

# "The Things Which We Have Heard"

## Hebrews 2:1-4

This was given circa 1995.

Sadly, it seems the spiritual depth of the average American "Christian" isn't much deeper than his CD of "Andy Griffith's Favorite Hymns." The average American Christian is much more American than he is Christian. And the Church owns much of the blame.

Say what you will about the Puritans, but they were a people with a truly biblical world view who saw every aspect of their lives as being lived out before the face of God. I'm not advocating a government run by the church. But I think there's something to be said for a society in which the average ten-year old can give you a fairly good explanation of the doctrine of substitutionary atonement. Given a choice between the convictions of the average Puritan family and those of today's average American "Christian" family, I'd take the Puritan convictions hands down.

Why the difference? Probably many factors, but none more important than the Puritan pursuit of consistent submission to the authority of the Word of God. The preachers preached without compromise and the Spirit blessed it in the lives of the people. The church leaders took their cues from Scripture, rather than from the philosophies of the world -- the "authorities" on which so many church leaders lean today. In many pulpits it seems only those teachings which are substantiated by scientific research and endorsed by contemporary thought get any attention. Truly biblical thinking is vanishing, not only from our society, but from our churches as well.

America is a godless nation because that's where its churches have

led it. ... Many in our ranks still seek to reach out to the spiritual needs of others by drawing from "broken cisterns that can hold no water." By effectively denying the Word of God, they have lost their attachment to the God of the Word. They are thus unable to offer the world to drink of Him who is "the fountain of living waters." Instead they offer the world more of its own, making disciples who denigrate biblical faith and mock holiness. How many ... churches do you know that fear God?

Barry Pierce, First Baptist Church, Leominster, Massachusetts

These verses before us in this text are considered by many to be a parenthetical passage, inserted as a warning for disregarding the Word of God, pointing back, as a whole, to the first two verses of the book. The primary reason for this parenthetical view is verse five picks right back up where verse fourteen of chapter one stopped in the writer's presenting Christ as superior to the angels. Another reason for the parenthetical view is in verse two and the mention of "the word spoken by angels," connecting these verses with the context of angels but separating it from the overall address.

This is a warning more for the believer than the unbeliever, but the unbeliever is still responsible for their disregard of the Word of God, specifically the gospel message, according to verse three.

This text centers on the phrase chosen for the title of this sermon: "The things which we have heard."

## **I. WE NEED TO CONSIDER WHAT'S BEEN SAID – "GIVE THE MORE EARNEST HEED"**

- A. "Therefore" – on account of what's just been given on Christ's superiority to the prophets and the angels, and because of the proofs given for that superiority, what He said, both in Person while on earth recorded in the Gospels as well as what is written in the whole of

Scripture as His Word, is to be held on to tightly.

B. "We ought"

1. "We" – keep in mind that the book of Hebrews was written to believers and most often the personal pronouns are given to make sure the reader understood to whom the point being made was given.
2. "Ought" – the word implies moral necessity not necessarily moral obligation. It is necessary we never lose sight of what the Bible teaches and continue living according to its doctrine and principles.
3. The primary responsibility of the pastor of a church is to "feed the flock of God." These are terms for a shepherd's primary duty. "It is applicable not only to the act of feeding a flock, but also to that of protecting, guiding, and guarding it. It here denotes not merely the 'duty' of instructing the church, but also of 'governing' it; of 'securing it from enemies, and of 'directing' its affairs so as to promote its edification and peace" (Barnes).

If the pastors and teachers of the churches had done their job over the past several generations, the church would be much sounder than it is.

[Acts 20:28–30](#)

<sup>28</sup> Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood. <sup>29</sup> For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock. <sup>30</sup> Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them.

### 1 Peter 5:1–4

<sup>1</sup> The elders which are among you I exhort, who am also an elder, and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and also a partaker of the glory that shall be revealed: <sup>2</sup> Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof, not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind; <sup>3</sup> Neither as being lords over God's heritage, but being ensamples to the flock. <sup>4</sup> And when the chief Shepherd shall appear, ye shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away.

