

Daily Bread with Brother Hwa-Chi (Not reviewed by the speaker, for personal use only)

Hebrews 2:1-4

Brothers and sisters, peace be with you, this is Hwa-Chi. Thank the Lord, it's time to read the bible again. This week, we are going to read Hebrews Chapter 2, and today we will read verses 1-4.

In Hebrews 1:4–14, the author uses a method of comparison, quoting Old Testament scriptures to prove that Christ, as the Son of God, is far superior to the angels. In Hebrews 2:5–18, the author emphasizes that Christ, as the Son of Man, accomplished far more than the angels. Within these two passages, there is an inserted exhortation, where the author seems to remind us that merely recognizing Christ's supremacy is not enough. More importantly, how does such recognition impact your life? What changes does it bring to your character?

Throughout the subsequent chapters, the author employs the same approach: on the one hand, presenting the truth, and on the other, providing exhortation to remind the saints not to linger only in understanding doctrine but to live out a corresponding experiential life. This style seems similar to that of Barnabas. Barnabas, known as the "son of encouragement," was particularly skilled in exhorting and encouraging the saints.

For example, the young brother Mark had deserted Paul on his first missionary journey and was subsequently rejected by Paul as a co-worker. However, Mark, through the companionship and encouragement of Barnabas, was ultimately restored and became a valuable assistant and co-worker to both Peter and Paul. Today, let us study this exhortation.

Verse 1: "Therefore we must give the more earnest heed to the things we have heard, lest we drift away."

"Therefore" serves as a summarizing conjunction, continuing the description from Chapter 1. As the Son of God, Christ's name, identity, position, existence, and victory are all superior to the angels. With this understanding, "we must give the more earnest heed to the things we have heard" —we must treat the truths we have heard with utmost seriousness. These truths must not be neglected or considered optional but must take precedence over other matters.

Every day, we receive countless pieces of information, most of which are trivial and insignificant. However, matters concerning Christ are of utmost importance; we must practice, obey, and apply these truths in our daily lives, turning them into our reality. Ultimately, they should become part of our character. Only then can we truly say we have gained revelation and truth about Christ. "Lest we drift away" —if we take a casual attitude toward the truth, hearing without storing it in our hearts, pondering it, and applying it in our lives, what we have heard will easily drift away.

This world is filled with various currents that seek to capture our attention and distract us. These currents are like a river's flow, swiftly carrying away all kinds of information that are not firmly anchored in us. This is perhaps the difficulty for most saints. Some may have been in the church life for a number of years, hearing hundreds of Sunday messages. Yet if asked, "What makes Christ so good?" they might struggle to articulate it, because what they previously heard has been carried away by the world's currents. This is the result of not giving earnest heed to the truths we have heard, which then drift away.

This is just the first step. The next step is that we ourselves may also drift away. When we gain new understanding of Christ, if we can transform that understanding into our experience and anchor it as part of our character, it will serve as a stabilizing anchor in Christ, helping us grow in stature. Just as Ephesians 4:14 says, "that we should no longer be children, tossed to and from and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, in the cunning craftiness of deceitful plotting."

Dear brothers and sisters, may we all take God's word seriously. Whenever we gain new light and revelation, let us take it to heart, earnestly seek the Lord for experience, and allow this new light and revelation to become part of us.

Verse 2: "For if the word spoken through angels proved steadfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just reward."

The "word spoken through angels" refers to the Old Testament. As mentioned in Hebrews 1:1, "God, who at various times and in various ways spoke in time past to the fathers by the prophets." Angels were often sent to deliver God's word to the prophets. For example, in Daniel 9:21–27, the crucial Seventy-Weeks prophecy was delivered by the angel Gabriel.

Angels are ministering spirits sent by God to deliver messages to the Old Testament prophets, thereby completing the Old Testament. Stephen, in his sermon before his martyrdom, rebuked the Jews who were persecuting him. He said, "You who have received the law by the direction of angels and have not kept it" (Acts 7:53). The Old Testament words, particularly the law, were conveyed through angels to the prophets, who then recorded them. God's Old Testament laws were given for the Israelites to obey.

