

“THE MESSAGE WE HAVE HEARD...”
by Rom A. Pegram (7/9/17)

In a conversation the other day, the topic addressed was this: ‘what is missing in our world today.’ And, all agreed that what may be missing above all else today is this: A healthy ‘Fear [Respect] of God.’ And that also means ... we have missed REALLY KNOWING GOD. Because if we really knew God, we’d have a healthy respect for *who* God is...

As we were reminded in our ‘Intro to Worship’ today, all too often we complicate who God is. For some reason, we have trouble accepting ‘the message of truth that we’ve heard’ ... and we have to add to it or change it to suit our needs. But adding to Jesus never was God’s intention. Jesus, folks, was the perfect sacrifice or gift for humanity. And we need no more ... and no less ... than just what God sent to us in Jesus!

Being human, however, lends itself to us ‘getting off track’ from time to time. So, we need reminders of who God is ... and why God sent his Son, Jesus, to us (*picking up where we left off last week*)...

So, here’re the questions that will get us ‘back on track’ as we review this very important NT book of Hebrews this summer. *What has God done for us, what is God doing for us right now and what will God be doing for us in the future?* Listen to our scripture lesson for today, as we begin together ... a *Hebrews Summer* (Hebrews 2:1-4, NLT)...

“So we must listen very carefully to the truth we have heard, or we may drift away from it. ² For the message God delivered through angels has always stood firm, and every violation of the law and every act of disobedience was punished. ³ So what makes us think we can escape if we ignore this great salvation that was first announced by the Lord Jesus himself and then delivered to us by those who heard him speak? ⁴ And God confirmed the message by giving signs and wonders and various miracles and gifts of the Holy Spirit whenever he chose.”

In studying Hebrews together this summer, we’re going to be learning a great deal together about our faith ... and the object of our faith—Jesus Christ. But, I don’t want you to even think about going home today without learning something from Hebrews right out of the gate...

So, let me ask you this question: How many women here today make the coffee in your home? (Let them raise their hands...) Well, if you do, *that’s not biblical!* I’m so thankful when I come into this place on Sunday mornings and see Lee Oestreich making coffee for our fellowship time! Why? Because, he is following God’s word to the tee...

If you’ve never noticed it before, let me share this with you now. God’s word, especially in this particular book of the NT, clearly says ... HE-BREWS! So, MEN are supposed to make the coffee, biblically speaking...

There, you've learned an incredible truth from scripture! And now, before we take a closer look at what's going on in Chapter 2 of Hebrews, let me review for you what takes place in Chapter One. The author of Hebrews doesn't waste any time launching into his purpose of *nurturing the lives of his readers to mature discipleship*. He lays out clearly the doctrine of Jesus Christ—specifically his superiority to all other beings through his nature as God's Son, the Messiah. Hebrews, Chapter One, is really an introduction to the entire book, and it speaks of Jesus in these ways:

- Son of God
 - Here, folks, we see Jesus as a 'special envoy' from heaven ... sent to earth to straighten things out—relationally speaking—between God and humanity; that's why Jesus came in a nutshell...
- Heir of All Things
 - All things are to be Jesus' inheritance, as the Son of God...
- Creator of the World
 - Genesis 1:26 – “Then God said, ‘Let *us* make human beings in *our* image, to be like *ourselves*....’”
- Radiant Light (Gospel of John)
- The Image of God [imago dei]
- Sustainer of the Universe (What keeps all of the balls in the air?)
- High Priest of Perfection (You'll hear more about that in the weeks ahead...)
- Superior to the Angels (We'll see that today...)
- Exalted King
- Lord of Righteousness
- The Eternal
- Ultimate Conqueror

And then we get to Chapter Two: Here the author encourages all of us to hang on to the truth that we've heard—the message about Jesus that we've heard. Don't complicate things by adding to it! God sent us exactly what we need [and as we see in Chapter One, no one is superior to Christ]. So, concentrate on that message—on the Jesus we get to know in the Bible—lest we too stray ... which is a real human tendency...

What you'll notice, as we begin our study of Hebrews today, is that *the NT writers are never satisfied with theology alone*—what we believe. It's one thing to believe; it's entirely another to live like it! So, OUR BELIEF MUST ALWAYS BE FOLLOWED BY APPROPRIATE BEHAVIOR! Why is this important? I'm glad you asked ... and the author of Hebrews let us know. First...

THERE ARE CONSEQUENCES OF NOT HEEDING THE MESSAGE... Verse one, again, says: “So we must listen very carefully to the truth we have heard, *or we may drift away from it* [italics mine].” Folks, I know this tells us to ‘listen carefully,’ but don't miss the second part of this exhortation; it's a *warning* to all who've heard the GOOD NEWS. And the writer of Hebrews wants us to know that there's nothing more important *nor more real* than what the Lord Jesus has spoken, as recorded in scripture!