- C. “To give the more earnest heed” – not just consider them to be good truth to follow but to pay close attention to those truths.
  - 1. “To give heed” – προσέχω – literally, to hold the mind or the ear toward someone or something. “As a nautical term, it means to hold a ship in a direction, to sail towards” (Zodhiates).
  - 2. “The more earnest” – περισσοτέρως – more abundantly, more earnestly, more vehemently. This is a very strong word to emphasize the critical importance of not compromising on the Word of God and the things of God that we have been taught from the Word of God. This goes, in part, to the importance of being under the teaching of the Word of God in church.
  
- D. “To the things which we have heard”
  - 1. This goes back to chapter one and verse two and the things spoken by the Son in these last days. Both what Jesus taught the Apostles while He was with them on earth, and what He spoke through His Word for us today are in view in these texts.

2. This also points to the necessity of the teaching ministry of the church. What we hear from the Bible being taught goes a long way in understanding what we read on our own.

## **II. WE NEED TO CONTINUE IN WHAT'S BEEN SAID – "LEST AT ANY TIME WE SHOULD LET THEM SLIP"**

If we give the more earnest heed to the preaching and teaching of the Word of God, we won't be as likely to "let them slip."

Hebrews 4:14

<sup>14</sup> Seeing then that we have a great high priest, that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our profession.

2 Timothy 1:13

<sup>13</sup> Hold fast the form of sound words, which thou hast heard of me, in faith and love which is in Christ Jesus.

Titus 1:9

<sup>9</sup> Holding fast the faithful word as he hath been taught, that he may be able by sound doctrine both to exhort and to convince the gainsayers.

- A. "Lest at any time" – a compound word made up with a negative particle (μή), meaning not even, never, in no supposable case; and ποτέ, an indefinite word meaning when, whenever.

There should never be a "whenever," a time, that we are not giving close attention to the things of the Bible.

- B. "We should let them slip" – as a boat that gets loose of its mooring and slips adrift downstream. This can be considered in one of two ways, both end in the same destruction.

1. We can be the ones in the boat tied to the anchor of

God's Word and if we're not careful, we can get loose of it and drift away.

2. Or the Word of God is the boat tied to us, and we simply aren't paying close enough attention to it and it drifts away from us.
3. This drifting doesn't happen quickly most of the time. "Figuratively to slip away, suggesting a gradual and almost unnoticed movement past a certain point" (Zodhiates). It happens because we ignore the warning signs and get so caught up in the world around us that we simply fade away from God and His Word, most often seen coming by a drifting away from church.

Nothing in the world is easier than drifting. No person drifts upstream, only downstream. It is so easy. All you do is sit back and relax and let the boat go. You are soon lulled into a lazy stupor, not caring where you go. You may not even be aware you are drifting until it is too late and the boat is on the rocks. Satan is very wise. He seldom urges a Christian to leave the church or to give up his faith in the Lord. Instead he causes us to relax, rest on the oars, and drift along in the Christian life.

All around us are Christians who have drifted into a state of coldness and indifference. They have stopped caring about others who need to hear the message of God's saving grace.

### **III. THERE WILL BE CONSEQUENCES IF WE DON'T**

**CONSIDER AND CONTINUE IN WHAT'S BEEN SAID  
– VS. 2-4 – “HOW SHALL WE ESCAPE IF WE  
NEGLECT SO GREAT SALVATION”**

- A. Verses two through four are all one sentence (actually, it's a statement in question form) and as such they all deal with the same topic, found in the question, “How shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation...”
- B. Verse two speaks to the steadfastness of “the word spoken by angels,” speaking of the Levitical Law, and the consequences of not obeying the given law.

**Deuteronomy 33:2**

<sup>2</sup> And he [Moses] said, The LORD came from Sinai, and rose up from Seir unto them; he shined forth from mount Paran, and he came with ten thousands of saints: from his right hand went a fiery law for them.

**Psalm 68:17**

<sup>17</sup> The chariots of God are twenty thousand, even thousands of angels: the Lord is among them, as in Sinai, in the holy place.

**Acts 7:35**

<sup>35</sup> This Moses whom they refused, saying, Who made thee a ruler and a judge? the same did God send to be a ruler and a deliverer by the hand of the angel which appeared to him in the bush.

