

Introduction:

- A. *Illus.*: When I was a college student at Trinity several of us went down to O'Hare Airport to look for people we could talk to about our faith. I remember talking with a sailor who was waiting for his plane. We talked about Jesus and salvation. He readily admitted that he wasn't much of a Christian but that he *had* prayed for salvation when he was a boy so he'd be fine. "*Once saved, always saved,*" he said.
- B. Christians are jittery talking about whether or not someone can lose their salvation. We are grateful for the promises of Scripture, like when Jesus assured his disciples in **John 10:27-29**, "*My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me. I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; no one will snatch them out of my hand. My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all; no one can snatch them out of my Father's hand.*" No one can steal you away from the Good Shepherd. Isn't that wonderful! We sing, "*Neither life nor death shall ever, from the Lord his children sever.*" And I believe that.
- C. Last fall on a weekend away I read the book of Hebrews. **Turn to Heb. 1.** I think I read it three times that weekend. It is a wonderfully rich and deep book. We don't know who the author was but you can't miss the message. **We who profess faith in Christ must keep on trusting and obeying the Lord lest we forfeit our hope.** The author doesn't answer the question, "Can you lose your salvation." What he says is that there are people who profess Christ and are active in church who nevertheless prove to have been barren and fruitless ground in whose lives the gospel never actually took root. Let that not be said of us!
- D. Wouldn't that be terrible! Wouldn't it be terrible if some among us would grow hard-hearted and drift away from the Lord? This is serious business, and so during this season of Lent, when Christians have traditionally invested in sober self-examination, we will study this great book. **Heb. 1:1-4...** Before Jesus, God spoke through the OT prophets in powerful, life changing ways, but now...

I. GOD HAS SPOKEN TO US BY HIS SON (1:1-14)

- A. Did you notices that Jesus is only spoken of here as the Son? It is a title which emphasizes Christ's authority; his position. There are **seven statements** about the Son, each one a distinct and amazing quality:
1. *Whom he appointed heir of all things*, - This speaks of the authority given to Jesus after his resurrection and exaltation, as if God said, "Every good thing you have accomplished by dying and rising again—every saved sinner, the new heavens and new earth, the grateful praise of saints and angels--all will be your inheritance forever." **So when this Son speaks we must listen!**
 2. *Through whom also he made the universe*. – He is Creator of all things who called all things into being out of nothing. So when this Son speaks we must listen!
 3. *The radiance of God's glory* – The Son is the shining-out of God's glory into the world, in the flesh! **So when this Son speaks we must listen!**
 4. *The exact representation of his being* – i.e, he is fully God in every way. To look at Jesus, the Son of God, was to see God. **So when this Son speaks we must listen!**
 5. *Sustaining all things by his powerful word* – Just as the Son spoke creation into being, he could speak it into un-being, into oblivion. Nothing in all the universe runs on its own power. Everything is held up by the Son's word. **So when this Son speaks we must listen!**
 6. *After he had provided purification for sins* – This short phrase will get three chapters of explanation later in the book. This is the very essence of what the Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, has done for us by dying and rising again. This is how the Son spoke. **So when this Son speaks we must listen!**
 7. *He sat down at the right hand of the Majesty in heaven* – There he reigns over all creation. There he intercedes for believers so that we can come boldly to the throne of Almighty God. There he waits for his bride, the

church, whom he will love for all eternity. **So when this Son speaks we must listen!**

**“In these last days God has spoken to us by his Son.”
And there can be no greater Messenger than he. So when this Son speaks we must listen!**

- B. In the Old Testament, God’s great messengers—even greater than the prophets—were angels. They appeared several times—all amazing. But the most significant appearance was to Moses on Mt. Sinai. It’s interesting that the story of Moses on Mt Sinai in Exodus doesn’t mention angels, but near the end of his life, Moses described what happened up on that mountain, where God delivered the Covenant—the Law, the Torah—to Israel like this, in Deut. 33:1-3 (the “holy ones” he speaks of are angels) ... *“This is the blessing that Moses the man of God pronounced on the Israelites before his death. He said:*

*“The Lord came from Sinai
and dawned over them from Seir;
he shone forth from Mount Paran.
He came with myriads of holy ones
from the south, from his mountain slopes.
Surely it is you who love the people;
all the holy ones are in your hand.
At your feet they all bow down,
and from you receive instruction,
the law that Moses gave us,
*the possession of the assembly of Jacob.”**

In other words, the Law which Moses received from God was delivered by glorious angels. The New Testament writers were very clear about this. In **Acts 7**, the first martyr Stephen bluntly accused the Sanhedrin who were trying him, *“And now you have betrayed and murdered him [Jesus, ‘the righteous one’]— you who have received **the law that was given through angels but have not obeyed it.**”* The point being, *how can you disobey God’s law given through such divine messengers!?* In **Gal 3:20** Paul says, *“The law was given through angels and entrusted to a mediator”* [i.e., Moses].

