

(Hebrews - Part 6): therefore...

by A.W. Tozer

A.W. Tozer emphasizes the importance of earnest attention to the truths of scripture and the dangers of neglecting salvation in his sermon on Hebrews.

Duration: 28:47

Scripture: Hebrews 1:1-2, Hebrews 2:1-3

Topics: "Expositional"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher addresses various excuses and obstacles that people have when it comes to accepting and following the word of God. He emphasizes that despite these excuses, it is crucial to pay attention to God's message and not let worldly distractions hinder one's spiritual growth. The preacher also highlights the urgency of obeying and believing in God, as the coming of the Lord may be upon us without our knowledge. He concludes by emphasizing the importance of staying committed to God, constantly feeding on His word, praying regularly, and repenting in order to save our souls.

Transcript

In the second chapter, 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 steadfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just recompense of reward, 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. The Lord also bearing them witness, both with signs and wonders, and with divers miracles, and gifts of the Holy Ghost according to his will.

Now, we're taking the book of Hebrews right along, verse after verse, and chapter after chapter, and we have arrived now at this section. And we begin with the word, therefore. A word that doesn't seem to have very much meaning, really, but it has tremendous meaning here.

Therefore links what he's going to say with what he has already said. That keeps it in what the theologians call context. You know the saying that if your text, a text without a context is a pretext.

And there are a great many texts that are merely pretexts. But this is a context. Therefore, he said, because I've said this, now I say this.

You see, the Bible never attacks the emotions direct, which is the favorite technique of many religious leaders. To attack the emotions direct, the general idea being that if you can get a tear, that you have made a saint, and that if you can get a man so badly shaken that he has to blow his nose loudly, that it's the trumpet of Gabriel, and that all is well. The truth is simply, brethren, that there is no connection whatsoever between our emotions that are worked up like that and truth.

Truth raises emotions, but always it's truth that does it, or else it is not properly religious emotions at all. So the scripture says, therefore, that is, the Bible way is frank and honest and logical. Certain things are true, and here they are, says the Holy Ghost.

Therefore, because they're true, certain obligations lie on you, and here they are. Now, that's the way the Bible works. That's the way Paul wrote his epistles.

That's the way the epistles of the other writers of the New Testament were written. That's the way the prophets wrote, that's the way Moses wrote. It is, these things are true, and because they're true, therefore you ought to believe this and do this.

That's the way it works. Now, the certain true things that are declared here are mentioned in the first chapter, that there is someone called the Eternal Son through whom God spoke, and in him God has spoken his final word to men. Always keep that in mind.

There will be no further revelation to man. God has spoken. He who in the beginning, in olden times, spoke in time past unto the fathers in various ways and in piecemeal fashion, has now in these last days spoken unto us by his Eternal Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.

And that Eternal Son, because of who he is and because of his position and because of his offices, he has given to his word, or God has given to his word, supreme authority. And because this is true, therefore we ought to give the more earnest heed to the things that we have heard. Now, there are errors which men have made.

They have not perhaps come right out and said them in so many words, but they think them. And what we think, so are we finally. And some have said or thought that there are any numbers of religions and all are good in varying degrees, and therefore why should we give the more earnest heed to the message of Christianity? Well, God has spoken in his Son and has said, Hear ye him? And Moses said, God will raise up a prophet like unto me.

Him shall ye hear, and it shall come to pass that whoever will not hear him shall be cut off from among his people. Jesus Christ is not another teacher. Jesus Christ is the final teacher and the last word of God to men.

And then there are those who would say that there is nothing to be disturbed about because Christ carries the supreme authority of God, and there is nothing for you and me to be worried about. But just because Christ carries the supreme authority of God, to ignore that authority is a grave offense. And some will say, God will take the initiative, I don't need anything.

I believe that God will always be the aggressor. I believe that too, incidentally. But remember that God has already taken the initiative when he sent his Holy Son Jesus Christ to the world, and then when he sent the Holy Spirit down to take the things of Christ so that God has already taken the initiative and there is no place to hide and there is reason to be bothered, we ought not to consider that when we get disturbed we

ought to go to a psychiatrist.

If God can't disturb us, he can't move us. If he can't move us, he can't save us. If he can't get us concerned about the things of God, why he can't do anything at all for us.

It was said of John Wesley that he was a man with a concern. We sing these hymns about being concerned and moved. We sing them, but we don't have to mean them.

