

Hebrews (Part Ten): Chapters 1 And 2

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There is no doubt that Hebrews 1 sets a strong, decisive beginning as it establishes the foundation, preparing to address the ramifications that were hindering the spiritual growth of many Jews who argued against the reality of Jesus being qualified to be High Priest under the New Covenant. I am going through the epistle to the Hebrews very slowly because I believe that once we get past the beginning of our relationship with God, by means of our calling, that Hebrews is based on Jesus' own statement that appears in John 15:5, in which He said, "Without Me you can do nothing." He meant it!

In context, it means that we will produce no fruit to glorify God without our contact with Jesus Christ. Remember how He illustrated that He is the branch and all these shoots are attached to the branch, but the shoots cannot produce anything unless the branch makes it possible for them to do that.

Without a doubt, all the books in the Bible are important. But in that listing of the books in the Bible, the epistle to Hebrews may be, in the overall sense, first among equals in terms of importance to our salvation. Jesus Christ is our Savior, is He not? And Hebrews is devoted to our Leader, the Captain of our salvation, from beginning to end. It is teaching us how to use our relationship with Jesus Christ pay dividends in terms of our salvation. We vitally need Him, that is, a very knowledgeable knowledge of Him and it is the hope of our salvation.

Now, the first four verses of Hebrews the first chapter establish His qualifications and they are most impressive. The remainder of the chapter addresses aspects of His clear superiority over the prophets God has previously sent and the angels that many Jews believe were better qualified than Him to be the High Priest. In that chapter, Jesus' superiority is clearly established over both.

Angels, on the surface of things spiritual, were more impressive to think about, or if it happened to occur to look upon by a human, than the humble Nazarene who suffered through a very shameful and painful death. But the spiritual reality was that Jesus was far, far above any angel in terms of qualifications. Now, Jesus was presented to mankind by the Father as a humble incarnate for the very purpose that profound attention by converts to all He said and did was required.

Jesus did not come to earth to save angels. It was therefore proper that God identified Him with those He came to save—mankind. Humans were, and are, His brethren. His humanity as our Savior is a very strong reason He should receive humanity's undivided attention regarding our calling to conversion. It is fitting, proper, and necessary for we humans *never* to allow ourselves to be indifferent to *anything* that He said. A humble human, yes, He was. But this humble human was also our Creator, and that carries a great deal of weight.

As the first chapter ends, it is time within the epistle to begin teaching the practical aspects that apply to daily applications of His being firmly established in that important office. It is a stark reality that God's purpose waits for no one. His purpose moves on toward the establishment of His Kingdom as our lives in Christ move towards their death. They are going in opposite direction. And the indication there is, we better make the best use possible of that time.

Before leaving chapter 1, we are going to take a look at some very intriguing verses regarding angels that we might need help to be reminded of because angels are, for the most part, invisible to our normal vision. So if your Bibles are not open to Hebrews 1, please do so. We are going to begin here in verse 8.

Hebrews 1:8-14 But to the Son He says: "Your throne O God, is forever and ever; a scepter of righteousness is the scepter of Your kingdom. You have loved righteousness and hated lawlessness; therefore God, your God, has anointed You with the oil of gladness more than Your companions." And: "You, Lord, in the beginning laid the foundation of the earth, and the heavens are the work of

Your hands. They will perish, but You remain; and they will all grow old like a garment; like a cloak You will fold them up, and they will be changed. But You are the same, and your years will not fail." But to which of the angels has He ever said: "Sit at My right hand, until I make Your enemies Your footstool"? Are they not all ministering spirits sent forth to minister for those who will inherit salvation?

Verses 8-10 clearly establish that Jesus sits on the seat of *absolute power in all of creation* except for the Father. He is in charge of the church. He will be in charge of the Kingdom of God to which He leads the converts and He will be in that position at the beginning of the Millennium. I want to prove this to you just with one verse. I think that you all agree with this. But in Psalm 110 it establishes this forever and ever and ever.

Psalm 110:1-2 The Lord said to my Lord [this is a psalm of David so "my Lord" is Jesus Christ], "Sit at My right hand, until I make Your enemies Your footstool." The Lord shall send the rod of Your strength out of Zion. Rule in the midst of Your enemies!

