

Hebrews 2:1-4 “The Danger of Ignoring the Son” [\\*\\*](#)

Main Idea: Hebrews 2:1-4 offers us a serious warning about the danger of ignoring the Son. There are two components in this warning, and we’ll consider them both carefully.

I. Consider the exhortation (1).

A. Make sure you pay attention to the message of the Son.

1. If you’re not taking steps to pay attention, you’re probably not paying attention.

2. Ask God to give you a learner’s heart.

B. Make sure you don’t drift from the message of the Son.

1. The Bible gives security to the person who possesses the Son.

2. The Bible gives insecurity to the person who merely professes the Son.

II. Consider the explanation (2-4).

A. What God said in the Law brings judgment (2).

1. The Law was given by angels.

2. The Law was binding.

3. The Law resulted in punishment for disobedience.

B. What God said through His Son brings salvation (3-4).

1. The Son announced this message.

2. The apostles confirmed it.

3. God the Holy Spirit gave supernatural testimony to it.

4. We must receive it.

Take Inventory: Ask yourself these questions...

1. What have I been doing with the Son of God?

2. What have I been doing with the Word of God?

3. What change most needs to happen today?

The Almighty God, the Creator of heaven and earth, the One who made *us*, came to earth as a man. That is a statement of fact, proclaimed in the historical record of Scripture and verified by eye-witness accounts. God came to earth! That’s the message of Christmas!

Yet as amazing as this is, we can so easily lose the wonder of it all. And if that’s happening in your life, how can

you tell? Here's one of the first evidences. You start *ignoring the Son*.

Ignoring a stranger is one thing. Ignoring a person who loves you is something else, something quite unthinkable yet far to commonplace in our lives.

I'm a blessed man. God has used my wife Sherry to bless my life for nearly twenty-five years of marriage, and before that, for four years of dating. My wife has poured out her life for me in countless ways, from fixing meals that I enjoy eating to ironing my shirts. She brought into the world our two daughters and labors at my side to raise them for God. She denies her own interests on a daily basis to meet my needs. She watches basketball games with me. She makes our home a pleasant place to be. She prays for me consistently. Which is what makes the following so unthinkable, and it's something that happens far too often...

We're sitting in the living room, Sherry on the couch, and I'm reading my newspaper in the easy chair. She's telling me about her day, and I'm mumbling responses to keep the conversation rolling. And then I ask her a question about something, to which she responds, "I just told you that. Weren't you listening?" And the sad reality is, no, I wasn't paying attention.

I'll say it again. Ignoring a stranger is one thing. Ignoring a person who loves you is worse. And if ignoring your spouse is bad, then ignoring the One who gave you your spouse and everything else, now that's unthinkable...yet it's a propensity that becomes a reality far too often.

Which is why the Bible frequently addresses this problem head-on. Solomon did with his sons in Proverbs 4:1, "Listen, my sons, to a father's instruction; *pay attention* and gain understanding." And God did over and over with His children, speaking through the prophets.

Through Isaiah He said in Isaiah 28:23, "Listen and hear my voice; *pay attention* and hear what I say." Through Jeremiah He said in Jeremiah 7:26, "But they did not listen to me or *pay attention*. They were stiff-necked..." Hosea offered the same exhortation in Hosea 5:1, "Hear this, you priests! *Pay attention*, you Israelites!" And Peter took it a step further, showing that to pay attention to God we must pay attention to His Word, in 2 Peter 1:19, "And we have the word of the prophets made more certain, and you will do well to *pay attention* to it..."

When you fail to pay attention, bad things happen. That's true when you're driving a car, sitting in math class in school, or having a conversation with your parents.

I had several coaches in an earlier phase of my life, and they nearly all used this line on a regular basis, "Alright, guys, listen up and pay attention!" And the athlete that didn't was soon out of the game.

With that in mind, let's turn our attention to the book of Hebrews, a book that has a lot to say about paying attention. In fact, the book is full of warnings, at least five major warnings that the writer, like a coach in the huddle, lays before his team.

For the past two weeks we've explored Hebrews 1 and there learned about the unique identity of Jesus Christ, the Son of God. We learned that the Son who came to earth is indeed the One who made the universe (verse 2), and that He's the exact representation of God (verse 3), and that He is superior to all created beings, including angels (verse 4). From verse 5 through the end of the chapter, the author substantiates the Son's supremacy over the angels by citing seven Old Testament passages, making it clear that Jesus Christ is indeed great!

This morning, we come to the first warning. If Christ is so great, then how you treat Him is a huge issue. And so, Hebrews 2:1-4 offers us a serious warning about the danger of ignoring the Son. There are two components in this warning, and we'll consider them both carefully.

