



5: Warning! Pay Heed

"Therefore we must give the more earnest heed to the things we have heard, lest we drift away. 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, God also bearing witness both with signs and wonders, with various miracles, and gifts of the Holy Spirit, according to His own will?"

Hebrews 2:1 – 4

In the first verse of chapter 2, with the word therefore, the writer of the Book of Hebrews leaves his main line of reasoning. He'll return to it in verse 5, but first he wants us to think about the implications of what he has written so far.

He has told us that Jesus is God's final word and He's a word worth listening to. Everything belongs to Him, He made everything and He holds it all together. He's the exact image of God. In fact He is God and now, having cleansed us of our sin once and for all, He's seated, enthroned, at the right hand of the Father in glory. Jesus is way better than any of the angels: they are servants; He is king. Therefore...

Pay Careful Attention

"We must give the more earnest heed." The word translated heed here means, hold on to, or, give attention to. The A.V. translation "ought" is misleading, must is closer to the mark.

"More earnest" translates a word that means, with extreme care. "The things we have heard" is the gospel: the good news of salvation. Because of all that has been said in chapter 1 it demands the most careful consideration.

Beware Of Drifting

There's a danger to be avoided. The possibility exists that we could "drift away" from the things we have heard. That's why we must pay careful attention to them.

"Lest we drift away" can be understood in two ways. It could mean lest they slip from the memory but it's better understood in the sense of people drifting off course. The possibility of those who have made a profession of faith drifting away from following Jesus because of the pressure of hardship will come up many times in the Book of Hebrews. This is the first of a number of warnings against that possibility.

Compare The Old And The New

In verses 2 to 4 the word spoken through angels — the Law of Moses — and the "salvation which at the first was spoken by the Lord" are placed side by side for comparison.

We are not told in the Old Testament that angels had anything to do with the giving of the law: it was a tradition that had been handed down among the Jews. But they were right in this tradition: it's confirmed in Acts 7:53 and Galatians 3:19.

The Law given through angels is said to have proved steadfast, firm or sure. Not one of its threats or promises proved empty. Every violation, whether it was deliberately stepping over the line (transgression) or unintended disobedience through hearing amiss resulted in "a just reward."

- ◆ *What is meant by the phrase, "a just reward?"*

How Shall We Escape?

Verse 3, is a rhetorical question — a question asked not to be answered but to make a point. The point is that there is no escape for those who neglect the message of the gospel. The word "we" is emphasised and refers to those of us to whom God has spoken in His Son — those who have heard the good news of salvation. Neglect means to be careless about.

- ◆ *What is it to neglect the good news of salvation?*

So Great Salvation

Salvation, here, should be understood in its broadest possible sense. The word means deliverance, health and restoration: all three. What the writer has in mind is God's whole plan to rescue hell-deserving sinners: bring them into fellowship with Himself, justify them, sanctify them and glorify them by grace along through faith in Jesus. There are many reasons why salvation can be called great but what the writer has in mind is what he has just said in chapter 1.

- ◆ *Why, do you think, the writer calls salvation great?*

Three more things about salvation — or rather the good news about it — are pointed out in verses 3 and 4 to give further emphasis to the need to pay careful attention to it: it was spoken first by the Lord; it was confirmed by the Apostles; it was confirmed by God Himself.

The Gospel: Spoken By The Lord

"Lord" translates the Greek name for Yahweh, the God of Israel. It refers, of course, to Jesus here and highlights His deity so as to show the greatness of the good news He proclaimed: God sent angels to announce the Law but this good news was announced by His Son.

The Gospel: Confirmed By The Apostles

The good news was first announced by Jesus but has been conveyed to us by people who actually heard Him: the apostles all of whom had met and conversed with Jesus.

The Gospel: Confirmed By God

And God Himself has confirmed the message brought to us by the the apostles by enabling them to do things that only God can give the ability to do: signs, wonders, various miracles and gifts of the Holy Spirit, all in accordance with His own will.

Be Warned

The teaching of the Bible is never mere theory unrelated to every day life and it should never be read as if it is. Every doctrinal statement is there for a practical reason. Sometimes that reason is spelled out, as it is here, and sometimes we have to work out what it is for ourselves.

In chapter 1 the writer of the Book of Hebrews made some great and important doctrinal statements but He made them for a purpose and the verses we've been looking at in this study spell it out. If Jesus is all that we have been told He is in chapter 1 then we must pay careful attention to the good news of salvation that has been told to us. It would be dangerous to neglect it.

- ◆ *What will paying careful attention mean, practically, for you?*