

## Romans 2:1-4

<https://thebiblesays.com/commentary/heb/heb-2/hebrews-21-4/>

*Christians have received the greatest salvation, better than the law of the Old Testament. We should take Christ's teachings seriously or else we will wander from them and miss out on a great blessing. We need to be fully delivered from the negative consequences of the Fall, by being completely restored to our original design.*

*For this reason*, the Pauline Author declares, *we must pay much closer attention to what we have heard* [Christ's word] (v 1). *This reason* refers to the deity, authority, preeminence, and inheritance of Jesus Christ, the King who sits at the right hand of God, as described in Chapter 1, and the salvation (or deliverance) we have yet to inherit (Hebrews 1:14). This salvation is the deliverance from the futility of not fulfilling the purpose for which God designed humanity, to rule the earth in harmony with God and others. When Adam fell, humans apparently lost their right to reign in the earth (John 12:31).

Christ has inherited the earth to rule over as King; God has given Him this inheritance as a reward for His faithful obedience to do His Father's will by suffering death on the cross (Philippians 2:5-10). Jesus, the God-man, has now been crowned with the glory and honor of having all authority over both heaven as well as earth (Matthew 28:18). Although Jesus was the Son of God from the foundation of the world, He was rewarded the title of "Son" for His faithful service as a human.

*For this reason*, the Pauline Author warns his readers to *pay closer attention* to what the Son of God taught. In verse 1, the things *we have heard* are the words of the Son, Jesus, who taught that those that put their faith in Him and suffered for Him would be raised up in His kingdom (Matthew 19:29-30).

This language shows that it is possible for someone to believe in Christ, be born into God's family, but then to ultimately ignore His message in the way they live. The Pauline Author is warning that through carelessness and neglect, Christians can gradually wander from Christ's teachings in our lives. We lose it slowly by ignoring it. This is why the Pauline Author exhorts his audience to pay attention *so that we do not drift away from it* (v 1), as a boat might *drift away* before a sailor realizes he is far from shore.

The Pauline Author is setting a serious tone for the message of this letter. This is a warning to people who have already put their faith in Christ; it is possible for believers to drift from Jesus. If a believer drifts, there is a negative consequence. What is that negative consequence? We lose our deliverance or *salvation* from the futility of not reigning alongside the King. We lose the greatest of rewards, the full restoration of our original design—to reign over the earth in harmony with God, nature, and one another.

It is not uncommon for people to say that all they want to do is get in to heaven; they don't care what their status will be afterward. The book of Hebrews begs to differ with that perspective.

The Pauline Author invites his believing friends to realize the enormous loss associated with missing out on this incredible opportunity to gain such an immense reward.

Have you ever wished you could be royalty? The adoption as “son” alongside Jesus is an adoption into the royal court. Regardless of what fantasy we might imagine for ourselves in this life, the picture the Pauline Author paints in Hebrews is that we can obtain something far greater than any of those dreams, by heeding and obeying the words of Jesus.

The Pauline Author refers to the Old Testament as a *word* that was given *through angels*, which was how humanity received the Bible according to Jewish tradition: *For if the word spoken through angels proved unalterable, and every transgression and disobedience received a just penalty, how will we escape if we neglect so great a salvation?* (vv 2–3). Since angels are messengers of the Lord, their words are from the Lord, and therefore infallible and unchangeable.

The Law of Moses in the Old Testament was a covenant between God and His people, and it carefully laid out the penalties for disobedience of the Lord’s commands (Deuteronomy 28:15-68). That covenant stands. However, Jesus’s better sacrifice introduced a better covenant, which brings us freedom from death, slavery, and condemnation (Hebrews 7:22). If the word through angels proved unchanging and effective, how much more a word directly from their Boss?

The *great salvation* spoken of here is a deliverance that believers can *neglect*. It is therefore a *salvation* that has already occurred. God has already granted a great inheritance, but the inheritance needs to be possessed.

When we see the word *salvation*, it is important to examine the context to determine “What is being delivered from what?” The Greek word “soteria” translated here as *salvation* appears other places where we can apply this approach.

