

12/11/22 - Heb. 2:1-9 - "God Speaks of Mankind"

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Preacher: Brenton Beck

[0 : 00] The text today is Hebrews chapter 2 verses 1 through 9. It will be on the screen as well. And it says this, Therefore we must pay much closer attention to what we have heard, lest we drip away from it.

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

For it was not to angels that God subjected the world to come, of which we are speaking. It has been testified somewhere. What is man, that you are mindful of him, or the son of man, that you care for him?

You made him, for a little while, lower than the angels. You have crowned him with glory and honor, putting everything in subjection under his feet.

[1 : 18] Now in putting everything in subjection to him, he left nothing outside his control. At present, we do not yet see everything in subjection to him, but we see him who for a little while was made lower than the angels, namely Jesus, crowned with glory and honor because of the suffering of death, so that by the grace of God he might taste death for everyone.

This is the word of the Lord. Thanks, brother. Good morning, everyone.

Again, I don't know how many times we've said good morning, but we're still waking up, I think.

Singing has sounded absolutely remarkable this morning.

When we broke to just voices in that last chorus of All I Have is Christ, that was so humbling to hear just the choir of singing from the congregation.

It truly means that, you know, this is not a concert up here. This is congregational singing. This is something that we're engaged in as a church body. We're singing to one another.

[2 : 33] It's profound. There's nothing like it. And so it's such a blessing to hear us engaging in the service in that manner. And so my hope today is, as we get into the text, my hope is to connect to something that's not winter-related.

It has nothing to do with cold. It has nothing to do with snow. But I'm going to try to dive into the art of sailing. We're going to think of the ocean.

We're going to think of the warmth. You know, so this will be therapeutic in a manner. You know, I talked to the psychiatrists how to get us all, like, geared up for winter and Christmas coming.

They said, talk about sailing. So, no, I'm just kidding. That conversation never happens. But I do believe that the text, in thinking about the text and what it's saying, it brought to mind sailing.

Now, I know nothing about sailing, okay? So I'm just going to throw that out there today. I was talking to my wife last night. I'm just like, should I even, like, do this? I could rewrite everything. And she's usually a good discerning.

[3 : 45] She's like, well, just let them know that you know nothing about it first, and then everything will be okay. And so here I am, cards on the table. I would love to sail, but for some reason, a pastor's salary doesn't really accommodate boats and things like that, at least not in this church, some churches.

And that's no criticism of any of our financial team. Oh, boy, what am I saying? So, but I believe that a humble salary doesn't really acquire all these extra things sometimes.

And so for that, I'm grateful, you know, for the ability to have a dream someday, you know, to sail. If anybody has a boat, let's talk.

But I just want to make sure that we know what we're getting into and that this passage connects to elements that I believe will be helpful in the art of sailing.

Now, in my research, in my ignorance with sailing, I have found that there are two sails that are needed that are very vital for sailing, the mainsail and the headsail.

[5 : 00] Both are to be used at certain points when you're out upon the water. And depending on the conditions that may require, you know, it determines what sail is meant to be used.

And so metaphorically speaking, in thinking about these two sails that are vital in sailing and moving forward towards a destination, I believe that the Christian life is very connected to an image of sailing with those two sails.

The passage mentions drifting and which brought upon my mind water, sailing, arriving to a destination and being that of, like, the Christian life.

And so I believe that the two sails within the Christian life is orthodoxy and orthopraxy. And so when we're talking about ortho in Greek, that means orthos.

It's basically something that is true, something that is straight, something that is right. And doxa, meaning opinion. So having a right opinion or a right perspective of something.

[6 : 14] But also orthopraxy, not just having a right opinion, but having a right action, praxis, action. So orthodoxy, orthopraxy, that which we know and that which we do within the Christian life.

And the text is heavy in content today. It reflects upon what sailing ought to look like in the Christian life if we are to borrow that mindset.

And what we will see today is the components. Three different points today of drifting and sailing. Drifting, being united and represented by the first Adam in the garden.

And then sailing, being united with the last Adam. So I invite you in this Advent sermon series as we're turning our attention to who Jesus Christ is, why He came, and I'd like to label this message, the God who speaks of mankind.