## I. Consider the exhortation (1).

Verse 1—“We must pay more careful attention, therefore, to what we have heard, so that we do not drift away.”

“Therefore” is a key word in this letter. “We must pay more careful attention, *therefore*.” The “therefore” takes us back to chapter one. In light of who the Son of God is, and in light of the fact that God has spoken to the world definitively and finally through His Son, *therefore*, the following should occur. *We must pay attention, careful attention, to what we have heard.*

As I mentioned, this is the first of five great warnings in the book of Hebrews, and the admonitions get stronger as the book progresses.<sup>[1]</sup> The writer teaches, then calls for a response, then teaches some more truth, then again calls for a response. Never forget that truth is for living. God’s truth demands an appropriate response.<sup>[2]</sup>

In this case, the truth we’ve just heard about the Son calls for a twofold response.

**A. Make sure you pay attention to the message of the Son.** Notice the words...

“*We*” must pay attention, says the writer, including himself. That would seem to indicate that this admonition is for believers, or at least professing believers.<sup>[3]</sup>

*We must pay attention.* The verb *prosecho* means “to hold to, to attend to.” *Give the most earnest heed*, says the KJV.

To what specifically are we to pay attention? “*To what we have heard*,” says the writer. Faith comes *by hearing*. I was saved at the age of eleven when God allowed me to *hear* something. These readers had heard something, too. The writer calls it “such a great salvation” in verse 3. It’s referred to as “the gospel” in 2 Timothy 1:8, “the teaching of Christ” in 2 John 9, “the faith” in 1 Timothy 4:1, and “the faith that was once for all entrusted to the saints” in Jude 3. This body of truth concerning the person and redemptive work of Jesus Christ is that to which we must pay utmost attention.

That raises the question. How exactly do you *pay attention*? Parents know the answer, so do coaches, but especially school teachers. When a teacher says to a class, “Alright, that’s enough! Pay attention!” that teacher has some specific expectations in mind, right? Sit up straight. Hands in front ready to take notes (and not flicking the neighbor’s ear). Mouths in the pause mode. Ears open. In fact, a good teacher will frequently talk to students about taking steps of preparation so they come to school ready to pay attention and learn, like: get to bed at a decent hour, eat a good breakfast, make sure you’re sitting in a seat where you can see the board. Teachers know this about human nature...

1. *If you’re not taking steps to pay attention, you’re probably not paying attention.* That’s the way it works in God’s school house, the church, too. If you don’t prepare yourself to pay attention to the teaching of God’s Word, you probably won’t pay attention. If you don’t get to sleep at a decent hour on Saturday night, if you don’t eat breakfast, if you don’t eliminate distractions ahead of time, you probably won’t get much out of the teaching of God’s Word. And here’s a specific preparation step to take...

2. *Ask God to give you a learner’s heart.* Tim Hansel offers this sobering thought, “One of the greatest tragedies of our modern civilization is that you and I can live a trivial life and get away with it.” A trivial life, not necessarily *bad* things, just trivial things, things that won’t matter in a hundred years. We give our attention to CNN, to NFL football, to surfing the net, to our MP3 player that holds 2,500 songs. Again, not bad things, but things that keep us from paying attention to the best thing. And that’s bad!

If you want to break out of the mold of trivial pursuit, ask God to give you a *learner’s heart*. It will change the way you begin your day and finish it because you’ll carve out time to be in God’s Word. It’ll change the way you come to church, because you won’t come to spectate, or worse yet, evaluate, but to educate your soul, to *pay careful attention* to the things of God.

There’s a second responsibility in this exhortation from verse 1...

**B. Make sure you don't drift from the message of the Son.** Notice how the two responsibilities relate. Pay attention to the message of the Son because if you do you won't drift away.

The verb "drift" is quite vivid. It's used elsewhere of a boat that drifts away, of a ring that slips off a finger, and of water that leaks from a jar.<sup>[4]</sup>

It makes me think of what happened to my car tire a couple of weeks ago. A front tire kept losing air, and every four or five days I'd have to pump it up again. Finally, I took it to the tire shop—I *paid attention* to my tire—and Howard fixed the problem. He removed the metal sliver that had pierced the tire. I paid attention to my tire, and I stopped the problem of the slow leak.

My observation is that our spiritual tires don't typically go down because of a blowout. Usually it's the slow leak that gets us. If we fail to pay careful attention to what we've heard, we start drifting, drifting, drifting.

