

HEBREWS 2:1-4
PAY ATTENTION

The letter/sermon of Hebrews is about holding on to faith in the midst of trials, temptations, doubt and opposition.

The call of Hebrews is to a persevering faith by “remembering Jesus” who is superior to everything else.

Sometimes we overlook or take for granted things in our lives that are valuable – it may be people or heirlooms, or things with great sentimental value. We may not always appreciate them the way we should.

Sometimes we don't even recognize the value of something that is in our lives everyday. That is where the ANTIQUES ROADSHOW comes in.

One of the most famous episodes featured a Navajo blanket-
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WJw2qCnhea0>

Appraiser: “Did you notice how I stopped breathing when you brought this in? This has been hanging off a chair in your house? It's a Navajo chief blanket- a national treasure 350K at auction.”

How do you think the client handled that blanket on the way out compared to when he came in?

There is a sad parallel to the Christian life experience.

You can grow up around Christian terms, Christian people, Christian activities, and Christian experiences to the point where we “get used to it” and neglect the AMAZING GRACE and love that God has for sinners.

Like old Navajo blankets, we have Bibles, devotionals, and Christian books sitting around gathering dust, and we've forgotten that they represent an invaluable treasure.

There are people around the world who would LOVE TO HAVE THE BIBLICAL RESOURCES WE HAVE, but they can't get them.

BIBLEINONEYEAR February 10 Life-Changing Words

My father wanted to go to Russia before he died. We went there on holiday as a family. At that time Bibles were strictly illegal there. I took with me some Russian Bibles. While I was there I went to churches and looked for people who seemed to be genuine Christians. (Church meetings were often infiltrated by the KGB.)

On one occasion, I followed a man down the street after a service. I went up to him and tapped him on the shoulder. There was nobody about. I took out one of my Bibles and handed it to him. For a moment, he had an expression of utmost disbelief. Then he took from his pocket a New Testament, which was probably 100 years old. The pages were so threadbare they were virtually transparent. When he realized that he had received a whole Bible, he was elated. He didn't speak any English and I didn't speak any Russian. But we hugged each other, and he started to run up and down the street jumping for joy. DO WE VALUE God'S WORD LIKE THIS IN OUR HEARTS?

The man received the Word of God which is 'more precious than gold, than much pure gold; they are sweeter than honey, than honey from the comb' (Psalm 19:10).

HEBREWS GIVES A SERIES OF ENCOURAGEMENTS AND EXHORTATIONS... each week the text will connect with at least one of these, maybe more.

Let us draw near to God.

Let us Hold fast to our HOPE

Let us spur one another on to love and Good deeds.

Let us not forsake meeting together with others.

Let us encourage one another

The text for today is an encouragement to “hold fast to our hope” by paying attention to what we have heard. The author is warning them about a danger of which they may not be aware.

1 For this reason we must pay much closer attention to what we have heard, so that we do not drift away *from it*. 2 For if the word spoken through angels proved unalterable, and every transgression and disobedience received a just penalty, 3 how will we escape if we neglect so great a salvation? After it was at the first spoken through the Lord, it was confirmed to us by those who heard, 4 God also testifying with them, both by signs and wonders and by various miracles and by gifts of the Holy Spirit according to His own will.

The MESSAGE

1-4 It's crucial that we keep a firm grip on what we've heard so that we don't drift off. If the old message delivered by the angels was valid and nobody got away with anything, do you think we can risk neglecting this latest message, this magnificent salvation? First of all, it was delivered in person by the Master, then accurately passed on to us by those who heard it from him. All the while God was validating it with gifts through the Holy Spirit, all sorts of signs and miracles, as he saw fit.

Honestly, when I read this WARNING, I'm reminded of the opening of Trouble in River City from the Music Man

*Friend, either you're closing your eyes
To a situation you do not wish to acknowledge
Or you are not aware of the caliber of disaster indicated
By the presence of a pool table in your community
Well, ya got trouble, my friend, right here
I say, trouble right here in River City*

The author of Hebrews is concerned about something far worse than the presence of a pool table. But He is warning them that neglect of what they've heard can lead to spiritual peril.

