

Stop Neglecting Your Salvation

Hebrews 2:2-4

Pastor Jeremy Cagle, April 24, 2022

If you would please open your Bibles to the book of Hebrews. And while you're turning there, if you've been with us for a while, you'll know that we're in the middle of a series on this book called the No Greater Saviour series. Because that's what the book of Hebrews is about. It tells us that there's no greater Saviour than Jesus, because He did something that the law and the commandments and the sacrifices could never do. And that is to pay for your sins. He took care of them once and for all through His death on the cross, because whereas the Jews had to offer sacrifices over and over again in order to do that. And whereas Israel had to kill their goats and sheep and bulls hundreds of times, 1000s of times, millions of times, you only have to go to the cross once, and it takes care of everything. Jesus only had to be sacrificed on one moment at Calvary, and it wiped all your sins away because His death is sufficient. And if you want to see this for yourself, you can look in Hebrews chapter two. The author talks about this when he says,

For this reason, we must pay much closer attention to what we've heard, so that we do not drift away from it. For if the word spoken through angels proved unalterable, and every transgression and disobedience received a just penalty, 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, 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.

For He did not subject to angels the world to come, concerning which we are speaking. But one has testified somewhere saying, "What is man that You remember him? Or the son of man, that you are concerned about him? You have made him for a little while lower than the angels; you have crowned him with glory and honor, and have appointed him over the works of Your hands; You have put all things in subjection under his feet." For in subjecting all things to him, He left nothing that is not subject to him. But now we do not yet see all things subjected to him. But we do see Him who has made for a little while longer than the angels, namely, Jesus, because of the suffering of death crowned with glory and honor so that by the grace of God He might taste death for everyone.

For it was fitting, for whom for Him, for whom are all things, and through whom are all things, in bringing many sons to glory, to perfect the author of their salvation through sufferings. 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, saying, "I will proclaim Your name to My brethren, In the midst of the congregation, I will sing your praise." And again, "I will put my trust in Him."

We'll end the reading there. As you can tell, just by looking through this, a key theme in this passage is that of salvation, because it's mentioned several times in here. The author tells you that Jesus was made

a little lower than the angels, and He was crowned with glory and splendor, and the Lord perfected him through his sufferings in order to do one thing, and one thing only, and that is to save us. He did it in order to pay for your sins. But before he gets into all that, the author says this in the first verse, he says, "For this reason," or "therefore," which means therefore, since Jesus has done all this stuff in order to save you, this is what you need to do now. You need to pay much closer attention to it. Or in the words of verse three, you need to be sure not to neglect it. God has done all this; He's taken care of all of it, but it's all for nothing if you overlook it. Because how will you escape so great a salvation? The answer is that you won't.

And just to say a few words about this. I did some research on it this week and I found some interesting statistics on the government Canada website. They said in 2019, the last time a poll was taken, about 68% of Canadians claimed to be religious, or three fourths of the country. That's kind of shocking. And you wouldn't see that by driving around. And I thought that was good news until it went on to say only about 23% of them ever did anything with their religion. And that's the problem. They didn't participate at all, they prayed once a month, went to church once a month, and only read their Bibles at Christmas and Easter. And that was all, because it was just words to them. And they claim to be Christian, but they're not Christian. They said they believed in God, but you couldn't tell it by looking at their lives, causing one newspaper to say this, "If these numbers don't change in the near future, then Canada will become a secular nation, and leave its spiritual roots behind." And I read that and I thought, "Where have you been living for the last 5-10 years? That's already happened." The country has turned its back on God. And we've become so secular here that the only religious laws that have been passed in recent years are against Christians, not for them. And the only spiritual litigation that's coming out in the courts are those that oppose the work of the church, they don't support it in any way. Because the church is quickly becoming an enemy here. We're becoming the threat.

As a result, what you're seeing is people abandoning it by the truckload; there's a mass exodus from the faith and this type of thing is so common today, I don't have to give too many examples of it. Because when you ask people in Chilliwack about their church involvement, they tell you where they go to church, they tell you where they used to go to church. And they don't tell you what they believe about Christ, they tell you what they used to believe as a kid because they used to be Baptist or Methodist, Presbyterian. And they used to go to the Reformed Church or Mennonite church or Alliance Church up the road, but they don't do it anymore. They set all that aside. Or when you witness to them and share the gospel and preach Christ to them, they tell you the same thing, because they say they used to buy into that. They used to trust in Christ to save them. But that didn't work. It had no impact on their lives. So now they've abandoned it for something else. How many of you have talked to someone like that? Anybody? Every hand in this room could go up. It happens all the time to such a degree that it's caused theologians to scratch their heads and try to come up with some terms to explain it. And we've talked about these in previous weeks. So I don't want to repeat any of that now. But we've talked about the terms of apostasy and backsliding and that type of thing. But there's another term we haven't gotten to yet. And that is antinomian. Which refers to someone who says they can live however they want to now

that they're saved and still be saved. They can do whatever they want to now they're a Christian, and still be a Christian and go to heaven and be forgiven, because they're anti or against the law. Because they think it has no bearing on their life anymore. That word has an interesting history because it was originally created by Martin Luther in a debate against a man named Johannes Agricola, in the 16th century, because Agricola said, the 10 Commandments in the Old Testament don't apply to me anymore. He said that we don't have to keep them or others laws like the sermon on the mount and the teachings of Jesus and the letters of Paul, that's all a thing of the past. That's all from the previous dispensation, but we've outgrown it now. To which Lutheran in a very ambiguous way said, "No, you're wrong." Because those things show us what we're supposed to do now that we are saved. They don't save us. But they tell us what God expects of us now that he's drawn us out of the world, because Jesus didn't die to leave you in your sin, He died to bring you out of it. And this is what the change looks like. Now you have to repent. No repentance, no salvation. No change, no heaven. It's just the way it works.

