

Perseverance - Part 1

by Richard Owen Roberts

The book of Hebrews emphasizes the importance of perseverance in Christianity, warning believers of the consequences of falling away from Christ and encouraging them to hold fast to their confession of hope.

Duration: 1:26:23

Scripture: Hebrews 2:1

Topics: "Perseverance"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker emphasizes the importance of not missing the message of God's word. He encourages the audience to pay close attention and take notes. The speaker then outlines the warning passages in the book of Hebrews, starting with the first warning in chapter 2 verses 1 to 4. He explains that this warning highlights the strict requirements of the old covenant and questions whether those under the new covenant have less stringent regulations. The speaker also emphasizes the undeniable evidence of the gospel message through the miracles and teachings of Jesus Christ.

Transcript

Well now, my privilege these days together is to draw your attention to the book of Hebrews. And I invite you to turn there now, and Lord helping me, we'll stay within this epistle. Now obviously, to talk about expounding the book of Hebrews in a brief weekend like this would be quite ridiculous.

It would take an entire session just to read the book. I wouldn't mind doing that, in fact. And may, before we're through, but this is a perfectly marvelous book, and one that I have been wanting to share with this group really from the first time I was privileged to come.

Now I trust that all of you have at least a basic acquaintance with the book of Hebrews, and are aware that there is a peculiar structure to the book. I don't mean to say that whoever wrote the book was conscious of what he was doing, but you can't really come to grips with the book of Hebrews and appreciate adequately its message if you don't come to a realization that there is a pattern here that needs to be observed. There are really two streams of truth that the book of Hebrews details.

The first I've already mentioned, this wonderful lifting up of Christ. And in a very systematic way, what the author of Hebrews does is to elevate Christ over angels, over Moses, over the whole of the priesthood, and particularly does he allude in a lengthy section to Melchizedek, that extraordinary king-priest of the Old Testament, and then before he's through, he compares Christ with the whole of the Old Covenant, the

sacrificial system, everything that had to do with the purpose of the law, and demonstrates in every instance that Christ is infinitely superior, infinitely superior to angels, infinitely superior to Moses, infinitely superior to Melchizedek, infinitely superior to the high priesthood of the Old Covenant, and his sacrifice infinitely superior to the sacrifices under the law. But in the midst of all that glorious lifting up of Christ and elevating him, and demonstrating his tremendous superiority, there is also a thread of warning that keeps bursting forth within the epistle.

And these warnings really focus on this one critical issue. All that Christ is infinitely superior to is but a shadow or a type of Christ, and Christ, in his coming, in his sacrifice, brought to completion all of the ceremonial law, all of the sacrificial system, all of the priesthood. So if a person came to Christ and left the shadows, left the priestly system, left the sacrificial system, left the purpose of the law under the Old Covenant, and then having walked with Christ, or having at least tasted of Christ, experienced something of the Spirit, something of the good things of the world to come, and then went back, they would be going back to nothing.

It would be leaving that which was a mere shadow, coming to that which is true reality, and then going back to that which expired, which has no longer any significance or any meaning whatsoever. So the warning passages of Hebrews really deal with this critical word, perseverance. And of course, Hebrews is so urgent for our day.

Urgent first because it is so largely neglected. It astonishes me how few people seem to have any comprehension of the significance of Hebrews at all. And secondly, I am astonished at how regularly the vast majority of professed Christians in our day merely neglect the message of Hebrews.

If I may put it in a few words, it does not matter how you begin. What matters is how you finish. Christianity is not a good start.

It's a glorious ending. Now you see, in our circles, we focus on the start. We make a big fuss and a big to-do about getting people to make an initial response to Christ.

And then we gloat and crow and brag and rejoice in their start, not even caring that they didn't go anywhere after they started. You can look back and see multitudes right now where they were the day we called them a convert. They haven't progressed a single inch.

But there's no way we can really lay hold of the book of Hebrews and continue in that pattern. We're bound to change our way of thinking and acting when we understand Hebrews. And so really, my message to you these few days is twofold.

It's to you personally. There may well be any number here who made a good beginning. But I repeat, it doesn't matter how you start.

It's how you finish that counts. And if you've stalled somewhere there in the beginning stages, understand that's not Christianity. That's false religion.

He that perseveres to the end said someone more important than you and me, the same shall be saved. The only one who really had the final word made that crystal clear. So I urge you to listen for yourself because perseverance is absolutely mandatory.

It's not an option. But also while you're listening for yourself, listen for others because so many of you, whom I've become acquainted with over these years since we've been privileged to come here, I have learned are involved in witnessing in a great variety of places. Many of you are preachers.

And a high percentage gathered in this room are persons with at least a measure of passion for others. But what a tragedy if in trying to help someone, you actually harm them. If you give them an abbreviated message, if you convey to them a truth that is but a half-truth, if you give them the impression that a good start is what counts.

