

# **Pay Much Closer Attention to Jesus!**

**Hebrews 2:1–4**

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I want to tell on myself actually just a little bit. So I'm married to my wife, Kaitlyn, and we have four kids. Everywhere we go, if it's a family trip, I'm always the driver. It is not that Kaitlyn can't drive...she just can't drive...so I'm always going to be the one who's driving. So I'm in the driver's seat, she's in the passenger seat, we got car seats out the wazoo behind us, and we're driving down the interstate. This happened this past week, and I tend to get distracted when I drive (apparently I'm not very good either). So I'm looking out the windows, and I'm like, "Man, look at that. Look at that," I'm reading that sign, I am messing with the music, and I'm looking at the screen in the car...and all of a sudden, apparently I start drifting over the median. So Kaitlyn being the good and loving wife that she is, she tells me to what? "Pay attention." But here's the problem, it doesn't sound like pay attention. Kaitlyn is over in the passenger, she's paying attention, and she lets out a high pitch shriek! So two reactions...initially I'm scared, like, "What's happening? Do we need to go somewhere? Do I need to take you to the hospital? What's going on?" But she says, "You were drifting," and so my second reaction is I'm mad. "Kaitlyn, I've been driving for some time now. I get us to point A to point B every time. You don't need to tell me to pay attention." In other words, I deny it, "I was not drifting, okay? I was just swerving just a little bit." So I ignore her, that's what I do, I ignore her warning. See, instead of being humble and realizing that my wife's trying to warn me so that we don't crash with our four kids in the car, I act like she's totally crazy.

Today in Hebrews, the preacher is going to do the same thing for us. He's going to tell us to pay attention to the road. Now there's good news and there's bad news; the good news is he makes it much clearer than my wife does. It's not a shriek, it's going to be very clear in English, okay? The bad news though, is that the temptation of our flesh this morning will be to respond in the same way to God as I did to my wife, and that's to get angry. That's to deny it, and ultimately to ignore the warning. So I would just want to put this in front of us at the beginning here—Church, we need to be humble this morning. We need to realize that just like my distracted driving, perhaps we're slowly drifting across the median and we're no longer paying attention to the road in front of us like we ought to. And if so, if that's us, the preacher this morning of Hebrews is going to warn us to get our eyes back on the road, to focus, to put our attention back to where our attention needs to be, because if we don't, we're going to continue to drift. And if we continue to drift, we're eventually going to crash. Now there's others of us in this room who perhaps are focused and our attention is on the road, but you and I still need to hear this warning. It's just like when a new driver gets his license, one of the things you might say is, "Hey buddy, glad you got your license. Don't text and drive or you might crash." The guy's never texted and drove before, but he needs to hear that warning so that he doesn't text and drive, doesn't get distracted and doesn't crash. The same is true for us this morning. Maybe your focused but you need to hear this warning that if you lose focus, if you start to not pay attention, you're also going to drift and you're also going to crash. So to every single one of us here this morning, the preacher of Hebrews and God are going to tell us, pay attention to the road ahead of us. Pay attention to what's in front of you and do not get distracted. His main point is pay much closer attention to Jesus lest we drift and lest we crash.

## **Scripture**

***"Therefore we must pay much closer attention to what we have heard, lest we drift away from it. For since the message declared***

***by angels proved to be reliable, and every transgression or disobedience received a just retribution, how shall we escape if we neglect such a great salvation? It was declared at first by the Lord, and it was attested to us by those who heard, while God also bore witness by signs and wonders and various miracles and by gifts of the Holy Spirit distributed according to His will."***

What we're going to do this morning is we're going to break our passage up into three sections. Section number one, we're going to call it 'three little words,' section number two, we're going to call it 'one big command,' and the final and third section is going to be 'one major warning.' Let's begin.

### **Three Little Words**

These three little words are the first three words of our passage, the first three words of chapter 2 of Hebrews. And it's these words, "Therefore we must," three little words that have a whole lot of significance. Now the first word, "therefore," Bro Ricky loves to ask, what is the therefore, there for. The therefore in chapter 2 is a little word that is connecting all of chapter 1 to whatever warning and exhortation is about to follow here in chapter 2. That's really significant because chapter 1 has been substantial; for the past two weeks, Kory has walked us through chapter 1 of Hebrews. In that chapter, the preacher of Hebrews gives us a vision of who Jesus is and it's incredible. So if you would just, just look back with me in your scriptures to chapter 1 of Hebrews, and we'll walk through just a couple of things that we learned about Jesus. Number one, He's the final and decisive word sent by the Father. Number two, He's the Son of God. Number three, He's the heir of all things. Number four, He's the Creator of the world. Number five, He's the radiance of the glory of God. Number six, He's the exact imprint of God's nature. Number seven, He upholds the universe by the word of His power. Number eight, He's made purification for your sins. Number nine, He's seated at the Father's right hand. And finally, number ten, He's much superior to angels. And so in chapter 1, we could sum up who Jesus is in three ways. Number one, He's God. Number two, He's Lord. And number

