



**Talmid תלמיד** a Hebrew word that means “a true disciple who desires to be what the Rabbi Jesus is.”

*Whoever claims to live in Him must walk as Jesus did. 1 John 2:6 (NIV)*

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STUDY TO SHEW THEMSELVES APPROVED UNTO GOD, A WORKMAN THAT NEEDETH NOT TO BE ASHAMED, RIGHTLY  
DIVIDING THE WORD OF TRUTH. 2 TIMOTHY 2:15



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## The Doctrines of Grace

### God's Sovereign Choice (Part-4)

*(Continuation from last month)*

#### ELECTION AND MORAL INABILITY

Those who favor a **conditional view of election** or some **sort of prescience** as the basis of election **face a serious difficulty**. They must assume that fallen persons are morally capable of responding positively to the gospel.

This assumption is **semi-Pelagian** because it presupposes that original sin weak-

ens the will but does not render it morally unable to incline itself to the things of God. Original sin notwithstanding, there remains some spontaneous power in the flesh that can incline itself to spiritual things.

We said earlier that if one agrees with the doctrine of total depravity, the **T** in **TULIP**, then the **U** of **unconditional election** follows necessarily. If one is incapable of meeting the conditions, then election must be unconditional.

If the **Reformation view** of original sin is correct, then God would see no fallen creature choose Christ in the future. God would know from all eternity that, left to themselves, fallen creatures will not choose Christ.

#### **John 6:64-68 (NASB)**

<sup>64</sup> "But there are some of you who do not believe." For Jesus knew from the beginning who they were who did not believe, and who it was that would betray Him.

<sup>65</sup> And He was saying, "For this reason I have said to you, that no one can come to Me unless it has been granted him from the Father."

<sup>66</sup> As a result of this many of His disciples withdrew and were not walking with Him anymore.

<sup>67</sup> So Jesus said to the twelve, "You do not want to go away also, do you?"

<sup>68</sup> Simon Peter answered Him, "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have words of eternal life.

Jesus says that no one can come to him without a grant from the Father. John relates this to the comment that Jesus knew from the beginning those who did not believe and would betray him.

**Again the reaction to the teaching of Jesus is telling:** many of his disciples deserted him. Why were they offended by Jesus' words? *If the words are given an Arminian cast, we see no reason for the offense.*

**Only if we understand Jesus' words to teach moral inability and an utter dependence on God's grace does offense become intelligible.** The doctrine of moral inability has offended many, and many have rejected Reformed theology precisely because of it.

Also interesting is Peter's reaction to Jesus' words. Jesus asked Peter, **"Do you also want to go away?"**

"Lord, to whom shall we go?" Peter responds. **"You have the words of eternal life."**

This reply suggests that Peter was less than enamored with Jesus' teaching. He may have been saying: *"I don't like this doctrine any more than those who walked away, but where else can we go? You are the teacher we trust and follow. You have the words of eternal life, so we'll stick with you even if you teach some hard things."*

Earlier in John's Gospel Jesus says something similar regarding moral inability: **"Do not murmur among yourselves. No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him; and I will raise him up at the last day"** ([John 6:43-44](#)).

#### **John 6:43-44 (NASB)**

<sup>43</sup> Jesus answered and said to them, "Do not grumble among yourselves.

<sup>44</sup> "No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him; and I will raise him up on the last day.

The key word in this statement is draw. What is meant by this drawing? I have often heard it explained that, for a person to come to Christ, God the Holy Spirit must first woo or entice them to come. We have the ability, however, to resist this wooing

and refuse the enticement. Though this wooing is a necessary condition for coming to Christ, it is not a sufficient condition. It is necessary but not compelling.

We cannot come to Christ without being wooed, but the wooing does not guarantee that we will come to Christ.

I am persuaded that this explanation is incorrect. It does violence to the text of Scripture, particularly to the biblical meaning of the word draw. The Greek word used is *elkō*. Gerhard Kittel's *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* defines *elkō* to mean **"to compel by irresistible superiority."** Linguistically and lexicographically the word means simply **"to compel."**

**"Compel"** is much more forceful than **"woo."** To see the force of this verb, let us examine two other passages in the New Testament where *elkō* is used.

The first passage is in [James 2:6](#): **"But you have dishonored the poor man. Do not the rich oppress you and drag [*elkō*] you into the courts?"** If we substitute the word *woo* here, the text would read: **"Do not the rich oppress you and woo you into the courts?"**

#### **James 2:6 (NASB)**

<sup>6</sup> But you have dishonored the poor man. Is it not the rich who oppress you and personally drag [*elkō*] you into court?

The second passage is [Acts 16:19](#): **"But when her masters saw that their hope of profit was gone, they seized Paul and Silas and dragged [*elkō*] them into the marketplace to the authorities."**

#### **Acts 16:19 (NASB)**

<sup>19</sup> But when her masters saw that their hope of profit was gone, they seized Paul and Silas and dragged [*elkō*] them into the market place before the authorities,

It would be ludicrous to say Paul and Silas were **"wooed"** to the authorities. Once forcibly seized, **they could not be enticed or wooed**. The text clearly indicates they were compelled to come before the authorities.

I was once asked to participate in a formal debate on the subject of election at an Arminian conference. My opponent was the head of the New Testament depart-

ment at an Arminian Seminary. At a crucial point in the debate, we focused our attention on the Father's "drawing" people to Christ.

My opponent appealed to [John 6:44](#) to make his case that God "draws" men to Christ but never compels them to come. He insisted that the divine influence on fallen man is restricted to drawing, which he interpreted to mean "wooing."