That word rule becomes important as we go along. But that is a prophecy made by David. That One who is going to come from his loins was going to rule over the entire earth. In fact, all creation except for the Father. So Psalm 110:1 makes His position and authority, including over angels, very clear, and we have not even left the first chapter. I am going to read verse 14 again in chapter 1. Referring to angels, the author said,

Hebrews 1:14 Are they not all ministering spirits sent forth to minister for those who will inherit salvation?

This verse establishes the angels position in relation to Christ and us. Jesus Christ is their ruler. They worship Him. And with us they are ministering spirits and have been assigned that responsibility by the Father and probably Jesus Christ as well. They are designated as ministering spirits and they indeed are spirit beings, but they are titled here as ministers. A minister, brethren, is a servant. The difference between them and Christ in terms of authority is very clear and, I repeat, that this was an issue with the Jews. It was something that they had trouble overcoming. That this humble Nazarene

was actually the Boss, the supervisor of these powerful angels that they so desired to be like.

So the terms of the authority of Jesus Christ are very clear. It is He who assigns the angels to their responsibilities. They are servants to the one in authority and that is Jesus Christ. So a minister is a servant. A person who occupies an inferior place in ranking and acts in a subordinate position subject to the will of a superior. Now catch this: angels are not governing spirits. They are *ministering* spirits. They are servants of someone who is in authority. And as we are beginning to find out, they are also servants of us. So service, not dominion is their area of labor.

There is an interesting comparison right in this whole section here and that is, just to show you the difference between the two (so for the good of the Jews), that Jesus sits at the right hand of God. Angels though are sent forth to work. Do you get the difference? This verse clearly ordains that these greatly endowed spirit beings, that is, angels, with truly wonderful knowledge and perhaps thousands of years of experience working with their Creator (the Bible describes them as excellent in strength), and yet they are *our* attendants. You read it yourself. They are our attendants. They are ministering spirits to us. But we are not their Boss, Jesus Christ is. Let us not get the order here confused at all.

Now, this tremendous service has come to us by means of God's grace. And they and their services are a gift. It reveals God's concern for us and knowing this should greatly increase our sense of security.

Again, hold your hand in the book of Hebrews because we are going to come right back there. But I want to show you a scripture in Psalm the 34th chapter.

Psalm 34:17 The righteous cry out, and the Lord hears, and delivers them out of all their troubles.

How does He do it? Very often through angels. Who knows how many times we have been the point of one of those rescues and an angel intervened in something that we were going through and we never knew it. That is an incredible piece of good news that I believe we do not often think about.

However, we should think about this and thank God for His mercy, considering now especially America's cultural decline and as its immorality rapidly increases. In today's world, the kind of assignment that an angel has is most assuredly done in this manner. So follow me here:

The king literally has any number of usually armed servants he could assign the responsibility of watching over, we will say, his son or daughter. The protected one, though being much younger and less knowledgeable, inferior in strength, and in things attained, nonetheless outranks the one who is protecting him. (This is even treated, what I just told you, back in the New Testament but we will not go to that though.) But that is what happened to us. God has assigned us to be protected by angels and they are sent forth.

Now, in our case, the angels far excel us in strength—just like the human protector of a king's home and family—as well as in wisdom and what they have attained, and yet they are our servants. They minister to us. That does not seem fair, but it is true. Now, here is why: We outrank them. Did you know that? As powerful as these angels are, as long as they have lived, the intelligence that they are able to use in virtually all kinds of things, they are our servants because *we* are the children of God. And, let me add something to that. We are not only the children of God, but we have been redeemed with royal blood. That is an important point. Thus they serve us. And most of the time we are not even aware that it is going on.

Why has God made this angels-ministering-to-us arrangement? There are a couple of possibilities. He really does not tell us. But there are things that we can remember from the Scriptures. First, remember that His judgments are true and right. The protection afforded God's children may possibly also have been done as a test to the obedience and loyalty of angels for God and His children. Angels have feelings, brethren. We know that from the Scriptures.