People would tell me growing up that if nothing changed in your life, nothing happened. And it's the same idea here. In fact, when you look at the Bible, you find that Luther was not the only person who dealt with this. Other people did too, like Jesus. And I might have to say a few things about this, because it puts this in perspective. But there were several times when the issue of antinomianism came up in our Lord's ministry, because people wanted to go to heaven without repenting and he wouldn't let them and they wanted to follow Him and be saved and be right with God while at the same time holding on to their sin. And Jesus said, "No, you can't have it that way."

One of these examples is the Rich Young Ruler. Do you remember that guy? He was a perfect example of this because he wanted to be saved and hold on to his money. He wanted to go to heaven while grasping his filthy lucre. And if you want to keep your fingers in the book of Hebrews, just turn to Matthew 19, you can find this guy's story there. And it's a really interesting one. That's why I want to share it with you. Because here Jesus talks to a man who had a lot of things going for him. I mean, this guy was at the pinnacle of society in the ancient world because he was young and rich and religious. He was healthy and wealthy and wise. But the problem is that he had never repented of it. There were several sins that he was holding on to. And so here's how the conversation goes. If you look in Matthew 19, verse 16. It says,

And someone came to Him and said, "Teacher, what good thing shall I do that I may obtain eternal life?" And Jesus said to him, "Why are you asking me about what is good? There's only One who is good; but if you wish to enter into life, keep the commandments." Then [the rich young man] said to him, "Which one's?"

That's kind of a funny question, like he is saying he doesn't like the first five so he could I just keep the second five.

...And Jesus said to him, "If you wish to be complete, go and sell your possessions, and give to the poor and you will have treasure in heaven."

Now, while Matthew doesn't go into all the details of the conversation here, the other gospels tell us that this young man came to Jesus on his knees, he was sincere. He really wanted to have eternal life. And so he asked Jesus a question that any preacher would like to hear at the time, and that is, what shall I do to go to heaven? And that sounds weird to us but to a Jew, that was a very logical thing, because this is how you got into heaven, you did things. You earned it with your works. And so that's what the guy asked Him. And Jesus said to him in verse 17 that if you want to go to heaven that way, keep all the commandments don't miss a single one. The man says, "I did that" basically in verse 20. So Jesus says, well, then here's one more issue, and this is where antinomianism comes into play, sell your possessions. And if you look in verse 22, it says, "But when the young man heard this statement, he went away grieving; for he was one who owned much property. That's a sad story, because to my knowledge is the only time someone came to Jesus on his knees and went away sad. It's the only time someone approached him in such a sincere way and walked away last, but it happened because this young man had an idol in his life. And that was his money. He had a god that he was bowing down to, and that was his wealth. So when Jesus threatened to take his god away, the man couldn't handle it. And when he threatened to remove this one idol in his life, the man said no, and which was a reminder to all of us not to do that.

You don't ever want to make a mistake like this, because this is what sin does. It always comes between you and salvation. Idolatry always drives a wedge between you and the cross. So you have to be careful to avoid it at all costs. This conversation was so shocking that you can read later on the disciples started asking Jesus about it, because they can't understand it. How can a rich guy not get into heaven? And how can a man who did all the commandments be lost? And Jesus said it is because he loved his sin too much.

This brings us to another example of a time when this issue came up in the ministry of our Lord. And I'll just give you one more instance of this and that's with the woman at the well, if you want to turn over to John, chapter four, you can find this one here. And if you're familiar with it, you'll know it's quite a story too, because this lady couldn't be any more different from the man we just talked about. And she couldn't be any less alike because she was old while he was young. And she was poor while he was rich, and she was sinful while he was religious or outwardly religious anyway. But nevertheless, she did one thing right and it saved her. And that is that she did repent.

In John four, verse seven, here's the woman at the wells story. It says,

There came a woman of Samaria to draw water. And Jesus said to her, "Give me a drink." For His disciples had gone away into the city to buy food. Therefore, the Samaritan woman said to him, "How is it that you being a Jew asked me for a drink since I am a Samaritan woman? (For

Jews have no dealings with Samaritans.) Jesus answered and said to her, “If you knew the gift of God, and who it is who says to you, ‘Give me a drink,’ you would have asked Him, and He would have given you living water.”

And then down in verse 15,

The woman said to Him, “Sir, give me this water, so I will not be thirsty nor come all the way here to draw.” And He said to her, [and this is the issue between her and the living water. This is the issue between her and God], “Go, call your husband and come here.” The woman answered and said, “I have no husband.” Jesus said to her, [by the way, that's the shortest statement she ever makes in the whole passage. Because she's embarrassed.] And Jesus said to her, “you have correctly said, ‘I have no husband’; for you have had five husbands, and the one whom you're now living with is not your husband; this you've said truly.”