So let us listen with great care. It's not that I hope to say a lot of new things you never heard before. That's beside the point.

I hope to say some things in keeping with the word of God that the spirit of God will use to alter our own lives and our service for the Lord Jesus Christ. To that end, let us bow together in prayer. Lord, here is a rich and a beautiful epistle written to an ancient church where people were sorely tempted to return to that which they had left in turning toward Christ.

There's no way that in the time allotted we could give full attention to this epistle, but by your grace and through the power of the spirit, we could give the kind of attention that would make a phenomenal difference in our lives. And so I pray that each man and woman here will take heed how they hear, and will take heed what they hear, so that indeed there will be put within us the capacity to be not only hearers of the word, but doers also. Some can't possibly do what is preached because they haven't heard it.

They sat and listened, but somehow it missed them. May the spirit of God so help us that not one will miss what you are saying to us in these messages from this precious book of Hebrews. To this end we consecrate these hours together and anticipate that ministry of the spirit that will matter eternally to the glory of Jesus Christ.

Amen. Now let me begin by suggesting that you either mark this out in your Bible or perhaps make notes. I don't hesitate to show you.

I don't think many of you can see what I've done, but a few of you can see the page of my Bible and see that I have put a big heavy black line around a certain portion. You don't have to see it to get the point. What I've literally done in this Bible that I'm using today is to put this heavy box around the warning passages.

I'm going to give you the passages in a moment, but before I do may I make this suggestion to you. Sometime before too long, mark out these warning passages and then read through Hebrews in two different ways. Read through Hebrews first just reading the passages that elevate and exalt and lift up the Lord Jesus Christ.

Then read through another time reading just the warning passages by themselves. Now let me give you my reason for that urging you. One of the most complex and difficult passages in all the Bible over which all kinds of people regularly stumble is Hebrews chapter 6. The passage that talks about the impossibility of renewing them again to repentance.

Now if you insist on reading chapter 6 by itself, you are certain to go on stumbling. It is a passage that is extraordinarily difficult to deal with in isolation. But it is a passage that snaps into focus in the most glorious way when you put all the warning passages together.

Let me show you what I mean by first outlining these warning passages so you can make note of them. The first warning is in chapter 2, verses 1 to 4. And that's the box that I lifted up in front of you that a few of you were able to faintly detect. So the first warning, chapter 2, verses 1 to 4. Now let me be quite honest in saying to you, there is not an exact science in mapping things out as I'm doing for you.

You don't need to follow my precise outline. In fact you would profit more if you did this for yourself. But I'm suggesting to you the warning passages as I have found them.

You might want to extend them a little or shorten them a little. That is perfectly acceptable. The main thing you want to end up with is the ability to read all the Christ glorifying passages in one reading and all the warning passages in another reading.

So the second then of these warnings occurs in chapter 3. At verse 7, it is a longer one than the first and it continues through chapter 4 at verse 13. I'll repeat that so that you are able to be sure you've gotten it. Chapter 3 at verse 7 through chapter 4 at verse 13.

The third warning passage is in chapter 5. It begins at verse 11 and continues into chapter 6 verse 12. So the third, verse 11 of chapter 5 on to verse 12 of chapter 6. Then because the theme that the author is contrasting with Christ has to do with the whole of the priesthood and the sacrificial system and the old covenant. The doctrinal passage following the third warning is a very extended one and continues until chapter 10.

So the next warning, that is the fourth warning, begins at verse 19 of chapter 10 and continues to the end of the chapter or in other words to verse 39. So from verse 19 of chapter 10 to verse 39. Then there are two more warnings, both of them in chapter 12.

The first from verse 1 to verse 17. Warning number 5, chapter 12 verses 1 to 17. And the final warning, warning number 6, chapter 12 verses 25 to 29.

And again I repeat, lest any misunderstand, that is the way I have mocked it out, but feel the liberty to mock it out more acceptably and more accurately than I have done. And just as a suggestion of some additional help. Many of you know and love Andrew Murray and his commentary on Hebrews faithfully mocks out these warning passages slightly differently than I have done, but in a most excellent way.

Some of you may have already his book in your library, others may want to secure it for it is a most profitable volume. But now let me do what I've suggested, or at least I'll do it in part. Let me begin by reading warning passages just so you see how these things flow together.

Chapter 2 verse 1. For this reason we must pay closer attention to what we have heard, lest we drift away from it. For if the word spoken through angels proved unalterable, and every transgression and disobedience received a just recompense, how shall we escape if we neglect so great a salvation after it was at the first spoken through the Lord and was confirmed to us by those who heard? God also bearing witness with them, both by signs and wonders, and by various miracles and the gifts of the Holy Spirit according to his own will. Therefore, just as the Holy Spirit says, Today, if you will hear his voice, now I don't want to confuse anyone, but you should realize what I'm doing.

I'm skipping over the doctrine and going to the second warning passage. That's why I gave you the list beforehand so you could follow me. I won't interrupt myself again.