God speaks of mankind. And we saw last week God spoke of Jesus Christ, and today is man. And that's just to say, when you think about sailing, you think about being on the water.

[7 : 27] It can be rough waters at times. You don't always know the challenges that lay waiting ahead, which sail you're going to have to use for different conditions.

It's complex, more complex than I could probably even comprehend from my limited knowledge of sailing. But it's almost like life can come with this mockery from evil, this mockery over our lives, that we constantly are just like, man, I know God has promised this, but it's like the enemy is just laughing in my face.

And so my hope today is that God's Word rescues us from any form of spiritual drift. I pray that it energizes those who are on the brink of spiritual drift.

And for us all, I pray that it encourages all of us, regardless of where our spiritual condition is, that we are all encouraged to press on.

And so that is my hope as we come to the end of our time today. And I pray that this will be true. So before we get into the text, I want to turn our attention to the Lord in prayer and our need for God's work to speak and to humble us this morning.

[8 : 44] So let's pray. Father, we come to you today turning to the author of life and the author of truth, the being of truth.

There is no falsehood in you. So help us at this time to lay aside the things that are clouding our minds, the drama that's encircling our lives.

Let's leave it at the foot of the cross and entrusting it to you. And so, Father, let us pick up truth today. And at these short moments being in your word, we pray that you provide a transformative life change in our midst and that we leave indeed changed.

And we pray this in Jesus' name. Amen. Amen. So like I said, three sections. And I want to look at the first section, which is just simply drifting and sailing.

I want us to see this in the text so that I can prove my sanity, but also so that we can apprehend the truth within God's word. Verse 1 in chapter 2 says, Therefore, we must pay much closer attention to what we have heard, lest we drift away from it.

[10 : 03] The author provides descriptive insights into the cause and effect relationship between our paying attention and our drifting.

Notice how it says, it's kind of a complicated set of words here, we must pay much closer attention.

It's like emphasizing like, yeah, you might be holding on to it, but you need to tightly grasp it to pay much closer attention.

Not just close attention, not just to, you know, hold this to be true, but to pay much closer attention to what we have heard, lest we drift away.

And therefore is an interesting word to begin this very verse, because therefore is there which connects all that's which before it in chapter 1.

[11 : 04] And so in that, when we're looking at what this passage is talking about, it's coming with a whole package of information. It's objective insight into what we pay attention to.

It's saying that not only are we supposed to pay attention to just, you know, good things in life, but an objective object, an objective reality that we have to pay attention to in our life, lest we drift away from it.

And so in the grand masterpiece of God's salvation, Christians are called to apprehend a quality of faith that produces a quality of life.

In other words, healthy orthodoxy, that which you know, will lead to a vibrant orthopraxy, that which we do and how we respond.

And there is quite a difference between hearing and listening, though, isn't there? Any parents, grandparents who have once parented young children, there is such thing as a difference between hearing and listening.

[12 : 16] If you don't believe us, go ahead and be a fly on the wall for a week at our house, and the conversations back and forth between, are you listening to us, children, that we love and we're patient with?

Listen to us, right? Listen. Because we hear so many things in this life. But God isn't in the business of transforming ears.

God is in the business of transforming hearts. He's not an audiologist. He's a cardiologist. And in that, we know that hearing is a work of the ear, but listening is a work of the heart.

Hearing deals directly with the condition of the heart. And spiritual drift, therefore, is a recipe for those who are cognitively aware of doctrine.

Like, you can be doctrinally aware and be able to articulate the doctrine, but if it's not something that we're heeding in our hearts, it will hardly ever change the way of our lives.

[13 : 25] We will live in a way that does not reflect the lifestyle that would reflect any honorable Christian striving in their lives.

And so, it kind of gets worse in this passage. Verse 2, For since the message declared by angels proved to be reliable in every transgression or disobedience, received a just retribution, how shall we escape if we neglect such a great salvation?

It was declared at first by the Lord, and it was attested to us by those who heard. While God also bore witness by signs and wonders and various miracles and by gifts of the Holy Spirit distributed according to His will.

And this is all to say, church, all to say that the message of the gospel is profoundly reliable. Our responsiveness to the gospel or our unresponsiveness to the gospel hold no objective weight into determining the reliability of the gospel.

