

## **Why Hebrews Was Written (Part Thirteen): Hebrews 2 And The Next Five Years**

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I have expressed myself several times about the state of the nation since the election of President Joe Biden, who carried with him Democrat control of the House of Representatives and the tie-breaker in the Senate in the person of Vice President Kamala Harris. It does not appear that the Republican Party will be much of a factor in the American government for the near future. Its brand of “conservatism” does not seem to appeal to ever-more-liberal Americans. To the latter, the Republican message appears to be a step backward rather than forward.

A primary issue confronting us as both members of God’s Family and citizens of the unconverted nation continues to be whether the Democrat Party, with the help of American voters, will continue its decades-long drive toward socialism. To that party’s leadership, socialism is the way to greater power and therefore more control. The citizenry has checked and will continue to slow the nation’s evolution in that direction because giving up things, including liberties believed to be advantages, is very difficult to do.

Will large swaths of the citizenry continue to push for greater liberalization of laws relating to family ties, religious life, and other moral and ethical principles? Will business interests, perceiving economic advantages in heading in that direction, continue to lend their support? The current Democrat Party persists in piling up vast national indebtedness while publicly acting as though it should not concern us. However, such a huge debt cannot be ignored. As other nations have experienced, massive debt presages national decline. We can predict that America’s future is one of continued deterioration, and it may downgrade substantially. It has not even begun to bottom out.

Do we see any indication that America’s true spirituality will improve substantially? We do not stand alone in thinking that America’s trajectory,

especially in spiritual matters, is downward. The whole evangelical arm of the Protestant world believes pretty much the same thing.

However, the recent historical record is clear. No socialist government—be it Communism operated by the Russians, Chinese, or Cubans; or National Socialism, popularly called Fascism, managed by Germans or Italians—has succeeded in producing anything but disaster for the peoples of those nations. We can point to the example of Venezuela in the last decade to show that socialism still produces only want and misery.

Yet here we are. More than two decades into the twenty-first century, America's government is led by a cabal that is driving the nation toward the same general system that, in living memory, failed so miserably elsewhere. This leftward push is even more perplexing because the United States of America possesses a complete historical record of its ability to produce the world's highest standard of living under its Constitution. Its founding structure and principles—which mirrored many of the governmental, religious, educational, and business principles commanded by the Creator God in His Word—had worked splendidly for two centuries!

Are we stupid? No, we are not stupid. The problems we Americans are generating are not a matter of lack of intelligence. We are exposing our significant lack of true spirituality, which motivates stupid choices out of self-concern just as other nations do. We are carnal human beings and led by people who do not believe what God says in almost every case. There is, therefore, no reason to think that America's spirituality will change for the better.

I can only conclude, then, that the circumstances for the called children of God, in terms of spiritual wellbeing, will be greatly tested over the next five years. The new "normal" will only continue its spiritually downward course. We are left to guess how far and how quickly God will allow it to fall. This conclusion leads me to warn that we had better be on our spiritual toes because the going may soon get very tough for the converted.

One reason dominates why this nation will continue its century-long, downward trajectory: The churches in America have been slack in following God's truths. Each denomination has lost a great deal of the enthusiasm it

had for preaching the gospel in earlier times. Many still send missionaries out and fill the world with Bibles, but each generation has watered down the message they preach. So, Americans have generally abandoned their zeal for Christianity, a zeal that had existed from this nation's beginning.

This process has resulted in a nation that has been systematically losing touch with the Creator God and His laws. Without that contact, He surely must feel abandoned, as He felt abandoned by Israel and Judah in Old Testament times. The result is the declining America we live in, which will continue to self-destruct as a nation because of its confused and almost essentially godless leadership—and not just its political leadership.

## **The Spiritual Giants**

What was the difference between Cain and Abel? The Bible notes that Abel proved by his action that something set him apart from his brother. Though Cain and Abel were full, flesh-and-blood brothers and raised to adulthood by the same set of parents, Abel was markedly different, which Hebrews 11:1-4 helps us to understand:

Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen. For by it the elders obtained a good testimony. By faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that the things which are seen were not made of things which are visible. By faith Abel offered to God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, through which he obtained witness that he was righteous, God testifying of his gifts; and through it he being dead still speaks.

