

HEBREWS
CHAPTER TWO

Compromise. Adjust. Accommodate. Concede. Give and take. We must make good use of these tactics in our human relationships if we want them to thrive. But they have no place in our relationship with Christ. His way is always right. When we deviate even a fraction from His plan we can suffer painful consequences.

Obedience to Christ requires constant awareness of His leading and purposeful effort to follow. Even just a few days of partial obedience or small compromises with the world can take us far off course. Careful attention and uncompromising obedience is required to keep from drifting away. This is the warning the author of *Hebrews* included in his sermon: “We must pay more careful attention...”

As we’ve learned, *Hebrews*’ original audience was in danger of slipping away from Christ by falling back into the ways of their Jewish roots. Following Christ brought hardship and persecution. Conforming to the world around them may have been easier in the moment, but the author warned them it carried dire spiritual consequences.

The New Covenant is superior to the Old Covenant

Read Hebrews 2:1-4

“Therefore” is an important word in verse 1 that should not be missed. It indicates that what is about to be said is true because of what has been established in the precious verses. Verse 1 tells readers they must pay more careful attention, “therefore,” so they do not drift away.

What does the “therefore” refer to? What is the main, overriding thought in chapter one on which the need for more careful attention is based?

What do the words “more careful attention” in verse 1 imply? What purpose would increased attention serve?

Are you in danger of drifting away? In what ways do you need to pay more careful attention to the exalted Christ?

The image of drifting portrays a shifting, even slightly, from the intended course. Picture a ship drifting off course in strong currents or wind. Even a small fraction off course can cause a ship to miss the harbor.

How can this image of drifting be applied to the Christian life?

At this time in Judaism there was a strong idea that angels were mediators of God's covenant with Moses on Mt. Sinai. So the comparison here in vs. 2-4 is between the old covenant that came from God through angels to Moses and the new covenant that came to mankind through Jesus Christ. The new covenant does not replace the old; it builds on it. God's revelation is progressive, moving from lesser to greater. The God of the old covenant is the same God of the new covenant with the same character, purposes, and expectations of His people.

What does vs2 say about the nature and authority of the old covenant that came through angels?

These Jewish Christians would never question the authority of the old covenant, so the author used the old covenant to prove the superiority of the salvation message of the new covenant. Angels may have confirmed the old covenant, but God Himself confirmed the new covenant. (Note: the author uses the word "salvation" as a synonym for the "new covenant.")

How did we receive the new covenant?

In what ways did God confirm or "testify to" the new covenant?

According to verse 3, how were the original hearers tempted to respond to this "great salvation?" What would be the result of this kind of response?

Jesus, "the Lord" (vs 3), announced God's great salvation. Those who heard Him were eye witnesses to its truth. God confirmed it through miracles and the outpouring of His Spirit. The

message of the new covenant is that God freely offers us the gift of His grace. However, He holds us accountable for our response. The new covenant of God's grace, eternal salvation, held out to us by Jesus. It cannot be ignored. It demands a response.

The apostle Paul devoted his life to sharing this "great salvation." It was his primary message and the driving force of his ministry. He believed and taught that without it there is no hope.

Read 1 Corinthians 15:1-8.

Paul gives the gospel or the message of our "great salvation" in a nutshell. Restate it as found in these verses.

Who are the eyewitnesses Paul lists in verses 5-8? Can you think of examples where God worked through the lives of these eyewitnesses to "testify" to the truth of their message?

Do you ever compromise this gospel with your life? Do you ever compromise this gospel when you share with others? Explain.

Why is non-compromise so important? See 1 Timothy 4:11-16, particularly vs 15-16.

The gospel message cannot be altered, changed, or adjusted to make it more palatable to worldly ears. Anything less than the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ is not sufficient for the forgiveness of sins. A compromised gospel is no gospel at all.

Everything is subject to Christ

Read Hebrews 2:5-9

As we've seen, the author has proven from the Jewish Scriptures that Jesus is superior to the angels. Even though angels are powerful messengers of God and awesome heavenly beings, it is Christ whom God has exalted. It is Jesus to whom everything is subject. Yet now in verses 6-7, the author quotes from Psalm 8 to emphasize a different aspect of Jesus' nature.

Read Psalm 8:1-9

How have you previously understood this Psalm, particularly verses 4-5?

Considering Hebrews 2:6-8 has your understanding of Psalm 8 changed? How?

Reread Philippians 2:6-11. (We read this last week, but it will be helpful for this particular discussion.) How does this passage yield light on Hebrews 2:6b-8? How can Jesus be both superior to the angels and “a little lower than the angels?” (Note: “Little” in Hebrews 2:7 can refer to either a small amount of distance or a short time.)

While Psalm 8 beautifully reflects on the unique nature of mankind and our special place in God’s creation, this passage also looks forward to the Incarnation. God became man. The Divine took on human flesh. For a while Jesus was made to be “a little lower than the angels.” The author introduces this truth, not so his readers will question the superiority of Christ, but to prove Jesus’ ability to empathize with mankind.