I just wanted to fill in maybe one or two who were wondering where I had jumped to in the reading. Well, I jumped to verse 7 of chapter 3. So let's go back now to 2, and we'll read on consecutively without interruption. God also bearing witness with them, both by signs and wonders, and by various miracles and the gifts of the Holy Spirit according to his own will.

Therefore, just as the Holy Spirit says, Today, if you will hear his voice, do not harden your hearts as when they provoked me, as in the day of trial in the wilderness where your fathers tried me by testing me and saw my works for forty years. Therefore, I was angry with this generation and said, They always go astray in their heart, and they did not know my ways. As I swore in my wrath, they shall not enter my rest.

Take care, brethren, lest there should be in any of you an evil, unbelieving heart in falling away from the living God. But encourage one another day after day, as long as it is still called today, lest any of you be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin. For we have become partakers of Christ if we hold fast the beginning of our assurance firm until the end.

While it is said today, If you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts as when they provoked me. For who provoked him when they had heard? Indeed, did not all those who came out of Egypt led by Moses? And with whom was he angry for forty years? Was it not with those who sinned, whose bodies fell in the wilderness? And to whom did he swear that they should not enter his rest? But to those who were disobedient, and so we see that they were not able to enter because of unbelief. Therefore let us hear, lest while a promise remains of entering his rest, any one of you should seem to have come short of it.

For indeed, we have had good news preached to us, just as they also. But the word they heard did not profit them, because it was not united by faith in those who heard. For we who have believed enter that rest, just as he said, as I swore in my wrath, they shall not enter my rest.

Although his works were finished from the foundation of the world. For he has thus said somewhere concerning the seventh day, and God rested the seventh day from all his works. And again in this passage, they shall not enter my rest.

Since therefore it remains for some to enter it, and those who formerly had good news preached to them failed to enter because of disobedience, he again fixes a certain day, today, saying through David, after so long a time, just as it has been said before, today if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts. For if Joshua had given them rest, he would not have spoken of another day after that. There remains therefore a Sabbath rest for the people of God.

For the one who has entered his rest has himself also rested from his works as God did from his. Let us therefore be diligent to enter that rest, lest anyone fall through following the same example of disobedience. For the word of God is living and active and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing as far as the division of soul and spirit of both joints and marrow, and able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart.

And there is no creature hidden from his sight, but all things are open and laid bare to the eyes of him with whom we have to do. Concerning him we have much to say, and it is hard to explain since you have become dull of hearing. For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you have need again for someone to teach you the elementary principles of the oracles of God, and you have come to need milk and not solid food.

For everyone who partakes only of milk is not accustomed to the word of righteousness, for he is a babe. But solid food is for the mature, who because of practice have their senses trained to discern good and evil, therefore leaving the elementary teaching about Christ, let us press on to maturity, not laying again a foundation of repentance from dead works and of faith toward God, of instruction about washing and laying on of hands and the resurrection of the dead, and eternal judgment. And this we shall do if God permits.

For in the case of those who have once been enlightened and have tasted of the heavenly gift and have been made partakers of the Holy Spirit and have tasted the good word of God and the powers of the age to come and then have fallen away, it is impossible to renew them again to repentance since they again crucify to themselves the Son of God and put Him to an open shame. The ground that drinks the rain which often falls upon it and brings forth vegetation useful to those for whose sake it is also tilled receive a blessing from God. But if it yields thorns and thistles, it is worthless and close to being cursed and it ends up being burned.

But beloved, we are convinced of better things concerning you and things that accompany salvation for though we are speaking in this way, for God is not unjust so as to forget your work and the love which you have shown toward His name in having ministered and in still ministering to the saints and we desire that each one of you show the same diligence so as to realize the full assurance of hope until the end so that you may not be sluggish but imitators of those who through faith and patience inherit the promises. Since therefore, brethren, we have confidence to enter the holy place by the blood of Jesus by a new and living way which He inaugurated for us through the veil that is His flesh and since we have a great high priest over the house of God let us draw near with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith having our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water. Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering for He who promised is faithful and let us consider how to stimulate one another to love and good deeds not forsaking our own assembling together as is the habit of some but encouraging one another and all the more as you see the day drawing near for if we go on sinning willfully after receiving the knowledge of the truth there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins but a certain terrifying expectation of judgment and the fury of a fire which will consume the adversary.