**Galatians 3:19–20**

<sup>19</sup> Wherefore then serveth the law? It was added because of transgressions, till the seed should come to whom the promise was made; and it was ordained by angels in the hand of a mediator. <sup>20</sup> Now a mediator is not a mediator of one, but God is one.

The text in Galatians chapter three points to this text in Hebrews (or vice versa), so let me make a few comments

on the text in Galatians from a term paper I wrote quite a number of years ago.

1. The law was given to Moses by God; this is very clear in the Bible. However, according to this verse in Galatians, as well as the other verses mentioned, angels were present at the giving of the law. What part they played is not precisely clear, but that they were there is.
  2. Considering what the word “ordained” means, it would seem prudent to simply consider the angels to have done nothing more than confirm to Moses, and to all peoples since Moses, what God wanted them to do with the law. The word “ordained,” in this context, simply means to establish, or to set, and, putting that together with the context of the law here, they were there to permanently establish the law as being from God.
  3. The “mediator” spoken of here is Moses. He was the one whom God used, and that the angels directed, to give the law to the people.
- C. Verse three begins with the question of escaping if the gospel message of salvation is neglected, both by the lost in rejecting the call to salvation, and by the believer for letting it drift away because we didn’t continually give proper heed to it.

I found the following points in a book on this text by William Newell published in 1947.

“Since Hebrews, we repeat, is addressed to professing Christian believers, ‘neglect,’ among many phases, would include:

1. Ceasing to give the attention and earnestness to the

things of God and of salvation that once we gave; a growing distaste for Bible reading; willingness to be absent from the assemblies of the saints of God (Heb. 10:25).

2. Absorption in earthly, selfish interests.
  3. Increasing deadness of heart toward Christ, His sacrifice, and to the love of God, Who gave Him.
  4. Occupation with the affairs and news of this world, rather than of the world to come, and our coming Lord.
  5. Loss of God-consciousness.
  6. Putting away of the thought of a “judgment to come.”
  7. Finally, living like the ‘beasts that perish,’ so far as eternity is concerned.”
- D. The question of escape from what comes to mind here – again, it’s two-fold.
1. For the unbeliever, it’s an eternity in hell.
  2. For the believer, it’s escaping the chastening of God here and the loss of rewards at the judgment seat of Christ.

Escape what? Ah, note how abstractly the apostle worded it. He did not specify the “what.” It all depends upon the state of the individual. If he be only a lifeless professor and continues neglecting the Gospel, Hell will be his certain portion. But if he be a regenerated believer, though a careless and

worldly one, then lack of assurance and joy, profitless and fruitlessness, will be his portion; and then, how shall he “escape” the chastening rod of the holy Father? Thus, the question asked in our verse addresses itself to *all* who read the Epistle.  
(A. W. Pink)

- E. The last part of verse three points to the earthly ministry of Christ and the teaching of the Apostles in person. The message of the means of “so great salvation” began with the work of Christ and continues today through His Word and His servants.
- F. Verse four points back to the phrase, “confirmed unto us by them that heard him,” that confirmation being the signs and wonders and miracles and the special gifts of the Spirit that they were given to heal like Jesus did and even raise the dead if necessary.

These gifts and special abilities were given “according to his [God’s] own will.” The same is true today – God chooses who gets what and we are obligated to use them for His glory.

**Conclusion:** Much more could be said on these verses, but the most important point is that the Word of God be heeded intently, be held on to and kept in close proximity to us so as to not let it slip away, and to be warned of the consequences of neglecting it.

A former park ranger at Yellowstone National Park tells the story of a ranger leading a group of hikers to a fire lookout. The ranger was so intent on telling the hikers about the flowers and animals that he considered the messages on his two-way radio distracting, so he switched it off. Nearing the tower, the ranger was met by a nearly breathless lookout, who asked why he hadn't responded to the

messages on his radio. A grizzly bear had been seen stalking the group, and the authorities were trying to warn them of the danger.

Any time we tune out the messages God has sent us, we put at peril not only ourselves, but also those around us. How important it is that we never turn off God's saving communication!-- Harold M. Wiest; Dawson Creek, British Columbia, Canada