

Please turn to the book of Hebrews, the book of Hebrews chapter 2. We'll look this morning at verses 1 through 4 of Hebrews chapter 2. Hebrews chapter 2 verses 1 through 4. In chapter 1 of this book, we've seen something of the supremacy of Christ. You see in the first chapter of Hebrews that the Son of God is the very radiance of the glory of God, the exact imprint of his nature, that through the Son, all things were created. And not only were all things created through him, but all things are created for him. And then you add to this glorious fact that he is the Alpha and the Omega, that all things are through him and for him, this reality that in him, in his incarnation, you find the center and climax of all of human history. And then additionally to all these wonderful things you see in chapter one, you see that he is infinitely superior to the angels, such that the angels themselves are his messengers and they worship him. And all of this then builds up to a therefore, a therefore, which is the first word of chapter two. If Jesus is so excellent, so grand, why would these Hebrew Christians be tempted to turn from him? Why would they be prone to act like he's not enough? Why would they be inclined to drift from this grand Jesus of Hebrews chapter 1?

It's absurd when you consider who he really is as chapter 1 has set him forth, but That is a question that all must ask. You must ask that question of yourself. Why, if This is the real Son of God, the second person of the Trinity, as presented in chapter one of Hebrews. If he's this grand, if he's this glorious, if he is the radiance of the glory of God, the exact imprint of his nature, through whom all things were made, for whom all things were made, the one who is perpetually carrying all things to their predetermined end.

So grand and glorious that angels are infinitely less than him and he is infinitely superior to them. so grand and glorious that the angels themselves worship him, they are his mere messengers, why is it that you would drift from this Jesus? And such is the inclination even of a Christian heart to drift from even this Jesus, so good as he is.

And so this message to them 2,000 years ago applies to all of us here today as they call not to drift from Jesus. With this in mind, let us pray. Almighty God, prone to wander, Lord, we feel it, prone to leave the God we love, every one of us this week, even the grandest saint in the room, has drifted at one point or another, to one degree or another, from the Lord Jesus Christ this week. And oh God, as a result, we come this morning and we say, will you please speak to us through your word that we would drift less frequently and less far that you would incline us, even through the preaching of your word this morning, to be refreshed anew, that you would put a fresh zeal in our hearts not to wander so frequently so far, but that more and more we would not want to be found away from the shore of Christ. We ask for your help to this end, even through the preaching of your word now. Pour out your Holy Spirit, for indeed, apart from him, We can do nothing, in Christ's name, amen.

Hebrews chapter two, verses one through four. Therefore, we must pay much closer attention to what we have heard, lest we drift away from it. For since the message declared by angels proved to be reliable, and every transgression or disobedience received a just retribution, how shall we escape if we neglect such a great salvation? It was declared at first by the Lord and it was attested to us by those who heard, while God also bore witness by signs and wonders and various miracles and by gifts of the Holy Spirit distributed according to his will. Well, thus ends the reading of God's holy word. May he bless now the proclamation of it to our lives.

We are all tempted to drift from Jesus. Every single one of us is tempted to drift from Jesus. The author of the book of Hebrews was tempted to drift from Jesus, prone to drift from Jesus. How do you know that? Well, look at the text. Three times in verse one he uses the first person plural, we. We must pay much closer attention to what we have heard. lest we drift away from it.

He himself understood that not only were those to whom he wrote inclined, prone to wander, prone to drift, he knew that he himself was prone to drift, even from the glorious Jesus that he has just set forth in chapter one. Indeed, we can all relate to the hymn writer when he said, prone to wander, Lord, I feel it, prone to leave the God I love. And so this is why these words about drifting are relevant for you today, because it is the tendency of every human heart, even the redeemed human heart, to drift from the Lord.

Jesus Christ. And so in our text we see remedies against drifting, remedies against drifting, and you see three remedies, three medicines if you will, that will help against drifting from Jesus. First you see listen closely. Second, don't neglect salvation. And third, contemplate the certainty of the message. Listen closely, don't neglect salvation, and contemplate the certainty of the message. So first, listen closely.

