

Warnings

Neglect

Hebrews 2:1-4

April 12, 2026 am

HDBC

The letter to the Hebrews isn't casual bedside reading. Dense and deep, complex and compelling, profound and practical—it requires mental focus and spiritual motivation to grasp its content and grapple with its application, But the return on this big investment has benefits that pay off in eternal dividends.

This is how Charles Swindoll opens his commentary on the book of Hebrews. And he is so right. This New Testament book is one of the longest of the N.T. letters, exceeded only by Romans and 1 Corinthians.

It is rich in Old Testament quotes, references and images.

It contains history, theology, wisdom and practical application.

It was written in order to encourage Jewish believers who were being persecuted by unbelieving Jews and Gentiles. The writer clearly was concerned that they were tempted to return to their old way of thinking, including their commitment to the old covenant. In order to persuade them to abandon that temptation the writer, who is unnamed, offered a simple, yet compelling theme:

Christ is preeminent and superior!

Christ is superior in his person, his role as high priest, his work of salvation.

This book includes great **statements of truth** like: *The word of God is living and active and sharper than any two-edged sword.*

It includes great **challenges** like: *Therefore, since we have so great a cloud of witnesses surrounding us, let us lay aside every encumbrance and the sin which so easily entangles us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us.*

It includes great **examples of faith** like those Hebrews 11.

It includes great **statements of encouragement**: *Let us therefore draw near with confidence to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and may find grace to help in time of need.*

It includes some **mysteries** such as: *Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for by this some have entertained angels without knowing it.*

It includes great **assurances** like: *Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today, yes and forever.*

But it also contains a **number of warnings**. These are like flashing red lights demanding that we pay attention. There are no less than five of these in this letter. The first one is found in Hebrews 2:1-4. So, please turn to that passage and follow along as I read it aloud.

READ THE TEXT.

Hell is undoubtedly full of people who were never actively opposed to Jesus Christ, but who simply neglected the gospel. Such people are in view in these four verses. They know the truth and may even believe the truth, but they are not saved. Not willing to commit their lives to Him. So they drift past the opportunity to be saved and enter condemnation.

This is the first of five major warnings interspersed throughout this book. It is as if the writer stops five times in the book and challenges his readers to act upon what he is writing.

Though the letter is primarily written to believers, there are places where the writer is speaking to unbelievers, some of whom may even be associating with the church. This is one of those sections. It is a warning to unbelievers. It cannot be to Christians. They can never be in danger of *neglecting salvation*. We may neglect growth, discipleship, and ministry. But our salvation is with us forever.

Not only is this warning written to unbelievers, but also to unbelievers who have heard the Gospel. This is not written to those who have never heard. Those who have never heard cannot neglect. This warning is directed to those Jews who had been confronted with the Gospel but who had not yet made a faith commitment to Christ.

The writer offers three compelling reasons to trust Jesus for salvation.

1. Greatness of Christ (1)

Notice the first three words. *For this reason*, is equivalent to “therefore.” It points to what has just preceded it. So what has preceded this verse?

The writer has just written of the greatness of Christ. Because of who Christ is, we can trust Him for our salvation. He is the divine Son of God who was the creator of all things. He was sent to reveal God to people and to show forth the glory of God. He is fully God and fully man.

He is the one who keeps all of creation held together. He is the one who lived, died and was resurrection for our purification. He now sits at the right hand of the Father, having finished His great work of salvation. He is superior to everything in creation, even to the angels.

The writer then appeals to those who are still on the fence about trusting Jesus, and to those who are waiting. He uses some imagery that they would understand. Couple of phrases are important to note.

Pay much closer attention to. One word in original language. It is emphatic. It means to give careful attention to something. To observe in an intentional way. **Student who has read a paragraph looking for an answer and missing it. The teacher will say “read it again, paying close attention.”**

Do not drift away - Pararheo – To let slip by. Drift away from. Used of something flowing or slipping past, as of a **ring slipping off a finger**. Used of someone **slipping down and getting stuck or caught in a difficult**

place. Was used of a boat whose anchor had come loose and was no longer keeping the boat steady, yet those on the boat were unaware that they were drifting. Also has the idea missing out on something because careful attention was not given to it. **Rebate that is offered, but never claimed because the deadline has passed.**

So, the writer is calling upon those unbelievers to give focus on the truth of salvation, lest their opportunity pass them by. One paraphrase goes like this . . .

Therefore, we must the more eagerly secure our lives to the things which we have been taught, lest the ship of life drift past the harbor of salvation and be lost forever.