Anyone who has set aside the law of Moses dies without mercy on the testimony of two or three witnesses how much severe punishment do you think he will deserve who has trampled underfoot the Son of God and has regarded the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified as unclean and has insulted the spirit of grace for we know him who said vengeance is mine I will repay and again the Lord will judge his people it is a terrifying thing to fall into the hand of the living God but remember the former days when after being enlightened you endured a great conflict of sufferings partly by being made a public spectacle through reproaches and tribulations and partly by becoming sharers with those who were so treated for you showed sympathy to the prisoners and accepted joyfully the seizure of

your own property knowing that you have for yourselves a better possession and an abiding one therefore do not throw away your confidence which has a great reward for you have need of endurance so that when you have done the will of God you may receive what was promised for yet in a very little while he who is coming will come and will not delay but my righteous one shall live by faith and if he shrinks back my soul has no pleasure in him but we're not of those who shrink back to destruction but of those who have faith to the preserving of the soul therefore since we have so great a cloud of witnesses surrounding us let us lay aside every encumbrance and the sin which so easily entangles us and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us fixing our eyes on Jesus the author

and perfecter of faith who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross despising the shame and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God for consider him who has endured such hostility by sinners against himself so that you may not grow weary and lose heart you have not yet resisted to the point of shedding blood in your striving against sin and you have forgotten the exhortation which is addressed to you as sons my son, do not regard lightly the discipline of the Lord nor faint when you are reproved by him for those whom the Lord loves he disciplines and he scourges every son whom he receives it is for discipline that you endure God deals with you as with sons for what son is there whom his father does not discipline but if you are without discipline of which all have

become partakers then you are illegitimate children and not sons furthermore we have had earthly fathers to discipline us and we respected them shall we not much rather be subject to the father of spirits and live for they disciplined us for a short time as it seemed best to them but he disciplines us for our good that we may share his holiness all discipline for the moment seems not to be joyful but sorrowful yet to those who have been trained by it afterward it yields the peaceable fruit of righteousness therefore strengthen the hands that are weak and the knees that are feeble and make straight paths for your feet so that the limb which is lame may not be put out of joint but rather be healed pursue peace with all men and the sanctification without which no man will see the Lord see to

it that no one comes short of the grace of God that no root of bitterness springing up causes trouble and by it many be defiled that there be no immoral or godless person like Esau who sold his own birthright for a single meal for you know that even afterwards when he desired to inherit the blessing he was rejected for he found no place of repentance though he sought it with tears see to it that you do not refuse him who is speaking for if those did not escape when they refused him who warned them on earth much less shall we escape who turn from him who warns from heaven and his voice shook the earth then but now he has promised saying yet once more I will shake not only the earth but also the heavens and this expression yet once more denotes the removing of those things which can be

shaken as of created things in order that those things which cannot be shaken may remain therefore since we receive a kingdom which cannot be shaken let us show gratitude by which we may offer to God an acceptable sacrifice with reverence and awe for our God is a consuming fire could you not sense the way those passages all blend together and how indeed the difficult parts suddenly have light poured in upon them when I was first ill and showing no signs of recovery I did the natural thing I asked the question of the Lord is there some sin in me that you're dealing with I think we always need to begin there but I wouldn't want to imply that I felt myself perfect I would only say I really could not sense any sin that the Lord was pointing out to me I was alert to the passage that we just

read in chapter 12 about whom the Lord loves, he disciplines but then I was getting ready to speak down at Palatius the men's prayer retreat and I just felt very drawn to the book of Job and felt I ought to give a series on the book and a thought occurred to me that if it had ever come to my mind before I had forgotten it this precious truth came to my mind Job was a good man a very good man the best man that God was dealing with in those ancient days and yet the book of Job is the record of a glorious revival really you can't find any detailed case of an individual's revival in all of scripture that equals the revival of Job now normally when we think of revival we think of a bad one you know, someone who is backslidden someone who has wandered from the Lord someone with severe problems

in their life or a church that's backslidden being revived but this beautiful truth dawned on me well there are there are times in which God's choicest servants are revived well I wouldn't want to put myself in the

category of God's choicest servants but what a blessing it was when that just poured over my soul revival's not only good for the bad but it's blessed for the best it is perfectly glorious for those who walk with God and then these words really indelibly impressed upon my mind I almost thought I heard the Lord saying to Job Job, come on up higher come up higher, Job you've been walking on a plain above the rest but come on up higher there is higher ground, isn't there?

I'm sure no one here feels that they have achieved the highest ground attainable and so God allowed Satan to push Job through that series of critical and difficult experiences in order to be able to say emphatically and with absolute success Job, come up higher and the last chapter is a glorious record of a man who had been up above the rest who is suddenly even higher and so I said, well Lord, I haven't been all that high but I'm going to look at this sickness as an invitation to come up higher I know that some of you are suffering as well as myself and isn't that a proper interpretation having asked the question is there some sin the Lord is dealing with obviously as I said we begin there but why waste our lives wondering if there's some offense in our life well why not just deal with

that and put it aside and say having had no suggestions from the Holy Spirit about some specific sin I need to deal with now I'm just going to treat it as an invitation to higher ground now friends in coming to you here at the cedars with the book of Hebrews I sense very much the same basic principle many of you have been persevering I mean look at the rounder table will you sure there's some young folk here and we're grateful for the young but I see a good many who are older than myself and some are relatively young Christians but by the grace of God some of you have been persevering in the faith for a long time I've had the privilege the church where I'll be preaching next Sunday night is the church that I attended as a boy the church where I made my first public announcements of