Now, to give you some background on this, it might help to point out that Jesus had the previous conversation with the rich young ruler in Galilee where the Jews were. But in this conversation, He has this in another part of the country where people from a different race lived, and that was the Samaritans, which was a problem because, as verse nine says, the Jews had no dealings with the Samaritans. And that was really an understatement. Because they thought they were a dirty people, they were a mixed race, part Jew and part Gentile. So the Jews at this time wouldn't talk to the Samaritans, walk with the Samaritans, or buy anything from their stores. They wouldn't eat with them, drink with them, or even take the time to talk to them, all except Jesus. Because Jesus sits down by the well in the middle of the day, and He strikes up a conversation with this woman out of the blue. And in the middle of it, He tells her that He would give her living water. He would save her if she wanted it. But in order to do this, she would have to give something up as well. And that was her lust. Because verse 18 says she'd had five husbands, and the man she's living with is not her husband. In other words, she has slept with man after man, she'd been with partner after partner after partner to the point of addiction. The sin was taking over her life. And Jesus said, “If you want to be saved, you're going to have to do something, you are going to have to give it up.” And if you notice, you can read the rest of this passage later on. That's exactly what she does. Because the rich young ruler heard that and he walked away, the Samaritan woman heard that and she stayed, and that's what saved her. Because you can tell by reading this that she was sick of her life of sin. She was completely tired of it. So she repented. And the reason John puts it in his gospel here is to show you that if she can do it, you can do it. And if she can act that way, then certainly you can do the same, because you're not any worse than this lady. No matter what you're going through, it's not as bad as this because this woman was promiscuous. But the Lord changed her in an instant.

The point is that Jesus was not an antinomian. He did not have a perspective in life that said you can sin all you want to and still be saved. And if you want to look back into the book of Hebrews, this is what the author is talking about. This is what he's referring to when he says in Hebrews chapter two, verse

one, "For this reason, we must pay much closer attention to what we've heard, so that we do not drift away." And then in verse three, "For how will we escape if we neglect so great salvation?" I'll say a few words about this in a moment, but a key word in this passage is the word *neglect*. It's the Greek word, *ameleo*, which means to neglect something or overlook it. But the way it's worded here, it refers to the act of doing it carelessly, with no thought at all for your action. Because you're looking this way, when you should be looking that way. And you're facing over here, when you should be facing over there. But you don't do it intentionally. You do it by accident, not acting that way on purpose, like you're trying to turn away from God, you're just careless, like a child that doesn't do his chores because he got caught up with his toys. Because if you notice the sin that the author is condemning here is not murder, it's negligence. And the problem he's addressing is not lust or adultery or greed, like those Bible characters we just talked about. It's laziness. And that's all. He brings it up here to say that God hates it when you act that way. He can't stand it. When you look at the cross and you look at Calvary and you look at Golgotha and you look at all your Saviour did, and you say, "I'm not interested because I just want to keep my sin."

The reason this is so important here is because it's the third time the author brings it up in this short passage, so he must have thought it was important. If you look in verse one, he tells you to pay attention to your salvation, which means to keep your eyes fixed on it and stay focused. And then in the same verse, he tells you not to drift away; don't let your mind wander and get distracted by your toys. And then after saying that, he takes it to another level here in verse 3d tells you not to neglect it. Why? Because you won't be able to escape hell if you do that. You won't be able to stay away from the wrath of God. Because God doesn't like it when people go to church for a while and say, I don't want it anymore. I don't need it. And he gets upset when people call themselves Christians for a season, and they give it up for something else like their idols. I mentioned that because I think that's where most people are at in Canada right now. They are going to hell because they know how to be saved, but they are neglecting the salvation, not because they don't know what the gospel is, but because they know it, and they're too lazy to do anything about it. It's also why so many churches are struggling in our nation, and so weak and powerless and ineffective. And that's because so many people come to church, and they never change. They show up here week in and week out, and they go on living like they always did. And the author of Hebrews gives you a warning here that you shouldn't do that. You need to repent or else it's all for nothing.

This morning we are going to talk about four ways to stop neglecting our salvation. So if you're taking notes, that's our outline for today. In Hebrews two verses two through four, we're going to look at four ways to stop neglecting our salvation. And we're going to get into a lot of wonderful things this morning. The author does talk about a lot of aspects of salvation to help you with this problem, but it all goes back to this one thing. And that is the issue of forgetting what Christ has done for you. So let's look at four ways not to do that. The first one is to realize how wonderful your salvation is. The first way to stop neglecting your salvation is to realize how truly wonderful it is. Which means that in order to avoid the mistake the author's describing here, you need to understand that God has given you something that

the Jews and the people in the Old Testament never dreamed up. They never had anything like what you have. And if you read in verse one, it talks about this when it says, “For this reason, we must pay much closer attention to what we've heard, so that we do not drift away from it. For if the word spoken through angels proved unalterable, and every transgression and disobedience received a just penalty, how will we escape if we neglect so great salvation?” Now, as you read that, it's a little bit hard to follow because of the way it's worded, but the argument is simple enough, because the author has given you reasons why you need to pay attention to Jesus, and not drift away.

