

## Hebrews 2:1-13

Last week we studied the person and work of Christ. We looked at His person – the fact that He is the image of God, a perfect reflection of God the Father. We looked at His work – how He created the world, how He sustains the world, how He died for our sins, and how He will one day create an everlasting kingdom that will never be destroyed and that will rule over the entire world. We also studied the fact that Jesus is much greater than the angels.

This week, in the second chapter of Hebrews, we are warned that we must be careful. We must not neglect the salvation that the Lord is offering to us:

**Hebrews 2:1:** “Therefore we ought to give the more earnest heed to the things which we have heard, lest at any time we should let them slip.”

The message of the gospel is *vital*. Mankind has a very serious problem: all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God, and the wages of sin is death. Without the gospel there would be no hope. Apart from Christ, all of mankind is doomed to spend an eternity in fiery torment. The gospel is the only way to escape the wrath of God. It is the only escape from Hell. There is no other way.

It is extremely important that we pay a good deal of attention to the words that God has given to us. In this world there are many distractions. There are all sorts of things clamoring for our attention – bills, chores, things that need to be done, trials, illnesses – to say nothing of the things that we see on the news. The world is full of distractions, and the world is constantly telling us that there are all sorts of things that are worthy of our attention. Advertising in particular tries very hard to entice us into desiring the good, pleasures, and desires of this world.

However, God tells us to not be fooled. The things of this world are temporary and passing away, and we should not desire them:

**1 John 2:15:** “Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him.  
16 For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world.  
17 And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever.”

The apostle John was very clear: the things of this world, and the desires of this world, are passing away. The things that we see around us are not going to last. This world is temporary; it is not eternal, and its goods and its wealth are all going to disappear.

There are a great many things that people desire and spend a lifetime trying to get, but Christians ought to be different. As John said, if anyone loves the world then the love of the Father is not in him. You cannot serve God and serve mammon at the same time, nor can you desire both the things of God and the things of this world. It will either be one or the other. The things that we desire – the desires of the flesh, and of the eyes, and the pride of life – do not come from God. Those things come from the world, and the world is bound for destruction.

If we focus on the things of the world and desire those things, then the message of the gospel is going to slip. Our focus is going to slip. Our life purpose is going to slip. We are going to derail – we will find ourselves going to places where we shouldn't go, and doing things we shouldn't do. What we

ought to do instead is realize temptation for what it is, and passionately seek the things of God. As Hebrews said, we ought to take earnest heed to the things God has revealed to us, so that we don't lose sight of what really matters. Do not give in to the devil's distractions

You see, life has very real and very serious consequences:

**Hebrews 2:2:** “For if the word spoken by angels was steadfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just recompense of reward;”

People today like to think that they can get away with anything. Many people – even those who claim to be Christians – think that they can live however they want, and it won't matter because God will forgive them. They take sin very lightly and live lives as they please. To use a Biblical phrase, they do that which is right in their own eyes.

But sin is a very serious matter and has very real consequences. The things that we do really *do* matter to God, and He will hold us accountable. In fact, one day we will stand before God and give an account of our lives:

**2 Corinthians 5:10:** “For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad.”

God takes sin *very* seriously. In fact, there was a time when God became so upset with mankind's sin that He destroyed the *entire world* in the Flood. He saved eight people and destroyed all of the rest. That should tell you exactly what God thinks of sin.

Notice that the verse says that *every* act of disobedience received retribution. This is a critical fact to remember. It often seems that the wicked get away with all sorts of things – that people do all kinds of terribly evil acts, and they go on to lead great lives. It seems like people get away with evil all the time, but that is not the case. God tells us that no one gets away with anything. Each person will stand before God and be judged, and those whose sins are not covered by the blood of Christ will have to pay for each and every one of their wicked deeds. Since they will not be able to pay for their sins, they will be condemned to Hell.

No one is going to “get away” with anything. In this life God gives people a chance to repent; He often withholds His judgment so that people can repent of their sin and change their ways. However, those who do not take advantage of that opportunity will find themselves in very serious trouble. If we do not repent and believe then there will be no escape:

**Hebrews 2:3a:** “How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation;”

This is very important: apart from Christ *there is no escape*. People today like to claim that there are many ways to God, but that is not true. Jesus was very clear that He was the only way:

**John 14:6:** “Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me.”

Jesus could not have been more plain: the only way to get to the Father is through Him. If you do not go through Jesus then you cannot be saved. All other religions are false religions and only guide men to Hell. Good works will not get you to Heaven. Only Jesus can save you.