Leviticus 26:14-39 warns the Israelites that if they do not listen to God, nor obey His commandments, statutes, and judgments, five progressively severe curses will befall them. The history of Old Testament Israel precisely demonstrates that the Israelites repeatedly stiffened their necks, refused to heed God's word, violated His commandments, and rebelled against His statutes and judgments. Consequently, these five layers of curses were fulfilled one by one in the history of Israel, ultimately resulting in the destruction of the nation of Israel and the dispersion of its people among all nations. Saints can review Leviticus 26:14-39 in their daily Bible reading and see that all who transgressed and rebelled received the retribution they deserved.

The history of Old Testament Israel, from Abraham to John the Baptist, serves as the best warning. The Old Testament, conveyed through angels, delivered God's words, and those who violated the Old Testament faced severe punishment and discipline. The New Testament, however, was directly revealed to us by the Son of God, who is far greater and more exalted than angels. Would not the consequences

of transgressing the New Testament be even more severe? Let us read the first half of Hebrews 2:3.

Verse 3a: “How shall we escape if we neglect so great a salvation?”

The author seems unable to find a stronger way to warn New Testament saints. Therefore, he contrasts the fundamental differences between the Old and New Testaments to admonish New Testament believers. The Old Testament emphasizes the law—commandments, statutes, and judgments—and anyone who violated the law faced corresponding punishment. The Israelites under the Old Covenant were under the governance of the law, which ultimately proved that humanity is fundamentally incapable of keeping the law.

The New Testament emphasizes grace, for the law reveals sin and demonstrates that people are utterly unable to save themselves. The grace of the New Testament, therefore, comes to those who are undeserving and willing to accept the salvation of Jesus Christ. The deeper the condemnation of the law, the greater the supply of grace. Romans 5:20 says: “Moreover the law entered that the offense might abound. But where sin abounded, grace abounded much more.” Therefore, the author warns New Testament believers from the perspective of grace: If we neglect so great a salvation, how can we escape? The contrast between “neglect” and “so great” is striking. If you truly understand how great this salvation is, you cannot neglect it.

The problem lies in our lack of understanding of salvation, treating it as cheap or ordinary. Often, when we preach the gospel, we lower its value, saying that believing in Jesus will lead to heaven or bring various benefits. If the gospel is presented this way, it’s no wonder that some earnest seekers find it hard to believe. May the Lord open our eyes to see how great this salvation truly is.

Today, let us try to examine how great this salvation is. Due to time constraints, I will briefly share from two perspectives.

1. From God's perspective, primarily based on Ephesians 1:3-14.

This salvation originated in the eternal plan of the Triune God before the foundation of the world. The Father's good pleasure was to have a holy and blameless church as the bride for His beloved Son. Every member of the church was meticulously chosen by the Father and predestined for adoption as sons.

Once the Father had established the plan, the Son executed it. He became flesh and dwelt among us as Jesus, living a perfect human life. At the age of 30, He began His ministry: preaching the gospel and training disciples. After three and a half years, He was crucified for the sins of humanity, accomplishing the great work of redemption. All who believe in Him can have their sins forgiven. Three days after His death, He rose from the dead, inaugurating a new creation, enabling believers to be justified by God. He also gave the Holy Spirit as the Helper to dwell in every believer.

On the Day of Pentecost, the mighty Holy Spirit was poured out, and Jesus' disciples cooperated with the Spirit to establish the church and spread the gospel to the ends of the earth, bearing witness to Christ worldwide. In every church, the Holy Spirit distributes gifts according to His will to equip the saints, enabling them to build up the body of Christ until all reach unity in the faith, awaiting Christ's return.

Thus, this salvation is a collaborative work of the Triune God: planned by the Father, executed by the Son, and applied by the Holy Spirit to each saint. This salvation is comprehensive, complete, and glorious, yet it is also personal, tailored to each individual saint.

2. From humanity's perspective, as described in 2 Corinthians 1:10: "Who delivered us from so great a death, and does deliver us; in whom we trust that He will still deliver us."

This verse addresses every believer's past, present, and future. In the past, someone preached the gospel to us, and God granted us wisdom to accept Christ as our personal Savior. A simple act of faith delivered us from "so great a death," meaning the lake of fire and eternal damnation. This is a certainty for every

believer—we are saved, sealed with the Holy Spirit, have eternal life, and are free from eternal destruction.