At that point I referred him to [Kittel](#) and to the other passages in the New Testament that translate the word *elkō* with the word drag. The professor was ready for me.

He cited an instance in Greek drama where the same word is used to describe the action of drawing water from a well. He looked at me and said, "Well, Brother Eddie, does one drag water from a well?" Instantly the audience erupted in laughter at this use of the Greek word.

When the laughter subsided, I replied: "**No, sir, I have to admit that we do not drag water from a well. But how do we get water from a well? Do we woo it? Do we stand at the top of the well and cry, 'Here, water, water, water?'**"

It is as necessary for God to turn us to Christ as it is for us to pull up the bucket to drink water from the well. **The water will simply not come out on its own, no matter how hard we plead.**

The question of drawing or wooing must be examined further. When the **Arminian** speaks of the Spirit's wooing, does he believe the Spirit's action is external to the person or internal?

Is the drawing simply the outward pull or tug of the preaching of the Word?

Or does the Holy Spirit somehow penetrate to the soul and then do his work of enticement?

Is it an attempt at inner persuasion?

If so, the Spirit's action is still external to the soul because he does nothing that is actually compelling to the soul.

Other difficult questions are faced by **Armini-**

**ans** at this point.

**Two important issues are these:**

(1) Does God woo or draw all men equally?

(2) Why do some people respond favorably to the Holy Spirit's wooing?

**As for the first question**, if God does not woo all people equally, then all the objections to the Reformed view of unconditional election must be raised here as well.

Does God not draw all men equally because some have greater power to respond than others? The **Arminian** may answer that God draws only those whom he knows will respond favorably. If so, then God does not even woo those who never come to faith. Few if any **Arminians** are willing to say that.

**The second question is this:** Why do some respond favorably to the Holy Spirit rather than refuse his wooing? If we say the answer lies in the intensity of the wooing (namely, that the Spirit entices some more strongly than others), **then we are back to the problem of sovereign selection.**

If we say instead that some respond favorably to the wooing because of something found in them; then we root our salvation ultimately in a human work. Does one respond to the wooing positively due to greater intelligence or greater virtue? If so, then we have something to boast about.

**Ephesians 2:8-9 (NASB)**

**<sup>8</sup> For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, *it is the gift of God;***

**<sup>9</sup> not as a result of works, so that no one may boast.**

When I pose this question to my Arminian friends, they readily see the dilemma and seek to avoid it by saying: "Certainly it is not a matter of intelligence or of any inherent superior virtue in those who respond positively. They respond this way because they see their need for Christ more clearly." **With this reply they dig themselves deeper into the pit. The answer only postpones the problem one step.**

Why do some people see their need for Christ more clearly than do others?

Have they received greater illumination from the Holy Spirit?

Are they more intelligent?

Are they less prejudiced toward Christ and more open to his call, which is itself a virtue? **No matter how one delays it, sooner or later we must face the question of greater or lesser inherent virtue.**

Following Paul's lead in Ephesians, **Reformed theology teaches that faith itself is a gift given to the elect.** God himself creates the faith in the believer's heart. God fulfills the necessary condition for salvation, and he does so without condition.

Again we look to Paul's words: **"For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; *it is* the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast. For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them."** ([Ephesians 2:8-10](#))

Considerable debate has ensued regarding the meaning of the first sentence. **What is the antecedent for the word that: *grace, saved, or faith*?** The rules of Greek syntax and grammar demand that the antecedent of that be the word faith.

Paul is declaring what every Reformed person affirms, that faith is a gift from God. Faith is not something we conjure up by our own effort, or the result of the willing of the flesh. **Faith is a result of the Spirit's sovereign work of regeneration.** It is no accident that this statement concludes a passage that begins with Paul's declaration that we have been **"quicken<sup>ed</sup>"** or **"made alive"** while we were in a state of spiritual death.

#### [Ephesians 2:1-5 \(NASB\)](#)

<sup>1</sup> **And you were dead in your trespasses and sins,**

<sup>2</sup> **in which you formerly walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, of the spirit that is now working in the sons of disobedience.**

<sup>3</sup> **Among them we too all formerly lived in the lusts of our flesh, indulging the desires of the**

**flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, even as the rest.**

<sup>4</sup> **But God, being rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us,**

<sup>5</sup> **even when we were dead in our transgressions, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved),**

[Ephesians 2:5 \(KJV\)](#)

<sup>5</sup> **Even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved;)**

[Ephesians 2:5 \(AMP\)](#)

<sup>5</sup> **Even when we were dead (slain) by [our own] shortcomings *and* trespasses, He made us alive together in fellowship *and* in union with Christ; [He gave us the very life of Christ Himself, the same new life with which He quickened Him, for] it is by grace (His favor and mercy which you did not deserve) that you are saved (delivered from judgment and made partakers of Christ's salvation).**

#### DOUBLE PREDESTINATION?

Any time the subject of predestination or election arises, the question quickly follows, **"Is predestination single or double?"** Usually lurking behind this question is a thinly veiled query regarding **infralapsarianism- or supralapsarianism**. ([infralapsarianism](#)) [the doctrine, held by Augustinians and by many Calvinists, that God planned the Creation, permitted the Fall, elected a chosen number, planned their redemption, and suffered the remainder to be eternally punished] ([supralapsarianism](#)) [the doctrine that the decree of election preceded human creation and the Fall] Since that issue is somewhat arcane, we will not treat it here.