Are there any of the angels who feel bad because they have to take care of the Boss' kids? It is one of those things. They have feelings about things! Did not Satan rebel against God because of his *feelings*? Yes, he did. He wanted more. He deserved more. His feelings got the best of him. Angels have feelings. So, God may be testing the angels to see how they feel about taking care of us. That is a possibility.

Remember an angel's high position in the workings of God and that He considers them as Family members too. Do not forget that many angels have defected from their assigned responsibilities in the past as Satan did. So, God throws them another test to see how they feel about taking care, watching over the Boss' children. Plus, there may be some uncertainty in His mind regarding the loyalties of a number of them and it is possible that some angels must be tested in order to bring to the surface where their sympathies really lie.

Let us turn to Ephesians 3 because I want to prove this whole thing out step-by-step as we go along.

Ephesians 3:14 For this reason [the apostle says] I bow my knees to the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, from whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named.

The *whole* family. I told you that God considers the angels as part of His Family, and others as well. Now, who are these members? I do not believe it is the Father and Son. I believe it is the angelic beings and that God's purpose could also be to strengthen bonding relationships between the various members of that great Family in heaven.

I want to go to another scripture here in Hebrews the 12th chapter.

Hebrews 12:22-23 But you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, to an innumerable company of angels, to the general assembly and church of the firstborn who are registered in heaven, to God the Judge of all, to the spirits of just men made perfect.

That scripture is only, as part of my sermon here, as an additional proof that there is more to God's Family than we might suppose, and He wants to possibly make sure that they are all getting along the way they should.

There are quite a number of biblical examples being used to intervene in mankind's behalf and thus we can see that God has done this before, that is, assigning ministering spirits to take up for our defense, and there is no

reason that He cannot do it again almost limitless times as the membership of His earthly Family grows and the need for His intervention also grows along with it.

Turn with me to II Kings 6 and we will see a number of times that angels have been sent in order to rescue one of God's children.

II Kings 6:15-17 And when the servant of the man of God arose early and went out, there was an army, surrounding the city with horses and chariots. And his servant said to him, "Alas, my master! What shall we do?" So he answered, "Do not fear, for those who are with us are more than those who are with them." And Elisha prayed, and said, "Lord, I pray, open his eyes that he may see." And then the Lord opened the eyes of the young man, and he saw. And behold, the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire all around.

What happened was this: Elisha and his servant Ghazi were being pursued and boxed in by the army of the king of Syria. The entire city was surrounded. When Ghazi, the servant, arose in the morning, he observed their precarious situation and knew full well that Elisha and himself were the targets of this army. So Elisha prayed, God opened the eyes of Ghazi, but the story continues on. When God opened his eyes, Ghazi then was able to see horses, chariots, soldiers, whatever was needed to fight a battle, so that God's army was far greater than the army of the king of Syria's. Now in verse 18, the story continues on.

II Kings 6:18-23 So when the Syrians came down to him, Elisha prayed to the Lord, and said, "Strike this people, I pray, with blindness." And He struck them with blindness according to the word of Elisha. Now Elisha said to them, "This is not the way, nor is that the city. Follow me, and I will bring you to the man whom you seek." But he led them to Samaria [capital city of Northern Israel]. So it was, when they had come to Samaria, that Elisha said, "Lord, open the eyes of these men, that they may see." And the Lord opened their eyes, and they saw; and there they were inside Samaria! [Now who was captive? The army of Syria was captive.] Now when the king of Israel saw them, he said to Elijah, "My

father, shall I kill them? Shall I kill them?" But he [Elisha] answered, "You shall not kill them. Would you kill those whom you have taken captive with your sword and your bow? Set food and water before them, that they may eat and drink and go to their master." Then he prepared a great feast for them; and after they ate and drank, he sent them away and they went to their master. So the bands of Syrian raiders came no more into the land of Israel.

Well, that whole affair turned out to be a great victory for Israel that God gave them when, mercifully, Elisha and his servant were the intended victims and then beyond that would have been the city of Samaria.

Another example is of how angels conducted themselves with a great deal of patience when Lot was behaving like an outright jackass. I mean, he was really stupid. Lot lingered in Sodom, a city that God was going to destroy and Lot already knew it! And still he was lingering. He was acting, brethren, unconverted, like it was never going to happen. His wife and his two daughters appear to have been following his unconverted leading until the angels had to grab their hands and virtually yank the four of them out of town. Boy, I will tell you, what mercy!