In the present, God is saving us, referring to the growth of our spiritual life and the journey toward sanctification. Through the church, believers support and encourage one another, walking together in faith along the heavenly path.

In the future, when Christ returns, He will save us from this mortal body, granting us a glorified spiritual body to join all the saints as the bride of Christ.

Such a great salvation, if we truly recognize it, will not be treated lightly, and we will be willing to fully offer ourselves. How shall we escape if we neglect such a great salvation? Salvation is meant to deliver us from sin and set us free from its power. If we see salvation and experience salvation, we will gain freedom. However, if we neglect salvation, we remain in sin and will be enslaved by it. In such a condition, how shall we escape?

The latter part of verse 3 and verse 4 highlights fourfold testimony of this salvation.

Verse 3b: “Which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed to us by those who heard Him”

This salvation was first spoken by the Lord, contrasting sharply with the Old Testament, which was mediated through angels. Jesus, the Son of God, personally preached during His earthly ministry, teaching His disciples as they followed Him. His deeds during those three and a half years are clearly recorded in the four Gospels. To hear Christ's teachings, we must carefully study these Gospels, especially the Gospel of Matthew, which organizes Jesus' sayings into five discourses. These are the words of the Lord Jesus Christ Himself, forming the first testimony.

Later, those who heard Him confirmed it to us. These individuals who heard the words of Jesus Christ included the twelve apostles as well as many disciples who followed Him. They were eyewitnesses of that time. After Jesus ascended to heaven,

they continued the earthly ministry of Jesus, bearing witness to Him. The author states, "confirmed it to us," which includes himself. Therefore, the author likely did not follow Jesus directly but was saved through the preaching of Jesus' disciples. In this verse, we see the first testimony was preached directly by Jesus. The second testimony came from firsthand witnesses who proclaimed it. Today, we are born much later and are not included in these two testimonies. However, the third and fourth testimonies are broader in scope.

Verse 4: "God also bearing witness both with signs and wonders, with various miracles, and gifts of the Holy Spirit, according to His own will."

The third testimony is that God bore witness with signs, wonders, and various miracles. People of later generations can come to know the words of Jesus Christ by reading the Scriptures and the testimonies of the apostles. These remain objective. When necessary, God, according to His own will, grants signs, wonders, and various miracles. At times, God bestows signs, focusing on the evidence revealed by God. These are works of God, not necessarily supernatural but can include supernatural signs.

Sometimes God grants wonders, emphasizing the miraculous nature of the event itself, which should be supernatural or, at the very least, beyond human expectation. Occasionally, God grants various miracles, focusing on extraordinary power, which is usually supernatural. In His mercy, when people cannot believe through these objective facts alone, God allows them to experience deeply personal, and even supernatural, events. This enables people to subjectively sense the testimony of Scripture, strengthening their faith and leading them to better understand such a great salvation.

The fourth testimony is the gifts of the Holy Spirit. This testimony is the most comprehensive. Beyond the objective knowledge of Scripture, the Holy Spirit distributes Himself to believers as He wills, allowing for a deeper understanding. While translations such as the Chinese Union Version render it as "gifts of the Holy Spirit," and English translations also use "gifts", the original Greek word means

"distribution". Darby's translation renders it as "distribution of the Holy Spirit". This means that as we read the Scriptures, the Holy Spirit imparts Himself to us, helping us comprehend the spiritual meaning behind the literal words. The Holy Spirit personally explains to us, enabling us to truly understand such a great salvation. With these fourfold testimonies, every believer who belongs to God can come to know and receive salvation through these witnesses.

Let us pray together: Dear Lord, help us to know such a great salvation and not to neglect or regard it as ordinary. This salvation involves the cooperation of the Triune God, especially the Son of God, who sacrificed His precious life to pave a way for us to come before the Father. In our daily lives, through the help of the Holy Spirit, we are being sanctified more and more. When we recognize how vast this salvation is, we will give the more earnest heed to the things we have heard and not drift away. Lord, bless our daily Bible reading time in. Help us to seize the time to better understand salvation, experience salvation, and have salvation become a part of us. May we also become a beautiful testimony of Christ. Bless our daily lives, I pray in the Holy Name of Jesus Christ.