

# Keep Moving Forward Series

## Don't Neglect Jesus (Hebrews 2:1-3)

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By  
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### At A Glance:

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*These sermon study notes are designed to be a tool used after listening to the sermon. This resource is a guide to help deepen understanding regarding the Scriptures and ideas presented in the sermon. Those who use these study notes are encouraged to look up, read through, and think about Scripture references in this guide. There is more information in these notes than what is presented in the sermon. These study notes are designed to be used as an independent study tool to help the formation of Biblical convictions, character, and conduct.*

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# Don't Neglect Jesus

## I. Introduction

### A. Illustration: Trip to the Zoo

1. How many of you have taken a family trip to the zoo? Going to the zoo is a common occurrence for many families. It's enjoyable to walk around and see some of God's creations that aren't normally encountered. It brings joy to see the faces of your children light up with excitement as they enjoy one of God's good gifts. Did you know we can learn a spiritual lesson by visiting a zoo?
2. How would you feel if you were in the presence of all those same animals, but the barriers and safeguards were removed? As an exercise in humility, I imagine what it would be like if I was confronted with these beautiful yet powerful animals out in the wild. I quickly realize how little and powerless I am. Any thoughts of control are a delusion. I am entirely at the mercy of powers that are beyond me. I wouldn't survive if a tiger or a polar bear came across my path.
3. This sense of proper humility seems to be widely lacking. A host of videos can be found online of people who failed to realize their own humility as they approached wild animals with an overly confident sense of false security. From the man who pet a bear to the one who got attacked by a mouse or the woman on the Mexican beach with the wild bull. Many of us have probably seen a headline of a tourist in Yellowstone getting too close to a buffalo.
4. Some people go so far as to treat uncaged wild animals with the same sense of safety they use with the animals in a zoo. This is a mistake. When we fail to respect the capability and power of animals far superior to our own, we set ourselves up to get hurt. We put ourselves in danger.

- B. Unfortunately, people can treat God the same way. They falsely assume a level of safety that they don't have by acting as if God is a lion cub rather than the powerful adult. They treat God as if He is a caged animal in a zoo under our full control. Some go so far as to think they have the right to tell God what to do—and get mad at Him when He doesn't do it! The author of Hebrews wants those who are connected to Jesus to feel the discomfort of insecurity for the purpose of promoting their spiritual health. If anyone is so comfortable with Jesus that they become complacent, this ought to be viewed as a significant spiritual problem. Laziness is devastating to the spiritual life. In fact, neglect is evidence that there is no healthy spiritual life.
- C. In this six-week series, we're going to learn about the major themes and action steps found in the book of Hebrews. This relevant book communicates a message that needs to be heard in all the hallways and classrooms of the modern church. Many modern disciples find themselves in the same spiritual condition as people in the early church being addressed by the book of Hebrews. The message of Hebrews meets us right where we are in our Jesus journey. The main message of Hebrews is those who are connected to God are constantly moving forward. Anyone who isn't constantly moving forward is disconnected from God. Let's look at the first major spiritual lesson communicated in the book of Hebrews.

