

The Book of Hebrews

Lesson 2: Such a Great Salvation; Jesus Our Brother -- Hebrews 2:1-18

Have you ever noticed how slowly a boat drifts? No one decides to drift. There is no dramatic moment, no loud announcement, no sudden turn of the wheel. The mooring line is just a little loose, the current is patient, and one afternoon you look up from your book and the dock that was right beside you is now a small shape far across the water. You did not row away. You simply failed to hold on. That is the picture the writer of Hebrews paints in the opening verses of chapter two, and it is one of the most important warnings in the whole letter.

We must pay much closer attention to what we have heard, he says, lest we drift away from it. Notice that he does not warn first about open rebellion or dramatic apostasy. He warns about neglect. How shall we escape if we neglect such a great salvation? Drifting does not require a decision. It only requires that we stop paying attention, stop holding fast, stop tending the line that keeps us tied to Christ. The danger is not that you will run from God in a single afternoon. The danger is that you will slowly, quietly, almost pleasantly, lose your grip.

But the writer does not leave us trembling on the open sea. He turns our eyes to Jesus, and the picture changes completely. The one who saves us is not ashamed to call us brothers. He took on flesh and blood. He shared in our weakness. He was made like us in every way, tempted as we are, so that He could become a merciful and faithful high priest. The God who could have stayed far above the storm climbed into the boat with us. He tasted death for everyone, and by His death He broke the power of the one who held us in fear.

So this chapter holds two truths together, and we need both. On the one hand, do not drift; such a great salvation is too precious to neglect. On the other hand, take heart; the One who calls you is your brother, who suffered and was tempted and is able to help you when you are tempted. The warning and the comfort belong together. Pay attention, hold fast, and do it leaning on the Brother who has already walked the whole hard road ahead of you and is reaching back to pull you through.

Group Discussion: The writer warns that we can drift away from salvation simply by neglecting it, without any dramatic decision to leave. Why is slow drifting often more dangerous than open rebellion, and what does drifting tend to look like in a believer's life today?

Personal Reflection: Where in your own walk with Christ have you noticed the quiet pull of drifting lately, the loosening of a habit of prayer, worship, or attention that once held you close to Him?

Read Hebrews 2:1-18

Study Questions

1. In verses 1 through 4 the writer argues that if the message delivered through angels was binding, then neglecting the salvation announced by the Lord Himself is far more serious.

What does this passage teach about the seriousness of the gospel and the danger of neglecting it?

2. The writer says we must pay much closer attention to what we have heard, lest we drift away. What is one specific practice or habit that helps you pay attention to Christ, and what tends to loosen your grip when you let it slip?
3. Verses 6 through 8 quote Psalm 8 about humanity being crowned with glory and honor, yet the writer admits that at present we do not see everything in subjection to us. How does verse 9, which says we see Jesus crowned with glory, answer the gap between God's purpose for humanity and what we actually see in the world?
4. The writer says that at present we do not yet see everything in subjection, but we do see Jesus. When the brokenness of the world or of your own life is more visible than God's victory, what does it do for you to fix your eyes on Jesus instead?
5. Verse 9 says that Jesus tasted death for everyone, and verse 10 calls Him the founder of our salvation, made perfect through suffering. What do these verses teach about why the Son had to suffer and die, and for whom He did it?
6. Jesus is not ashamed to call you His brother or sister (verse 11). How does it change the way you think about yourself to know that the Son of God openly claims you as family?
7. In verses 14 and 15 the writer says that Jesus shared in flesh and blood so that through death He might destroy the one who has the power of death, and free those who were held in slavery by the fear of death. What does this teach about what Jesus accomplished against the devil and the fear of death?
8. Many people organize their lives, quietly or openly, around the fear of death and loss. In what area of your life is fear still acting like a master, and how does the victory of Jesus speak to it?
9. Verses 17 and 18 say that Jesus had to be made like His brothers in every respect, so that He might become a merciful and faithful high priest, making propitiation for the sins of the people, and that because He suffered when tempted, He is able to help those who are being tempted. Why was it necessary for the Son to fully share our humanity, and how does His full humanity, joined to His deity, make Him the only sufficient high priest and Savior?
10. Look back across the whole chapter. The writer moves from a sober warning about drifting to the tender truth that Jesus is your brother and helper. Name one specific way this chapter is calling you to hold fast to Christ this week, and how His nearness as your brother gives you the strength to do it.

Now or Later

Reflect on these passages: Psalm 8:4–6, the original promise of humanity crowned with glory and honor; Philippians 2:5–8, the Son taking the form of a servant and becoming obedient to death; 2 Timothy 1:10, Christ abolishing death and bringing life and immortality to light; 1 Corinthians 15:54–57, death swallowed up in victory through our Lord Jesus; Romans 8:15–17, the Spirit of adoption by which we are made fellow heirs with Christ.