**The deeper issue is how reprobation relates to election. Reprobation is the flip side of election, the dark side of the matter that raises many concerns. It is the doctrine of reprobation that has prompted the label of decree. It is one thing to speak of God's gracious predestination to election, but quite another to speak of God's decreeing from all eternity that certain unfortunate people are destined for damnation.**

Some advocates of predestination argue for single predestination. They maintain that, though some are predestined to election, no one is predestined to damnation or reprobation. God chooses some whom he



will definitely save, but leaves open the opportunity for salvation for the rest. God makes sure that some people are saved by providing special help, but the rest of mankind still has an opportunity to be saved. **They can somehow become elect by responding positively to the gospel.**

This view is based more on sentiment than on logic or exegesis. It is manifestly obvious that if some people are elect and some are not elect, then **predestination has two sides to it.**

It is not enough to speak of Jacob; we must also consider Esau. Unless predestination is universal, either to universal election or universal reprobation, **it must be double in some sense.**

Given that the Bible teaches both election and particularism, ***we cannot avoid the subject of double predestination.***

The question then is not *if predestination is double*, **but how it is double.** There are different views of double predestination.

One of them is so frightening that many shun altogether the use of the term *double predestination*. This scary view is called equal ultimacy, and it is based on a symmetrical view of predestination. It sees a symmetry between the work of God in election and his work in reprobation. It seeks an exact balance between the two. Just as God intervenes in the lives of the elect to create faith in their hearts, so he similarly intervenes in the hearts of the reprobate to work unbelief. **The latter is inferred from biblical passages that speak of God's hardening people's hearts.**

**Classical Reformed theology rejects the doctrine of equal ultimacy.** Though some have labeled this doctrine "**hyper-Calvinism**," I prefer to call it "**sub-Calvinism**," or even more precisely, "**anti-Calvinism**."

Though Calvinism certainly holds to a kind of double predestination, **it does not embrace equal ultimacy.**

**The Reformed view** makes a crucial distinction between God's positive and negative decrees. God positively decrees the election of some, and he nega-

tively decrees the reprobation of others.

**The difference between positive and negative does not refer to the outcome (though the outcome indeed is either positive or negative), but to the manner by which God brings his decrees to pass in history.**

**The *positive side* refers to God's active intervention in the lives of the elect to work faith in their hearts.**

**The *negative* refers, not to God's working unbelief in the hearts of the reprobate, but simply to his passing them by and withholding his regenerating grace from them.**

**Calvin comments on this:** *"Now, if we are not really ashamed of the Gospel, we must of necessity acknowledge what is therein openly declared: that God by His eternal goodwill (for which there was no other cause than His own purpose), appointed those whom He pleased unto salvation, rejecting all the rest; and that those whom He blessed with this free adoption to be His sons He illumines by His Holy Spirit, that they may receive the life which is offered to them in Christ; while others, continuing of their own will in unbelief, are left destitute of the light of faith, in total darkness."*

For Calvin and other Reformers God passes over the reprobate, leaving them to their own devices. He does not coerce them to sin or create fresh evil in their hearts. **He leaves them to themselves, to their own choices and desires, and they always choose to reject the gospel.**

I once heard the president of a Presbyterian seminary respond to a question about predestination by saying, "I don't believe in predestination because I do not believe God brings some people kicking and screaming, against their wills, into his kingdom, while at the same time he refuses access to those who earnestly desire to be there."

This response surprised me, not only because the president's public disavowal of predestination blatantly violated his ordination vows in the Presbyterian Church, but also because it revealed a radical misunderstanding of a doctrine with which he should have been quite familiar.

**Reformed theology does not teach** that God brings the elect “kicking and screaming, against their wills,” into his kingdom. It teaches that God so works in the hearts of the elect as to make them willing and pleased to come to Christ. They come to Christ because they want to. They want to because God has created in their hearts a desire for Christ. **Likewise the reprobate do not want to embrace Christ earnestly. They have no desire for Christ whatever and are fleeing from him.**

**Table 4** demonstrates the difference between orthodox Calvinism and what is called hyper-Calvinism. In this table we see Calvinism’s positive-negative schema, in which God actively works in the lives and hearts of the elect, while he passes over the reprobate or leaves him in his natural condition. It is important to remember that in his decree of election, God considers the mass of mankind in their fallen sinful condition. He chooses to redeem some people from this condition and to leave the rest in that condition. He intervenes in the lives of the elect, while he does not intervene in the lives of the reprobate. One group receives mercy and the other receives justice.

**Table 4**

**Predestination of the Elect (PE) and of the Reprobate (PR)**

<b>Orthodox Calvinism</b>	<b>Hyper-Calvinism</b>
<b>PE is <i>positive</i>;</b>	<b>PE is <i>positive</i>;</b>
<b>PR is <i>negative</i></b>	<b>PR is <i>positive</i></b>
<b>PE &amp; PR are <i>asymmetrical</i>.</b>	<b>PE &amp; PR are <i>symmetrical</i>.</b>
<b>The ultimacy of PE and the ultimacy of PR are <i>unequal</i>.</b>	<b>The ultimacy of PE and the ultimacy of PR are <i>equal</i>.</b>
<b>PR: God <i>passes over</i> the reprobate.</b>	<b>PR: God <i>works unbelief</i> in the reprobate’s heart.</b>

The concept of ***justice*** incorporates all that is just. The concept of ***non-justice*** includes everything outside the concept of justice: ***injustice***, which vio-

lates justice and is evil; and ***mercy***, which does not violate justice and is not evil. **God gives his mercy (non-justice) to some and leaves the rest to his justice. No one is treated with injustice. No one can charge that there is unrighteousness in God.**

When Paul speaks of God’s having loved Jacob and hated Esau (**Romans 9:13**), this **divine “hatred”** must not be equated with **human hatred**.