English explorer William Perry who took a crew to the Arctic Ocean. Wanted to go farther north to continue their chartings. Calculated their location by the stars and started a very difficult march north. Walked for hours until they were exhausted. Took another reading from the stars and they were further south than we they started.

Discovered they were walking on an ice floe that was moving south faster than they were walking north. Thought by their efforts that they were getting closer, but were really moving further away.

The greatness of Christ is a good reason to trust Him for salvation. He is superior to anything and everything else. You can trust Him. But there is another reason to trust Jesus, now.

2. Certainty of Judgment (2-3a)

Angels are a part of the Bible story. We find them throughout the Old Testament and in strategic places in the New Testament. They are seen carrying out a number of roles. They worship God. They protect people. They fight against Satan and demons. They deliver messages. And they are associated with the Old Testament law.

Acts 7:38 *This is the one (Moses) who was in the congregation in the wilderness together with the angel who was speaking to him on Mount Sinai and who was with our fathers.*

At least one angel was there communicating to Moses for God. On Mt Sinai Moses received the law, and at least part of it was communicated through an angel. Remember, at the heart of the law was this truth:

If you broke the law, you were judged by the law. There was no way out. There were specific punishments prescribed for specific offenses.

Two words for sin in this passage.

Transgression - Means to step across a line. Trespass. Go where you don't belong, do what you are not to do.

Disobedience – Imperfect hearing. Not deafness, but closing your ears on purpose to keep from hearing. This is the sin of neglect. One is active sin. This is the passive sin.

If the Old Testament people who had limited revelation were held accountable for their disobedience, how much more will New Testament people who have the fuller revelation?

The text speaks of a **just penalty**. It is right that sinner be judged. The penalty is just. We may struggle to grasp the justification for divine justice, but we can trust the God who is the author of justice, yet at the same time filled with love, mercy, grace, and compassion.

You might not want to believe there is a judgment, but the Bible consistently confirms its reality. That judgment involves a place called Hell. The Bible presents it as a real place where real people will go.

The Bible also consistently presents faith in Christ as the **only escape** for that judgment. If one neglects or rejects that avenue of escape,

there is no other hope. **If I'm in a burning building I don't need multiple ways out, I just need one.**

If you **neglect** this opportunity to be saved, there is no hope. **Neglect** means **to be careless about, to make light of, to ignore**. The idea is of looking at the door of salvation never walking through. Why do people who hear the good news of salvation **neglect** it?

- 1) **Some procrastinate. Think they have all the time in the world.**
- 2) **Some are unwilling to give up their sins or lifestyles.**
- 3) **Some are too proud.**
- 4) **Some just shrug it off as unimportant. No big deal.**

3. Confirmation of God (3b-4)

The third good reason for trusting Christ is the confirmation of God. Confirmation came first through Jesus, himself, then the apostles, and ultimately by God.

When Jesus preached the gospel He did things that made His message believable. He challenged the people who were struggling with his words to **look at his works**. He claimed to be God, then proved he was God through his miracles.

The apostles also gave similar confirming signs. They performed miracles through the power of God, which confirmed their message.

The third confirmation came through the giving of spiritual gifts. Some of those spiritual gifts were specifically designed to offer confirmation of the message of salvation.

At its heart this is a warning about neglecting the opportunity to be saved. Hear the key question again. **How shall we escape if we neglect so great a salvation.** The implied answer? **We will not and cannot escape.**

Takeaways: What is this text asking me to do now?

Pay attention – Don't let the chance to be saved drift away.

Learn from the past – Past generations faced judgement for their sins.

Look to the future – A future judgment is assured for present generations.

Act now – Don't delay.

There is a time when it is too late. Once the rains started falling in Noah's day the door to the ark had long been closed and the invitations revoked.

A 2024 *New York Times* article "The Most Important Conversation to Have Before You Die." The article opens by stating:

Instead of talking about politics around the Thanksgiving table this year, consider a less fraught topic: death. It's something few of us want to think about, but death is a fact of life that we will all encounter, often first as a caregiver and then, inevitably, when we reach our own."

According to the article, what is the most important conversation to have before you die? It's not about your eternal destiny. It's not about your relationship with God or how to face final judgment. Instead, "discussing what medical care you want to receive at the end of your life is one of the most loving things you can do for your family." The article notes, "While death can be a scary subject to broach, you may be surprised by how you feel after."

Discussing end of life medical care may be an important topic. But I want to beg to differ greatly with the writer. In fact the writer could not be more wrong. It may be important to discuss medical decisions and final arrangements, but consideration of your eternal destiny is infinitely more important.

How shall we escape if we neglect so great a salvation?