So with that in mind, we understand the next verses better. **V.4** sets the argument: “*So he [the Son] became as much superior to the angels as the name he has inherited is superior to theirs.*” The name he has inherited is Son. The angels’ name is *servants*. The writer quotes seven (yes, seven, again) OT passages to prove it is so: **vv.5-14...**

- C. The angels who delivered his word are God’s **servants** but the message we’ve heard comes from God’s **Son**. And what was his message? What did he speak? **Salvation by providing purification for our sins.**

The writer tells us all this high theology—this wonderful catalog of the greatness of the Son of God—for a reason. **2:1...**

II. WE MUST PAY THE MOST CAREFUL ATTENTION, THEREFORE, TO WHAT WE HAVE HEARD, SO THAT WE DO NOT DRIFT AWAY (2:1-4)

- A. It’s sort of an ice-water-in-the-face statement: “*so that we do not drift away.*” That, evidently, is a serious concern, a real danger, for those who regard themselves as Christians. After all, this book isn’t for pagans. It’s written to professing Christians.

That’s a telling phrase, “*so we don’t drift away,*” like a boat unanchored, tied too loosely to its moorings. *Drift away.* A picture of a slow separation, unnoticed till it is too late. It pictures the need for a strong mooring, an anchor, so the author tells us in **6:19**, “*We have this hope as an anchor for the soul, firm and secure.*” But those who care little for their hope in Christ come untied from their anchor.

People are seldom wrenched away from faith in Christ. They *drift away*. My observation is that even those who say they left the faith for intellectual reasons actually lost their moorings in sin and hard hearts well before their doubts swamped them. **Faith without obedience dies.** Faith in Jesus without obedience to Jesus dies. **Here the direct implication is that professing Christians drift away because the stop listening to the message of the Son—**despite his consuming authority and his life-giving message. They just stop *paying careful attention.*

- B. The Bible here says, consider the stakes! **V.2**, “*For since the message spoken through angels was binding, and every violation and disobedience received its just punishment, how shall we escape if we ignore so great a salvation?*” The glorious angels brought the message of a covenant with God. It was wonderful news for Israel. But Israel’s acceptance bound them also to the penalties for disobedience. **Now a far greater messenger, the Son of God speaks salvation—those broken laws can be forgiven, because he personally died in our place to purify us from our sins.** If we drift away from *that*—if we no longer pay attention to that message—there’s nothing left! Not even God Almighty can do anything more for you! There is no escape, but only the prospect of hell. Near the end of this book, in **Heb. 10:26-29**, the writer recaps: “*If we deliberately keep on sinning after we have received the knowledge of the truth, no sacrifice for sins is left, but only a fearful expectation of judgment and of raging fire that will consume the enemies of God. Anyone who rejected the law of Moses died without mercy on the testimony of two or three witnesses. How much more severely do you think someone deserves to be punished who has trampled the Son of God underfoot, who has treated as an unholy thing the blood of the covenant that sanctified them, and who has insulted the Spirit of grace?*”
- C. Then the writer adds even more force to his plea: **Consider the evidences.** There are three:
1. “[This salvation] was first announced by the Lord.” He means specifically the Lord Jesus. Jesus himself said what he came to do. Jesus said of himself, “*the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.*” Jesus said, “*I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.*” Jesus said, “*I am the resurrection and the life. The one who believes in me will live, even though they die.*”
 2. Secondly, what the Lord said “was confirmed to us by those who heard him.” That is, we have the words of

the eye- and ear-witnesses. Not one, but several, recorded still here in our Bibles. They are in agreement.

3. Third, “God also testified to it by signs, wonders and various miracles, and by gifts of the Holy Spirit distributed according to his will.” This points to the stories in the Gospels and Acts—the astonishing things Jesus did, and that his disciples did, to prove that this message was from God. God continues to do things like this. I spoke this week to **Dr. Craig Ott**, a missions prof at TEDS. He’d just been to Egypt and I asked about his trip. He said he’d spent time among many new believers from Sudan. “Fully half,” he said, “came to Christ through seeing visions of him.”

- D. There’s a line from a hymn: “What more can he say than to you he has said?” You surely cannot drift away from the faith because the message is unclear, nor because the message is not credible, nor because the message is not important to you. How will you escape if you ignore it?

Conclusion

Heb. 2:1 is the point of this whole book: “*We must pay the most careful attention, therefore, to what we have heard, so that we do not drift away.*” The writer of this book wrote as a pastor—as someone who looked at the flock of God and saw that the danger among them was not only wolves who attacked from outside, but simply those who wander—who drift—away. He speaks like this because he has seen it. He had preached, as I have, to such people, sung with them, prayed with them. He had celebrated with them and the church when they seemed to trust Christ. Later, in **6:9** he also speaks like a pastor, “*Even though we speak like this, dear friends, we are convinced of better things in your case—the things that have to do with salvation.*” I feel that way about you—I’m convinced of better things but I warn you because the danger is so real and we must all pay attention.

There is also a happy insurance in Heb. 2:1. You will not drift from your salvation if you simply “pay the most careful attention to what we have heard” from the Son of God. We are not on our own, like a lonely marathon runner. We have the living Spirit of

God within our hearts. Because the Son of God has purified us from all our sins, **Heb 4:16** says, *“Let us then approach God’s throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need.”* Pay careful attention to such a gracious offer of help!

Heb. 3:1 says, *“Therefore, holy brothers and sisters, who share in the heavenly calling, fix your thoughts on Jesus, whom we acknowledge as our apostle and high priest.”*

And near the end of this great book of encouragement, in **12:2**, we’re reminded again, *“And let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us, fixing our eyes on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of faith.”*

Like this writer, I have watched adult believers walk away from the faith—*drift away*. Sometimes it is just for a season and mercifully God’s grace draws them back again. But a few never are anchored again.

This season let us each and all pay careful attention to what we’ve heard from the Son of God.