But, here's the warning: "...or we may drift away...." The Greek verb used here gives us several descriptive ideas as to what the author really means here, such as...

The idea of 'slipping away' is kind of like *evaporation*... Give insufficient attention to the gospel in your life and it will simply vanish into the air; the process is not dramatic or sudden; rather, it's subtle and quiet. The shock comes when you suddenly need your faith the most and find it's evaporated due to neglect...

Another meaning of the Greek verb used here is that of 'leaking'... The implication here is not so much one of neglect as it is a *faulty container*. Truth leaks out of a mind that's sloppy ... with a lack of discipline and study. Good (Godly) ideas fail to mature and so leak out and are lost forever...

Finally, and maybe the most pictorial description coming from this verb, would be that of 'a boat that has slipped its moorings during the night and has totally disappeared.' The owner comes to the dock, fully expecting his boat to be ready to use, and finds nothing. The post to which it had been tied is still there; the area is deserted and quiet; but as far as the eye can see, there is absolutely no sign of the boat or what became of it—a picturesque description of a faith that's been carelessly taken care of...

All of these images speak powerfully to us today, as we contemplate what the writer of Hebrews means when he warns, "So we must listen very carefully to the truth we have heard, or we may drift away from it [italics mine]."

Once again, the first instance—*evaporation*—describes vividly the subtle loss of faith because of our preoccupations; we live in a world that's incredibly abundant with distractions! *Busyness* may be the worst of all of them; being too busy can fritter away a Christian's commitment to staying plugged in to God ... and then in the moment we need our faith the most, we find it too weak to be functional...

Jane and I were once the proud owners of a small fishing boat—a few years ago, and I had to learn about all of the maintenance involved with owning a boat. And one of those things I had to learn about was the battery that would start the motor, run the lights and the fish finder, etc. I had to learn the hard way that even during the winter, the battery needed to be maintained or there would be consequences...

What I (learned the hard way) needed to do was to plug the battery into a charger and trickle-charge the battery once a month during the winter to keep the power up, *to keep the battery healthy*. Otherwise, I'd have some dead cells in the spring...

What I actually did the first winter was NOT do the monthly maintenance ... and the next spring, I had to *spring* for a new battery...

When we neglect the message that we've heard—the GOOD NEWS of Jesus Christ—and do not exercise our faith regularly, the same thing happens! When we need it the

most, we suddenly find out that our faith is not as healthy as it's supposed to be and there's a definite loss of power! That's what the author of Hebrews is trying to warn us about...

So, we need to 'listen very carefully to the truth we have heard.' Why? Because there are consequences of not heeding the message! **SECONDLY...**

THE MESSAGE HAS COME FROM JESUS HIMSELF... It really *does* matter who delivers the message, doesn't it? Verses 2-4, again, tell us: "For the message God delivered through angels has always stood firm, and every violation of the law and every act of disobedience was punished. ³ So what makes us think we can escape if we ignore this great salvation that was first announced by the Lord Jesus himself and then delivered to us by those who heard him speak? ⁴ And God confirmed the message by giving signs and wonders and various miracles and gifts of the Holy Spirit whenever he chose."

Folks, who does the announcing of 'the message' really does matter! Verse 2 tells us this: At one time, it was the angels. But the angels now take a lower rung on the ladder of heralds ... to one named JESUS! Verse 3 tells us that it 'was first announced by the Lord Jesus himself!'

Regarding the angels who delivered God's messages previously, people took them seriously! Their attitude was basically, "Disregard and disobey and judgment will fall!" That was their message... Now, Jesus himself has given us the message of life...

How seriously are we taking Jesus as God's Son ... and the message itself? As important as the angels were as messengers of God, *they don't hold a candle to the One we have now*; that's what the message of Hebrews is all about!

So, as we begin this summer series of Hebrews, ask yourself this: Am I still paying attention to the message that I've heard ... that old, old story of Jesus? How important is it in *my* life? Or, have I tried to improve on the message of Christ by adding to it ... or maybe by taking something away from it? Today, is my faith mixed up with things like ... the economy ... or my political views ... or something else; or is my faith in Christ still PURE ... just as the message was heard the first time?

The GOOD NEWS for all of us is this: *The writer of Hebrews is going to get us back on track!* Remember in Chapter One: **Jesus is the Image of God (imago dei).** *When we get to know who he is, we will then get to know who God is.* And when we get to know who God is, we will then come to realize ... what God has done for us, what God is now doing for us, and what God will do for us!

This summer, as we study Hebrews together, I believe it is Christ himself who will emerge in our lives and in the life of our church, if we're open to Him. Are you ready? It's going to be an exciting ... and hopefully refreshing ... time together...