Warren Wiersbe observes, "More spiritual problems are caused by neglect than perhaps by any other failure on our part."<sup>[5]</sup> Just think about it. What happens when we neglect God's Word, prayer, and gathering for corporate worship with God's people? Almost always, we start to drift spiritually.

What happens to a person who drifts, and drifts, and drifts away from the Son? The warnings in the book of Hebrews are shocking, to say the least.

Listen to Hebrews 6:4-6: "It is impossible for those who have once been enlightened, who have tasted the heavenly gift, who have shared in the Holy Spirit, who have tasted the goodness of the word of God and the powers of the coming age, *if they fall away*, to be brought back to repentance, because to their loss they are crucifying the Son of God all over again and subjecting him to public disgrace."

What does that mean? Does it mean a person can lose their salvation? We'll explore the warning carefully when we arrive, the Lord willing, in chapter six, but for now let me place two biblical perspectives on the table.

1. *The Bible gives security to the person who possesses the Son.* For instance, Jesus said in John 10:27-28, "My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me. I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; no one can snatch them out of my hand." That's pretty clear. Jesus says that when He saves someone, that person is eternally secure. This truth appears throughout the Bible, in Romans 8:28-30 and 1 John 5:11-13, just to name two texts.

Yes, the Bible gives incredible assurance to the person who possesses the Son. It's called the doctrine of eternal security. But did you know the Bible also teaches the doctrine of *insecurity*? It does...

2. *The Bible gives insecurity to the person who merely professes the Son.* Profession is no guarantee of possession. Just because a person *says* he believes in Christ is no guarantee he truly knows Christ.

John MacArthur hits the nail on the head, "Hell is undoubtedly full of people who did not actively oppose Jesus Christ but simply drifted into damnation by neglecting to respond to the gospel."<sup>[6]</sup> It's not that they lost their salvation, for they never had it to begin with.

The doctrine of *insecurity* is a good doctrine. Here we see it in the warnings of Hebrews. A person who doesn't heed these warnings ought to feel temporal insecurity so that they run to Christ for real salvation and become eternally secure!<sup>[7]</sup>

So there's the writer's exhortation. Make sure you pay attention to and don't drift from the message of the Son. That raises the question, *why*? Why is this exhortation here anyway?

## II. Consider the explanation (2-4).

In verses 2-3 the writer returns to a comparison he made in the first two verses of the book between God's revelation through the Law and God's revelation through His Son:

“For if the message spoken by angels was binding, and every violation and disobedience received its just punishment, how shall we escape if we ignore such a great salvation? This salvation, which was first announced by the Lord, was confirmed to us by those who heard him.”

Remember, the recipients of this book were Jewish. As such they had a high view of the Torah or “Law,” to the point that some were considering going back to their old ways in Judaism. To help them see the folly of this, the writer reminds them of a basic truth, namely that...

**A. What God said in the Law brings judgment (2).** In verse 2 we're told three things about the Law...

1. *The Law was given by angels.* Actually, there's no mention in the Old Testament of angels being at Mount Sinai, other than a statement in the Greek version of the Old Testament (the Septuagint) in Deuteronomy 33:2.<sup>[8]</sup> But Hebrews 2:2 says angels were there. So do two additional New Testament texts. In Acts 7:53 Stephen said this to his accusers, “...you who have received the law that was put into effect through angels but have not obeyed it.” In Galatians 3:19 Paul stated similarly, “The law was put into effect through angels by a mediator.”

2. *The Law was binding.* Verse 2 again, “For if the message spoken by angels was binding.” And it was binding. God didn't give His people ten suggestions, but ten commandments.

3. *The Law resulted in punishment for disobedience.* “Every violation and disobedience received its just punishment.” The Greek word for ‘violation’ is *parabasis* and means “to step across a line.” It refers to sins of commission where there is deliberate and willful intent to transgress God's will. The word translated ‘disobedience’ (Greek *parakoe*) means “hearing amiss.” It's the idea of shutting one's ears and refusing to listen to God's commands, warnings, and invitations. It refers to a sin of omission, that is, failing to do what one ought to do. MacArthur sums it up, “There are only two kinds of sin, and they involve what you do and what you don't do. Every sin was covered by the law.”<sup>[9]</sup>

And *every sin* received its just punishment. There were no exceptions.<sup>[10]</sup>

The writer's point? Why would you go back? Don't you remember what it was like living under the Law. Sure, the Law was good—it came from God through the angels. And sure, the Law showed people what they should and should not do. But in the end, that's all the Law could do—point out sin and bring judgment upon the sinner.

A sinner needs more than to have his sin pointed out. He needs a remedy for his sin. The Law couldn't provide that. Yet, the Son did just that.