He begins verse two with the word “for”. “For the word spoken through angels proved unalterable.” The word spoken through angels here is another way of referring to the law. Because that's where the Jews thought the law came from. They believed it was given to us by angels, to show the the amazing aspect of it, because the idea is that they brought it down to Moses when he was on top of Mount Sinai. The Lord wrote out the 10 commandments on tablets of stone and then he put it into their hands. And we don't have a lot of information here as to what that looks like because the Old Testament says that when Moses went up on Mount Sinai to receive the law, he disappeared from view. And that's about all it said. That's probably because Moses didn't know how to describe what happened. It was too much for him. But there are several passages that give us more information about that event. So for example, if you want to write some of these down, Deuteronomy 33, verse two, says that toward the end of his life when he was about to die, Moses did reflect on that event. And he said, “The Lord came from Sinai, and dawned on them from Sier; He shone forth from Mount Paran, and he came from the midst of ten thousand holy ones.” And that's an interesting verse because Moses said there were 10,000 holy ones, or 10,000 angels when the law was presented.

The significance to that is that Moses doesn't say there were one or two angels, or just a few here or there, but there were more than he could count to highlight the importance of what was happening because for the first time, God was putting His word into the hands of man, He was giving His Scriptures to humankind, and to celebrate that, He did it with multitudes and multitudes of angels, which must have been quite a sight.

In Acts seven verse 52, Stephen, the first Christian martyr is saying, “Which one of the prophets did your fathers not persecute you who received the law as ordained by angels and did not keep it because you kill the righteous one, Jesus the Messiah.” And that passage gives you Stephens last words. That's the last thing he said before he was killed. And in it he rebukes the Jews for not keeping the law, as ordained by angels. And his point is that the law is a precious thing. It's truly wonderful, but you guys didn't see it that way. You turn the law upside down and used it to kill Jesus. And the problem with that is that the law is not a human invention, it's created by God. It was not a man-made thing. It came from the mind of heaven, with the assistance of angels. And the author of the book of Hebrews mentioned that here to say, even so the gospel is even greater than that. Even though the law was so wonderful, what you have is even better, because it wasn't just given by angels, it was given by Jesus Himself, which is why you need to stop neglecting it. That's why you need to stop being so lazy with how you approach it.

The author says, “For if the word spoken through angels proved unalterable,” and that means if the word proved trustworthy, or reliable in the ESV, how much more reliable is the word you have? How greater is the gospel of the New Testament? So you need to wake up and pay attention to that instead of treating it the way Israel did. You know, again, the book of Hebrews is written to the Hebrew people, it's a message given to the Jews.

I don't have to tell you that the Jews did not do a very good job of listening to God did they? They constantly ignored Him, which is why the Lord made them wander for 40 years in the wilderness, because He told them to invade the promised land and they wouldn't do it. He told them to conquer it, and they refused. So He didn't let them enter again until an entire generation of them died off. They've done studies on that and the amount of people dying per day was like 100 something every day for 40 years. Everywhere they left in the wilderness, they left behind a graveyard, because it was death after death after death, to punish them, just for ignoring His word. That's all they did. It's also why He let their enemies overtake them in the book of Judges, because they did the same thing there. He told them to get rid of their idols, and they didn't. He told them to smash their Ashura poles and their statues to Baal and burn their high places, and they refuses, so He sent the Canaanites in to teach them a lesson. He did the same thing with the Assyrians in the Book of Kings. He did the same thing with the Babylonians in the Book of Chronicles. And he did the same thing with the Romans after the New Testament came to a close, because they came to Jerusalem and tore the temple down brick by brick.

But the reason the author brings all that up here is to say that if God did all of that to them, just what do you think He's going to do to you if you ignore the message of salvation? If He punish them that severely for breaking the law, just how much more do you think He will punish you for breaking the good news? So be careful not to do that. This should be convicting for us, because we've all been guilty of doing this from time to time. We're all prone to come to church and doze off and fall asleep and not take it too seriously because we're distracted by other things to the point that we just don't hear things during the service. Someone may ask us afterwards, “What did you think of the sermon?” And we say, “What sermon? I didn't hear it.” Or we ask our kids, “What did you think of Sunday school?” And they say, “What Sunday school?” You ask people, “What did you think of the lyrics and the music?” And they say, “What lyrics? I didn't even catch the lyrics, I was too busy listening to the guitar.” Sometimes we come to church like zombies. And I want to be careful when I say that, because I understand that you guys are tired. When you show up here, you've had a long week of work, and you're busy trying to balance the pressures of life and job and family. But friends remember this: this is only one day a week that we get to do this. The service only lasts for a few hours on Sunday. And that's it. So you need to make it count. You want to make sure to give it your full attention when you come into this place. Because if you don't, God will judge you for that.

This brings us to another way to stop neglecting your salvation, and that is to realize how dangerous it is when you do that. Second way to stop neglecting your salvation in this passage, is to realize how dangerous it is when you neglect it. Which means you need to realize that it will cost you something to

act this way. And if you look in verse two, he says, “For if the word spoken through angels proved unalterable and every transgression and disobedience received a just penalty, how will we escape if we neglect so great a salvation?” And I wanted to talk about this verse again because I've already covered it from the perspective of angels. But I didn't do it from the side of judgment. So I want to do that here. Because if you look back over this, you can see several references to judgment in here because that's what the law was about. The law was given to judge us and damn us and condemn us for our sin. It wasn't given to save. And that's what the author is talking about here. Because he says in the law, every transgression and disobedience received a just penalty. That doesn't come across well in English, because those two words transgression and disobedience are both synonyms for the word sin, but they cover it from different directions. The word transgression is a Greek word, *parabasis*, which refers to a deliberate sin or one you did on purpose. Depending on how it's used in Greek, it can refer to the act of trespassing or crossing a line. And that's a good picture. Because when you sin, this is what you do. You cross a line, you step over an invisible barrier, because the Lord told you to go this far, but no farther. And He told you to take this many steps, but don't take any more. And you did it anyway. Because you lied when you weren't supposed to lie. And you lusted when you weren't supposed to lust and you stole when you weren't supposed to steal, and you knew it. That's the meaning of this word. The whole time you understood perfectly what you were doing.