**Romans 9:13 (NASB)**

<sup>13</sup> **Just as it is written, “JACOB I LOVED, BUT ESAU I HATED.”**

**It is a holy hatred** (see **Psalm 139:22**).

**Psalm 139:22 (NASB)**

<sup>22</sup> **I hate them with the utmost hatred; They have become my enemies.**

Divine hatred is never malicious. It withholds favor. God is **“for”** his elect in a special way, displaying his love for them. He turns his face away from those wicked people who are not the objects of his special grace. Those whom he loves with his **“love of complacency”** receive **his mercy**. Those whom he **“hates”** receive **his justice**. **No one is treated in an unjust manner.**

We conclude that the election of which the Bible speaks is **is unconditional**. No foreseen actions of the elect cause them to be elect or provide the grounds of their election. The conditions for salvation or justification are indeed met by the believer, but they are met because God provides these conditions for them by his sovereign grace.

**Calvin summarized it this way:**

**“Many controvert all the positions which we have laid down, especially the gratuitous election of believers, which however cannot be overthrown. For they commonly imagine that God distinguishes between men according to the merits which he foresees that each individual is to have, giving the adoption of sons to those whom he foreknows will not be unworthy of his grace, and dooming those to destruction whose dispositions he perceives will be prone to mischief and wickedness. Thus by interposing foreknowledge as a veil, they not only obscure election, but pretend to give it a**

different origin.”

## CORAM DEO (Before the face of God)

In short, if there were conditions for election, then God determined who would meet those conditions. Asking how He made the choice as to who would be given the conditions simply moves the question back one step. He must have unconditionally elected those who would be elect. Naturally, causes are rarely if ever so individual. Effects usually come about because of the convergence of several causal factors. We can rarely, if ever, pinpoint those causes. But God can. If there were some sort of secret recipe of causes that would bring the faith that saves or the hypothetical faith that God foresees in election—even if it takes a combination of godly parents, personal piety, and hearing the ad for the Billy Graham crusade on the radio—God still makes the soup. He wrote the recipe and mixes the ingredients.

Unconditional election is simply another way of saying that God is the sovereign one, and that He alone is the ultimate cause of whatsoever comes to pass. To be sure, He uses secondary causes: the faithful proclamation of the Word, the heartfelt prayers of the saints, the work of apologists and preachers, ads on the radio, even the consciences of the yet-unregenerate elect. But it is He who uses these things to bring about what He purposed from before all time, when there was God and nothing else<sup>1</sup>

*Tabletalk Magazine, March 2001: Marked for Life: Unconditional Election. 2001 (7). Lake Mary, FL: Ligonier Ministries.*

## TRUE EVANGELISM

### FALSE FORCES IN EVANGELISM

THE Lord Jesus described His mission by the words: **“For the Son of Man is come to seek and to save that which was lost”** ([Luke 19:10](#)), and this concise statement included both His finished work upon the Cross **“Therefore when Jesus had received the sour wine, He said, “It is finished!” And He bowed His head and gave up His spirit”** ([John 19:30\(NASB\)](#)), and His unfinished work in the world ([Acts 1:1](#)). While the work of *saving* the

lost must ever be a Divine undertaking accomplished only through His finished work on the Cross, there are aspects of the work of *seeking* them which were committed to His followers, and which are a part of His unfinished work in the world.

The work of seeking the lost, like the work of saving them, is in reality a Divine undertaking. It is distinctly stated that the *Son of Man* is come to seek. Thus He is again pictured in the Parable of the Lost Sheep: **“When he has found it, he lays it on his shoulders, rejoicing.”** ([Luke 15:5 NASB](#)) It is the “goodness of *God* that leads to repentance,” and the whole undertaking of finding lost men is but “the power of God unto salvation”; for no human effort or service can be effectual apart from the power of God. Seeking the lost is more than a mere attempt to locate unsaved men, for they are present on every hand. The term **“seeking the lost,”** therefore, suggests a Divine preparation of the unsaved that will bring them into adjustment with the necessary conditions of salvation.

It will be found, in the course of these studies, that there are successive aspects of the Divine seeking of the lost to be traced in Scripture, and every phase of this work, it will be seen, is undertaken and wholly accomplished by God the Holy Spirit. To recognize these Divine movements and to be willing humbly to co-operate with them is the true basis of all soul-saving work.

While it has pleased God to appoint to His saints (not as a corporate body, but as individuals) a portion in the work of seeking, the human part in that work is not worthy to be compared with the Divine. Yet man, who by nature comprehends and measures only visible things, is ever prone to disregard the invisible working of the Spirit, and to place an undue emphasis upon the comparatively small human share in those undertakings.

It is under these distorted estimates of the factors in the work of salvation that those things which may be called **“false forces”** in evangelism are substituted for the true. What are here termed **“false forces”** are, in some measure, God-appointed means in true evangelism. They become false forces only when they receive too much emphasis, or are strained to perform a function beyond that assigned to them in the purpose of God. Thus it may be seen that failure in evangelism is not always due to an entire neglect of some part, or parts, of the Divine appointments for the work; but may

be due to an unbalanced estimate of the relative values of these forces.