I like the stilted word for word translation of the Greek interlinear bible –

“Therefore, it behooves more abundantly to give heed us to the things heard lest we drift away.”

What does it behoove us to give heed to??

The message of the GOOD NEWS...

That God sends his son to earth and enters into our mess. He comes as a priest and as the sacrifice so that we can know that our sins are forgiven forever.

We have not just the absence of the wrath of God, but God's favor and approval, presence and protection.

Do not neglect this, not even for another bible reality.

An Exhortation to Be Attentive (2:1)

WHAT GETS YOUR ATTENTION?

"We must pay more careful attention, therefore to what we have heard, so that we do not drift away." (2:1)

"Pay ... attention" (NIV, NRSV), "give ... heed" (KJV) is *prosechō*, "to turn the mind to, attend to, be attentive" ... "to apply oneself to something, turn to, occupy oneself with a thing."

The author knows that we are prone to drifting. The author is not talking about open hostility to God or Jesus. He is talking about "drifting" and neglecting Jesus. Those lead to grave spiritual peril.

He is speaking to those who are in the community of faith. The danger to them is NOT atheism or hostility to God. IT IS DRIFTING CAUSED BY NEGLECT.

EX: People who want plants in their home don't come right out and kill them. They die because of neglect or ignorance. SO TOO in our spiritual lives. We don't set out to drift, but if we're not careful we end up being carried along.

We are prone to neglect and drifting – Eph 4:11-14

And he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds and teachers, 12 to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, 13 until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ, 14 so that we may no longer be children, tossed to and fro by the waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by human cunning, by craftiness in deceitful schemes.

We are fully responsible for what we have heard. We cannot just drop it and move to something else as if the gospel's commands were merely human opinions.

If we do there is the danger that we will "drift away" (NIV, NRSV) or "let slip" (KJV). The verb is *pararreō*, "to flow past, glide by," from *para*, "by, beyond" + *rheō*, "flow" ... "be washed away, drift away."¹⁸

You have probably observed this in the life of any church. Folks have heard the gospel, but they don't take heed to it – and so drift without moorings. They are like the seed in Jesus' Parable of the Sower (Matthew 13:3-9, 18-23) that was sown on the hard ground of the path, the shallow ground of rocky soil, or the thorny soil where it was choked out. Just hearing the word, without being doers of it (James 1:22) is a dangerous, deceptive position to be in.

Earlier in the week, as part of the reading from the Bible in One Year we had the passage from PROVERBS 4:20-23 – GUARD YOUR HEART

My son, be attentive to my words; incline your ear to my sayings.

21 Let them not escape from your sight; keep them within your heart.

22 For they are life to those who find them, and healing to all their flesh.

23 Keep your heart with all vigilance, for from it flow the springs of life.

It fits so well with Hebrews 2:1-4

JOHN FLAVEL was an author/pastor who really gave thought to the idea of "keeping the heart" or as Hebrews would put it, "give more abundant heed to what you have heard so that you don't drift from it." Keying off of Flavel, I could do a whole series on "Keeping the Heart".

THE HEART IS THE CENTRAL FOCUS OF WHERE WE NEED TO GIVE MORE ABUNDANT HEED.

The heart of man is his worst part before he is born anew, (Gen 6:5– God saw that every intent of the thoughts of the heart was only evil continually) and the heart is the best afterwards: it is the seat of principles, and fountain of actions. The eye of God is, and the eye of a Christian ought to be,

principally fixed upon it. **The greatest difficulty in conversion, is, to win the heart to God; and the greatest difficulty after conversion, is, to keep the heart with God. Flavel**

Keeping the heart or paying attention lest we drift involves giving ear to what we've heard and holding fast to it. There are several verses in Hebrews that refer to "holding fast or firm until the end" - 3:5, 14, 4:11,14

This happens as we maintain an open relationship of repentant faith in communion with God. We must be honest about our condition and set our eyes and hearts on Christ.

2:1-4 If Jesus is greater than everything then we must not drift away.