The wife then looked back and tragedy occurred to the family. Now, Lot's stupidity was not done yet. Following that, Lot, under the influence of alcohol, committed incest with his daughters and still God saved them. Don't you try any of stuff like that! See what a mess he was precipitating by means of boneheaded decisions? Why did not God just allow him to perish? Perhaps God was mercifully responding to Abraham's appeals and perhaps God saw him as possessing a righteousness not easily perceived. But the angels nonetheless made their rescue.

Now there are more, very successful rescues by angels that we can use as examples. But I think that near the top of the list must be Daniel. Everybody seems to know the story of Daniel in the lion's den, but what might not be known is the unusual specific method that the angels used to rescue Daniel. Turn with me to the book of Daniel to chapter 6. Daniel received his lion's den sentence of a gruesome death when it was illegal to worship any God except that of the Medes. Now, Daniel is well aware that what he was going to do when he prayed was illegal, but he was going to do that nonetheless. So

he prayed at his usual time, in his usual place, and was thus apprehended because those driven to jealousy knew that as well and they saw him as a meddling lawbreaker.

It appears that even the king was greatly offended by the sentence issued by the court to put Daniel to death by lions. Now to the king, Daniel was not only a great administrator, he was also a friend.

Daniel 6:21-24 Then Daniel said to the king, "O king, live forever! My God has sent His angel and shut the lions' mouths, so that they have not hurt me, because I was found innocent before Him; and also, O king, I have done no wrong before you." Now the king was exceedingly glad for him, and commanded that they should take Daniel out of the den. So Daniel was taken out of the den, and no injury whatever was found on him, because he believed in his God. And the king gave command, and they brought those men who had accused Daniel, and they cast them into the den of lions—they, their children, and their wives; and the lions overpowered them, and broke all their bones in pieces before they ever came to the bottom of the den.

What He did was the angel of the Lord closed the lions' mouths so they were free to move around, but they were not free to bite anybody. And justice was pretty quick in those days. In this case, it was because God judged and then using the same lions intended to kill Daniel, He carried out His judgment in behalf of one of His servants by means of an angel.

Now, those occasions that I have already given you are all from the Old Testament and there are a few given in the New Testament. None were violent but still nonetheless spectacular. Please turn with me to the book of Acts, chapter 5. I know that you know these things, but I want to make sure that I get this step-by-step because we are in a very, very important book.

Acts 5:17-24 Then the high priest rose up, and all those who were with him (which is the sector of the Sadducees), and they were filled with indignation [this is against the apostles], and laid their hands on the apostles and put them in the common prison. But at night an angel of the Lord opened the prison doors and brought

them out, and said, "Go stand in the temple and speak to the people all the words of this life." And when they heard that, they entered the temple early in the morning and taught. But the high priest and those with them came and called the council together, with all the elders of the children of Israel, and sent to the prison to have them brought. But when the officer came and did not find them in the prison, they returned and reported, saying, "Indeed we found the prison shut securely, and the guards standing outside before the doors; but when we opened them, we found no one inside."

Pretty good.

Next I want Luke 16. There is something I want us to note here just in passing but it is reasonably important.

Luke 16:22 "So it was that the beggar died, and was carried by the angels to Abraham's bosom. The rich man also died and was buried."

We want to go to just one other scripture and that is in the book of Psalms.

Psalms 91:11-12 For He shall give His angels charge over you, to keep you in all your ways. In their hands they shall bear you up, lest you dash your foot against the stone.

The only reason I read those scriptures is I wanted you to see that the word angels is recorded as plural. I mentioned this for a specific reason and that is because the Catholic Church has a doctrine that claims that there is only a single angel assigned to this responsibility. Not so. There are any number God is free to call upon at any time that He feels that it is needful.

Now, one more note to affect our sense of security regarding the extent that Christ views His relationship with us. This is really kind of interesting. One commentator made the point of emphasizing that the term "ministering spirits" is in reality a title." Are they not ministering spirits?" That it is a title. Now this indicates that they hold an office in the same sense as deacon, elder, pastor, evangelist, and apostle hold an office. Therefore, what it shows is that it is not simply that they go forth randomly to do their deeds, but

rather they are sent forth and report back to their superior as is normal in governmental formulas. Looking at this in this manner makes one realize that God is not just winging it as time goes by, but is constantly monitoring the effectiveness of His operations.