But we ought to mean them because we ought to give them more earnest heed, which means careful attention. We ought to read, we ought to listen, we ought to search, we ought to examine and re-examine. And it ought to be an earnest heed.

We ought to put away levity and frequency and fun. The curse of everything today is it's got to be funny. If it isn't funny, it's not popular.

But there is nothing funny in God seeing his race wander away into night. There was nothing funny about his sending his Holy Son to be born of a virgin, nothing funny about his persecution and his crucifixion, nothing funny about the coming of the Holy Ghost, nothing funny about the judgment or levity or frequency or fun. When we consider the things of God, we ought to give the more earnest heed to the things which we have heard.

Now, says the more earnest heed, and the great labor of the church has always been to get people to take serious attention, or give serious attention. It's been the labor of the church every place it's been the labor of the church. Now, a great many pastors and preachers don't worry about this at all, because they don't expect anything and don't get it.

But if a man of God has the burden on him, the burden of the Holy Spirit, he will want to stir the people to serious attention. And until serious attention has been given to the claims of Christ, it is for us as if the Bible had never been written, medicine that sits on the shelf and is not taken, food that is left in the refrigerator and never eaten, never nourished anybody, heat that is not turned on, never warmed anybody. And the Bible itself, though it is nourishment, though it is light, though it is warmth, though it is medicine to the soul, yet it never helps anybody where there is not serious attention given to it.

And when we don't give serious attention, it is as if Christ had not come and died, and it is for us to neglect all that is meant by his coming and dying. Now, I notice two characteristics of the average natural man. One of them is moral insensibility, this lack of feeling.

He can't feel the whole moral question. And it's a strange paradox that he may be troubled by his inability to feel and yet can't feel. Then there is spiritual lethargy, an unnatural inward drowsiness when faced with the claims of God.

If we hear a speech, we immediately call up headquarters and want to know how we can get a fallout shelter. And if somebody makes a lecture on cancer, we examine ourselves and wonder if that last vein was the cancer. We are always concerned, but we are rarely concerned when it comes to spiritual things.

Moral insensibility and spiritual lethargy are two great curses because they keep us from taking earnest heed. Now, the source of this dangerous condition is the semi-anesthesia caused by the act of sinning. When a person sins, he anesthetizes his conscience to a certain extent.

The Bible called that cauterizing the conscience. You know, if you cauterize a thing, it will hurt at first, then it will heal over, and after that you have no feeling there where the cauterization took place because you have developed a hard shell, a skin there. And sin does that.

It cauterizes the conscience, and pretty soon it doesn't bother us that we're sinning. I'm a blinding agent of the unholy one we call the devil. I preached last Sunday morning from this book of Hebrews on angels, and somebody came to me afterward and said they had enjoyed it but wanted to know if I would also sometime preach on demons.

Well, that's something I don't want to preach on, but something I assume I must sometime because the devil blinds the minds of those who believe not, thus the light of the glorious gospel of Christ might shine unto them. Then there is preoccupation of the making of a living. Jesus called it the cares of this life.

I want to say this to you this morning, and I think as the preachers say that I have no fear of successful contradiction, that if all of you listening to me, would put as much earnest time in and give as much serious attention to seeking God this week as you're going to put in to making a living, you would become a much finer Christian, and by next Sunday you'd wonder what had happened to you. And I'd like to say that if you women listening to me would give as much earnest heed to the claims of Christ and to the needs of your own soul, as you're undoubtedly giving to your cooking and to your family, at the end of the week you would have made such spiritual advances that you would be ashamed of the way you'd been living before. But the simple fact is God gets the leftovers.

God never gets the main meal, he gets the leftovers. God never gets anything new, he gets the hand-me-downs. We give to God that which we don't need instead of giving to God for ourselves.

But if we were as concerned with our spiritual condition as we are with our homes and our business and our income, we would go forward spiritually at a great rate. And the beautiful thing about it is we wouldn't neglect our homes to do it, and we wouldn't neglect our business to do it. You don't have to take your choice between making a living and going forward with God.

You can do both. You don't have 17 children, do you? And there was a woman once by the name of Susanna Wesley, and she had 17 children. I think she had 18, and John was the 17th.

Well, 18 children, and yet she kept that house thick and spanned. And she was known as one of the greatest women of her time just because she decided she could look after her family and still make spiritual progress. And I will say this, too, that if you who are students would seek the face of God as earnestly as you seek books over these coming weeks, you would find yourself growing in grace like grass by the watercourses.