He begins with this word, therefore, and he is saying here that because or since this message has come to you through Jesus Christ himself, through the glorious Christ of chapter one, the Christ, again, who is the radiance of the glory of God, the exact imprint of his nature, and all those other wonderful things presented about Christ in chapter one, Since it has come to you through him, this message of salvation has come to you through him because of who he is.

You must listen closely to what he says. The dignity of his person demands a listening ear. It is a moral imperative that you listen to him because of who he is. Because of who he is in chapter one, he can say, we must. pay much closer attention to him. This is a moral imperative. And how closely are you to listen to his message?

I've always found these two quotations from the book of Luke really insightful when I've considered the call of my life to listen to Christ. Luke 9, 44, Jesus says this. when speaking, listen to the way Jesus talks about the way he speaks. If anyone other than Jesus spoke this way, you would say, you're an egotistical maniac. He says this, let these words sink into your ears. Luke 9, 44, the son of man is about to be delivered into the hands of men. He can say, my words need to sink into your very ears. That's how closely you are to listen to Jesus. And then listen to how the people were listening to him in Luke 19, 48.

It says of the people, all the people were hanging on his words. They hung on the very words of Jesus. When he spoke, they couldn't help but grab hold of them as if it was a ledge and it was their only way of escape as they were falling to their death. They grabbed hold of the ledge of the words of Jesus Christ, knowing that his words were the words that they needed to hear. They needed to listen to him. They are to be hanging on his very words.

But perhaps somebody here thinks to themselves, well, I've heard this message before. I've heard about Jesus before. I need something new. I need something different. I need something better than this Jesus. Well, look what he says they needed. He says we must pay much closer attention to what we have heard. It was what they had already heard. He doesn't tell them they need to pay much closer attention to some new novel idea, to something that has come to them that's better or superior than what they had already heard. He says you need to keep hearing what you've already heard.

You need to never grow tired of that message, of that Jesus. You need to hear him again, hear him afresh. You'll never find a better voice. You'll never find something more important to listen to than to this Jesus. Pay attention to what we have had. We have heard. Continue to hear Christ. Listen to Christ. Listen to the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Do you know that message here this morning? Do you know of what he came to do? Have you heard about Christ? Heard in your heart? Has it sunk into your ears that Christ Jesus came in this world to save sinners? that he came to shed his blood for the souls of all the elect that all for whom he came would have eternal life.

We need to hear that message and hear it again and hear of the dignity of his person and never tire of hearing of this message for it will help keep us from drifting. It will help to keep you from drifting when you hear this message again and again and again. We gather each Lord's Day to worship God. That is the primary purpose for which we gather. But we also do gather for this reason as well, that we would hear afresh of Jesus that we might not drift from him. Because even if you heard about Jesus last week from this pulpit, and even if you heard about Jesus two weeks ago from this pulpit, I promise you need to hear about Christ again Because the heart of even the redeemed sinner is prone to wander.

It is prone to drift. It's prone to leave the God that you claim. And in fact, at some level, surely by God's grace, do really love. But notice this language of drifting is so helpful. It paints an image for us that is good to remember. It is rare that a professing Christian in one sort of momentous decision of unbelief rejects Christ. It is almost always the case that it is a slow drift. One compromise here, a compromise there, And then slowly but surely you drift so far from the shore of Christ that when you realize where you are, you don't even know how to return. You can't even see the shore of Christ any longer.

So far out in the sea of unbelief. Have you found yourself? Do you have drifted slowly? How did I get here? How did I how did I get so far? Well, I stopped prioritizing Christ. I stopped thinking upon Christ. I stopped attending worship. I started making excuses here and there and a little bit everywhere. And so now I don't even think upon the things of the Lord. I don't care about the things of the Lord. I've drifted.

And so the text says, listen closely, pay close attention to Christ when you hear him preached, care about the Lord Jesus Christ. When you hear Christ in conversations, when we here at Second Presbyterian Church converse throughout the week and we hear a brother or a sister start to speak to us about Christ again, we should be listening. I cannot tell you how many times I have personally been the recipient of this blessing. I've gathered with one of you over a lunch or just a conversation, and I have been freshly invigorated to love Christ, to seek Christ, because y'all have spoken to me about Jesus. That should be always something that you want to listen to closely. When you hear about Jesus, you should care. You should want to listen closely, because if you don't, you will be prone to drifting.