Back to the book of Hebrews again. We are going to be bouncing back and forth because we are not really done with chapter 1 yet. But as we begin delving into Hebrews 2, it is helpful to know that the sense of urgency and exhortation within the introduction in chapter 1 continues right on into this chapter. There is no break in the tension whatever. These events are important to our conduct and therefore our witness in producing fruit that glorifies God.

Note that the first word in chapter 2, in verse 1 is therefore, That term indicates that because of what has already been stated, we are going to be called upon to collect our thoughts and do something. To help us, let us first recall that Hebrews 1 names seven things that mark Christ as decidedly superior to angels in Jewish minds. But in case we had any feelings about angels, I hope this begins to remind you about how important what was said in chapter 1 is to our well being. In the context of our times, we Americans might not grasp why some of these achievements of Jesus may not be anywhere near what we in our culture and times think is important. But here is what chapter 1 proves. These are the seven things that are pointed out there and they are foundational to Jesus Christ's ministry to us.

1. It says He has obtained a more excellent name than they are. They being angels and prophets.
2. He will be worshipped by them as the firstborn. That tells you right away again the importance of Jesus Christ in terms of importance.
3. He created them.
4. He sits on the divine throne.
5. He is anointed above them.
6. He created the universe.

7. He has a higher place of than angels.

Now, something that we are urged to do by that word therefore is to take note of these things. We are not dealing with some, what shall I call, "minor figure" in the hierarchy of God. Something that we are urged to do is to take action on what is in chapter 1 to ensure that we do not lose all that Jesus Christ represents, has done, and can do to affect our salvation. I like the way that the Amplified phrases Hebrews 2:1, saying, "Since all this is true [that is, all that is in chapter 1], we ought to pay much closer attention than ever to the truths that we have heard, lest in any way we drift past [them] and slip away." After the end of all that is in chapter 1 this is what the author of the book of Hebrews feels is of primary importance. That probably came from the apostle Paul. I do not know that for sure, but he seems to be the most likely one to have written this.

Our overall responsibilities are to glorify God by producing much fruit and growing in the grace and knowledge of Jesus Christ by means of practical applications of loving one another. The author is saying, let us not forget the nuts and bolts of what we are involved in or we will drift away from our conversion to Christ and the Kingdom. Now, the author, probably the apostle Paul, knew full well from his own conversion experiences, that it takes focused and consistent efforts or this world will once again grab our attention to our spiritual detriment.

He repeats the same sense of urgency in Hebrews 6 and in yet three more places before Hebrews is completed. It is the most (I have seen this from other researchers) exhortative book in the entire Bible. All through it the apostle is saying, do not lose this, you have got to apply yourself. He is not-so-plainly saying, let this knowledge of Christ's importance *move* you. God has assigned the second highest Being in all of creation to watch out for us! That is not unimportant. The goal in life is far, far too important to let it just slide through inattention.

He seems to have two possible avenues to failure. One (this is the apostle writing), is outright danger to life and limb. That is, if we begin to fail, God

may just allow us to be eliminated. The second possibility is that we absolutely *will* receive a chastening from God. He will not let it slip by. That is why the apostle here is urging us to get going on this.

Now, the verbs that are used in these first four verses are very unusually strong. The verse 3 verb is especially strong and indicates that the author may indeed be the apostle Paul. The author was somebody who was *not* following Christ during His earthly ministry but received his calling later. That is one of the clearest possibilities in this book that he is the author of this because that definitely fits the apostle Paul. Note what he writes. He says the word of the Lord was *confirmed* to him by those who *heard* Him. That is very clear. He did not hear Him in His ministry. In other words, he was told by those who personally heard Christ during His ministry. So, the author is urging that responding to Christ because of all of His personal attributes, in addition to His sovereignty, is something we ought to do. In fact, it is our duty to do it.