This discussion of false forces in evangelism will be limited to three general aspects—*i.e.*, **Men, Methods, and Messages.**

**MEN.**—By this term reference is here made to a class of men in the ministry called “**evangelists,**” and on whom the church has so largely come to depend for her activity in evangelism.

The word “**evangelist**” is used but three times in Scripture, and but one of these passages is to any extent descriptive. It is as follows: “**Therefore it says, “WHEN HE ASCENDED ON HIGH, HE LED CAPTIVE A HOST OF CAPTIVES, AND HE GAVE GIFTS TO MEN.”..... And He gave some *as* apostles, and some *as* prophets, and some *as* evangelists, and some *as* pastors and teachers, for the equipping of the saints for the work of service, to the building up of the body of Christ; until we all attain to the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a mature man, to the measure of the stature which belongs to the fullness of Christ ([Ephesians 4:8, 11–13, NASB](#)).**

Here the evangelist is seen, with the apostle, prophet, pastor and teacher, to be a gift of the ascended Christ to His church in the world. This ministry gift of the apostle, prophet, evangelist, and pastor and teacher should be distinguished from the endowment for service bestowed upon the individual believer ([1 Corinthians 12:4–31](#); [Romans 12:3–8](#)). In the one case the servant of God who has been endowed for ministry is Christ’s gift to the whole church; while in the other case a special enablement for service is given to the individual believer by the sovereign Spirit “**as He will.**” In this same connection still another distinction should be made, in that the believer, in addition to the exercise of gifts, is appointed to the ministry of the priestly office; and since evangelism will be found to depend so largely upon the exercise of the believer’s gifts and his ministry in the priestly office, a violation has been done to the plan of God, as revealed in His Word, inasmuch as the work of evangelism has been taken from the whole company of believers and entrusted to a few.

The evangelist of Scripture is, without question,

the messenger to the unevangelized, preparing the way for the pastor and teacher in his more constant ministry in the church. The evangelist, therefore, finds his fullest Divine purpose as a pioneer missionary to the what will now be called the unevangelized.

The modern “**revival,**” the work of the “**revivalist**” who comes under the title of an evangelist, but works as a religious promoter in the organized church, is unexpected in Scripture, except as the word “**revival**” is used to denote a forward movement in the spiritual life of the church, without including the idea of attempting to regain some spiritual position once held, but now lost. The use of the word usually means, however, a getting up after having fallen down, or a waking after sleeping, or a coming to strength after a period of weakness; while, on the other hand, the Scripture presupposes a continual erect, wakeful and aggressive position for service on the part of every Christian ([Ephesians 6:10–17](#)). Thus, it may be seen, a “**revival**” is abnormal rather than normal. It may have a function when needed, but in no way should become a habit, much less a sanctioned method of work. Having regained vitality, believers are not warranted in habitually returning to an anemic state.

The re-adjustment of a powerless church into a normal position of fruit-bearing fellowship with God is, without question, an undertaking that is warranted in Scripture. Such a transformation, however, can be accomplished only through a ministry of teaching and pastoral care. Thus it falls naturally within the sphere of service committed to the pastor and teacher whose ministry is not necessarily located in one place since he is a gift to the whole body of believers. Such a ministry may be undertaken by a pastor and teacher who is a specialist in such work, and who may visit the field to temporarily assist the resident pastor in his work. If this adjustment of the church is accomplished, the pastor or special assistant may then “**do the work of an evangelist.**” There is an important possible distinction, however, between being an evangelist by calling, and doing the work of an evangelist as occasion may arise in the pastoral office.

The efficiency of the whole company of believers must depend upon their proper adjustment to God in the cleansing and fitting of their individual lives. Just here there is a grave danger lest the church shall ignore her God-appointed work, and the necessary individual prep-



aration for it, and attempt to substitute the wholesale machinery and appeal of the modern evangelist in its place.

The fact that a “**revival**” is planned for is a confession on the part of a church of a condition which would render the normal movements of the Spirit in salvation impossible. The call for the evangelist, under those conditions, also reveals the fact that the expectation of the church, to a great extent, is toward the man that is invited, rather than toward the Holy Spirit and His appointed ministry through the church itself. The special help of a Scriptural evangelist might be imperative in gathering the abundant fruit produced by the faithful evangelizing efforts of a church. It will be admitted, however, that such conditions do not often exist in the churches: on the contrary, the sincere and intelligent evangelist must, almost without exception, first do the work of a pastor and teacher by seeking to revive the church itself.

This unfruitful condition of the church has created a great temptation for the evangelist to be superficial in his aim and undertakings. His reputations, and often his remuneration, are dependent upon apparent results; for many pastors and churches have been trained to a vision of quantity in results rather than to a due regard for quality. If the evangelist understands the Divine program in soul-winning, and proposes to go to the bottom with the churches, and do a teaching work that he may build the necessary Scriptural foundation for abiding fruit, he may often have to do so against the opposition of pastors and churches. They, expecting a sudden and apparent transformation, are naturally unprepared for the extended period of time and the pastoral instruction that is required to accomplish the necessary work. In undertaking a thorough foundation work in the churches, the evangelist would thus be forsaking his own calling, and assuming the work of the pastor and teacher; and would be a disappointment to those who had called him and on whom he depends, humanly speaking, for his support. His temptation is to secure the apparent results that are expected; for it is not natural for him to follow a program that would drive him entirely from the ministry which he has chosen.

The discussion of the fundamental error of the church in unduly magnifying the work of the evan-

gelist, and neglecting her own God-appointed ministry in salvation, will be the theme of succeeding teachings.