three, He's Savior. That's who Jesus is. That's who God, in Hebrews 1, tells us Jesus is. He's God, He's Lord, and He's Savior. But now the question is what do we do with all that, because that's some really big and important theology. So here at the beginning of chapter 2, the preacher's going to connect that big theology to some practical living for you and me. That's what good theology is meant to do. It's meant to spur us on to do something, and that's what the therefore in verse number 1 is there for, to get us ready because Jesus is this, therefore, get ready to do this. That's the first little word.

The second little word is the little word, "we," therefore we. Now, the second little word, is describing the all-encompassing nature of whatever's about to follow, right? We need to remember in Hebrews that this is a preacher speaking to his congregation. And yet, take note here in chapter 2, he doesn't start off saying here's who Jesus is, therefore you. He doesn't say here's who Jesus is, therefore I. He says here's who Jesus is, therefore we. We is all inclusive. We means everyone because of who Jesus is. We are now all called to do something. In other words, it's from the pulpit to the pew. The preacher's included, the deacons are included, the teachers and leaders are included, all of the volunteers are included, the custodial team is included, the church member who's been here the longest is included, the church member who's been here the shortest is included, all the kids are included, all the youth is included, all the college is included. Everyone truly means everyone, and that means here this morning at Hardin Baptist Church, everyone means you, therefore we, me and you, all of us, from the pulpit to the pew now must do something as a result of who Jesus is.

There's one more little word to pay attention to, therefore we must. This third little word, it's a word that communicates something that is urgent and mandatory. Have you noticed in just our everyday American English, we rarely, if ever hear or use the word must? I'm a dad and I don't think I've ever said my kid must do something...Hey Maddox, you must clean your room. Baylor, you must play T-ball....I don't think I've ever said must,

and you probably haven't often said must. Now, why is that? We rarely hear the word must because must is for one very formal, but two it's very authoritative. It gives someone no other option. So a parent might say you should clean your room, you ought to clean your room, you better clean your room, but we might not say you must clean your room. We like to avoid that word. It makes us uncomfortable, but it's right here in our text and we can't substitute it. It's must, it's a mandatory command. It is something that we now have no other option. Therefore, because of who we've seen Jesus to be, all of us, that's we, must now do something because our life depends on it. Therefore we must, and these three little words pave the way for second section.

### **One Big Command**

"Therefore we must *pay much closer attention to what we have heard...*" that is the big command. Because of what's been revealed about Jesus, all of us now must pay much closer attention to what we have heard. Now, a couple of questions I want to ask about this text. Number one, what is the preacher talking about? What have we heard? Pay attention to what we've heard, but what have we heard? What we've heard is none other than God speak. Not just by the prophets but we've heard, you and I have heard, God speak by his Son, Jesus. It connects us back to the very beginning of how Hebrews opens up in verses 1 and 2 of Hebrews 1, the preacher says, "Long ago, at many times and in many ways, God spoke to our fathers by the prophets." You heard God speak by the prophets, "but in these last days He has spoken to us by His Son." So in these last days, we have heard God speak through Jesus. That's what we've heard. So the thing we've heard in verse 1 of chapter 2 isn't actually a thing, it's really a person and that person, His name is Jesus. So the big command that the preacher is giving us here at the onset of chapter 2 is that in these last days, Church, you and I must pay attention to what we've heard. We must pay closer attention to Jesus.