After Jesus’ willingly took on humanity and humbled Himself to death on a cross for our sakes, the Father exalted Him to His rightful place of power and authority. Verse 8 states that everything is “subject” to Christ. The word translated “subject” is from the Greek *hypotasso*, which means the act of yielding to the perspective or position of another.

Read 1 Corinthians 15:24-28 and compare with **Philippians 2:9-11** and **Hebrews 2:9**

Is everything and everyone in submission to Christ now or is this “total submission” yet to come?

The answer to the above question is “yes!” Jesus has complete authority now, but its full impact will not be realized until His second coming. This paradox is referred to as “now and not yet.” Jesus has all power over all things, seen and unseen. The reign of Christ is a present reality, yet we will not fully see it until the final consummation of this age.

What examples of the “now and not yet” authority of Christ do you see in the world today?

As Christians how do we understand and deal with difficult times when it may appear that Jesus is not in control? See Romans 8:35-37 & 2 Corinthians 4:7-12 to help with your answer.

The Family of God

Read Hebrews 2:10-18

Beginning in the second half of verse nine there is an abrupt shift from the glory of the exalted Christ to the suffering and death of the obedient Son. The idea of a “crucified Lord” was a scandal in the first-century and a stumbling block to Jews and Gentiles alike.

People still stumble over Jesus today. Our society does not normally esteem a suffering servant. Think about how our western culture measures success. *What are the characteristics of a life “well lived?” What kind of people do we hold up as heroes and celebrities?*

Read 1 Corinthians 1:18-29 and compare with Hebrews 2:10-18.

According to this passage in 1 Corinthians, the ways of God are foolishness to the world. What action did God find “fitting” (see Hebrews 2:10) that many people today cannot understand?

Note: “Fitting” can also be translated as “appropriate” or “suitable.”

What was God’s purpose in this action? (Note: His purpose is stated at the beginning of Heb 2:10 and then expanded on throughout the next 8 verses.)

In what ways is Jesus the “author” of your salvation? Use verses 11-18 to help you with your answer.

In what sense has Jesus been made “perfect” through His suffering or death? (Compare verse 10 with Hebrews 4:15 & 2 Corinthians 5:21)

Generally, the word “perfect” means “complete, whole, or adequate.” In this case, it specifically refers to the fact that Jesus not only fully obeyed God’s plan for Him, but also that His obedience was adequate for “bringing many sons to glory.” Jesus’ death on the cross was His final act of obedience to the Father in a lifetime of complete obedience. His death also bought your salvation so that you can eternally share in His glory as His *brother*. Or “sister” of course! The author uses the term “sons” to refer to all the people of God, both male and female. In God’s family we are all His honored children who will receive an eternal inheritance.

If you are in a relationship with Christ, God has made you His child. Jesus calls you His brother (See verse 12). You share in the blessings, glory, and inheritance of Jesus. Express your gratitude to God below.

In verse 11, who is the “one who makes men holy?” Who are “those who are made holy?”

The verb translated as “holy” in verse 11 is the Greek word *hagiazō*. *Hagiazō* means “to hallow or sanctify; to separate from the profane and dedicate to God.” I love the way *The Complete Word Study New Testament* describes it: “*Hagiazō* means to withdraw from fellowship with the world by first gaining fellowship with God.” This “withdraw” or process of sanctification begins at our conversion. God then uses this process of purification to continue to transform us to the likeness of Christ. See **Romans 8:29**.

In verses 12 and 13, the author quotes from Psalm 22:22 and Isaiah 8:17-18 to emphasize the family relationship that has been established between the Son and the people of God. This emphasis turns our attention once again to the incarnation. The time when the Son lived among God’s children.

Why was it necessary for Jesus to share in the children’s humanity?

Based on verses 14-18, make a list of all the things that Jesus’ incarnation and death accomplished for us.

Read 1 Corinthians 15:54-57. How did Jesus' death erase the "fear of death" for Christians?

Personal Application

If you have entered into a saving relationship with Christ, you belong to the family of God. Jesus is your brother and God is your Father. Jesus is not ashamed to call you His sister. All the rights and privileges of God's family belong to you!

What does it mean to you personally that God is your Father?

What implications does this have for how you should relate to God?

Hebrews chapter one and two do not waver on either the deity or humanity of Jesus. In fact, the entire New Testament confirms these truths. Jesus is fully God and fully man. This belief is crucial for understanding Christ's person and work on your behalf.

Why is Jesus' deity and humanity both necessary for your salvation?

Why is Jesus' deity and humanity both necessary for your sanctification?

How can remembering the humanity of Jesus encourage you as you strive to follow Him?

Jesus is able to save us completely and Jesus is able to completely understand our human frailty. What a superior Savior! He is worthy of all glory and honor. Let's praise Him today.