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## Hebrews 2 – Overview

*Author's Note: The overview study for each chapter of Hebrews is intended to simply provide a basic understanding of some of the various key elements of each chapter and is not written as an in-depth theological treatise.*

In [Hebrews 2](#) there are two places where “**therefore**” is used (v1 and v17), so it is important to see what the “**therefore**” is there for. V1 is talking to the believer and v17 is talking about Christ. [Hebrews 2:1](#) says,

**Therefore we must give the more earnest heed to the things we have heard, lest we drift away.**

In the Greek Interlinear Bible, the word “**therefore**” in v1 is actually two words - “*dia touto*” and is translated as “**on account of this**”. That accurately defines the meaning – because of this, on account of this, for this reason (NASB). The NIV simply translates it as “**we must**” and does not even include the “**therefore**” in the translation. The Amplified Bible translates it – “**Since**

**all this is true**". That translation is very clear and captures the underlying meaning of the simple word **"therefore"**. Any **"therefore"** always points the reader **back** to what has previously been said. So, in this case, the **"therefore"** is pointing back to the utter greatness of Jesus Christ. What is learned about Christ, coupled with the warnings, should make every believer more mindful that an individual's ongoing and habitual neglect of such a great salvation is most likely evidence that a mere "professing" believer may in fact not be an actual "possessing" believer. They may profess salvation, but not actually possess salvation. According to Matthew 7, many will say **"Lord, Lord"** on that final day, but will not be allowed to enter into God's kingdom. God will not be mocked, and it can be assured that whatever an individual sows is what they will ultimately reap – both now and in eternity.

The next word **"must"** – **"Therefore we must"** - is the Greek word *"dei"*. The Greek word *"dei"* is an "impersonal verb" and is generally translated as **"must"** in the New Testament. It is considered by many to be the strongest of all of the New Testament exhortation verbs. It signifies the **absolute necessity** of doing something. The Greek Interlinear Bible translates it as **"it is necessary"**. By stating that something is an absolute necessity, it takes on a "binding" element for the believer. And what the believer is constrained to do is to **"give the more earnest heed to the things we have heard"**.

In [Hebrews 2](#) there are no major verbs in the imperative mood which means that there are no actual command verbs. However, the phrase in v1 to **"give...earnest heed"** to what we have heard lest we **"drift away"** is a major exhortation in the present tense. The present tense represents a continuing action. In this case it carries the meaning of **"give and keep on giving...earnest heed"**. The Greek verb for **"give...earnest heed"** is *"prosechein"* and comes from two Greek words *"pros"* and *"echo"*. The prefix *"pros"* means "forward or towards" and the verb *"echo"* means "to have or to hold". So, it literally means **"to have or hold forward"**. It means to hold before oneself. The verb *"echo"* carries the idea to **"mentally hold on to something"**. The warning here is that of not letting the truth of God casually slip away from our lives. The nature of the sin of Adam was that he possessed a careless and indifferent attitude against the very commands of God that were to govern his life. Very often the reason that a believer fails to heed what God has said is simply because they have become careless in the matter of paying attention. Apparently many of these Hebrew Christians were actually giving less and less attention to the truth that they so vitally needed. In [I Timothy 1:19](#) the word *"echo"* carries the

meaning of steadfast adherence to the faith, or holding on to it.

**<sup>19</sup>having faith (having a steadfast adherence to the faith) and a good conscience, which some having rejected, concerning the faith have suffered shipwreck,**

This is much more than just making a simple profession of biblical truth, but rather is allowing what is known about God, Christ, His Word, His church, and His truth to fully govern the individual's life. The NIV translates it as **"holding on to faith"**. The Amplified says **"Holding fast to faith (that leaning of the entire human personality on God in absolute trust and confidence)...."**. That translation has great insight and captures the deeper meaning of *"echo"*. [II Timothy 1:13](#) is the same word *"echo"* and is translated as **"hold fast"**,

**<sup>13</sup>Hold fast the pattern of sound words which you have heard from me, in faith and love which are in Christ Jesus.**

However, what needs to be appreciated is that when the prefix *"pros"* is added to the word *"echo"* what it does is actually strengthen and intensify the word. So, the idea of giving **"the more earnest heed to"** certain things is a fairly intense word in the Greek language. And to intensify it even more, it is in the active voice which means that the subject is the one doing the acting. So, in essence, this would be considered a very strong exhortation to the believer.

So, why would the writer have to strongly warn his readers to **"give...earnest heed"** to something? It is because that is the very thing they have actually abandoned and ignored. When reading a passage and the writer makes a very strong statement, just the fact that he has done so should always cause the reader to ask the simple question "Why did he have to say that?" And in this passage particularly, the answer should be perfectly clear. The author is simply encouraging his readers to do what they have **not** been doing.

Now, this abandoning and ignoring what God had said is **not** something that happened quickly to these Hebrews. That is why the author uses the word **"drift"** –

“lest we **drift away**”. The Greek word for “**drift**” is the compound word “*pararuomen*” and provides an incredible word picture. The verb “*rheo*” means “to flow”, and the prefix “*para*” means “by”. So, literally the word means to flow by, to pass by. It means to pass by something without giving any attention to what is being passed by. We do this all the time when we are driving – we just pass by things and do not really pay any attention to what we have passed because it is not really that important. However, in a spiritual sense, many people do this every week and just casually pass by what is important for their lives. They come to church and they hear the Word of God, but they just casually pass by it, just “**drift**” by it and do not give any real or meaningful heed to what has been said. I remember as a young boy sitting in the large church that my family attended. I was there and I audibly heard what was being said, but I just ignored it and never really listened to the real message. It had absolutely no impact on my life other than to embolden me against the gospel and the message of God’s Word. It happens all the time – just drifting right past the most important and crucial message in eternity.