The other word, disobedience, is very different from that, because that's a Greek word, *parakoe*, which refers to a careless sin, or one you did by accident. Depending on how it's used in Greek, it can refer to the act of being caught up in a trap, like a fish caught in the net, or a rabbit caught in a snare. Because you didn't do it on purpose. It was done by accident. The idea is that the Lord says, go this far and no further but you didn't know. And He told you to take this many steps and no more, but you had no idea. You lied, but you didn't really know it was a lie. Or you stole and you didn't know it was stealing. But either way, the author of the book here uses both of those expressions to say the Lord will punish you for both of it. Whether you sin on purpose or not, it doesn't really matter to heaven. Because God will give both of them a just penalty. And the word *just* here means he will give you exactly what you deserve, no more, no less. And when God judges you for breaking the law, either deliberately or by accident, He'll give you precisely what you had coming. If that is so, then verse three says, “How will we escape if we neglect so great salvation?” In other words, if that is how perfect God's justice is, if that is how precise His righteousness is, how do you think it's going to be when you look at the cross, and you look at Calvary, and you look at the empty tomb, and you look at your Saviour dying, and you sniff it at disdainfully because you're just too lazy to do anything about it. It's a very sobering thing.

Matthew Henry said, “If men trifle with God, then God will trifle with them. And he will especially do it when they treat Jesus with disdainful hands.” And let me tell you what this has to do with our lives today. And that is that if you don't repent of your sin, you know what you're doing? You're going to hell. It's as simple as that. This says you will be judged. And if you neglect Jesus, and you ignore Him, and you turn Him away because you would rather just do whatever you want to like the antinomian, do you

know what will happen? You will be lost because you cannot escape God's wrath. It means you can't run fast enough to get away from it, you can't go far enough to avoid it.

Because remember, God will punish you for every sin. And the word *every* means *every* here. Every big one and every little one, every deliberate one and every careless one. And it says that He will give you a just penalty, which means He won't be impartial to you. He won't let you get away with something just because you're nice or friendly or you don't hurt anybody. Because that's not what it's about. Salvation doesn't come from you being nice. It comes from you being sorry. You don't go to heaven because you're good and friendly and you don't hurt people. You go to heaven when you are beat down and broken and crushed over your sin. So that's what you need to be focusing on.

Just to highlight this, if you look at this phrase in verse three, the author doesn't say that salvation is just salvation. He calls it a great salvation. And he doesn't just call it great, but he calls it so great a salvation. The word *so* is important because that's a term that we typically use when we don't know what else to say. We look at our wives and say you're *so* beautiful because we just can't put it into words, right? And we tell our friends that they're *so* amazing. And we tell our children that they're *so* hyper. You guys know what I'm talking about, right? *So* mischievous. Because they're *so* overwhelmed with it. All of the other terms fail us. And it's the same way here, because the author of Hebrews says that this is what you have, you have *so* great a salvation for this reason, because you have *so* great a sin. And you have *so* great grace of God, because you have *so* great a punishment coming to you without Christ, and you don't ever want to forget that.

We don't say a lot about this type of thing today, but first Peter four verse 17 says that judgment begins with the household of God. And if you're wondering, why? The answer is because the gospel started with us, the good news began here in the church. So we're the first ones that are going to be held accountable for it before anyone else. Romans two, verse nine also says that there will be tribulation and distress for every soul of man who does evil for the Jew first, and also the Greek. And that passage tells us a similar thing, because it says the Jews get tribulation first. Why? Because they were the first ones to meet God, so God is going to put them at the first of the line, because they've had more time to repent.

Second Corinthians five, verse 10, also says, "For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ." The word *all* means *all* there. Because it's a dreadful thing to turn your back on God, when He has given you so many opportunities to be saved. And that brings us to another way to stop neglecting our salvation. And that is to realize how miraculous it is. The first one is to realize how wonderful it is. And secondly, you need to realize how dangerous it is when you do this. Because when you neglect salvation, you're not messing with anybody, you're messing with God. And when you ignore His Word, you're not ignoring what anybody says, you're ignoring what He says. And there are tremendous consequences if you do that.

This brings us to a third way to stop neglecting our salvation and that is to realize how miraculous it was, which means that you really need to understand how much trouble it took for God to bring the gospel to you. Because it was not a simple thing. He did it with an enormous amount of effort. And if you look in verse three, it talks about this when it says, "How shall 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, 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." Now, as you go on in this passage here, remember he is making a contrast between the Old Testament and the New Testament. Because he's comparing the way God's Word came to the Jews, and the way it came to us. Verse two refers to the word spoken through angels, because that's how the Old Testament came to Israel. But in verse four, he mentioned signs and wonders and miracles, because that's how the New Testament came to us. They got the angels, we got the miracles, they got the cherubim, and we got things like tongues and prophecies and healings.