commitment to Jesus Christ after more than half a century of preaching I get to go back and preach in that church where God touched me so deeply as a young boy I know something about perseverance many of you know something about perseverance but I believe that all of us can learn even more about what it means to persevere and not only as I said to learn it for ourselves but by the grace of God to learn it for the sake of others so that we impart to them a message of truth that includes perseverance not just the good beginning but the glorious ending now let's go back in Hebrews having read through the warning passages and let's pick up the first warning let me read it to you again and then let me take some few moments putting forth the setting of all of this chapter 2 verse 1 for this

reason we must pay closer attention to what we have heard lest we drift away from it for if the word spoken through angels proved unalterable and every transgression and disobedience received a just recompense how shall we escape if we neglect so great a salvation after it was at the first spoken through the Lord and was confirmed to us by those who heard God also bearing witness with them both by signs and wonders and by various miracles and by gifts of the Holy Spirit according to His own will some of you I'm confident have some awareness of the setting of this book of Hebrews in the latter part of the warnings that we have read together there is some clear allusion to what the people in the church to whom the epistle is addressed were facing did you notice in the language of the

portion that we read how these people were suffering for their faith and how they were made I'm referring now to the warning in chapter 10 they were made a public spectacle verse 33 they endured reproaches and tribulations they showed sympathy to prisoners and in consequence verse 34 they had to joyfully accept the seizure of their own property now that's not a great deal of detail but it fits of course exactly with what we know about the book of Hebrews we don't know who were the recipients of the book we have no

record of the name of the place where the epistle was first sent but we know it was a Jewish congregation and we know that they were people who as I suggested early on left the shadows left the types of the old covenant and entered into the completion of the perfect in Jesus

Christ we know being Jews that they left their own synagogues in some measure they may have attained a dual attendance maybe they remained within the synagogue on Saturday and were in the house of the Lord on Sunday that may be the case with some others apparently left the synagogue altogether when they realized that that was only a shadow why spend your time in the shadows I mean what if someone here were in the process now of a new home and you had gone so far as to hire the architect and he produced just marvelous plans within your price range would you go to bed at night sleeping with the plans would you spend the rest of your life rejoicing in the architectural sketches no when you hire an architect the sketch is just a step but you don't remain in the step you don't abide there you

move from there to the completion of the dwelling well to remain in the Old Testament to be all caught up with the sacrificial system under the law is like trying to dwell in the architect's drawings it doesn't make any sense that's just the sort of thing a thinking person wouldn't do so here are these Jews they have come to an awareness that Jesus is the Messiah they have embraced him in some measure they have put in their word of loyalty to him they've claimed him as their own in some fashion but now they're under tremendous persecution some of them coming from these Jewish homes as I've said and having forsaken the synagogue are under attack by their parents and their grandparents by their aunts and their uncles what an asinine thing you've done how could you be so foolish here is the

true religion and you've abandoned the true religion to follow monkey business you've gone chasing after this ridiculous Messiah Jesus don't you know that's just shim sham don't you know that's just a passing phase don't you know he's dead and buried Christianity will soon perish from the earth how could you have been so foolish as to leave the religion of your fathers and to embrace this new thing come on home come on back we'll forgive you you're young you're impulsive we'll just overlook what you've done just come on back to the bosom of your family and at the same time this was happening Neal was developing a tremendous hatred of Christians and he had somehow gotten the notion that Christians had done him great damage and so he used Christians as lanterns at his garden parties he

doused them with flammable liquid and then he hung them up on posts and they were set on fire and they provided the light for his garden parties it cost something in those days to be a Christian and so here are these young Christians beckoned back into the bosom of Judaism by their families and made fearful by the persecution that Neal is so arduously executing against them at the same time others of them when they went off to chapel for a service when they met with the children of God in worship of Jesus Christ they went home only to discover that their homes had been totally ransacked and it was not random ransacking it was deliberate way of saying we hate Christians and when you go off to church you can anticipate that you're going to suffer the loss of everything that's valuable to

you and others who were caring for prisoners and fulfilling the teaching of Jesus Christ were suffering immense harm for their love of Christ and love of others so over and over in a great variety of ways they were being appealed to don't go on with this false Christ just give up on it it's not going to last there is no value to it come home, come home don't ever risk everything for the sake of a cause like Christianity and so the epistle is written to those people warning them don't go back don't go back there's nothing to go back to you already left nothing for everything don't even for a moment think of leaving everything for nothing but the indications are that there were some who made a good beginning but a tragic ending now