Abel's belief in God set him apart from Cain. Even today, those who operate on the same faithful set of beliefs distinguish themselves from those who do not, like Cain. This principle is a simple but monumental reality concerning how one should conduct his life! No other characteristic even begins to come close in value to what faith in God can produce in terms of wellbeing for an individual or a nation.

Hebrews 11:6 points out faith's importance, "But without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is,

and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him.” The epistle’s author, who may have been the apostle Paul, adds in Hebrews 10:22, “Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water.” Faith is thus mandatory for a relationship with God.

Faith in God is not the complete answer, of course, but its lack certainly reveals a fundamental need as people try to find solutions to the problems that arise almost daily in this nation. God is the Source of all good solutions, and faith in Him is the beginning step in seeking them out. It is by our personal faith as God’s called-out ones that we will not only endure the troubling times that lie ahead but also grow as we respond to Jesus Christ’s leadership. Even amid the nation’s calamitous troubles, we can triumph through the faithful use of His Holy Spirit!

We cannot be dogmatic that we will experience any direct persecution over the next five years. We can be sure, however, that the ongoing troubles will continue to spawn a gradual but ever-increasing weariness and confusion. The “spirit of the times,” the currents of thought in our increasingly anti-God society, will impact our lives negatively. We will likely find it difficult to be certain about how we should conduct our lives during such times. We may have trouble discerning who is telling the truth about ideas and events affecting us. These things will disturb our sense of wellbeing. In other words, much as we have experienced over the last five years, the “swamp” will continue to stir things up even to the point of chaos, if that is what they feel they must do to retain and increase their control over us.

## **We Have a Serious Work To Do**

What God has freely given us is of such monumental importance to our eternal wellbeing that one would think nothing could ever dislodge it from our minds. However, Hebrews 2:1-3 warns that God’s truths can indeed slip from our minds. Through neglect, we can allow our minds to drift from the firm anchor they once had:

Therefore we must give the more earnest heed to the things we have heard, lest we drift away. For if the word spoken through angels proved steadfast, and every transgression and disobedience

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received a just reward, how shall we escape if we neglect so great a salvation, which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed to us by those who heard Him . . .

Drifting away will happen, not because any of God's Word will change, but rather because the human mind has a propensity to allow even once-meaningful ideas and habits to diminish in importance, which leads to harmful changes in our behavior. We might object, "I would never let that happen!" But what happened to Solomon? I am not his judge; I do not know if he has lost his chance of salvation. But there is no doubt that God tremendously gifted him with understanding, wealth, and power, but toward the end of his life, he let things slip and drifted away from God and His ways.

Drifting from what we once thought thoroughly lodged within us can indeed happen when we allow our focus to wander through neglect. This wandering from the way is a very real danger because it may be happening, and we remain unaware of it. It can occur subconsciously as we unthinkingly spend less time with God and His Word and more time engaged in this world's distractions.

I remember swimming in the ocean as a boy and not realizing that the ocean's current was causing me to drift away from my parents on the beach. By carefully studying the shoreline, I realized that it was not the same as the one where I had entered the water. Only then did I become aware that I had drifted. A similar kind of unintentional drifting from God's truth can take place in our minds. Unless information from God's Word is consciously kept fresh within us, we will begin to stray!

We have all heard the saying, "You can't teach an old dog new tricks." Evelyn and I recently moved from a home in which we had lived for over twenty years. After moving, I found myself disoriented for a couple of months because I did not know where anything was in the new place. I was familiar with where my things were in the old house, but I had not mapped out where they were in the new one. This confused situation continued until I studiously worked on drilling the specific locations of things into my mind.

God's truths operate the same way. If we fail to work at keeping things fresh, we have a proclivity to forget them. If this were not so, God's warning would not appear in His Word.

### **Keeping Things Fresh in Mind**

From my experience with changing from one house to another, I came to understand *why* I knew where everything was in the "old" house. I realized that, over the years, I had developed various tools and procedures for daily use in my work or doing things like making repairs on the house or shopping for food. In the latter case, for instance, I knew almost every time which store had a particular product we needed, and I frequently knew exactly where that product was shelved in the store. I could enter the store, and regardless of its size, I could walk to the right aisle, pick up the item, check out, and return to my car. I never hesitated for a moment. It dawned on me that it is familiarity arising from use that is the key. We become familiar with God's Word and way of life because we practice it repeatedly (see Hebrews 5:14).