And just to explain this a little bit, depending on where you grew up in the church, you might not have heard a lot about the sign gifts in the New Testament, because they are so abused today. One reason a lot of Christians are very quiet about them is because there are so many bad ideas floating around out there about them. If you don't believe me, just go home and turn on the TV. You'll see lots of them there. But you shouldn't avoid them, because the Bible does say a lot about them. And so to understand them, you've got to dive into what it says. If you notice, there is a progression in this text, because it tells us that the word of God came to us in stages. First, it says in verse three, that it was spoken through the Lord because the good news began with Jesus. That's where it was first heard when He came into Galilee, preaching and teaching and instructing the apostles. Then in verse four, it says, it was confirmed to us by those who heard it, and that is a reference to the apostles. Because when Jesus left, they were the ones who were still around, they carried on the work after He was gone. They were His ambassadors or His spokesman. And then it goes on to say in verse four that God also testifying with them both by signs and wonders and various miracles, because that's how the apostles spoke for God. That's what happened as they preached, they did signs. That surprised everybody.

This is so important. I just want to stop here for a minute and say a few words about it. I don't know if you've thought about this before, but miracles did not happen randomly in the Bible. They didn't take place all the time. There were a lot of famous characters in Scripture that never performed one, like Abraham, the father of the Jews, he never did a miracle or a sign or a wonder, as far as we could tell. He lived a pretty normal life. He was pretty boring, except for with a few exceptions. It was the same with David, because he never did anything miraculous either in his life, aside from some highlights of fighting was pretty dull. You might say it was a miracle that he killed Goliath, but it was never presented that way. You might say it was supernatural, that he hurled a stone and hit this giant and knocked him over. But the Bible didn't describe it like that. It just said there was stone and it killed him. It was the same way with John the Baptist. You would think if anybody would do a miracle, it would be that guy. He was the forerunner of the Messiah, but he didn't. He ate locusts and wild honey, which is gross, but it's not miraculous. And he wore camels hair, which is itchy and uncomfortable, but nothing

supernatural about that. It was it was like that way for most of the life of the people in Israel. For the most part, miracles were very rare, which is why they were so effective. That's why they were so helpful. Because if they happened all the time, then it would have caught anybody's attention. If they were an everyday occurrence, and when they occurred, everybody would say, "Oh, there's just another one. He's raising the dead. We saw that yesterday. Oh, there's just another healing. Well, you know, that happened last week." That wasn't the case. When the miracles happen in the Bible, people perked up. Because they were so unusual, which is what the author is talking about here, because he says that the gospel was given to us in a miraculous fashion in order to make people pay attention, and understand that something unusual was happening. Because if you notice, the author says that God testified to it by signs. And that's the Greek word *semeion*, which refers to a marker or a clue beside the road, because that's what the gifts were in the book of Acts. They were clues pointing men to God. And it says that God also did this through wonders, which is Greek word *teras*, which refers to a spectacle, or a site that shocked people. They were used to startle people and shake them out of their apathy. The verse says that the Lord testify to them by various miracles. And that's the Greek word *dynamis*, from which we get the word dynamite or power. And it really sums up what this is about, because the miracles revealed the power of God. They were done in such a way that people knew that there was no other explanation for them but that God did this. They allow the apostles to not only tell people that they spoke for God, but they could show people they spoke for God. And they permitted them to not only say that you need to hear this, but they could prove that you need to hear this. Which is why these gifts tapered off toward the end of the first century. That's why they ceased once the Bible was finished, because the apostles didn't need to do that anymore. They didn't need to provide physical proof that God had spoken. Because all the proof was right here. The Lord had given us the Scriptures. And that was all that we needed. So that version of the gifts came to an end.

I will say more about that next week, so if you have any questions about that, please come back then. I want to spend an entire Sunday talking about that because I understand that not everybody believes that today. Many people think this version of the gift is still continuing in the church. So I want to clear up some misunderstanding for that. But for now, let me just say that the author's intention here is to say that before those gifts ceased, God allowed all of them to occur. And more importantly, this audience saw it. He allowed all of that to take place in a very free and clear way. And his readers got to witness it because they live in the first century. They were contemporaries of this event. So many of them got a front row seat to all the things that apostles were doing. And his point here is that you should not neglect your salvation. For that reason to you shouldn't let it pass you by. It's a dumbest thing in the world to watch all of that and ignore it. And it's the silliest thing to see the apostles do miracles and heal people and speak in tongues and raise the dead and not let it change you. So you don't want to make that mistake either.

Let me tell you how this applies to our lives today. If you think you will believe in Christ, when you see a miracle, let me tell you something, you're wrong. And if you think you'll repent when you see someone speak in tongues and raise the dead and heal the sick, let me show you what this is saying. It's saying

that you won't, because all these people saw the same thing. And they didn't believe. While many of them did believe, many of them watched it occur, and they rejected it. And if you were honest with yourself, you would do the same thing too if you were in their shoes. This is why the warning is in here, it's not about just seeing things with your eyes, it's about seeing them with your heart. And that's what you need to pay attention to. Because if you don't believe in God, I promise you this, the problem is not evidence, the problem is willingness. If you're rejecting Christ this morning, the issue is not that you can't believe the issue, it is that you won't believe because you'd rather hold on to your sin. Going back to what we said earlier, you're doing that because you would rather hold on to an idol in your heart. So you need to give that up first.

