

RED OAK CHURCH OF CHRIST

THE GUIDELINE

Psalms 31:3

BEWARE OF NEGLECT

How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation; which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them that heard him; (Hebrews 2:3) This unsettling question is preceded by marvelous information about how God, in various ways and at different times, spoke through the prophets to the fathers (Hebrews 1:1). Then it is contrasted with; *Hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds;* (Hebrews 1:2) Next, Paul points out that God's son was the "express image" of his person (Hebrews 1:3). The phrase "express image" is from the greek word (χαρακτήρ) which means; "an exact copy or reproduction; understood as the exact expression that is the result of printing or engraving with a stamp." (This explains Christ's words in John 14:1-14) The word "person" has to do with essence or substance and gives the idea of substrata or supporting structure. Then, notice the word "upholding", which has to do with consistently maintaining or bearing and it involves "all things". Next, note that this is accomplished; "by the word of his power". The same verse also tell us that the Son; "by himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high." Finally, in chapter one (4-13) we learn of the lofty rank and file of the Son. The angels were told to worship him and no angel was ever told, "Thou art my son this day have I begotten thee". He was made better than the angels in that he inherited a more excellent name than they. It is interesting that the Holy Spirit inspired Paul to appeal directly to the Old Testament scriptures to make his case. The converted Jewish recipients of the Hebrew letter would surely have understood and respected these direct references.

These Jewish converts were reverting back to their old ways and Paul's plan was to snap them back into reality. *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. For if the word spoken by angels was stedfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just recompence of reward;* (Hebrews 2:1-2). Paul says they were "slipping" or "drifting"; (a gradual process). The late Thomas Eaves stated it this way, "It is as a boat that has been rowed ashore and partly pulled out of the water and when the tide comes in it picks it up and takes it out to sea or out into a body of water." Paul points out the dangers of the slippery slope that these brethren were on, "every transgression of disobedience received a just recompense of reward," Sin always finds you out! This brings us back to our discomfiting question. Why were they slipping? We will let Paul tell us.

How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation; which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them that heard him; (Hebrews 2:3) Now Paul reveals the true nature of their relapse. It was neglect. Neglect is used in the New Testament in four different ways. There is the neglect of hearing (παρακούση). Jesus spoke of this type of neglect concerning the trespass of a brother and the offender refusing to hear the offended (Matthew 18). It is used in Colossians 2:23 concerning the unsparing treatment (ἀφειδίᾳ) of the body. It is used in Acts 6:1 concerning the neglect (παρεθεωροῦντο to over look or ignore) of the widows. Finally it is used in our text (also see 1 Timothy 4:14). It is the word (ἀμελήσαντες) which means; "to be careless of, to neglect not caring for what had just been said." We have an example given in Matthew 22:5 *But they made light of it, and went their ways, one to his farm, another to his merchandise:* What a terrible indictment on a congregation! They were careless to the point of indifference to what was being said and of what had been said! This is how division begins. First, there is the carelessness. We have an example of careless ones in Isaiah 32. We learn in previous chapters that Assyria had fallen and Judah had been properly rebuked for their sinful alliance with Egypt; *Woe to them that go down to Egypt for help; And stay on horses, And trust in chariots, because they are many; And in horsemen, because they are very strong; But they look not unto the Holy One of Israel, Neither seek the LORD!... Now the Egyptians are men, and not God; And their horses flesh, and not spirit. When the LORD shall stretch out his hand, Both he that helpeth shall fall, and he that is holpen shall fall down, And they all shall fail together. Then shall the Assyrian fall with the sword, not of a mighty man; And the sword, not of a mean man, shall devour him: But he shall flee from the sword, And his young men shall*

*be discomfited. (Isaiah 31:1,3,8) We see in chapter 32:9-12 a scathing rebuke from God to Zion. Notice carefully, Rise up, ye women that are **at ease**; hear my voice, Ye **careless** daughters; give ear unto my speech. Many days and years shall ye be troubled, ye **careless** women: For the vintage shall fail, the gathering shall not come. Tremble, ye women that are **at ease**; be troubled, ye **careless** ones: Strip you, and make you bare, and gird sackcloth upon your loins. They shall lament for the teats, For the pleasant fields, for the fruitful vine. (Isaiah 32:9–12) Obviously, the rebuke on these careless women was a testimony against the general condition of the entire people, but notice again the words “careless” and “at ease”- they are synonyms. The prophet had been preaching his heart out and what was the outcome? It had no impact on them because carelessness and complacency had truly gone to seed! Read on in Isaiah and you will find these words of judgment, Upon the land of my people shall come up thorns and briers; Yea, upon all the houses of joy in the joyous city: Because the palaces shall be forsaken; The multitude of the city shall be left; The forts and towers shall be for dens for ever, A joy of wild asses, a pasture of flocks; (Isaiah 32:13–14)*

If we learn anything from these scriptures, we learn that when we begin to compromise, add to, or take away from God’s law it has a devastating affect on us. The book of Hebrews was primarily written to check the present danger they were in because of false teachers trying to convince them to go back to temple worship. To compound the problem they were “at ease” and were basically unaware of their dangerous condition because they were beginning to buy into the false teacher’s doctrine. Think for a moment of what they were about to throw away! *But, beloved, we are persuaded better things of you, and things that accompany salvation, though we thus speak., (Hebrews 6:9) For the law made nothing perfect, but the bringing in of a better hope did; by the which we draw nigh unto God. (Hebrews 7:22) By so much was Jesus made a surety of a better testament. (Hebrews 7:19) But now hath he obtained a more excellent ministry, by how much also he is the mediator of a better covenant, which was established upon better promises. Hebrews 8:6, It was therefore necessary that the patterns of things in the heavens should be purified with these; but the heavenly things themselves with better sacrifices than these. (Hebrews 9:23)*

You might be asking why on earth would they be willing to abandon this better way having already left the very thing that Paul was exposing to be false? Part of the answer, I believe, is found in traditionalism. Tradition has a very strong hold on people, and these Jews were steeped in tradition. Paul understood full well what was going on! *But I certify you, brethren, that the gospel which was preached of me is not after man.And profited in the Jews’ religion above many my equals in mine own nation, being more exceedingly zealous of the traditions of my fathers. (Galatians 1:11–14) God Help us not to drift!†*

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