Now, question number two about this text. Why is the preacher having to tell the congregation this? Again, a preacher talking to a congregation of

believers, isn't it kind of just assumed that Christians pay attention to Jesus? It's in the name Christian, like we pay attention to Christ, and that might be assumed but that's not what's happening in Hebrews. The preacher has to remind his congregation to pay closer attention to Jesus because the reality is they're not, they're not paying attention to Jesus. The preacher knows that his people have gotten distracted. He knows they're driving down the road, but instead of looking where they ought to be looking, they're looking out the window, they're looking at their dash, they're messing with the music, and they're no longer paying attention to the road. They're driving on to what's in front of them, and the things that this Hebrew congregation we're getting distracted by, they're going to seem a little bit strange to us. They're going to be a little bit disconnected from us because this Hebrew congregation was a congregation of Jewish Christians. That means they had a church, and this church was full of Christians, but most of these people had a Jewish background. So the temptation that these Jewish Christians were facing is they were being pressured by their family, by society, by culture, to go back to revert back to their old covenant systems, to their Jewish ways. They were being distracted by temple sacrifices and priest, and as a result, they were losing sight of the one who fulfilled all these systems, the one who is better than all these systems and His name is Jesus. So the command the preachers giving his congregation is stop it, stop getting distracted by what's familiar. Stop getting distracted by what's culturally acceptable and start paying better attention to Jesus because He is better. That's the point of Hebrews.

Now, it's safe to say that nearly 2000 years later that we, you and I, are not distracted by the same things that these Jewish Christians were distracted by. Yet, I promise you this morning, Church, that nevertheless there is something this week, something here this morning that is tempting to distract you from Jesus, and that distraction for you is just as dangerous as it was for those Jewish Christians in Hebrews. So let's just take a moment to bridge this gap. We have this ancient danger, but we're not tempted in in that way, we're not tempted to be distracted by temple

sacrifices. Let's bridge the gap between these ancient dangers and our modern dangers. I'm sure you realize this, but distractions that take our eyes off Jesus are everywhere. They're endless each day. You and I are tempted to spend a whole lot of time thinking about, obsessing over, and consuming other things besides Jesus. I just think through this past week of the major, pop culture headline of the week. Some of you already know exactly what it is. The major pop headline culture of the week was the announced engagement between Taylor Swift and Travis Kelsey. Now hear me say I have nothing wrong with Taylor Swift and Travis Kelsey. I think they're both very talented individuals. I think they're amazing at what they do. I'm glad they're getting married and we hope and wish them a very happy marriage. And I'm cool, I get that the world is very obsessed with this marriage. But here's my real concern...I think if a whole lot of American Christians were honest with themselves this morning and thought back to their past week, there would be many Christians across the world who would find themselves thinking about overly consumed and more obsessed with this celebrity marriage than they were thinking about obsessed with and consumed with the marriage between Christ and His church. That's when we have to say this is not good anymore.

Now you may be thinking that's crazy, and you would never get distracted by that. That's fine, maybe not, but you were distracted. The temptation to be distracted just came in a different form. Just think about everything that you and I are tempted to be distracted by. I have a list of things. You and I are tempted to be distracted by technology, media, and entertainment. It distracts us. It takes our eyes off of Jesus. We're distracted by news, politics, and drama. We get consumed in these partisan politics. We're distracted by money, success, and fame. We're distracted by work and school. We're distracted by power and influence. We're distracted by love and relationships, other people's and our own. We're distracted by sports. I spent a good chunk of my time yesterday watching college football. We're distracted by busyness, productivity, never ending to-do list. We never have time. Why? We are a distracted people. I know some of these things

seem so small, they seem so harmless, and on the surface I want to say all of these things are good. But do you know and do you realize how quickly these good things can turn from harmless fun to dangerous idols just like that? Slowly and often unknowingly, you and I get so captivated by these things that we stop paying attention to Jesus and we start paying way too much attention to the wrong things, to lesser things. The whole point of Hebrews is stop it, Jesus is better.

Now do you know what the problem with being distracted is? It's actually what makes this really, really scary as well...you never mean to get distracted. It's never your intention to get distracted. Just think about a conversation you probably had this week or in the last month. You know someone important is talking to you, someone important is telling you something important and you have every intention in the world to listen. Hey, it's an important person, tell them an important thing, I'm going to listen to them. But suddenly something happens over here, something happens over there that catches your eye and then you start thinking about the million things you have to do after work. Then you start thinking about how your kid has practice and about how you're going to make that. Then you think about how you're going to pay that bill. All of a sudden, though you have every intention to listen to this person, you just slip and you start getting distracted by a million different things. No longer paying attention, no longer listening to this individual. It's not something you meant to do, it just happened. It's not something you set out to do. It was accidental, and that's the point. The thing with being distracted from Jesus is no one in this room sets out to do it. No one in this room says this week, I'm going to get distracted from Jesus. It just happens. It happens subtly, it happens accidentally, it happens slowly, and it often happens quietly.