**B. What God said through His Son brings salvation (3-4).** Verse 3—“How shall we escape if we ignore such a great salvation?”

Ponder what God's Son provided, such a *great salvation*. It's so easy to forget. We were guilty law-breakers—it's God's law we'd broken. And since our crime was against The Eternal One, we were sentenced to eternal punishment. There we were, helpless, hopeless, condemned, and powerless to do anything about it.

But God. God sent His own Son into the world, His perfect Son, born of a virgin and thus without a sin nature, able to live a perfect life (which He did). And then God condemned His own perfect Son to die in the place of rebel sinners. He placed your sin—if you've believed in Christ—on His own Son and judged Him. Think of it. He pardoned you because of what His Son endured in your place. And then, on the basis of His Son's triumphant resurrection from the dead, He raised you to new life.

When the Bible says it's a *great salvation*, be assured, it is *great!* God saves sinners, to borrow from A. W. Pink, from the penalty, power, presence, and from the pleasure of sin.<sup>[11]</sup> This is the message of the Bible, my friend, the

message of a *great salvation*.<sup>[12]</sup>

**Romans 1:16** “I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God for the *salvation* of everyone who believes: first for the Jew, then for the Gentile.”

**1 Thessalonians 5:9** “For God did not appoint us to suffer wrath but to receive *salvation* through our Lord Jesus Christ.”

And it’s not just great on earth either. It’s what they’re talking about in heaven, according to the last book of the Bible, where we read in Revelation 7:10, “And they cried out in a loud voice: ‘Salvation belongs to our God, who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb.’” (as well as in Revelation 19:1)

Yes, in Christ we have a *great salvation*. But what’s the writer’s reason for calling salvation *great*? Remember he’s trying to encourage his readers to *pay attention* and not *drift away from the Son*. When you don’t appreciate the value of what you have, you don’t care if you lose it.

Calvin puts it this way, “God wishes his gifts to be valued by us at their proper worth. The more precious they are, the baser is our ingratitude if they do not have their proper value for us.”<sup>[13]</sup> Think of it this way. If you gave me a \$2 poster from Dollar General and I didn’t hang it up in my house, it wouldn’t be that big of a deal. But if you gave me an oil painting that you bought in Paris for \$3,500 you’d rightfully be offended if I stuffed it under the bed.

And we’re talking about something of far greater value than a \$3,500 painting! “How shall we escape if we ignore *such a great salvation*?”

Where did this message of salvation come from? We just learned that the Law came through angelic messengers, but what about the message of salvation? Listen to verses 3-4, “This salvation, which was first announced by the Lord, was confirmed to us by those who heard him. God also testified to it by signs, wonders and various miracles, and gifts of the Holy Spirit distributed according to his will.”

Four things are true of the message concerning this great salvation.

1. *The Son announced this message.* Hear His announcement, “I am the way, the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father but by me (John 14:6).” “I have come that you might have life and have it more abundantly (John 10:10).”

2. *The apostles confirmed it.* Note that the author doesn’t claim to be included in this group of “those who heard him.” He wasn’t an apostle, apparently, and that would seemingly rule out the Pauline authorship of Hebrews.

Jesus chose twelve men, designating them apostles, so that they might observe Him up close for three years, and then give public witness concerning His life, death, and resurrection once He returned to heaven. And that’s what they did.

Hear Peter and the apostles in Acts 5:32, “We are *witnesses* of these things, and so is the Holy Spirit, whom God has given to those who obey him.”

Hear the apostle John in 1 John 1:1-2, “That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked at and our hands have touched—this we proclaim concerning the Word of life. The life appeared; we have seen it and testify to it, and we proclaim to you the eternal life, which was with the Father and has appeared to us.”

3. *God the Holy Spirit gave supernatural testimony to it.* Take another look at verse 4: “God also testified to it by signs, wonders and various miracles, and gifts of the Holy Spirit distributed according to his will.”

God the Holy Spirit enabled the apostles to perform miraculous signs and wonders as a means to confirm that their message was true. Acts 2:43 declares, “Everyone was filled with awe, and *many wonders and miraculous signs were*

done by the apostles.”[\[14\]](#)

Some today want to make signs and wonders normative. In other words, they say these gifts are for believers today, too. But that misses the point, as Robert Gromacki explains, “God authenticated or confirmed these official spokesmen with abilities that other believers did not have.”[\[15\]](#) The apostle Paul made this clear in 2 Corinthians 12:12, stating, “The things that mark an apostle—signs, wonders and miracles—were done among you with great perseverance.”