To be honest, this is one of the greatest mistakes I think that's happening with the charismatic movement today. And that is that they're so caught up in this form of the gifts, that they forget that God doesn't even care about that first. And they're so focused on doing things like speaking in tongues and getting healed and being slain in the Spirit, that they forget the fact that He isn't interested in that primarily anyway. First, He's interested in your soul. First, He wants to change your inner man. And you need to remember that as well. Don't get caught up in all this stuff. Before you get caught up in that, the Bible says that if you confess with your mouth, Jesus is Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. And it doesn't say that if you confess with your mouth after speaking in tongues, and it doesn't say if you believe in your heart, after prophesying, you'll be saved, no, believe, salvation. Confess, you're born again. Because that's the way it works. At another time, it says faith comes from hearing and hearing from the word of Christ. And there it tells you this is where your faith originates, it originates with your ears, and listening. It doesn't originate with your eyes and seeing things. It doesn't start when God proves it to you. It starts when you pay attention to His word. It also says he who believes in the Son has eternal life. Because that's what you have to believe in to be saved, you believe in the Son before anything else. But you get the idea. Salvation is an internal thing. It's not external. So if you're looking for miracles, you need to look for a miracle in your heart to begin with.

This brings us to a final way to stop neglecting our salvation. Just to review these other ones, the first one is to realize how wonderful it is. And secondly, you need to realize how dangerous it is when you neglect it. Thirdly, realize how miraculous it is because the Lord didn't give you the gospel through any normal means. He didn't present it to you in a boring way. He could have done that, but He didn't. He showed it through the use of these miracles as an act of mercy.

Which brings us to a fourth way to stop neglecting your salvation, and that is to realize where salvation comes from, it comes from the will of God. This means that God is the one who's responsible for saving you and making it happen, so you shouldn't neglect it for that reason, either, because He went through all this trouble for you. And the least you should do is acknowledge it now instead of shrugging your shoulders and ignoring it. And I put this last one in here because it really summarizes what we've been talking about. Because when you read this passage, you really get a sense of what the author is saying, because you see all kinds of references to God in here. His name pops up all over the place. Because if

you look back at the chapter, verse three says that this message was first spoken through the Lord. Which means that the message of salvation was first given by God because before Jesus, nobody knew anything about it. Before He showed up, we didn't have a clue. But when He got here, Jesus said things like, "I am the Way the Truth and the Life. No man comes to the Father but through Me," which means that this is how you're saved now. You go through His cross and His death and His person. You're made right with God by focusing on His words and His teaching and His message. He also said, "I am the light of the world, whoever follows Me will not walk in darkness but will have the light of life," which means that this is how you escaped the darkness as well, you do it by following His light. You don't do it by following the light over there. You do it by following this. He said, "I'm the bread of life, whoever comes to Me will not hunger again." He said, "I'm the water of life, He who drinks with me will not thirst again." He said, "I am the resurrection and the life, whoever believes in me will not die." The significance is that God said all that to you. The angels didn't do it, the Son of God did. He didn't send a messenger from heaven, Christ said that Himself.

And then in verse four, it says, "God also testified with the apostles." And the word *testified* an important thing there because it means to speak together with something. That's what the Lord did with the miracles. That was the intention of them. When the apostles performed those miracles, God spoke and they spoke, the Lord preached and they preached. Some people today think that these miracles are just being done to dazzle people for shock and awe, but that's not the case. They were given to testify. They were done to be a testimony to show everyone that what the apostles said was true. Because when they preached, the people could say, "Look, they're doing miracles, there must be something to this. Look, they're doing signs, there's got to be some something important to what they're saying. Then it also says that God did this "both by signs and wonders, and various miracles, and by gifts of the Holy Spirit, according to His own will." And that verse ends with a one more reference to the Lord here, because it says the gifts were given by the Holy Spirit, which is a reference to the third member of the Trinity. The author mentions the second member in verse three, when it talks about Jesus. Now he mentioned the third member of the Trinity in verse four, to show that all the members of the Godhead were involved in your salvation. Because after Jesus left the earth, this is what He did, He sent the Holy Spirit to us. He didn't leave us alone. But instead He gave us the final member of the Godhead. He's goes by several names, but the reason He's called a spirit is because that's how He appears to us. He's invisible. You can't see Him. Some translations of the Bible, call Him a Holy Ghost. But that term has been dropped because it makes it sound like He's not real. He is real because the book of Acts tells us at 40 days after Jesus ascended into heaven, on the day of Pentecost, where 1000s of Jews could watch it, the Spirit came down from heaven. And as He did, He enabled the apostles to do miracles right away. They started speaking in tongues and healing and prophesying instantly to show that the two things were one, the Spirit and the gifts are interrelated. The Spirit didn't come, and then wait several months to do that; He didn't show up and then wait a year before the gifts started, they started immediately to show He is the one who's responsible for them.

The author also says, to explain that further, he says that they were given according to his own will. And the word *will* means that this is the thing that distributes the gifts to us now. It's God's will, not your will. It is the Spirit's choice, not your choice. So if you read the New Testament, and you wonder why did this person get to be an apostle and not that one, the answer is that God did it. And if you look at the Christian world today, and you ask yourself, "Why does that church get to have this preacher? And not that one?" You guys have never said that here, by the way. Or, "Why did they get to have this ministry and have a worldwide impact? And we don't?" The answer is that the Spirit does that. It all goes back to Him. And the point the author is making here is that to neglect that is to neglect Him. And to ignore that is to ignore Him, and take away from His glory, which is why this passage is so serious, because God did all of this for you. And the Lord went through all this trouble in order to save you. So the last thing you should ever do is pretend like it's no big deal. The last way you should ever respond to this is to shrug your shoulders and be apathetic and say I don't care. Because if it doesn't make you grateful after studying this, I don't think it ever will. And if it doesn't make you appreciate Him after reading this text, nothing could ever do it. Because you don't just have a God who saved you. You have a God who saved you like this. And you don't just have a God who forgave you, but He did in the most considerate way. Because He sent His Son, He gave you His one only child and then the moment the Son left, He gave you the Spirit so you wouldn't be alone. And the most amazing thing is that the Spirit stayed. While His ministry has changed throughout the years, it's still His job to make sure that you're okay. The Holy Spirit lives among us to take care of you and make sure nothing happens to you until Jesus returns to take you home. And the author brings it up here to say you have every reason to be thankful to God now. Because just look at all this.