But there's the constant seeking after pleasure, and that keeps people back. There's the physical pleasure, comforts and various vices and food and the rest. And there are mental pleasures such as social pleasures and gambling and amusements and the reading of fiction.

There are aesthetic pleasures, art and music and learning and culture. But all these put together, they demand, they simply give pleasant sensations, the same sensation a baby gets by sucking its thumb. And the whole human race has grown up thumb suckers.

And we give over, we give to the getting of a pleasant sensation the time we ought to get the saving of our souls. Peter said, Save yourselves from this wicked and untoward generation. Peter, why would you say

that the average evangelical won't like it? Well, I don't care what the average evangelical likes.

Peter said, But though we may not be in earnest, I want you to know God is in dead earnest. God the Father was earnest when he planned and finally accomplished the work of redemption. God the Son was earnest when he sweat bloody sweat in the garden of Gethsemane.

And God the Holy Ghost is always in earnest when he comes to dwell in the natures of man or the nature of men. And it says here, we ought to give the more earnest heed to the King James Version. I'll leave that to men who have anything better to do.

But in this case, I want to just make a correction here. And if you'll notice in the margin, it says, Lest at any time we should let them slip. And the margin says, Run out as a leaking vessel.

And other versions have, We should drift away from it. Oh, this spirit of drifting, this spirit of leaking. A lot of us have leakage of the heart.

A great many people have leaking hearts. They leak in their spirits or they drift as a boat drifts away. Things that we have heard, they're here.

God has declared them through his Son Jesus Christ, our Lord, and he has set them here to save us all and to bless us all. Some have listened and been interested and pondered and hesitated and then done nothing about it at all and are slowly drifting away from the rock of truth out of a falls, maybe sunning himself and lazily waiting for a bite. Not knowing until it's too late that he has drifted so near to the falls that he can't recover himself.

And so with a scream he goes over to his death. I wonder how many of them, how many persons there are that have gone over the falls because they allowed themselves to drift away from the truth. Well, how do we neglect by drifting from it? And how do we neglect it? Well, another form is leaking away.

We get the truth in our heart but it leaks away. We let it leak away and here is the heart-breaking truth that some hearts are leaking. We have leakage of the heart and our good resolutions all leak away.

Comes around the New Year, and on New Year's Eve they get unsilvered. But start making resolutions. I have resolved that I will be kinder to my wife this year.

I resolve that I will give regularly to the church. I resolve that I will pray regularly every day. I resolve that I will not let a day go by that I do not read the Holy Scriptures.

I resolve that I will seek to know God better. I make my resolutions. But you know the heart is a leaky thing and before the 1st of February the average person's resolutions have all leaked away.

There are the good intentions, the strong whine of spiritual desire. When you hear a man preach, a man that touches you particularly wherever he might be, suddenly you conceive a strong desire for God. And the strong whine of spiritual desire, you are long after it.

But the little vat of your heart is leaky and pretty soon it all leaks away and pretty soon there is no desire left at all. And the love of spiritual things, you see the difference between spiritual things and earthly things is that the things of the Spirit are so modest. The things of the Spirit are not pushing in on you.

The things of the Spirit are not singing commercials to you. The things of the Spirit are not knocking on your door and urging you. The things of the Spirit are waiting.

It is written of Jesus that he did not lift up his voice nor make himself to be heard in the street. He did not cry aloud but was calm and quiet. You came to him for the truth but the things of the flesh are so insistent, so clamorous.

Before you are up in the morning they are clamoring at you, trying to get you interested in buying what they want to sell or doing what they have decided that you should do. I am on a one-man strike against buying anything that is advertised by singing commercials. I just won't do it.

I hope sometime they don't get around to singing about everything because I will have to go to the woods and live on roots and berries because I just won't buy it. If they sing about it, they can have it. Anybody that is that silly and anybody that thinks I am that silly and had a half with it, they are coming to you and urging you and pushing you by example and by precept and by instruction and by advertising and by urging.

They are trying to get us to go certain ways and do certain things. But the things of the Spirit, I heard what a great Welsh preacher once said that Jesus Christ is a gentleman. He won't break down anybody's door.

He stands at the door and knocks and people come in unto him but he never pushes through the door. Or it can be. In Oregon where I was a couple of weeks ago, cabins are all along.

They all look pretty much alike. They are made out of fur, wood, unpainted, nice brown wood, rather nice to look at. Well, they must be painted, though fur wouldn't be that brown.