straightway that creates a problem for some shallow

thinkers some speak about gaining salvation and losing it now we got a lot of that crowd those persons that we call gently and kindly our minions believe that you can be saved and lost and they use these warning passages I should say they misuse these warning passages to substantiate their view and others just kind of shy away from the passages fearfulness maybe especially chapter 6 does teach that one can be saved and then lost I hope by my 8th visit at Cedars I don't have to spell out these rudiments again you know sometimes we feel a little like the author of this epistle in the beginning of chapter 6 when he says I'm not going to lay again the foundations if you haven't got a hold of the foundations by this time what could be the purpose in my laying them out once more but having said

that I also want to say that we use such ridiculous language that we misinterpret the truth I have knocked you for this before but I managed to knock you in the past and get away with it not that I was ever really caring but I want to say again friends don't use ridiculous language don't use language like once saved always saved if a 4 year old talked like that I would correct him I should hope I wouldn't have to correct you we're being saved and because Christ is saving us obviously he doesn't start something and then abandon it he always finishes what he begins the doctrine that those words once saved always saved is really based on is called the perseverance of the saints now that's what we're talking about here in Hebrews the perseverance of the saints simply put here's the doctrine

when Jesus Christ reaches down and plants repentance and faith in a person's heart and they exercise that repentance and faith he puts within them a persevering spirit so that they keep on and keep on and keep on repenting and believing right on to the end of their life the perseverance of the saints so a saint to use the words I've already used but culturing them slightly differently a saint is not a person who had a glorious start a saint is a person who is pressing on persevering week after week month after month year after year unceasingly so we believe I believe I speak for every true Christian here we believe that salvation is of God and he never starts to save anyone and then abandons them somewhere along the line he always puts this spirit of perseverance within people but now you

see the tragedy is that multitudes have supposed that a moment of repentance and a moment of faith constituted salvation and that's just ridiculous no truth to that at all we'll come to this more carefully as we pursue these passages of warning but the faith that saves is not past tense it's not momentary it's ongoing just as I have said to you on another occasion repentance is not something once done forever accomplished repentance is ongoing every day of my life I am a repentant person so every day of my life I am a believing man I have faith that continues that's what it means to believe to keep on believing but foolishly we have thought that if a person had a moment of faith they were forever secure well I don't need to go further in that if some of you are perplexed about the

fundamental of the faith don't hesitate to ask me privately for help but I'm going to assume that we've gotten those matters straight and we're prepared to deal with this first warning notice how it begins we must pay closer attention to what we have heard closer attention than what? well obviously closer attention than those whom he describes in chapter one now if you haven't got chapter one inside you if you're not understanding it then the first warning won't be clear so let's go back and read chapter one God after he spoke long ago to the fathers in the prophets in many portions and in many ways in these last days has spoken to us by his son whom he appointed heir of all things through whom he made the world and he is the radiance of his glory and the exact representation of his

nature and he upholds all things by the root of his power when he had made purification for sin he sat down at the right hand of the majesty on high having become as much better than the angels as he has inherited a more excellent name than they for to which of the angels did he ever say thou art my son today have I begotten thee and again I will be a father to him and he shall be a son to me and when he again brings the firstborn into the world he says and let all the angels of God worship him and of the angels he says who makes his angels winds and his ministers a flame of fire but of the sun he says thy throne O God is forever and ever and the righteous scepter is the scepter of thy kingdom thou hast loved righteousness and hated lawlessness therefore God thy God hath anointed thee

with the oil of gladness above thy companion and thou Lord in the beginning didst lay the foundation of the earth and the heavens are the works of thy hands they will perish but thou remainest they all will become old as a garment and as a mantle thou will roll them up as a garment they also be changed and thy years but thou art the same and thy years will not come to an end but the witch of the angels has he ever said sit at my right hand until I make thine enemies a footstool for thy feet are they not all ministering spirits sent out to render service for the sake of those who will inherit salvation now just notice those words who will inherit salvation again I'm not going to labor this point but you need to realize that the word salvation is an eschatological term it has to do with

future we are being saved we shall inherit salvation now is our salvation nearer than when we believed by the grace of God he has started the process as I've said already he's determined to finish it he will not fail in anything he's determined but that salvation in all of its glorious fullness is still out in front of you and still out in front of me though we're enjoying glimmers and traces and aspects of it at the moment but now let me lay out some simple matters that will help us as we look carefully at these warnings many when they read this epistle get into controversy over who wrote it who did write Hebrews well I don't know I don't see any heading in my Bible that says the epistle of Paul to the Hebrews in that the Holy Spirit didn't give us that answer why should we produce it

out of nothingness the striking thing in this first chapter indeed it remains striking throughout is the number of quotations did you notice how many quotations there are I'm using a Bible that marks the quotations out and so they're just right there they leap up off the page some of you haven't got that kind of a text arrangement so for your sake let me just point this out we've got a quotation from Psalm 2, verse 7 in verse 5 from 2 Samuel 7, 14 in the second part of verse 5 from Psalm 97, 7 in verse 6 from Psalm 104, 4 in verse 7 from Psalm 45, 6 and 7 in verse 9 from Psalm 102, 26 and 27 in verses 10, 11 and 12 and Psalm 110, verse 1 in verse 13 now that's quite remarkable and indeed as we continue in Hebrews you'll see how frequent are the quotations that has led some to suppose that

