the sacrifices of their gods: and the people did eat, and bowed down to their gods. 3 And Israel joined himself unto Baal-peor: **and the anger of the Lord was kindled against Israel.***

*4 And the Lord said unto Moses, **Take all the heads of the people, and hang them up before the Lord against the sun, that the fierce anger of the Lord may be turned away from Israel.** 5 And Moses said unto the judges of Israel, Slay ye every one his men that were joined unto Baal-peor.*

*6 And, behold, one of the children of Israel came and brought unto his brethren a Midianitish woman in the sight of Moses, and in the sight of all the congregation of the children of Israel, who were weeping before the door of the tabernacle of the congregation. 7 And when Phinehas, the son of Eleazar, the son of Aaron the priest, saw it, **he rose up from among the congregation, and took a javelin in his hand; 8 and he went after the man of Israel into the tent,***

*and thrust both of them through, the man of Israel, and the woman through her belly. So the plague was stayed from the children of Israel. 9 And those that died in the plague were twenty and four thousand.*”

**Deuteronomy 17:2-5**—“*If there be found among you, within any of thy gates which the Lord thy God giveth thee, man or woman, that hath wrought wickedness in the sight of the Lord thy God, in transgressing his covenant, 3 and hath gone and served other gods, and worshipped them, either the sun, or moon, or any of the host of heaven, which I have not commanded; 4 and it be told thee, and thou hast heard of it, and inquired diligently, and, behold, it be true, and the thing certain, that such abomination is wrought in Israel: 5 then shalt thou bring forth that man or that woman, which have committed that wicked thing, unto thy gates, even that man or that woman, **and shalt stone them with stones, till they die.**”*

iii. God took it seriously when people broke His Law—willingly or unwillingly

**B. The Certainty of Judgment Upon the New—**  
“*how shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation*”

### 1. How Shall We Escape?

**NOTE:** If God took that which was mediated by angels—that could never produce eternal life—that could never make anyone right with God—If He took it so seriously—How do

we think we will get by—if we neglect the One that is greater than that?

- a. The Old Testament had a lot of laws—that God individually punished if they were broken
- b. The New Testament law—is only One—Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ
- c. If God made sure every old Testament Law was punished—How do we suppose that we will escape if we neglect—So Great Salvation

### 2. God’s Punishment

- a. The Old Testament punishments seemed extremely severe
- b. But they are nothing compared to the New Testament punishment

**Hebrews 10:28-31**—“*He that despised Moses’ law died without mercy under two or three witnesses: 29 **of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing, and hath done despite unto the Spirit of grace? 30 For we know him that hath said, Vengeance belongeth unto me, I will recompense, saith the Lord. And again, The Lord shall judge his people. 31 **It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.*****”

**NOTE:** Don't take Christ lightly. Judgment is coming. And it will be nothing like what Israel experienced in the Old Testament. It will be far worse.

### III. We Should Take It Seriously Because Confirmation

**of God** (vs. 3b-4)—“*which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them that heard him; 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?*”

#### A. The Accuracy of the Message

**NOTE:** The gospel message is not just one message out of hundreds of different messages found in the world of religion. The gospel message makes the claim that it is true—and everything else is a lie.

Jesus said, “*I am the way, the truth, and the life; no man cometh unto the Father but by me.*”

1. It came from Christ—“*which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord*”

##### a. Jesus' claim on the message

- i. He claimed that He was sent by the Father
- ii. He claimed that He was equal to the Father
- iii. He claimed that He was the way to the Father

iv. He claimed to have all authority from the Father

##### b. Jesus' verification

**John 10:38**—“*But if I do, though ye believe not me, believe the works: that ye may know, and believe, that the Father is in me, and I in him.*”

**Acts 2:22**—“*Ye men of Israel, hear these words; Jesus of Nazareth, a man approved of God among you by miracles and wonders and signs, which God did by him in the midst of you, as ye yourselves also know*”

- i. Jesus healed the sick
- ii. He raised the dead
- iii. He cast out devils
- iv. He demonstrated power over the elements
- v. He demonstrated control over plant and animal life

c. Jesus didn't just do these works just to meet people's needs—He did them to confirm to all those who saw Him that He was the truth

2. It came from the disciples—“*and was confirmed unto us by them that heard him*”

a. Before Jesus left—He set up 12 men to observe Him, and to learn of Him—so

that they would be ready to carry on the ministry after He left

- b. They played their part—in testifying of who Jesus really is
- c. In the same fashion—God gave them similar signs to confirm the message that they preached—

**Vs. 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*”

- i. God wanted to make it very clear that these men were not false witnesses—but were indeed of the truth
- ii. They raised the dead, healed diseases, cast out devils

## **B. The Accountability of the Hearer**

1. To have it so clearly presented—and to neglect it—is to put you in a very dangerous place
2. God had made it very clear to them—that they needed Christ—yet they were not taking it seriously
3. God has made it clear to us as well
  - a. Not through signs and miracles—all those signs and miracles have already happened

- b. They have already confirmed that the message is true—we don’t need more
- c. We have His Word—we have its accuracy
- d. We must believe it

## **CONCLUSION:**

- † **What are you doing with Jesus Christ?**
- † **Are you just sliding by?**
- † **Are you just being lazy about Him?**
- † **Are you guilty of neglecting Him?**

**Paul gave us 3 reasons we should not neglect so great salvation:**

- **Who Christ is**
- **The Certainty of Judgment**
- **The Confirmation of God**

## **ILLUSTRATION:**

*“According to the Consumer Reports National Research Center, one out of every five gift-card recipients never used their cards last year, representing about **\$972 million in unredeemed cards.***

*The top reasons for not using gift cards include:*  
*Haven't had time: 50 percent*  
*Haven't found anything I wanted: 37 percent*  
*Lost the card: 14 percent*  
*Card expired: 12 percent”*

Napoleon neglected Waterloo for 3 hours—it cost Him everything

How many more are neglecting Christ—and it will cost them eternally more