But secondly, don't neglect salvation. Don't neglect salvation. You see this beginning here in verse two. For since the message declared by angels proved to be reliable, and every transgression or disobedience received a just retribution, how shall we escape if we neglect such a great salvation. So secondly here, don't neglect salvation. Now before we even expound these verses, verse two into the start of verse three, we need to take this warning not to neglect salvation seriously. Notice the text does not say, do not reject salvation. It says, do not neglect salvation.

In Yazoo City and even in our church, there's far more danger of, on the whole, neglecting salvation to the perishing of your soul rather than rejecting salvation outright. If you go talk to most people in Yazoo City and you say, do you know the Lord Jesus Christ? Do you know salvation? Probably most of them, if you were to say, are you a Christian? Most of them would probably say yes. Whether they are or not, they would say yes to that. They won't openly reject Christ.

I don't suppose anyone right now in this room is at a place in their life where they're willing to openly reject Christ. But many people neglect salvation. Yes, you ask them directly and maybe they would claim Christ at one level or another, but they don't really care about Christ. They don't really care about salvation. They don't ever ponder. These things, they don't really think about how great a salvation this is.

The text says when you neglect this salvation, when you ignore it, when it doesn't have a place in your heart, sincerely, how, the text says, shall we escape if we neglect such a great salvation? Perhaps it may be the case. I don't know this with infallibility. Perhaps it may be the case, though there are far more in hell because they neglected such a great salvation. than that they actually outright rejected it. They just simply didn't really care. They just simply didn't really care about salvation and so they have no escape on the day of judgment according to our text. So these warnings need to be taken seriously. Seriously. Remember, this author is writing to a group of professing believers, and he gives them this warning, and he even includes himself in this warning with that word, we.

Now, someone might object to author of Hebrews and say, well, do you not understand Mr. Author, sir, who's ultimately the Holy Spirit? Do you not understand that There's this doctrine called the Perseverance of the Saints. Have you never heard what Jesus said? All that the Father gives me will come to me and whoever comes to me will never, I will never cast out. Do you not understand that once you're saved, you won't lose that salvation, author of Hebrews? Why would you give these warnings to professing Christians?

And the author of Hebrews knows all of this. He knows about the doctrine of the Perseverance of the Saints. He knows that Christ said, all that the Father gives me will come to me and I will never cast them out. but he also knows that God uses means so that his people might persevere to the end. God uses means to help his people persevere to the end. He uses means like the preaching of the word. He uses means like encouragement and means like discipline and means like correction and means like warnings.

There is a place for even the believer here this morning to hear these warnings, not because you're not going to ultimately persevere to the end, but they should shake us awake to want to be all the more vigilant, to grow in grace, to pursue holiness. These warnings are for believers. These warnings are meant to be a means to help us take seriously the great salvation that we have received. I once heard an illustration that captures the place of warning in the life of the Christian that I found helpful and I want to share it with you. The illustration went like this.

Imagine somehow, now this is impossible, but imagine somehow you knew next week you're going to get on a flight from Jackson to Atlanta and you knew infallibly from God that that flight was going to safely arrive in Atlanta. Would that mean, if you knew infallibly that somehow that plane was going to get from point A to point B, would that mean

that you wouldn't need to heed the warnings to purchase a plane ticket? That you wouldn't need to heed the warnings to show up to the airport on time so you don't miss your flight? You need to heed those warnings so that you get your plane ticket. so that you show up to the airport on time. Yes, you're gonna get to your final destination, but those warnings are helpful for you to do your part in being faithful to assure that you get on the flight and make it to your final destination. You still heed the warnings. And so in this text, heed the warnings not to neglect this salvation.

Now what is at the heart of this argument? Looking back at verse two, for since the message declared by angels proved to be reliable, and every transgression or disobedience received a just retribution, how shall we escape if we neglect such a great salvation? There's an argument here from the lesser to the greater.