maybe the author of this epistle is that man who is described as being mighty in the scriptures a certain Jew named Apollos born in Alexandria an eloquent man, mighty in the scriptures I'm not saying it was Apollos but Paul quotes some scripture but not quite as much as appears here but we're not going to boil down on who wrote it I told you that this book consists of these two channels these glorious lifting up of Christ and these warnings which we're focusing upon but to lay hold of this first warning we have to catch some sense of the matter of angels I told you that the first doctrinal division has to do with comparing Christ with angels and showing Him to be infinitely superior to the angels now in verse 2 of the first warning we have a reference to angels which we want to be sure we

understand if the word spoken through angels proved unalterable and every transgression and disobedience received a just recompense how shall we escape? you can readily see that the thrust of the

first warning is people under the old covenant were given very stringent requirements that they had to live up to is it sensible to suppose that those of us under the new covenant have less stringent regulations by which we must abide? oh well of course it's sensible because that was an age of war and we live in the age of grace so those of us under grace can be careless we can be lazy we can be slovenly we can walk all over Christ we can trample in the dirt the blood of the everlasting covenant we can behave ourselves in the most corrupt and detestable fashion possible and grace will cover a

multitude that's the attitude of our day over and over and over I'm listening to preachers who are stressing grace and implying that grace has liberated us from all responsibility this first warning teaches otherwise if those who had nothing but the law received at the hand of angels were under mighty obligation to God how do you think it possible for someone to be under the grace of Jesus Christ to be given less responsibility if you think of the age of grace as an age of irresponsibility you don't know yet what grace is all about the more deeply I move by the grace of God into a comprehension of what it cost Christ the more deeply I feel the responsibility of being a Christian and living faithfully to the glory of Jesus Christ if you have a very relaxed and careless spirit it's because

you haven't yet seen the truth that Hebrews portrays and I hope and pray you won't leave this weekend without understanding what it means in chapter 2 when it asks the question how shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation but let's take a few moments to bring to the forefront of our minds of this issue of angels mentioned in verse 2 if the word spoken through angels now we read in the early verses of this chapter that in the past, verse 1 now God spoke to the fathers through the prophets He did this at sundry times He did it in diverse manners and you know that's true while the Old Testament is obviously larger in terms of its bulk than the New it covers a large time frame whereas the New obviously focuses on a very brief period if there was as much Old for a brief period as there

is New for that same time frame the Old would be swelled immeasurably so in verse 1 it's crystal clear that while we have a lot of content in the Old Testament it is spread over a long period of time and it comes in many diverse ways in the Old Testament you have type you have emblem you have narrative you have prediction you have poetry you have prose you have history you have parable it was given by revelation to prophets it includes visions to individuals there are dreams recorded and the messages of those dreams there are voices heard there are angelic visitations there are inward divine impulses recorded so what came in the Old Testament came as we read in many diverse ways and over a considerable portion of time but now the message that has been brought to us in these last days is

brought to us not in a diverse way by a multitude of persons and certainly not by angels per se but it is brought to us by His Son and then there is a perfectly beautiful description of the Son in verse 2 the Son who is appointed heir of all things the Son who made the world the Son, verse 3 who is the radiance of the Father's glory the Son, verse 3 who is the exact representation of His nature the Son who holds everything together by the word of His power why He, when He had made purification for our sins sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high now you cannot for a moment if your mind and heart work are right suppose that that which was given as the Old Covenant was given could be compared in value and significance and in responsibility it brings upon us as that which was given

by the Son who is declared in such excellent language of verses 2 and 3 so again I repeat what I already said anyone who feels that you can be a Christian and act less responsibly than the Jews of the Old Testament is a person who has yet to come to genuine faith true faith brings immense levels of responsibility and devotion now this is an urgent thing for our day because by our poor methods and our

mangled theology we have made millions of persons who think they're Christians who don't feel responsibility you hold it to look at the average church where there are almost always three times more people there on Sunday morning than at any other time except a banquet or a concert or a golf game we have millions in our churches who do not realize the responsibility that comes to them in

saying they believe in Jesus Christ but this epistle spells it out with great care now verse 2 of chapter 2 refers specifically to an activity in which the angels were involved speaks about the word spoken through angels that proved unalterable now what is he referring to there? well he's clearly referring to the giving of the law now we don't normally think that when the law was given there were angels involved just call to your mind the passage in Exodus where there is the description of the giving of the law remember the people were gathered at the foot of the mount and a severe warning was given to them don't go beyond this line if you or even your beasts go beyond this line you are in terrific trouble with God and then when the law was given remember God came down on the mount and