It's true whether we want to admit it, that it's true. God is deserving of all glory, honor, and praise, regardless if we give it to Him or not. He is who He is. He is sufficient. And so, what this passage is saying is that this reliability stretches far back to the Old Testament.

[14 : 52] It stretches far forward to the New Testament that encircles the cross. Messages that were spoken back in the Old Testament were spoken by angels on the behalf of God.

These were legally binding and reliable. The law that was delivered in the Mosaic Covenant clarifies the punishment of sin. Obey and live.

And in the New Covenant, the reliability still was transcendent. The messages by angels, the verification by the apostolic body with signs and wonders to bring about the validation of the message and that it is binding and still reliable today.

We saw that at Jesus' birth announcement to the shepherds. We saw it at Cornelius' house not too long ago in Acts chapter 10. It has been reliable.

And so, what therefore is this passage saying is unreliable? What then is the greatest danger of spiritual drift? It's not the reliability of the message.

[15 : 57] It's us. It's me. It's you. It's our failure to hear and not listen.

You see, the true danger of spiritual drifting is not simply missing a spectacular, I'll borrow Les' word, spectacular Christian life with all of our boats, right? Does that exist? Or just this vibrant, deep connection, intimate relationship that you might have with God, the Father.

True danger of spiritual drift is not simply missing on a spectacular Christian life experience, but it is an abandonment of the gospel.

Not as if we lose our salvation, but it begs the question if the gospel was simply a cognitive exercise all along. No heart change.

[17 : 03] Spiritual drift is the pulse of an unregenerate life. And for that, we must hear, listen, and obey.

Orthodoxy, orthopraxy. And for this Jewish audience of this letter, it's a warning not to drift away, running back to the blood of bulls and goats to atone for their sin, which would be a works-based system.

And for us today, it's similar, not necessarily bulls and goats, but anything that we replace the blood of Christ to atone for our sin. It can be for a Christian church attendance, perfect church attendance, mind you.

Maybe all the ways that you serve within the church. Or maybe their generosity. You're pointing to all these other things and not pointing to the cross of Jesus Christ. And so the same is similar.

Spiritual drifting is abandoning the gospel. And I'm putting myself on the chopping block today as well. I'm not trying to bully, but as a pastor, it's the most loving thing that I can do is to herald this reliable message to us today, of which I've grappled with greatly throughout this week.

[18 : 21] And so in that, we're all in this together, trying to glorify God in our lives. God is calling us to listen, church.

He is calling us to listen and order our lives in obedience according to our listening. It's a call to lift our sails of orthodoxy and orthopraxy upon the sea of life.

Eyes off of the world and fixated upon Jesus Christ. And so we see something developing by the author in Hebrews, and what we're going to look at is this drifting aspect and how it correlates with the first Adam, Adam in the garden.

And verse 5 says, For it was not to angels that God subjected the world to come, of which we are speaking. It has been testified somewhere, what is man, that you are mindful of him, or the son of man, that you care for him.

You made him for a little while lower than the angels, and you crowned him with glory and honor, putting everything in subjection under his feet. Now in putting everything in subjection to him, he left nothing outside his control.

[19 : 36] At present, we do not see everything in subjection to him. Many may ask, well, why does this all matter?

It's not that big of a deal, right? We can kind of dupe ourselves and become desensitized to the weight of not living out the heart change that we claim we've received.

And this is especially prevalent for non-Christians, those who are outside of faith in Jesus Christ.

And it's like, in continuing the discussion of angels, we just got out between what God is speaking of Jesus Christ in contrast to angels, and now it's kind of talking about mankind and angels.

And the author is contrasting angels with mankind, simply saying that this great salvation, this great work of redemption in Jesus Christ, is something that mankind participates in, not angels.

Basically saying angels don't need saved, mankind needs saved. And so additionally, he refers to a psalm here to illustrate the role of mankind in the scope of this redemption.

[20 : 54] Psalm 8 specifically in this verse is a psalm that is David reflecting upon just how God has created man lower than the angels, lower than God, but God has assigned this dominion for man.