He is saying, you have received a message from angels, and when receiving that message, you received a just punishment when you didn't obey that message. How much more so, in essence, he is saying, from the lesser to the greater, should you receive and heed the message of salvation that has come through Jesus Christ? If people were punished when they neglected the law given through angelic mediators, how much more will people be punished when they neglect salvation given through Christ's mediation? Now, what is this message that is declared by angels?

Well, it appears in one way or another that the angels had a place in mediating the giving of the law at Sinai. And you see this by piecing together various passages in the Bible, but perhaps the most clear is this. In Acts 7.53, when Stephen is being persecuted right before he dies, he's speaking these words to the people and he says this, Acts 7.53, you who have received the law as delivered by angels and did not keep it. So to whatever extent The angels were involved in mediating the law to Moses and then from Moses to the people. However exactly that worked out, the details are not given to us in scripture, but you can piece it together from several different passages. However exactly it worked, the point is simple in the text. What is the point? When they broke that law, what happened to them? They were punished.

How much more when the very son of God himself who angels worship has come should you be punished if you neglect this great salvation, from the lesser to the greater. Calvin captures it this way. God wishes his gifts to be valued by us at their proper worth. The more precious they are, the baser our ingratitude if they do not have their proper value for us. In accordance with the greatness of Christ, so will be the severity of God's vengeance on all despisers of the gospel.

Think of it, friends, Abraham and Moses and Daniel and Ezra and Nehemiah, all those Old Testament saints long to live in the day of fullness in which you get to live. And this is why Jesus Christ could say to those in his day that they will suffer even greater punishment than those of Sodom and Gomorrah on the day of judgment.

Why? Because they were neglecting an even fuller and even clearer salvation as given through him. Not an altogether different salvation. All salvation has always come through the promised Messiah, the Lord Jesus Christ, but the fullness of it had come in a way that the Old Testament saints had not seen.

It was more clearly revealed and so the rejecting of it warrants an even greater punishment. There is no getting around the logic of Hebrews chapter 2 verses 1 through 4. You must pay close attention to Christ and his gospel. If you do not pay close attention to Christ and his gospel, you neglect salvation. If you neglect salvation, there is no escape. That's his point. Pay close attention. And if you don't, you neglect salvation and there is no escape.

And so do you ever actively contemplate the salvation that is yours in Christ Jesus? Do you ever think upon what he has done for you? Have you ever had a night or a morning where you've woken up and you've just thought about the grandeur and the wonder of the Lord Jesus Christ and what he has done for you.

When that is happening in your life, that is a great remedy against drifting. When you contemplate this great salvation, it helps to keep you from wandering. I still remember when I was in high school, my pastor charged us one time from the pulpit. He said, occasionally you ought to get together with someone, a friend, whatever it might be, and instead of discussing all your struggles and problems, which there's a place for that, of course, but he said, just Contemplate Christ in the cross. Just contemplate the person and work of Christ. And do you know what happens when you do that? And this doesn't need to be every conversation. It doesn't mean you don't get together and discuss your finances or other challenges that you're facing in your children's lives or your life. That's fine. That's not against God's law.

But do you know what will happen when you get into a conversation and you don't talk about a single struggle, a single concern, and all you do is contemplate with someone else the person and work of Christ? All of a sudden, you kind of forget about all those struggles. All of a sudden, they just kind of fade into the background, not because they're not real, not because they're not difficult, but because the glory and wonder of who Christ is and what he has done for you so fills your heart and mind that you know that nothing else compares with what you've already received in him. You're joyful, you're moved to gratitude because of who he is, even in the midst of whatever you might be experiencing.

This is one of the ways you can avoid neglecting such a great salvation by speaking about this salvation with one another, stirring one another up in this salvation. Thirdly, this morning, we see a remedy against drifting and it is this, contemplate the certainty of the message, contemplate the certainty of the message. Look at about halfway through verse three. It was declared at first by the Lord and it was attested to us by those who heard while God also bore witness by signs and wonders and various miracles and by gifts of the Holy Spirit distributed according to his will.