there was smoke and there was fire and there was the trembling of the earth and the people were shaking in their boots so much indeed they were told not to be afraid in a physical sense but to fear God in the truly spiritual sense but although we don't read about the presence of angels in the Exodus passage we do read in Deuteronomy 33 when it's describing the giving of the law that there were tens of thousands of angels present or we read in Psalm 68 verse 17 the chariots of God are twenty thousand even thousands of angels the Lord is among them as he was at Sinai in the holy place or in Acts 7.53 it speaks of those who received the law by the disposition of angels this is Stephen's sermon those who received the law by the disposition of angels and have not kept it and Paul picks this up

in Galatians 3.19 the law was ordained by angels in the hands of a mediator and here in Hebrews 2 if the word spoken by angels was steadfast now friends let me just lay this out I'm sure most of you have seen it already the law had a tremendous world it was indeed a declaration of God on the inalienable light that law was given by angels they were present they conveyed the law it isn't as if the hand of God took the tables of stone and placed them in the hands of Moses were led to believe that somehow in ways that are not clearly described that angels were involved in this giving of the law but the point is not how was the law given the point is if those who received the law and disobeyed it died without hope how can those of us who have received the gospel of Jesus Christ treat it in a

shabby way trample it under our foot be neglectful of its great truths and teach others to be careless concerning it and hope that somehow grace will carry us through it is a contradiction of God to think that he would hold those who received the law at the hand of angels responsible and let go guiltless those who received grace at the hands of Jesus Christ and this is carefully spelled out in verses 3 and 4 how shall we escape if we neglect so great a salvation after it was at the first spoken through the law it was then confirmed to us by those who heard and God himself was bearing witness with them both by signs and wonders and various miracles and by gifts of the Holy Spirit according to his own will now if you've been troubled by the whole subject of miracles and gifts if you've been

wondering about the place of signs and wonders here it is spelled out in language you can hardly miss the law was given with signs and wonders I spoke of the smoke of the fire of the shaking of the earth and of the people hearing a voice from heaven that cast them down upon their faces in utter fear when the gospel was given it wasn't done in a dark corner it's not a message that somehow just slipped unnoticed into the world no the son of God leaves his glory he comes down to this sin-cursed earth he proclaims a message a voice from heaven declares this is my beloved son but the message that Christ proclaimed is proven the

validity of it is substantiated there can be no question did anybody else ever raise anyone from the dead did anyone else speak to the deaf and they hear could anybody

else take a little spittle and clay and mix it and plaster it on a man's eyes and they could see and then he sent out his disciples to do the same thing now if you want to insist on the necessity of signs and wonders and gifts and miracles in our day and you want to pursue that that's between you and the Lord but I know why they were given they were given so that I could say to you today and you could say to others as we have all been told in the past this is a verified thing that we believe the Son of God was demonstrated to be God indeed by these signs and wonders it would be a hard thing if we knew that the law given the way it was given required a great deal of us and then we came under grace and we were just required to believe that Jesus is the Son of God and there was no evidence

nothing at all to convince us he went around saying that he was going to die and in three days he would rise again but instead they rolled a great stone over the tomb and three days later the great stone was still there three months later the great stone was still in place and there was no sign of him nobody ever heard of him again I mean it would be hard going believing but what we've received we have received with astonishing proof convincing glorious proof that we must not dare suppose that God would have given us such overwhelming evidence concerning his Son and then say to us now just have a moment of faith and then go your merry way and do whatever you please and my grace is going to cover it all no no one of the first things a child must learn about God is that God changes not he

would not have laid heavy responsibility upon those under the old covenant and left us free to live in sin as we please that wouldn't be God-like God is consistent with himself and we know that if something minor oh no don't misunderstand me but nonetheless hear me we know that if something minor and I say to you the law is minor it's the schoolmaster to bring us to Christ it's part of the shadow it's part of the type God wouldn't give us something minor and accompany that with great responsibility and then give us the most precious gift ever given to mankind and accompany it with no responsibility it's inconceivable now here you see we're dealing with a church in Hebrews where the young people and the others who have heard the message and are taking delight in it they say oh this is

wonderful oh I can see now what what what a precious thing it would be to have all of my sins covered by the blood of Christ this whole system in which we've been involved going to the priest and the regular sacrifices and then the once a year back to the high priest oh that was hard going we struggled onward with that because our sins were covered but they were never totally removed you're telling me that Jesus Christ comes and takes away sin not just the penalty but he takes away sin yes yes that's the message Christ came to save us from our sins oh that sounds good I'm so weary of sin oh I've had all of sin I can handle you mean Christ will take away my sin yes Christ will take away oh I like that so they embrace that you see in a surface way and then the trials the difficulties and

the beckoning back to Judaism you can't go back you can't go back no man having put his hand to the plow and turning back is fit for the kingdom of God Christianity is not a wonderful start but a glorious ongoing pursuit of God

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