Can God do the miraculous in our day? Sure He can do whatever He wants. He’s God! But what is the purpose of “signs and wonders”? He tells us right here. He did them through the apostles to confirm their message. That message has been recorded in what we call “the New Testament.” The purpose for the signs and wonders has been fulfilled. It’s unnecessary today.

Warren Wiersbe explains, “Today we have the completed Word of God; so there is no need for these apostolic miracles. God now bears witness through His Holy Spirit using the Word.”[\[16\]](#)

Noteworthy Bible scholar, Benjamin Warfield, agrees, “These miraculous gifts were part of the credentials of the apostles as the authoritative agents of God in founding the church. Their function thus confined them distinctively in the apostolic church, and they necessarily passed away with it.”[\[17\]](#)

But don’t miss the point. Whereas godly people today may disagree when it comes to the purpose and presence of signs and wonders, of this there is no confusion. When it comes to the message of salvation, the Son announced it. The apostles confirmed it. God the Holy Spirit gave supernatural testimony to it. And...

4. *We must receive it.* Indeed, we must receive *Him!*

Do you enjoy the hymn *Come Thou Fount of Every Blessing*? It’s a song that many have enjoyed. But you may not know the rest of the story about its author, Robert Robinson. Warren Wiersbe explains:

The composer, Robert Robinson, was converted under the mighty preaching of George Whitefield, but...later he drifted from the Lord. He had been greatly used as a pastor, but neglect of spiritual things led him astray. In an attempt to find peace, he began to travel. During one of his journeys, he met a young woman who was evidently very spiritually minded.

“What do you think of this hymn I have been reading?” she asked Robinson, handing him the book. *It was his own hymn!* He tried to avoid her question but it was hopeless, for the Lord was speaking to him. Finally, he broke down and confessed who he was and how he had been living away from the Lord.

“But these ‘streams of mercy’ are still flowing,” the woman assured him; and through her encouragement, Robinson was restored to fellowship with the Lord.[\[18\]](#)

Hebrews says, “Pay attention! If you don’t want to drift away, pay careful attention! Don’t ignore this great salvation.” With that in mind...

Take Inventory: Ask yourself these questions...

1. *What have I been doing with the Son of God?* Do you believe in Jesus Christ? Is He your Savior? Do you love Him who loved you and gave His life for your salvation?

2. *What have I been doing with the Word of God?* Hebrews says that the solution against drifting is to pay careful attention to what we’ve heard. That’s why we have a Bible, so we can go over and over and over again the message

God has given us. Is the Bible a treasure to you? Do you spend time in it daily? Do you memorize it and build your life on it?

3. *What change most needs to happen today?* Change occurs one step at a time. Are you drifting from the Son? Then do a 180. Turn back. Call on Him, confessing your need for Him. A journey begins by taking one step, so take it by His grace and for His glory.

---

**\*\*Note:** This is an unedited manuscript of a message preached at Wheelersburg Baptist Church . It is provided to prompt your continued reflection on the practical truths of the Word of God.

[1] Robert Gromacki says there are *seven* warnings; p. 37.

[2] Philip Hughes remarks, “These passages serve to demonstrate that the teaching in this epistle is not merely theoretical and unrelated to the realities of everyday life, but is intensely practical and therefore full of intense seriousness. This is true for all the doctrine of the New Testament...Theology and life go together.” (p. 72)

[3] Although John MacArthur suggests the book was written to three different groups of Jews living in a particular community: a) some non-Christian Jews, b) Some Jewish Christians who were still hanging on to the rituals of Judaism, and c) Some Jewish non-Christians who were intellectually convinced about the truths of the gospel but had never committed their lives to Christ (p. 81).

[4] Observation by Raymond Brown, p. 47.

[5] W. Wiersbe, p. 282.

[6] John MacArthur, p. 80.

[7] Leon Morris observes, “One need not be violently opposed to the message to suffer loss; one need only drift away from it.” (p. 21)

[8] Deuteronomy 33:2 states concerning the Lord that “at his right hand were angels with him.”

[9] MacArthur, p. 90.

[10] See Numbers 15:30-31

[11] A.W. Pink, taken from Strong, J. (1996). *The exhaustive concordance of the Bible*, (*Logos*)

[12] Sometimes salvation refers to a state, sometimes to an event. Or to put it another way, sometimes the word refers to the state of being saved, in other places to the process of being saved . (observation in the Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament; *Logos*)

[13] Quoted in P. Hughes, p. 76.

[14] See also Mark 16:19-20

[15] Gromacki, p. 41.

[16] Wiersbe, p. 282.

[17] Taken from J. MacArthur, p. 99.

[18] Warren Wiersbe, *The Bible Exposition Commentary*, p. 283.