So, what is the urgent command, what is the one big command in Hebrews chapter 2 verse 1? Don't let it happen. Don't let it happen this week. Don't let it happen this month. Don't get distracted from Jesus. He is better than all these things. Focus on Him. Pay closer attention to Him. He is God and your phone isn't. He is Lord and your sport isn't. He is Savior and your



work and your job and your money and your school aren't. So while all these things can be good, we have to stop fixing our eyes on them, we have to stop obsessing over them, and we have to start focusing on fixing our eyes and obsessing over Jesus who's better than all these things. Now here's the question. That sounds great, what happens if we don't? What happens if we walk away like, mmm...I'm just too busy and this thing is too cool, that thing's too shiny. I'd like to pay better attention to Jesus, but I'm just not going to. What happens if we don't listen? What happens if we don't pay attention?

## **One Major Warning**

Here's where the warning comes along, here's what the preacher is trying to keep from happening to us. The three little words which lead into the one big command is followed by one major warning. "Therefore we must pay much closer attention to what we have heard, *lest we drift away from it*. If we don't pay closer attention to Jesus here's the warning, we'll drift away from Him. In this book of Hebrews, there are five total, what are known as, warning passages, and this is the first of those five. We'll continue to explore this theme all throughout the book as we go verse by verse, but I want to go ahead and see this morning that none of these passages are teaching that genuine Christians can lose their salvation. The verse isn't if you don't pay attention, you will lose your salvation. That's not what the preacher's saying. I think of these warning passages like storm sirens, and I think this could be helpful for you. When you hear a storm siren, you have two choices. First, you can run inside and take cover. You can get in your bathroom, get in a fetal position, put on a helmet, put pillows over your back, and you can heed the warning and go take refuge. Or second, you don't have to, you can ignore it all and you can do nothing. The point is when true saints in Christ hear these warnings, including ours today in Hebrews, we don't ignore them. We run inside and we take cover, not just in any old house but in the house of Christ. When we hear these warnings we run to Christ. We continue to cling to Him and we say there's no way I'm walking outside. There's a storm coming and I'm going to

continue to take refuge in Jesus to the very end. That's what true saints do as a result of these warnings. But those in the fold who aren't truly in Christ, they're going to hear the warning just the same. It's going to be just as loud storm sirens but instead of running in the house and taking cover like they should, they're going to ignore it. They're going to stay outside. And as a result, they're going to drift. They're going to walk further and further and further away from the house of Christ until that storm finally comes and they're caught outside in it, because all this time they were never truly seeking refuge in Jesus. The point of these warning passages, once again, are not that you and I may lose our salvation if we don't listen up. The point is God's going to use these warnings, including ours here today, to keep us persevering to the very end, to keep us inside the house and not walk out. We hear these warnings, it leads us closer to Christ. And if it doesn't, if we ignore these warnings and don't persevere to the end, then we'll get caught up in the storm of God's wrath because we were never seeking refuge to begin with. So the first of these five warnings is pay much closer attention to Jesus lest you drift away from Him.

Let's talk about drifting. I want to point out three things about drifting this morning. Number one, how easy it is. Number two, what happens if you do, the consequences of drifting. Number three will end with a reality check on our drifting. So, how easy is the ease of drifting? The illustration here is that drifting is as easy as floating down a river. Just think about it, to float down a river, what do you have to do? Nothing. You just get in a float. You sit down and the current does the rest. I used to work at Venture River waterpark about ten years ago right after graduating high school. I love Venture River; great people who own it and operate it. We have students who work there. It's incredible. If I go to Venture River, I'm not getting on the Fumbi, I'm not getting on the Matanascar, I'm not getting in the wave pool; I'm getting into Lazy River. Do you want to know why? Because I like to be lazy. I like to be comfortable. I like to not have to put any effort in or fear for my life. I like to just drift. I like to float down the water because it's easy. Church, it's no different when it comes to

drifting away from Jesus. If you want to drift away from Jesus, it is easy. Just get a little bit comfortable, just get a little bit complacent, just get a little bit lazy, and soon enough, you'll start floating. Soon enough, you'll start drifting down the river. The current's going to take you and you're going to look up and you're going to realize that you're halfway down from where you began. It's so easy, but that doesn't make it good because drifting has severe consequences.