I would assume they are stained. And they all look pretty much alike. I was walking along and I had my Bible and I suddenly opened the door and pushed myself in.

Here was a fellow laying on a bed. And I backed out. Oh, pardon me, I said.

Pardon me, I thought this was my cottage. Well, it wasn't. It was the one next to it.

I haven't gotten over that yet. That wasn't a woman anyhow. At least it was a man.

And there he was laying on a bed. But I wouldn't have done that so I pushed in there. But if I'd go to your house and I'd see you draw the blind and I pushed the bell once, I wouldn't push it twice.

If I pushed the bell once and you looked and I saw the blind go down or the Venetian blinds flip, I'd say to myself, they don't want me there and I would take a bus back home. But our Lord is never intrusive. The things of the world are intrusive.

And here's the point I'm trying to make in wandering around. It's this, that if you're going to give attention to the things of God and save your own soul, you're going to have to have a good intention, good resolution, and then do it and see to it that you do it. And don't let the devil prevent you.

You're going to have to take yourself by the scarf of the neck, shake yourself up and say, Lord God, I'm going to see if I can't be a better man next week than I was last week, and a better man next month than I was last month. Well, I wonder what we're going to do about all this. God meant it when he gave us the law.

Christ meant it when he died and rose. The Holy Ghost means it. How much more will we be judged if we heed not the truth than they were judged who heeded not the law for it's written, for if the word spoken by angels was steadfast and every transgression and disobedience received a just recompense or reward, 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? God also bearing them witness both with signs and wonders and divers miracles and gifts of the Holy Ghost according to his will.

How shall we escape? I intended to. I intended to later, but there wasn't any later time. I didn't understand, but they understood enough.

I was too busy, but as the song says, at last they have found time to die. Somebody else says, nobody in my crowd paid any attention, but it's always so. When the saving voice of God speaks to a crowd of men, it's only one here and there that hears it.

When the voice of God speaks to a family that heard it, the rest of them are overthrown in the flood. Somebody else says, if I pay attention to this, I'll lose my job. The chances are you won't, but if you do, any job that you lose that saves your soul, guarantees your heaven, certainly will be a wonderful bargain.

Somebody else says, I want to have some fun yet and then I will become a Christian. I've heard that no later than this week. I won't answer that.

That's too, it is too meaningless, lacking in significance to warrant any answer to all. And then others say, I was afraid of what people would say. Afraid of what people would say.

Society is in a conspiracy to make us all alike. Society is in a conspiracy to make us all bad. Not too bad, because if we get too bad, we're problems to the police.

But not too good, for if we get too good, we're fanatical, so they say. So society wants to keep us nice, trimmed down, going to church, supporting boys' clubs and girls' clubs and hospitals and all those things are all right, certainly. But society wants to keep us just good enough not to be a problem to the police and bad enough not to bother their conscience.

But I hear the voice of God calling us to a better kind of life. And that's why the book of Hebrews was written at all. The whole book of Hebrews was written to people half in and half out.

People on the borderline, some were in, some had tasted the good word of God and some were gazing over. Nobody wanted to buy. And the man wrote the book of Hebrews an urgent, vibrant, living book that he might speak to those who were on the border and say, go on over, you can dare to do it.

Go on over and speak to those who couldn't quite make up their mind whether they wanted to obey and believe. Say, you dare obey, you dare believe. That's why the book of Hebrews was written.

May God grant that we do not let these things slip away from us, that we do not drift away from them, and that we do not allow the truth to leak out of our hearts. There's any time of the year when the truth leaks away, it's summertime, because there's everything to do and short time to do it and all the rest. But by the grace of God, we must not allow this to happen.

We must keep our hearts spiritual and we must go on with God. We must feed on the word day and night. We must pray often and we must pray regularly and we must obey.

We must repent. We must do the will of God. Lest the coming of the Lord come upon us and we know it not.

Now, Father, we pray thee, bless this truth. Long ago thy servant wrote these words. We, thy servants, in this time long after hear them.

There is a living as if they had been written yesterday and delivered this morning. O God, we lift our eyes to thee, to thy Son, Jesus Christ, the Lord, who is above angels and who sitteth at thy right hand and we pray, give to us a spiritual urgency. Give to us a longing which is more than human.

Give to us, we pray thee, a desire that's like a fire burning in our bones. That the claims of Christ, thy Holy Son, may be so strong within us that we cannot neglect them. We shall press on like the day spring, rise higher and higher to the shining light and unto the perfect day.

We ask it in the name of Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.

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