Like quite a responsibility, right? And thinking about where King David's position was, he was pretty highly esteemed. He was King David, so he would relate to this pondering thought pretty well in his life and what God had him do.

But we have to ask the question, why in the world did the author of Hebrews think about this? Why is the author of Hebrews considering the insignificance of mankind and the responsibility that we have as image bearers?

And I believe that is because mankind is weak. Just as the passage before, verses before. We're unreliable. We are limited in our flesh.

And quite honestly, as we look throughout the history of biblical history specifically, or the history even in our own lives, often we've messed up a lot.

[22 : 11] Quite a bit. It goes back to Adam, to Noah, to Israel, to even King David, and so on. But here's the thing. Our present struggle with sin never indicates that God made a mistake.

Our struggles, our failures, from Adam to Noah, to Israel, to David, nothing indicates that God made a mistake.

Just like the reliability of the message of the gospel is not contingent upon our unreliability, is reliable, sufficiently reliable, and so is how God ordered everything for mankind.

He did not make a mistake. God's love is relentless for you, and He will bring His people back. That is the story of the gospel and redemption.

And so while the first Adam was a representative of spiritual drifting, the last Adam, being Jesus Christ, is a representative of spiritual anchoring in who we are and what God intends to do with us.

[23 : 25] And the good news that this passage begins to offer is that while mankind has brutally distorted our function in the world, that mandate, that divine mandate, we've messed that up quite a bit, unreliable man still preserves the image of God.

This is wild. It's mind-boggling the more you sit on it. I encourage you to sit on this more throughout the week. In other words, we lost quite a bit due to the ramifications of sin.

And many of us can relate. Like, yeah, we can raise our hand. Like, I know that I've messed up greatly in different ways. But because of the great salvation, not all is lost.

And this is good news. It is good news. But it still is bad news. Because spiritual drifting is not just a distortion there, therefore, upon our function, our divine dominion mandate, but it's also a disgrace upon the image of God.

Not only our role, but our image. And when our eyes are captivated by the world and not Jesus Christ, we represent the first Adam, not the last Adam.

[25 : 03] And while this is a quite heavy reality, I know this is, it really takes a good dose of bad news to cherish and value the good news, doesn't it?

In order to know and value and delight in the good news, we need a good dose of the bad news sometimes. This passage does it for us.

But who's ready for some good news? I am. And so, like, chronologically building in this passage, we get to this emphasis in verse 9, this sailing in the last Adam.

And this is just remarkable here. It's almost like it starts out just like the verse, the passage started out with, therefore. This says, but.

And this is good news. Whenever you see that, it's contrasting. Like, the story is changing. And this is good news. The good news starts here.

[26 : 03] But we see him, who for a little while was made lower than the angels, namely Jesus, crowned with glory and honor because of the suffering of death, so that by the grace of God he might taste death for everyone.

Period. Those who experience the weight of spiritual drift tend to indicate that the change that needs to be made is extremely difficult.

Wouldn't you agree? Those who are caught up in spiritual drift or possibly in it, fully engulfed in it, or possibly on the borderline of it, to change that course, it's extremely difficult.

And that it is. It is very difficult to change that course. But isn't verse 9 the good news that ought to ignite a life of orthodoxy and orthopraxy?

To rediscover the beauty of the gospel and living the gospel. And it's like the author of Hebrews does something here that it's not up for opinion or interpretation.

[27 : 21] He names Jesus for the first time in the book. It's not the Son of God here or God's Son. He names Jesus by name. But we see Him for a little while He was made lower than the angels namely Jesus.

Don't be confused of who He's referring to. The good news of the gospel and the foundation of all that we hear and of which we obey is the fact that God experienced death for everyone.

He who knew no sin became sin for us. And the punishment that we deserve for our sin for our failure Jesus Christ took upon Himself.

How? God emptied Himself. God Himself emptied Himself into the shell of man to take upon flesh.

We referred to it last week as grave clothes that He borrowed for 33 years until He was stripped. And the glory of His deity shined and He returned to heaven.

[28 : 42] He was in a fragile state. He was brought into this fragility in this life. He's brought into this messed up world that the very people that should be praising God are the ones who rejected Him.