So the ease of drifting takes us into the consequences for drifting away from Jesus, and it gets real serious, real quick. The preacher shows us the danger of drifting by comparing two messages. He's going to compare the message declared by angels to the message declared by Jesus, and it comes in verses 2 and 3. So don't drift, "For since the message declared by angels proved to be reliable, and every transgression or disobedience received a just retribution, how shall we escape if we neglect such a great salvation?" Now on the surface this can be a little bit confusing, but what we need to know is that the message in verse 2, declared by angels is referring back to the mosaic law in the Old Testament. There are two places in the New Testament that shed light on this fact, and that's Acts 7. and Galatians 3. In Acts 7, a guy named Steven is speaking to Israelites, and he says you who *received the law as delivered by angels* but do not keep it, and then they stoned him. In Galatians chapter 3, Paul says the law was put in place *through angels by an intermediary*. So a little bit of confusion on what this means, but whether it was Jewish tradition or whether it really happened, the message declared by angels, the Hebrew audience would've known this is referring to the law of Moses. The point the preacher's making is that law was reliable, it was good, and if you neglected that law, what happened? Your disobedience and your transgressions would receive a just retribution from God. You would get God's wrath if you neglected His law.

So now watch what the preacher does. He compares that message delivered by angels to the message that's now being delivered by Jesus. Take note, this is in a section in Hebrews in the middle of a section where

the preacher is making a case about how Jesus is better than the angels. The question he asks is if Jesus is better than the angels and wrath came against those who broke the angels' message, how much greater will the wrath be for those who neglect Jesus's message, the gospel message, the salvation message? How terrible will it be for us if we get distracted and do not pay attention to Jesus? How will we escape? And if we do this, if we drift away from Jesus, we will be without excuse because in verses 3 and 4, the preacher goes on to explain how this message from Jesus has been clearly and consistently communicated to you and me. We're without excuse. He says this, "It was declared at first by the Lord, and it was attested to us by those who heard, while God also bore witness by signs and wonders and various miracles and by gifts of the Holy Spirit distributed according to His will." In other words, this message from Jesus was brought first by Jesus, and it's been written down for us by His apostles and close eyewitnesses. It's what we're reading this morning, it's the Bible. It's been confirmed to us through divine signs, wonders, and miracles, and it is weekly being communicated to us through the life of the church as we receive the Holy Spirit who gives us spiritual gifts that we use to edify and encourage one another in the Lord. So this message that's being delivered by Jesus, it is being consistently and clearly communicated to you and me. The whole point is if we neglect it, if we don't pay attention to it, if we don't set our eyes on Jesus but get distracted, how will we escape God's wrath if we neglect such a great salvation? Of course the answer is we won't. We will not escape. That's the consequence for drifting. You won't escape God's wrath.

Now we end with the reality check, what is the reality of drifting? I just want to ask two questions. Number one, are you drifting this morning? Have you looked up and seeing that you're halfway down this river, that you've been comfortable, that you've gotten distracted, that you obsess over things that are not as good as Jesus? Are you drifting from Jesus this morning? Number two, if not, do you realize that if you don't pay attention, you could? I'm confronted with two realities when I read this text, and

both of them are hard to swallow. Number one, as I studied this week, my mind flooded with youth, students, former youth, students, friends, family, who once professed the faith but now want nothing to do with Jesus. It breaks my heart that they've drifted because they won't escape. But then I'm confronted with this reality that if I'm not careful, the exact same thing can happen to me. If I don't pay closer attention, what happened to them could happen to me.

So for all of us in the church here this morning, the command is the same...pay closer attention to Jesus. Don't lose sight, don't get distracted. And just like when I'm driving and Kaitlyn tells me to pay attention, I get it, there are two responses. One is you can be like no, I'm not. Don't tell me how to do this. Don't tell me how to walk with Jesus. Don't tell me to pay better attention. You deny it all, you ignore it, or you can do what I didn't...and that's we can be humble this morning and we can realize we needed this warning and we can heed God's Word. So if you find yourself distracted this morning, you've been floating down the river, the preacher's telling you to stop floating. It's not too late. It's not too late right now, the sirens are still going off. Get in the house. Stop floating down the river, get out of your float, put your foot in the water and start walking back upstream. It's not too late but you have to stop drifting. For those who find themselves clinging tightly to Christ this morning, praise God! But the warning is don't stop. Keep clinging tightly. Don't walk out of that house. Keep taking refuge in Christ because the storm is still coming and you do not want to be outside when it comes. I just want us to consider this very briefly, I know we're busy, it's hard to pay attention to Jesus, but the God of the universe was not too busy to pay attention to you. The God of the universe stepped into the world He created to pay attention to you. He took on human flesh, lived a perfect life, died a sinner's death, rose from the dead, ascended into heaven for you. He paid attention to you, and He is worthy of all our attention to Him. We must pay much closer attention to Jesus lest we drift away.