In fact, we could say this from a negative angle to say that if you if you're not thankful, it's not God's fault, it's your fault. And if you're not grateful, and you neglect it, the blame doesn't rest on His shoulders. The blame rests on yours, because God did everything that He could.

We are going to talk about these things some more next week, but this is another problem that I would have with the charismatic movement and that is that when you attend some of their services, everything is so noisy that it makes it hard to think about God. Everything's so chaotic that it's hard to focus on Him at all, because there's so much hooping and hollering and yelling going on. There's so much dancing and shouting and swaying. God is the farthest thing from your mind and it shouldn't be that way for us. When you come to church, it's our job to get rid of all the distractions, so we can put Him on display because nothing else matters. I had someone tell me the other day that they came from a church like this. And they attended a congregation where every Sunday was like a show. They said that Grace Fellowship Church is different and wondered why. And I said, "I think it's because this is reverent. And I think we're different. Because you walk into this room, you can tell that we don't care much about the lights or the show or the program here. We're not interested in the dancing around and the hollering, we just care about Jesus. And that's it. We want you to glorify Him. And that's all. Everything else is secondary to that. I've also had people come from some of these other places, and they asked me, "Why do you sing those types of songs here? Why do you play this type of music?" And the answer is the

same. We do it because of Him. The lyrics help you to worship God, and the music enables you to put Him on display.

That's what the book of Hebrews is about at the end of the day. That's a message behind this letter. Because I've told you before, the word "better" appears 13 times in his book to show you that in Christ, you have a better hope, and a better covenant and a better testament and better promises and better sacrifices than anything that the Jews ever had. Jesus surpasses it in every way. And the word "greater" is used seven times to say that in Christ, we have a greater salvation, and a greater high priest and a greater tabernacle, and a greater reward than what they experienced, which is why you need to put your sins away. That's why it's so important to repent. We don't put our sins away because we're trying to earn salvation. We do it because He earned it for us. And we're thankful for it. Amen. We fight sin because Christ has died for sin. And if we put our Saviour on the cross, we don't want to have anything to do with it, which is what this morning is all about.

I mentioned this because if you find yourself losing your focus on Christ this morning, and it's falling into the trap of antinomianism, where you're holding on to your sin, I have good news for you. And that is that you don't have to stay there. Because you'll be forgiven today. Jesus can deliver you because the Bible says Jesus is a friend of sinners. And it says, "A bruised reed He will not break," which means if you feel bruised over this, God will receive you. And if you feel beaten up and broken, because you know that you've been doing the wrong thing, that's okay, because He'll show you mercy if you come running to the cross. You need to go straight to the place where your Saviour died because at the cross He paid for every sin. And at Calvary the Bible says He was crucified for every transgression, including this one, the sin of negligence. So if that describes you today, all you have to do is go there and believe and He will save you.

In my studies this week, I came across a story the time a man from Leeds, England went to see his doctor because he couldn't hear. He just purchased a hearing aid several years before and for some reason it didn't work. So we went in to get it looked at and the doctor said there's a very simple reason why it's not working. And that's because you've never turned it on. It's been sitting in your head all these years but it did you no good because you didn't use it properly. And my friends, I tell you that story because it's possible to do the same thing with Jesus. You can have Him sitting in your head all these years and receive no help from Him either if you don't use Him properly. You need to do that this morning. You need to trust in Him right away. So will you do that? Let's go to the Lord and a word of prayer and ask for His grace.

Heavenly Father, Lord, we are so grateful this morning for our salvation. And I know that this message was given as a warning, because that's how it's presented in this passage. But Lord, we're not leaving this room this morning with a warning; we're leaving this room this morning with grateful hearts, thankful and overjoyed for what Christ has done for us. Lord God, You thought of everything. And You're a Saviour that took care of every last issue related to our sin. So rejoice in that today.

Lord, I pray for my brothers and sisters in Christ this morning. I know they have been beat up by the world this week, they get beat up by the world every week. And they go out and they see so much sin among them, and they see sin among other Christians and they see sin in the church, and sin and their job and sin, sin, sin everywhere they go. But Father, I pray that this message and our time in the Word today would remind them where they need to take this and take it back to the Saviour. Thank you, Lord, for such a mercy. Thank you, Lord, for such great grace, that you've poured out upon us.

And as we come to the Lord's table this morning, Father, we want this to be a special time. It is given to us to remember what our Saviour did. Christians for 1000s of years have been celebrating this. They celebrated it at the beginning with your disciples. They celebrated all throughout the apostolic age. They did it during the Reformation to remember Jesus. He is the One we're here to worship today. May He be the one on display. And we pray this all for His glory in His name. Amen.