The absolute certainty of the message of salvation should be a preventative to your drifting from it. What other religion will you go to? What other gospel will you go to? Whatever other ideology will you go to? that has the certainty of the Christian gospel, that has the objective reality behind it of the person and work of Christ in history who died and who rose and who ascended into glory. There is no message, there is no way of salvation that has certainty like the Christian gospel. I once visited a Muslim mosque, that's the worship place of Muslims, and afterwards the Muslims gathered around me at a table and they said to me, they said, Are you looking for the truth?

Without skipping a beat, I said, no, I've already found it. And that wasn't because I'm special. And that wasn't because I'm somehow an exceptionally bold Christian. I don't know that there's really any truth in that. But it's

because the undeniable veracity of the Bible. It's so undeniably true. It's so obviously factual. You can't get around the veracity of the message. Contemplate the certainty of this message, nothing compares with it.

And when you do this, while it takes of course the Holy Spirit to bring a person from life to death, while it of course takes the Holy Spirit to grow us in grace and in holiness of life, but when you contemplate this message, and then you consider anything else, where are you gonna go? Are you gonna find something more certain than this way of salvation, that the God became man without ceasing to be God, to take upon himself the full weight and penalty of your sins, to bear it on the cross, to rise from the dead for your justification? Are you gonna find something more certain, more sure than this? What other rock under which would you turn to find something so sure as this way of salvation, as this person, the Lord Jesus Christ, and his work to save sinners? nowhere else to turn. And so the author here begins to contemplate the certainty of this message so that the hearers will not drift.

He says in verse three, this message was first declared to you by the Lord himself, that this message additionally was attested to you by eyewitnesses. These people hadn't seen Christ, they're like you. They hadn't seen Christ with their own eyes, but eyewitness testimony had come to them.

And eyewitness testimony has come to you in the Bible. This is eyewitness accounts. Read the four gospels. It's eyewitness accounts that comes directly to your doorstep, directly to your bedroom, wherever you have your Bible. You have eyewitness accounts just like they did.

It's sure, it's certain. And then you have it authenticated by God himself in verse four as it describes the various miracles that were performed in their midst. Now you sitting here today have remarkable evidence to authenticate the message of the gospel. You have the historicity to which it points and it's entirely trustworthy. And you also have remarkable evidences because of what you've seen the spirit do.

While you can't claim here as they could then in the apostolic age that you had seen these exact sorts of signs and miracles that are listed here in verse four, but you've seen remarkable evidence for the truth of Christianity by the work of the Spirit. You've seen acts of love that you can't explain apart from the power of the work of the Holy Spirit. Things you've heard about Christians really doing that are objectively true, undeniably true, or things you've seen Christians do that you can't explain apart from the work of the Holy Spirit. You've seen saints endure hardships with joy that you cannot possibly explain apart from the work of the Holy Spirit. You've seen remarkable evidences And these things should be helps to keep you from drifting. So here this morning, again, these are the three remedies that the Spirit of God offers to you to help remedy you from drifting.

In verses one through four, and there are these. Listen closely, don't neglect salvation, and contemplate the certainty of the message. May God help all of us to that end. In Jesus's name, let us pray. Almighty God, we praise you for remedies from drifting for, oh God, prone to wander, Lord, we feel it, prone to leave the God we love. Oh God, but you are a God who brings remedies to us. Instead of letting us simply drift away, which certainly would be our case apart from your kindness, instead of just letting us drift away, you give us remedies.

You say unto us in this portion of your word that we should always listen closely when we get to hear and contemplate the person and work of the Lord Jesus Christ and the great gospel message of salvation. We should

always be wanting to avoid neglecting this great gospel and this person and this work of the Lord Jesus Christ. And we should be sure that we can have confidence because of the undeniable veracity of Christianity.

May these three remedies help all of us here this morning not to drift. And even now, as we go to the Lord's Supper and we get to see another remedy, a remedy, yes, not explicitly mentioned in our text, but a remedy indeed to remind us again of Christ, to remind us of our salvation and to tell us it is true, it is sure, it is certain. Don't drift. Don't go anywhere else. This is certain, this is sure, you have in Christ a great salvation. It's in Jesus' name we pray, amen.