So, why is it necessary to “**give the more earnest heed**” to the things of God? It is because of what the author communicated in [Hebrews 1](#) when he indicated that God is a “speaking” God ([Hebrews 1:1-2](#)). God is always speaking. He speaks through His Word, through the person of Christ, through His Holy Spirit, and very often through others. He never stops speaking and what He has to say is incredibly vital and important. What God has said to these Hebrews is something that demands their concentration, but apparently they have not been paying attention to what God has communicated to them. From a practical perspective, the spiritual fallout is that if believers do not take hold of what God has spoken to them, then they will eventually suffer the consequences of what the writer says will happen when they “**neglect so great a salvation**” (v2).

V1 is clear that these Hebrew Christians had “**heard**” God’s truth. When the Greek word “**hear**” is used it can have one of two meanings. The first is that someone just audibly hears what has been said. The second meaning is that the individual also heard

the meaning and intent of what was being said. That is what this word “**heard**” is speaking about. It is not that these Hebrew Christians just heard some words, but that they actually understood what had been communicated. Christians need to realize that church is a dangerous place simply because God holds each of us responsible and accountable for the truth that we have both heard and understood. So, it is not like the author is asking them to just simply do something. To the contrary, he is asking them to take heed **because** of what they have already been told and understood. If a parent has clearly explained some reasonable expectation to their children and the children have both heard and understood what their parents have said, then if the children are not obedient it will invariably have negative consequences in their life. We operate like this all of the time. Just let someone casually ignore paying their electric bill and someone will come cut it off for them. They understand how the electric company works and it is their understanding that makes them responsible. If where someone works begins work at 7:00am and they never get there until 9:00am, most likely they will lose their job. Would that be their employer’s fault? Absolutely not! It is their clear understanding of when work begins that makes them responsible to be on time.

Without trying to overstate the simple issue here, the Christian culture that surrounds us is one where the church has casually accommodated people’s various and capricious notions and whims about life and almost completely ignored what the sovereign Lord of eternity has had to say. God has spoken and the church has just casually ignored and neglected what He has said. Believers consistently read obvious commands in Scripture all the time, but just find a way to casually ignore them. If that is the case, then these verses should serve as a very real warning to all who are casual and nonchalant about the impact of God’s Word on their life. Many believers simply have not embraced and taken hold of what God in His Word has declared and affirmed. It is a fair assumption to say that the Word of God may be the most neglected element of the Christian life. The word for “**neglect**” in v3 is the Greek word “*amelesantes*”. The “*a*” is the negative prefix and the verb “*melo*” means to care. So, when used together the word “**neglect**” means to not care. It has the idea of being careless with something, of actually making light

of it, and not regarding it as important. The NIV translates it as “**ignore**” and the Amplified Bible translates it as “**refuse to pay attention to**”. I.e., the picture is that God has spoken, but the individual simply does not care and refuses to pay attention to what has been said.

In my dentist’s office there is a sign right above the patient’s chair so that when the dentist leans his patients back in the chair they see a sign on the ceiling. The sign simply says “Ignore your teeth and they will go away”. In like manner, if a believer just casually and indifferently ignores their spiritual life, it likewise will just go away. Often times it seems that the most difficult people to reach are those who have a significant knowledge of God, people who were raised in a church, attended a church, and had godly parents – but they just ignored and neglected their spiritual opportunities. And now they have reached a point where they seem unreachable. They have ignored and neglected God and His Word for so long that they have lost all meaningful interest in God, in Christ, in His Word, in His truth, in His church, and regrettably in His salvation. And the saddest part about it is that the majority of these people actually believe that they are saved. The church has developed a false theology that has given people the “illusion” that they are saved when in reality they are not. Absolute truth, lordship, and commitment have become archaic and outdated concepts to many. Unfortunately, the modern church has fostered a cultural theology that allows people to equate familiarity with the gospel with salvation itself. The sad part, however, is that their familiarity with the truth only creates a greater judgment for them and not a basis for salvation.

Do you not just abhor it when someone you have given something valuable to treats it with complete disrespect and indifference? A number of years ago we had bought a John Deere Gator for our grandchildren to ride in around the farm, but one afternoon one of them was riding in the woods with two of their friends and became very careless and ran the Gator into a tree. Basically, the Gator died on the spot! It was so wrecked that it has not been used since. When our

oldest son was attending college, we bought him a nice car to travel back and forth to school. Unfortunately, one night he loaned the car to one of his friends, and on their way back the young man was not being careful and wrecked the car so badly that it was totaled and our son never drove it again. There are always consequences for refusing to pay attention to what should be paid attention to. In the case of Hebrews, the consequences are of an eternal nature. The Gator or an automobile can be replaced, but no one will receive a reprieve and acquittal from God’s final judgment. Being careless with and neglecting spiritual truth always has a negative outcome.

Many of these Hebrew Christians had reached a point in their life where they were not holding on to what they knew and not giving earnest heed to what God had revealed to them. They had become careless with the truth of God and God simply identified it as “**neglect**”. Apparently they had not regarded the Word of God as important and essential for their life and eventually became neglectful with that which was so fundamentally vital for their lives. The more someone detaches themselves from a meaningful public profession of Christ, the less and less impact and influence His Word will have on their life. Obviously, the issues that the author raises in these first few verses have very serious implications.