The duty that is intended by the author is a serious, firm, fixed settling of the mind upon that which they heard of Christ. And he is telling us that in our time, we must put our whole heart into this way of life, bringing the urgency to every aspect of securing the salvation God has promised through Christ, lest it slip from our mind.

One of the things that is interesting is the term drift as it is used as the last word in verse 1 in the New King James version. The same Greek word underlying it is translated as "slip" in the Amplified Version, drift or slip. This is interesting because it tends to show me something that I have observed in my years as a church pastor and also apparently true then too. And incidentally either drift or slip is a correct translation of that word.

My observation through my time as a church pastor is that there is little of what we might term as violence or really intense feeling involved in people seeming to ceasing to fellowship with the church. Disfellowshipping is also rare. What happens is people just seem to gradually lose interest and ultimately reach a conclusion to justify leaving to themselves and stop attending. No big fight. People just leave. I do not mean that there is never some big argument over a doctrine or whatever, but it almost never happens that way. People just disappear.

If you ever do any researching in some technical journals, you are probably going to run across the name Thayer, who is a Greek word researcher. Well, he provides an expanded definition of the underlying Greek term that gives a more explicit meaning of the Greek word translated as "drift" or "slip." Now, listen carefully to this. That Greek term means "to find oneself flowing or passing by without giving due heed to things." That is why they slip out of the church. It also slips out of their mind.

That term's meanings is involved in a situation where one might say, "I never noticed that at that time." Where was their mind? Well, they never noticed it, the attention was on something else. Or here is another one. "Oh, I didn't catch that when he [or she] said that because my mind had drifted to another subject. I wasn't really concentrating." However, in this context, the things in danger of being passed by were the words of salvation through Jesus Christ. Never forget the admonition that we are to live by *every* word of God.

Now, verse 2 in Hebrews 2 adds weight to the author's warning by reminding all readers that even though the first covenant may appear to be on a lower level than the New Covenant because much of it was conducted with many angels participating, God was nonetheless steadfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just reward. Let me read that first to you.

Hebrews 2:2 For if the words spoken through angels proved steadfast [he is talking about the Old Covenant, brethren], and every transgression and disobedience received a just reward. . .

Do you think God is going to overlook our sins? Do you think God is not going to overlook His governmental responsibilities? Do you think God is going to overlook His childrearing responsibilities? No, He will not! We do. That is the difference between us and Him. He will carry out His responsibilities. I am not saying that He is going to come down on us like a ton of bricks. Remember, He is the very height of mercy as well, but correct He will! If He feels it needs corrected, He will do it. It may be just a little chastening or whatever, but He will do it. What did He say about Abraham? That one of the reasons that He chose Abraham was because he will teach his children.

Here we are being reminded that God will not forget His responsibility to *His* children to see that they are chastened for the mistakes that they make. Again, I am not saying He is going to come down like a ton of bricks but there will be some chastening. Most of the time I think it is going to be very mild compared to what we probably deserve.

So I want you to know this: that God clearly backed the Old Covenant with firm responses. That is what Paul was saying there. We want to pass off the Old Covenant as being nothing. Not so. God did not consider it that way. And we have the apostle's word for it as well.

Verse 3 then clearly clinches the admonition and it is, do not be deceived. Now if we neglect this great salvation God has called us to attend to, we also will receive a just recompense for our neglect of Jesus' words. Do not let this opportunity drift by. The author is not saying that God is going to come down like a ton of bricks falling from the sky. Never forget that God is the ultimate in merciful pity as well. But God will take care of the situation in His time. He will not drift from His responsibilities—governmental responsibilities, childrearing responsibilities—and that is why we must give the more earnest heed to the life responsibilities of this way given us by His calling.

Now, back to the word drifting again. The drifting spoken here is rarely intentional. This is just something that I have observed. It is rarely intentional. It is one of those things in life that just seems to happen, but it does happen, and there are causes. Very often it happens because we choose to live life doing those things that we enjoy because they are easy for us to do and they also give us a certain amount of pleasure as well. But the drifting is frequently caused by sheer neglect, that is, laziness or forgetfulness. The neglect is caused by poor choices prioritizing what is truly important and the failure of sacrificing our time and efforts because they do not give us pleasure right off the bat even as we begin to make the sacrifice.