The ones that claimed to be closest to God were the ones that pushed Him away. Which is a direct connection to what Psalm 8 is talking about in the frailty of man.

He allowed Himself to be lower than the angels. Allowed Himself until the third day being crowned with glory and honor. And we'll talk about that in verse 10 next week.

By way of the storyline of redemption, that which was a dominion mandate to Adam was fulfilled in Jesus Christ. The old covenant blood, no good.

Done. But the new covenant blood in Jesus Christ atones for sin. For that. If you are not a Christian this morning, come to Jesus Christ today.

[29 : 47] By your faith you are saved. Not by works so that you can't boast. Come. Jesus' arms are wide open. And they won't be wide open forever.

You're not promised tomorrow. Come to faith. I encourage you to come pray with me after this message. And I love the reality that this passage gives to us.

Back at verse 8 it talks about this subjection. The good news is that Jesus Christ clarifies that our struggle in this time period, Christian life is pretty difficult.

You don't become a Christian for an easier life. That's actually not true. As we sang, martyr's blood, if you look back through church history, it's not very, you wouldn't read it to your kids before bedtime.

The problem of our rebellion before coming to faith in Jesus Christ is that this world is in rebellion against God.

[30 : 55] And so, what naturally will happen if we come and place our faith in Jesus Christ? There are going to be a rebellion directly against us. Silence the messengers, essentially.

And so, in this already but not yet tension, and while we feel that friction with the world, this time pales in comparison to what King Jesus is consummating in redemption.

So, the call of this passage is indeed for all of us, regardless of where you're at, to repent, whether it's a little bit of drifting or a lot of bit of drifting, and to keep pressing on.

And so, we can blame a number of things, I believe, for our spiritual drifting. We can blame our misplaced affections that's often a big prevalent one, work taking the place of worship.

While necessary and good, we can easily become workaholics and find value and fulfillment in that paycheck and completely neglect our dusty Bibles. Even in our relationships, especially romantic, relationships, in this life, we can often place our spouse in a place that only belongs to God, as if our spouse becomes so codependent upon our spouse to give us the fulfillment we need.

[32 : 17] We neglect Jesus Christ. That's a big one. But also, even money, whether we have an abundance or a lack of money, both sides of the spectrum, money is the root of all kinds of evil. Whether you don't have a lot of money or you have a lot of money, it's a double-edged sort of reality where it's unfortunate that it causes us to lose focus in this life.

Discouragement, trials, can lead to spiritual drift. When you're going through a living hell, yeah, you feel it. When you're going through trials, when God seems to be distant, when He seems to be silent, it's very difficult and it's very easy to lose sight.

even to, like, parasitic sins that cling to us causing spiritual drift, whether that might be pride where we think that life is all about us or possibly even addiction, whether it being substance, food or drink, pornography.

All of these things are attempts of filling a void in our flesh that only God can fulfill in a Christian's life.

And so, yes, we can blame a number of things. We can point to a number of things for our spiritual drifting. We can point to people. We can point to situations. We can point to life.

[33 : 36] We can point to our church. We can point to, you know, our jobs and our employers. However, this text makes it abundantly clear, church. Listen to me.

The message is reliable. We aren't. God created mankind with His image and we distort it. But the antidote of spiritual drifting is embracing ourselves rightly as we are, which compels us to embrace Jesus Christ rightly for who He is.

That is the antidote of spiritual drifting. So, while the days of our sailing through this life will tend to lead us to rough waters, unknown dangers up ahead, may we don't see any sight of lands representing, like, any conclusion to anything.

We might refer to it as a light at the end of the tunnel. We might not see an end in sight. But church, we hold tight. We hold on tight because the things that we are subjected to are ultimately subjected to Jesus Christ.

And so, we hold on. We raise our sail of orthodoxy and orthopraxy in this life, lest we do drift. And the gospel of Jesus Christ is the great salvation of which we hear with our ears, we listen with our hearts, and we continue to press on.

[35 : 20] So, this Christmas, as we ponder the incarnation, the moment that God entered into history, might we find the value of Christ being the determining factor of our hope in this life, of which we continuously renounce ungodliness, and apprehend godliness.

Let's pray. Let's pray.