The keeping, and right managing of the heart in every condition, is the great business of a Christian's life. Flavel Prov 4:23; Mark 7

6 And He said to them, "Rightly did Isaiah prophesy of you hypocrites, as it is written:

'THIS PEOPLE HONORS ME WITH THEIR LIPS, BUT THEIR HEART IS FAR AWAY FROM ME.

20 And He was saying, "That which proceeds out of the man, that is what defiles the man. 21 For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed the evil thoughts, fornications, thefts, murders, adulteries, 22 deeds of coveting *and* wickedness, as well as deceit, sensuality, envy, slander, pride *and* foolishness. 23 All these evil things proceed from within and defile the man."

Octavius Winslow - the graces are not self renewing...

The soul / our hearts are inclined toward Atrophy and Entropy

The first is what happens when you have your arm in a cast for 2 months. The second is what happens when you leave the 3-5 yr old SS class alone for 5 seconds : Entropy - "lack of order or predictability; gradual decline into disorder."

Octavius Winslow: Personal Declension and Revival of Religion in the Soul:

<<There is no essential element in divine grace that can secure it from the deepest declension. We tend to deify the graces of the Spirit thinking of the faith and love in us as being omnipotent. Though they are divine in origin they have no self-sustaining power. They need constant communications of life and nourishment from Jesus. The very moment of their being left to their inherent strength is the very moment of their certain declension and decay.>>

It were an easy thing to be a Christian, if religion stood only in a few outward works and duties, But to take the soul to task, and to deal roundly with our own hearts, and to let conscience have its full work, and to bring the soul into spiritual subjection unto God, This is not so easy a matter,.
—Richard Sibbes

In reading Hebrews and skimming the writings of Flavel, Winslow, and Sibbes, I've seen what a shallow person I am. I read and pray and seek to engage with God, but those guys are like the experts at delving into the state of their souls. Maybe they're all Enneagram 4's and they could be considered zealots or extremists, but I bet we'd all do well to "pay more abundant attention" to the condition of our hearts.

PASTORAL APPLICATION:

There is a great danger in letting our practice shape our belief rather than our belief shaping our practice. When you compromise your behavior in an area your views about that issue will change. Changes in Moral practices influence theology and beliefs:

EX: Sex and Money are two typical areas where this happens.

WHERE DO YOU STRUGGLE??

Flavel - Twelve Seasons Which Especially Call for Diligence in Keeping the Heart

Prosperity – “I’LL volunteer for this one”

Adversity

In the time of Zion’s Troubles – when the church is oppressed.

In times of danger (and public distraction)

Keep the heart from Repining- time of straits and outward pinching wants (Jesus, I my cross have taken...) we should complain TO God, NOT OF God – GO TO THE THRONE OF GRACE Heb 4:16

From Wandering in Duty

Keep The Heart from Revengeful Motions

Keep the Heart under great Provocations (and crosses in our lives)

Keep the Heart from Yielding to Sin the careless heart is an easy prey to Satan in the hour of temptation, his main batteries are raised against that fort-royal, the heart; if he wins that, he wins all; for it commands the whole man: and, alas! how easy a conquest is a neglected heart!

(Piper- The 5 second rule –Barney Fife NIP IT IN THE BUD)

Keep the heart from Desperate Conclusions – SPIRITUAL darkness and doubting

Keep the Heart from Relapsing Under Sufferings (for religion)

Encourage Your Heart Against Death.

TODAY, If you’ve neglected Jesus and have drifted, that does not have to define you.

Be honest with God, heed the warning, and talk with Him about what is getting your attention.

incline my heart to Your testimonies and not to gain. (Psalm 119:36)

Pray that the “eyes of your heart would be enlightened” – Eph 1:18ff

<https://www.desiringgod.org/articles/9-ways-to-pray-for-your-soul>

We have a high priest who is not ashamed to be your brother and He can sympathize with us. As we will see, maybe next week, ..

Hebrews 2

11 For both He who sanctifies and those who are sanctified are all from one *Father*; for which reason He is not ashamed to call them brethren,

17 Therefore, He had to be made like His brethren in all things, so that He might become a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people. 18 For since He Himself was tempted in that which He has suffered, He is able to come to the aid of those who are tempted.

You are not alone, nor are you powerless. There is one who stands with you and for you.

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