## II. The Impactful Action

- A. It is a big deal when God speaks. God doesn't speak every day. It is not a common occurrence. When God communicates His message, everyone should sit up and take notice. If the God of the universe and the Creator of all things speaks, humanity should have a specific reaction. The author of Hebrews uses the Bible, the Old Testament, to ground his points in Scripture. In this case, the example of God speaking to the nation of Israel from Mount Sinai (also called Horeb) is used to explain an unexpected yet proper reaction to God speaking. This event in Israel's history is used as a pattern and a point of instruction for how people should react to the message of God being communicated through Jesus.
- B. Even though God rescued this people and set them apart for Himself, He went on to say this:
- <sup>10</sup> The Lord also said to Moses, "Go to the people and consecrate them today and tomorrow, and have them wash their garments; <sup>11</sup> and have them ready for the third day, for on the third day the Lord will come down on Mount Sinai in the sight of all the people. <sup>12</sup> But you shall set boundaries for the people all around, saying, 'Beware that you do not go up on the mountain or touch the border of it; whoever touches the mountain shall certainly be put to death. <sup>13</sup> No hand shall touch him, but he shall certainly be stoned or shot through; whether animal or person, *the violator* shall not live.' When the ram's horn sounds a long blast, they shall come up to the mountain." (Ex. 19:10-13)
- C. To modern thinking, God may seem to be harsh or cruel in these instructions. Why would a person be killed simply for touching a mountain? That seems unfair and an overreaction. While this response is understandable, it fails to consider the gravity of the situation. God is giving the people a compassionate and appropriate warning—like a warning siren of the approaching storm. A person who, in pride, assumes they should have access to God and openly disobeys God's clear commands, and fails to respect even God's authority, demonstrates themselves to be a very rebellious person.<sup>1</sup> If a person won't listen to God's authority, they are hard hearted, unteachable, and uncorrectable. God is appearing in this way to convince the people to listen to Him through Moses (Ex. 19:9).
- D. Notice how the people responded: they trembled and backed away (Ex. 19:16-17, 20:18-21).<sup>2</sup> The author of Hebrews draws our attention to the response of those who were present when God was speaking so that we might learn an important spiritual lesson:
- <sup>20</sup> For they could not cope with the command, "If even an animal touches the mountain, it shall be stoned." <sup>21</sup> And so terrible was the sight, *that* Moses said, "I am terrified and trembling." (Heb. 12:20-21)
- E. The author of Hebrews is using Exodus 19:12 and Deuteronomy 9:19 to make his point. Remember, God first rescued people out of slavery and then required them to obey Him. He did this to set apart people to be in His kingdom (Ex. 19:3-6). Even though all this was happening, the people were warned of the danger of the magnitude of God's presence. There was an attitude of seriousness attached to the communication of God's message. Even Moses, the

<sup>1</sup> Exodus 19:21

<sup>2</sup> John 18:4-6

person who was able to draw near to God and speak to Him “face to face,” had a healthy respect toward God (“I am terrified and trembling”, v. 21). God’s presence caused Moses to be marked by a state of intense fear or desperation.<sup>3</sup> Moses was so impacted by the expression of God’s presence on Mt. Sinai that he physically vibrated slightly and irregularly with fear or anxiousness.<sup>4</sup> So powerful was God’s presence that Moses instinctively knew he was powerless to protect himself if God wanted to do him harm. Moses experienced directly the type of feeling that God encouraged Job to understand (Job 40:15-41:34).

- F. The author of Hebrews wants to recapture the wonder and seriousness of what it means for God to speak. He wants to confront people who are too comfortable with God’s word to the point that they don’t have the correct attitude of seriousness toward the message of God. When God speaks, it is a serious event.

### III. The Impactful Spokesperson

- A. Through Jesus, God is communicating the most important parts of His message. God the Father sent His most respected and qualified representative to share the most critical portion of His message to the world.<sup>5</sup> Through Jesus, God communicated the central details about how a person can be restored back to Him and rescued from the relational consequences of the damage they have caused with God. Everything God had been doing in the past led up to what He was going to accomplish in and through Jesus. Eternal issues are at stake, and the gospel by its very nature demands to be treated with the fullest seriousness.<sup>6</sup>

- B. The significance of Jesus as the messenger of God is explained this way:

<sup>1</sup> God, after He spoke long ago to the fathers in the prophets in many portions and in many ways, <sup>2</sup> in these last days has spoken to us in *His Son*, whom He appointed heir of all things, through whom He also made the world. <sup>3</sup> And He is the radiance of His glory and the exact representation of His nature, and upholds all things by the word of His power. When He had made purification of sins, He sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high, (Heb. 1:1-3)

- C. Notice the role Jesus is playing here (“God...in these last days has spoken to us in His Son”, vv. 1-2). Jesus is speaking and communicating the message of God. If God was doing a press conference and answering media questions, Jesus would be at the microphone. The message being communicated is even more critical because of the significance of the person who is speaking. Jesus is sharing the breaking news coming from God Himself.
- D. A list of qualifications is provided for Jesus being God’s spokesperson and representative, including: 1) Jesus is given authority and ownership over everything (“whom He appointed heir of all things”, v. 2), 2) Jesus is the Creator of the world (“through whom He also made the world”, v. 2), 3) Jesus expresses God the Father’s glory (“He is the radiance of His glory”, v. 3), 4) Jesus possesses and embodies the same divine nature as God the Father (“the exact representation of His nature”, v. 3), 5) Jesus is the sustainer of God’s creation (“upholds all

<sup>3</sup> Logos 10 Bible Study Software Exegetical Guide on Hebrews 12:21 “terrible”

<sup>4</sup> Logos 10 Bible Study Software Exegetical Guide on Hebrews 12:21 “trembling”

<sup>5</sup> Matthew 21:33-44, Mark 12:1-11, Luke 20:9-18

<sup>6</sup> Philip Edgcumbe Hughes, [A Commentary on the Epistle to the Hebrews](#), The New International Commentary on the Old and New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1977), 73.

things by the word of His power”, v. 3), 6) Jesus accomplished what no one else did—salvation (“When He had made purification of sins”, v. 3) and 7) Jesus was rewarded the highest place of honor and power (“He sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high”, v. 3) . With these qualifications, no one is more adequately credentialed to speak for God! Jesus is an expert, and He knows what He is talking about. So, listen up!