The reason only Jesus can save you goes back to the reason why people are lost in the first

place. People's great problem is *sin*. Their sins separate them from God and make them worthy of His judgment. In order to be saved, those sins must be paid for. The only way they can be paid for is if someone who is innocent suffers on their behalf, and takes upon himself the punishment that they deserve. The only person who has done this is Jesus – and therefore, Jesus is the only way to be saved. There is no other sacrifice for sins that God will accept. It is Jesus or nothing.

The author of Hebrews goes on to point out that there is a great deal of evidence to support this gospel:

**Hebrews 2:3b:** “...which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them that heard him;

4 God also bearing them witness, both with signs and wonders, and with divers miracles, and gifts of the Holy Ghost, according to his own will?”

There is a great deal going on in these verses, so let's spend a little time talking about them.

One of the things that people like to say today is that we should just take things “on faith”. When people say that, what they are saying is that we don't need evidence or reasons to believe; instead, we should believe things “just because”. That may sound very wise and spiritual, but it is not Biblical. It is true that God commands us to have faith in Him, but He does not ask for blind faith. Instead God has spent a great deal of time giving us *reasons* to believe.

For example, Jesus did a great many miracles. Why did Jesus do these things? So that people would believe that He was the Messiah:

**John 2:23:** “Now when he was in Jerusalem at the passover, in the feast day, many believed in his name, when they saw the miracles which he did.”

People saw the miracles of Christ and believed what He had to say. His miracles validated His claims.

When Christ was about to be crucified, He told His disciples what would happen *before* it happened. He told them that He was going to be killed, and He would raise back to life on the third day. The reason He did that was so that when those things took place, they would have proof that Jesus really was their long-awaited Messiah:

**John 13:19:** “Now I tell you before it come, that, when it is come to pass, ye may believe that I am he.”

In other words, Jesus gave people *reasons* to believe. He did not just say “I'm the Messiah, so believe it”. Instead He offered proof that He was who He claimed to be.

In fact, this is something that the passage in Hebrews even talks about. It mentions that God's word was *confirmed* to them by the signs and wonders that the apostles did. One thing you may find strange when reading through the book of Acts is that the apostles could do all sorts of miracles. Peter and Paul had the gift of healing – in fact, people could be healed just by touching Paul's handkerchief:

**Acts 19:11:** “And God wrought special miracles by the hands of Paul:  
12 So that from his body were brought unto the sick handkerchiefs or aprons, and the diseases departed from them, and the evil spirits went out of them.”

Why did God do special miracles by the hands of Paul? According to Hebrews, it was to confirm the validity of the Gospel. Paul and the other apostles were missionaries; they went all over the world preaching the gospel. When they went to a place, they did not just say “You should believe us because we say so”. Instead they proved that they really were sent from God by the miracles that they did. The miracles validated their identity and their message, because the miracles were impossible to do apart from the power of God. Since the apostles did so many miracles, it gave people a good reason to believe their words.

It is important to realize that these extraordinary gifts were only exhibited by the apostles themselves. No one else seems to have had the gift of healing – and even Paul did not have it for his entire life. Later in his life there were people he knew who were sick, but he could no longer heal them. The reason for this is because the gifts had served their purpose, and so they passed away. God gave them to the apostles in order to establish His Church, and His Church was established.

Today these sign gifts are no longer present. We do not have the gift of tongues, or the gift of healing, or the gift of prophecy. Those gifts were limited to apostolic times. I realize that there are Charismatic churches today that claim to still have these gifts, but they are greatly mistaken. What you find in these churches is a poor counterfeit – nothing more.

You see, in the Bible the gift of tongues was the ability to speak real languages that you had never learned. It would be as if you could suddenly speak Chinese, when in fact you had never studied the Chinese language at all. The gift of healing was the ability to walk up to someone, touch them, and have them instantly and miraculously healed. It is true that today God still heals, but not in the same way. Today the Church prays over a person, and God may heal them or He may not. A person who had the gift of healing, though, could walk into a hospital and heal everyone there by touching them – without even praying over anyone. The apostles did that sort of thing all the time, but no one has the ability to do that today.

Finally, the gift of prophecy was the ability to infallibly foretell the future. This was a very serious thing, because anyone who ever got *anything* wrong was to be put to death for being a false prophet. Needless to say, there are no longer any real prophets around. People claim to be prophets, but the accuracy of their messages is nowhere near 100%. In fact, these self-proclaimed prophets rarely get anything right at all – which is proof that they are not from God.