However, it is not the end-all and be-all in solving this drifting problem. Even prolonged acquaintance with the truth can create drifting because we can allow our familiarity with it to produce an attitude of contempt. "Contempt" may be too strong a term in many cases, but this tendency is a built-in weakness that grows unless we take some purposeful action to counter it from time to time. When exciting revelations are new, they generate focused attention that keeps us alert in the hope that God will reveal even more to us, adding even more excitement. However, we must be careful because the new becomes old, and the exciting tends to dull over time. They become "old hat," and we soon pay them scant attention.

Then there exists the reality that most of us are hardworking and productive people. Some of us have a problem controlling the amount of time and effort we expend on producing material things; such people are workaholics who burn through time and energy they should spend in more spiritual pursuits. They consume their time in physical work, and that time, once used up in an activity, is gone forever. Past time cannot truly be redeemed. We can only "redeem" future time for its best use.

So, too many of us allow time to drift away, spending it on relatively unprofitable things. We need to prioritize our time better, spending it on burning eternal things into our minds and hearts so that God's way is always our first response.

## Some Final Thoughts

Depending on the translation, the first word in Hebrews 2:1 is “therefore” or “wherefore” or a similar term that points toward an upcoming conclusion based on the preceding material. It is a transition word that bridges the gap between the exciting and necessary information on Jesus Christ's divine supremacy in Hebrews 1 and the author's exhortation on what to do about it in chapter 2.

In general, the term directs the reader either to a conclusion or a call to action. In Hebrews 2, it leads into an exhortation designed to grab the reader's spiritual attention and spur him into diligent action based on the information written in chapter 1. A sense of urgency is apparent in the author's next words, “We must give the more earnest heed.” This simple command may be the very suggestion we need to keep our minds focused on the correct use of our time during these next few years. If we keep our noses in God's Word to maintain its freshness in our minds, it will ensure no drifting will occur. It is what God Himself wants us to do.

This same context contains another urgent warning in Hebrews 2:3: “How shall we escape, if we neglect so great a salvation . . .?” We need to focus on the word “neglect.” Its presence urges us to pay attention because we can lose priceless understanding by slacking off in our necessary work to retain Christ's testimony and bring glory to God. *Neglect* means “to ignore,” “to disregard,” “to be unmindful of,” “to be slack, inaccurate, inattentive to, or slovenly inexact.” It is warning us that we will pay a high price for carelessness.

The author intends to stir us to dutiful study, thought, and behavior. He desires that we thoughtfully consider with great admiration the dignity of the One spoken of in chapter 1. He is now our life! Do we need anyone more than Him? His words are our guides to life—real life. Without Him, we can

do nothing toward producing the correct fruit by which we can glorify God (John 15:5).

In the first chapter, the apostle expounds on the superiority of Jesus Christ in comparison to angels. He created the angels, and He is the One who commands them to assist Him and His children. He holds all things together by His word of power. He brought the Word of God to humanity in these last days to give us the opportunity for salvation. He is the Son of the Father and has received all authority and glory and offices of the highest honor. He inherits all things, and we inherit with Him only because He makes it possible and grants us a place with Him.

Because our Savior is the way, the truth, and the life (John 14:6), His words are true. His Word is truth (John 17:17). We can completely rely on His words. Why should we, to whom He has given the words that lead to salvation (John 6:63, 68), follow anything that is not true? What would we gain? Satan has deceived the entire world (Revelation 12:9), and we live in a world of almost constant lying. In Christ, though, the shackles have been removed, and we can now follow Him, the personification of truth.

Contemplate these things against the backdrop of eternity. What do we lose if we drift away by neglecting to follow our spiritual responsibilities over the next five years? Hebrews 2:1-3 does not say what we lose by rejecting God's truths, only that we can drift away through neglect, by failing to take care of the responsibilities God has called us to perform. The author implies that by doing so, we trade an eternity of sharing life with the glorious and wonderful Jesus Christ for what? A momentary bit of excitement, a fleeting relationship with another flawed human being, a temporary chance of wealth, ephemeral prestige, or some other transient, earthly achievement? Do these sound like good trades?