So, the conclusion there is: a Christian must develop a steadfast discipline. It is an absolute must.

It is interesting that the Greek word translated as neglect in verse 3 (this I think is very interesting), "How shall we escape if we neglect. . ." more

literally translates into English as meaning "to make light of" or "to be unconcerned." Turn with me to Matthew the 22nd chapter.

Matthew 22:1-5 And Jesus answered and spoke to them again by parables and said: "The kingdom of heaven is like a certain king who arranged a marriage for his son, and sent out his servants to call those who were invited to the wedding; and they were not willing to come. Again, he sent out other servants, saying, "Tell those who are invited, "See, I have prepared my dinner, my oxen and fatted cattle are killed, and all things are ready. Come to the wedding.'" But they made light of it and went their ways, one to his own farm, and another to his business."

Neglect in Hebrews 2:3 and these words that are translated in Matthew 22 "to make light of," they were unconcerned. It is exactly the same word in Matthew 22, verses 1-5 as in Hebrews chapter 2, verse 3, and thus, the author of Hebrews points to the same cause of possible failure as Jesus did in His parable. And the author includes himself in this admonition because if we read this, "how shall *we* escape if *we*" he included himself in that "neglect so great a salvation." And if that was the apostle Paul, that was very interesting. I do not think that he was very often a lazybones at all.

Now why is God this way where he is going to carry through on His responsibilities? First, He sets us an example. He does not slack off at any time, but He is always judging Himself and His responsibilities. But there is a reason why God is this way so that He is on top of everything. It is because God clearly holds us accountable for what we have been freely given. Did you hear me? He holds us responsible for what we have been given. And this has strong implications. Notice something that is clearly stated in Hebrews 1.

Hebrews 1:9 "You have loved righteousness and hated lawlessness; therefore, Your God has anointed You with the oil of gladness more than Your companions."

That is the concern. The concern is He does not want us to lose salvation. And so He is going to carry through on His responsibilities or otherwise we are going to miss out.

Notice what it says regarding salvation in Hebrews 1:14. He is writing for Christians and the verse says *will* inherit salvation. One four letter word, but boy, it has a ton of meaning to it. Do you know what that is telling us? It is telling us that Christians, though they are under the blood of Jesus Christ, they do not have salvation *yet*. It is *will* inherit it. He is clearly stating that we do not have it yet. It is coming in the future. And though we are covered by the blood of Jesus Christ, we have not yet finished the course that has been assigned to us.

The "once saved, always saved" doctrine of this world's churches calling themselves Christian, clearly teaches "once saved, always saved." It is that once one is under the blood of Jesus Christ, that person is already saved, and therefore forever assured of salvation. This is one of Satan's most deceitful lies. Jesus Christ is indeed the payment for our sins and by what He has accomplished in our behalf saves us from the penalty of sin to that point in one's life. However, life has not ended yet and growth in the grace and the knowledge of Jesus Christ has barely begun. How much fruit have you produced to glorify the Father?

Let me ask you something. Have you recognized the power of sin that is in this world? Sin is a power that the Bible frequently touches on in order that we be aware that sin is constantly enticing the carnal nature and thus death. There is power in other people sinning. No, brethren, we have not yet been saved from the power of sin in this world, attempting to persuade our carnality to sin and bring death.

Here is another truth. We are not yet saved until we are totally beyond the presence of sin to influence our decision-making. That is, until sin has absolutely no wedge into us that can deny us salvation, because its very presence on Planet Earth is almost like it is an eternally-living beast of prey! And brethren, we are still here. Sin's presence is right here too. And therefore, we are still alive as a human being. We still possess our carnality, and if allowed, it will *leap* at the chance to sin. We are not guaranteed eternal life only on the basis of our acceptance of Jesus Christ.

Have you pondered this fact: Sin was not even an issue for Adam and Eve until Satan joined Adam and Eve's presence. I want you to think about this. And though he did not make them sin, he indeed was part of that three-person small company and undoubtedly having some influence.

Now, we will not be completely free of his and this world's presence until we are changed and totally beyond the grasp of sin that still dwells in us. When we begin our next sermon, we are going to look for some wisdom from Peter to combat this.