In other words, no one today manifests any of the sign gifts of the New Testament. The modern gift of tongues is just people babbling random nonsense, while the real gift of tongues involved people speaking real languages. The modern gift of prophecy is nowhere near 100% accurate, so it is not from God. Nor is there anyone who has anything remotely like the apostles' power to heal. The Charismatic churches are teaching a lie: their gifts are counterfeits. The real thing has fulfilled its purpose and passed away.

After having covered all this, the author goes back to talk about the position of Christ:

**Hebrews 2:5:** “For unto the angels hath he not put in subjection the world to come, whereof we speak.”

The author points out that the angels are not going to rule over the world to come. Instead, the person that God has given all power and authority to is none other than Jesus Christ. As we saw last week, He is the one who is the King of Kings and the Lord of Lords, and He will reign over the entire world. All kingdoms and principalities and powers will belong to Him:

**Hebrews 2:6:** “But one in a certain place testified, saying, What is man, that thou art mindful of him? or the son of man that thou visitest him?”

7 Thou madest him a little lower than the angels; thou crownedst him with glory and honour, and didst set him over the works of thy hands:

8 Thou hast put all things in subjection under his feet. For in that he put all in subjection under him, he left nothing that is not put under him. But now we see not yet all things put under him.

9 But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honour; that he by the grace of God should taste death for every man.”

In this passage Hebrews is quoting from Psalm 8. Many people apply this chapter to mankind, but as we can see it is actually talking about Christ. *Jesus* is the one who was made a little lower than the angels; that happened when He was born a man in Bethlehem. Jesus is the one who was crowned with glory and honor. Jesus is the one who was set over the work of God's hands. All things in this world will be subject to Jesus, and not to anyone else. Verse 9 makes this very clear. Jesus – who is the eternal, infinite God – was made lower than the angels in order to suffer and die for our sins, but He has now been crowned with glory and honor. Jesus humbled Himself, and God glorified Him.

As verse 8 says, at this point in history Jesus has not yet received His kingdom. There are still many things that are not in subjection to Him. In fact, if you look at the world around us you will see that virtually *nothing* is in subjection to Him. The whole world is in a state of rebellion and chaos. The nations rage, both against God and against His followers. The world has no interest in being made subject to God.

But one day that will change. There will come a time of great Tribulation, when God will spend seven years pouring out His wrath upon a sinful and disobedient world. He will judge the world for its wickedness and its sins. During that time the announcement will finally be made that the kingdoms of this world are now under new management:

**Revelation 11:15:** “And the seventh angel sounded; and there were great voices in heaven, saying, The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of his Christ; and he shall reign for ever and ever.”

After this announcement is made Satan will still try to defeat Jesus, but he will utterly fail. The kingdom that God establishes will last forever, and it will never fall or be destroyed. One day everything will be subject to Jesus, and when that day comes it will last for all of eternity. His power is undefeatable.

What is truly amazing is that God has invited *us* into His kingdom. In fact, He suffered and died so that we might be saved and go on to enjoy the kingdom with Him! That is an astonishing thing. It is amazing that Jesus, the Creator, would die for mankind. It is astonishing that He would suffer on our behalf.

**Hebrews 2:10:** “For it became him, for whom are all things, and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings.”

One of the themes of this book is that the sufferings of Christ play a vital role in His ministry. Later in the book it will tell us that because Jesus was tempted as we are, He can help those who are tempted. Jesus isn't some distant God who doesn't really understand what we are going through; instead

He really can feel our pain, because He was pained Himself. He became a man and went through all the pains and sufferings that man goes through. He was tempted as we are, and yet He did not sin. His experiences enable Him to help us. That is what this verse is getting at, and the author will expand upon it later.

Thanks to the sacrifice of Christ, we can become the children of God:

**Hebrews 2:11:** “For both he that sanctifieth and they who are sanctified are all of one: for which cause he is not ashamed to call them brethren,  
12 Saying, I will declare thy name unto my brethren, in the midst of the church will I sing praise unto thee.  
13 And again, I will put my trust in him. And again, Behold I and the children which God hath given me.”

It is critical to realize that not everyone is a child of God. The Bible is very clear about this: only those whose sins have been forgiven are God's children. None of the wicked are children of God. In order to become a child of God, you must repent of your sins and believe. Only then will you be one of God's children, and have the right to enter His kingdom. Being a child of God is a very special privilege – one that can only be obtained through Christ.