This example from Stephen’s sermon in Acts provides an illustration:

“And he [Moses] supposed that his brethren [Israel] understood that God was granting them deliverance [“soteria”] through him, but they did not understand.”  
(Acts 7:25)

In this Acts passage the word “deliverance” actually translates two Greek words: “didomi” which means “give,” and “soteria” which means *salvation*. To “give salvation” is to “deliver.” From the context, the deliverance being spoken of is a deliverance of the nation of Israel from slavery to the Egyptians through the agency of the man Moses. From our context in Hebrews 2, we will see that the deliverance being spoken of is to be delivered from the loss of the “glory and honor” of reigning over the earth in harmony and in service with Christ.

The word translated here as *salvation* is modified by the adjective *great*. As we progress in this chapter, we will see that the immense *salvation* that we (any believer) should not *neglect* is the inheritance we have been granted to be restored to our original design, to reign with Christ over the earth. To fully enter into the joy of our Master (Matthew 25:21).

In subsequent chapters this *great salvation* of being freed from the power of sin so that we might fully possess our inheritance is likened to the inheritance God gave Israel when they were freed from slavery in Egypt. Their inheritance after they left Egypt was the opportunity to possess the Promised Land of Canaan. Their salvation/deliverance from Egypt was carried out by God alone (1 Samuel 10:18). God granted the Promised Land to Israel as an inheritance (Genesis 15:7) but commanded Israel to fight and take the land through their efforts, grounded in the faith in God's promise.

The picture the Pauline author will paint to his Jewish audience is that they are like the generation of Jews coming out of Egypt. They have already been saved into God's family by the hand of God (John 3:14-15). Accordingly, they have been granted the promise of a great inheritance, to be fully restored to gain the "glory and honor" of reigning over the earth. But this is a promise that must be possessed through obedience. To fail to walk in obedience is to *neglect* this *great salvation*, the complete deliverance from the futility of the Fall.

An eternal standing with God as His child is never questioned. The Pauline Author presumes throughout that the believers receiving this letter possess the gift of being in God's family (Hebrews 3:1, 4:14, 10:19; 12:5). Being born again is a gift of God that is freely given, with no further requirements (John 3:14-16). But the author desires that these believers fully possess the reward of their inheritance by fully obeying God in all things (Colossians 3:23). God gives us the resurrection power of Jesus to overcome sin and its consequences in our daily lives, but that power is of no effect if it is neglected.

The Pauline Author emphasizes that there is no doubt who Jesus was and that we know what He taught: *After it was at the first spoken through the Lord, it was confirmed to us by those who heard, God also testifying with them, both by signs and wonders and by various miracles and by gifts of the Holy Spirit according to His own will* (vv 3–4).

God the Father verified the truth of Christ's claims by providing *signs and wonders and by various miracles and by gifts of the Holy Spirit*. Jesus first did such *signs and wonders*, proving that He is God (John 14:11). Only God can cause such miraculous occurrences. But then Jesus further *confirmed* His word *by those who heard*, Jesus's disciples. God also worked *miracles* through His disciples *by gifts of the Holy Spirit* to confirm the word of Christ.

The phrase *us who heard* infers that the writer(s) of this letter, and possibly some of the recipients, had the experience of having heard Jesus in person. So what Jesus said is not speculation. The claims in this letter are backed by the signs of God. The letter's recipients have no plausible reason to doubt them.

There is no doubt that Jesus's words are true, and that the path of obedience is rooted in listening to Him and following His example. Further, it is indisputable that at the end of the road of obedience is the reward of the inheritance—the same reward Jesus was granted (Matthew 28:18, Revelation 2:21).

The Pauline Author implores the believers to do exactly that since obedience leads to the greatest reward imaginable—going from being simply a child to being rewarded the privilege of being a

“son.” To be appointed a “son” is to possess the reward of the inheritance, to share Christ’s “glory and honor” by co-reigning over the earth alongside Him.

### **Biblical Text**

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