- E. Considering all these factors, we are encouraged to respond to the message communicated through Jesus in an appropriate way. No one who is given the opportunity to hear the message of Jesus will be able to give an adequate excuse to God for why they neglect or disobey His message. God the Father provided sufficient and strong reasons for people to take the message of Jesus seriously. Our response to the greatness of the Son should be devoting attention to the message about the Son.<sup>7</sup> Jesus is making a public service announcement that communicates the actions steps we must take to be safe and respond to the danger we are facing. Jesus is warning the public what to do next to prepare for the upcoming disaster.

#### IV. The Impactful Response

- A. How are people expected to respond to the message of Jesus according to God as He speaks through the author of Hebrews? The appropriate response to the word of God is explained like this:
 

<sup>1</sup> For this reason we must pay much closer attention to what we have heard, so that we do not drift away *from it*. <sup>2</sup> For if the word spoken through angels proved unalterable, and every violation and act of disobedience received a just punishment, <sup>3</sup> how will we escape if we neglect so great a salvation? After it was at first spoken through the Lord, it was confirmed to us by those who heard, (Heb. 2:1-3)
- B. How did angels communicate the Law—the commands God gave for how to worship Him? Wasn’t God Himself speaking to Moses? Yes, God Himself communicated His message to Moses on Mt. Sinai, and God wrote the Ten Commandments on the stone tables. However, it is clear from other passages of Scripture that God was not alone. Moses, who was on the mountain with God, affirms that angels were also present with God (Dt. 33:2). The presence of angels is confirmed by David (Ps. 68:17). Angels were witnesses to these events. The fact that angels were involved in giving God’s word is also testified in the New Testament (Ac. 7:53, Gal. 3:19). Angels regularly show interest in the work God is doing with humanity (1 Pet. 1:12).
- C. If we are to take the message of Jesus seriously, how are we supposed to react to the word of God? What is healthy? In this text, there are three commands provided to explain how we are to respond to the message of Jesus. First, we are required to devote careful mental focus to the message (“we must pay much closer attention to what we have heard”, v. 1). To pay attention to the message of God communicated by Jesus is to believe and act on what is heard.<sup>8</sup> Disciples are being encouraged not to grow lax or careless in their attention given to God’s word.<sup>9</sup> We

<sup>7</sup> Douglas J. Moo, [Hebrews](#), ed. Clinton E. Arnold, Zondervan Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Academic, 2024), 62.

<sup>8</sup> Douglas J. Moo, [Hebrews](#), ed. Clinton E. Arnold, Zondervan Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Academic, 2024), 62.

<sup>9</sup> Douglas J. Moo, [Hebrews](#), ed. Clinton E. Arnold, Zondervan Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Academic, 2024), 62–63.

should pay more attention to the message of Jesus than the people of Israel gave to the Law given to them through Moses.

- D. Those who take an apathetic, uncaring, dismissive, and disinterested attitude toward the Bible are at odds with God and open to punishment. When we have access to God’s word and reject it, there will be significant consequences for doing so. This is the point being communicated here. Continual effort directing our mental attention toward the Bible is the expectation for the Christian life. It is critical to understand that the emphasis is not being placed on any Bible reading action or habit; it is on the attitude with which a person approaches the word of God. A person can be reading and studying the Bible, all with a sinful attitude!
- E. The reason we must keep paying attention to the message of Jesus is to prevent a common spiritual danger that will happen if we aren’t paying attention—drifting away (“so that we do not drift away from it”, v. 1). Being told to not drift away is the second command. What is being described here is not an intentionally and thoughtfully chosen course of action, but one that simply occurs over time, perhaps without a person noticing.<sup>10</sup> Some people get carried away by the influence of the world and end up moving away from Jesus and His message because they are not paying attention to the course of their life. If people get lazy with God’s word, the natural and expected consequence will be drifting away from God. Losing focus in the Christian life gets us off course. Like golfing, a lack of concentration can cause us to get off course and end up in the rough.
- F. The assumption being made here is that anyone who does not pay careful attention to the word of God will naturally drift away from Jesus. Their lives will get off course from the desires, intentions, and goals God has for their life. If a person is not regularly spending time with the Bible along with an attentive focus, it is guaranteed their life will not be in the condition God desires it to be. Mental errors matter. It is impossible to be a healthy disciple and neglect the word of God at the same time. The only way our lives will be pleasing to God and consistently obedient to what He says is by regularly putting into practice what we are learning from God’s word. If we are left to our own selves for too long, we will get off course. This is just the way the Christian life works. Not everyone will notice or realize their life is off course from God’s path, but it is. The solution to drifting away is a renewed concentration on the message of salvation communicated by Jesus.<sup>11</sup>
- G. The third expected response to the message of Jesus is active participation so that we don’t neglect what God has said and the work His Spirit is doing in us (“how will we escape if we neglect so great a salvation?”, v. 3). This work of God in us is summarized in Philippians 2:12-13. God is at work in the lives of those who stay connected to Him through His word (Jn. 8:31-32). Those who do not feel concern or interest in the Bible will not be able to escape the punishment of God.<sup>12</sup> Disinterest will end in disaster. Anyone who is spiritually lazy will follow

<sup>10</sup> There are different ways that drifting away is described in Hebrews including: 1) A deliberate decision to reject Jesus 2) a failure to move forward in the Christian life and 3) a gradual diminishing of spiritual passion. Douglas J. Moo, [Hebrews](#), ed. Clinton E. Arnold, Zondervan Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Academic, 2024), 66.

<sup>11</sup> Douglas J. Moo, [Hebrews](#), ed. Clinton E. Arnold, Zondervan Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Academic, 2024), 67.

<sup>12</sup> Logos 10 Bible Study Software Exegetical Guide on Hebrews 12:3 “if we neglect”

the example of those in the Old Testament who were punished by God for their disobedience. What is my interest level in the word of God?

- H. The point being communicated here is that God's word, regardless of how people respond to it, is legally binding on those who are exposed to it ("For if the word spoken through angels proved unalterable", v. 2).<sup>13</sup> Unalterable means to be proved to be true.<sup>14</sup> Since God communicates the truth, it is legally binding, which is why legal words are used to explain the relevance of God's word for our lives ("violation", "act of disobedience", "just", "punishment", v. 2). Those who think the Bible is irrelevant will discover on the day they stand before God that they will be judged according to what it says. The words of Jesus matter (Jn. 12:48). Everyone will be held accountable for their disobedience to God's moral standards found in their knowledge of God's message or their own personal conscience. No one who knows the message communicated by Jesus and acts against it will go unpunished. The message of Jesus is relevant and applicable for everyone who hears it. This longstanding point is emphasized throughout the Bible (Dt. 32:46). God will hold everyone accountable for what they have heard from His word.
- I. The author of Hebrews makes a comparison between the message communicated in the Old Testament through angels to the message communicated in the New Testament through Jesus ("For if the word spoken through angels proved unalterable, and every violation and act of disobedience received a just punishment, how will we escape if we neglect so great a salvation?", v. 2). The author uses a logical form of argument by moving from the lesser to the greater (an a fortiori argument).<sup>15</sup> If God expected people to take seriously the message previously communicated through angels, and Jesus is more important and powerful than angels, He will expect an even more serious response to the message communicated through Jesus. God's punishment of people in the Old Testament serves as a warning to us who've heard the message of Jesus. Jesus offered the same warning (Mt. 10:14, 11:20-24).

## V. Conclusion

- A. When God speaks, humanity has the obligation to take notice. The most important words communicated from God are found on the lips of Jesus. Everyone who hears the words of Jesus will be accountable to God for how they respond to Jesus' message. Everyone is warned to pay careful attention to what the Bible says.
- B. Whenever God's word is being communicated and taught, everyone listening has the responsibility to pay attention and respond to what they are hearing:

<sup>19</sup> And so we have the prophetic word *made* more sure, to which you do well to pay attention as to a lamp shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star arises in your hearts. (2 Pet. 1:19)

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<sup>13</sup> Douglas J. Moo, [Hebrews](#), ed. Clinton E. Arnold, Zondervan Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Academic, 2024), 63.

<sup>14</sup> Logos 10 Bible Study Software Exegetical Guide on Hebrews 12:2 "unalterable"

<sup>15</sup> The same argument is also found in Hebrews 10:28-31.