If someone is going to be an effective Bible teacher, then they must do much more than just present biblical information to the listeners. They must also warn, exhort, and challenge people to respond to the truth. By the time that the author arrives at [Hebrews 2](#), He fully understands who Jesus Christ is and so his ensuing pleas to these Hebrews are extremely passionate. He understands that Christ and Christ alone can purge men from their sins, that He is the Creator, and that He is more than worthy of reverence, obedience, and worship. These are not small or insignificant issues for the Christian life. But the author also understands that when teaching is presented properly and clearly that it always demands a response. Unfortunately, people can know all of the truth that there is to know about Jesus Christ, and yet still die in their sins and be eternally separated from God in a place of indescribable judgment.

There are many people who have heard the gospel,



who know all of the facts about His life, death, burial, and resurrection, who know that He died for them and that He deeply desires for them to have His forgiveness, but they simply are not willing to submit their life to Him as their Lord and Savior. This has to be the most tragic of all scenarios.

Christians must never weaken the message for unbelievers and mere “professing” Christians that judgment is certain, but salvation is not. And sadly for the person just described, the more that they know the greater will be their judgment. Jesus actually addressed this in the gospels. Throughout all of Scripture, the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah and Tyre and Sidon were singled out as being despicably immoral and ungodly. But none of these were as guilty as Capernaum, Bethsaida, and Chorazin. In [Matthew 11:21-24](#) Jesus says,

**<sup>21</sup>“Woe to you, Chorazin! Woe to you, Bethsaida! For if the mighty works which were done in you had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes. <sup>22</sup>But I say to you, it will be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon in the day of judgment than for you. <sup>23</sup>And you, Capernaum, who are exalted to heaven, will be brought down to Hades; for if the mighty works which were done in you had been done in Sodom, it would have remained until this day. <sup>24</sup>But I say to you that it shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom in the day of judgment than for you.”**

The issue presented in this passage is that those who will receive the greatest eternal judgment are those who have received the greatest light, but have failed to heed it. It is a very dangerous scenario for someone who is lost and without Christ to continually hear the Word of God, but never respond to its message.

For these Hebrews, the issue of giving “**more earnest heed**” had become even more critical simply because God had clearly “**confirmed**” (v3) for them what He had spoken through Jesus Christ. [Hebrews 2:4](#) says that He did so “**with signs and wonders, with various miracles, and gifts of the Holy Spirit**”. [Mark 16:20](#) uses the same word for “**confirm**” and speaking of how Christ worked through the apostles states the following:

**<sup>20</sup>And they went out and preached everywhere, the Lord working with them and confirming the word through the accompanying signs. Amen.**

I.e., God left no doubt as to the truthfulness of what Christ had accomplished. He provided all of the evidence that anyone could ever desire to prove that Jesus Christ was in fact exactly who He claimed to be. God will never ask someone to believe something unreasonable. He never asks them to commit their lives to that which is senseless, irrational, or meaningless. Why would someone ever think that the very God who created them has no clue as to how their life should be lived? The person who knows the absolute most about a large jumbo jet is the one who designed it – not the pilot. When the lost man looks at himself and at his family, it is difficult to imagine that they somehow believe that man came from some primordial soup or from some kind of cosmic explosion. If anything is true, it is that man was created by an amazing and infinite God, and lost or saved all men reflect His image. It takes much more faith to believe that man is the result of some biological mishmash hodgepodge that happened billions and billions of years ago than it is to believe in the majestic and glorious God of creation.

And to make all of this even more serious, v5 speaks of “**the world to come**”. The reality of life is that there is a “**world to come**”, and more than anything else in life, men better make sure that they are fully prepared to enter into it. Most people are not! This “**world to come**” is comprised of two real “places” – the Lake of Fire and the new heavens and new earth. [II Peter 3:13](#) says,

**<sup>13</sup>Nevertheless we, according to His promise, look for new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells.**

The second place is mentioned in four (4) different places in Revelation 19 and 20. [Revelation 20:15](#) says,

**<sup>15</sup>And anyone not found written in the Book of Life was cast into the lake of fire.**

What a brutally terrifying moment that will be for so many – the most unimaginable event possible. Yet Scripture clearly confirms that that will be exactly what

will happen to the vast majority of people simply because they died in their sins and without a Saviour.

So, there is just one warning in [Hebrews 2](#), and that warning is simply that those who do not care about what God has said and who just refuse to pay attention to His words, those individuals will not escape God's retribution for ignoring and demeaning His Son or His Word. This is not only something done by individuals and churches, but also by nations. For instance, it appears that apart from the intervention of God that the United States has reached a spiritual point of no return relative to where it is headed. People's belief and value systems all create "direction". People's lifestyles create a definite "direction" for their life. Anyone can look at someone's life, where they have been, what they have done, what they are doing, and almost without fail make a correct assessment as to where that direction will lead them in the near future as well as eternally. Are there exceptions? Sure! But there are not many. The only way that men can be an exception is for God to spiritually intervene in their life and give them what Scripture calls a "new heart". And once someone receives a "new heart" they will head in a new direction. [Ezekiel 36:26-28](#) says,

**<sup>26</sup>I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; I will take the heart of stone out of your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. <sup>27</sup>I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will keep My judgments and do them. <sup>28</sup>Then you shall dwell in the land that I gave to your fathers; you shall be My people, and I will be your God.**

Next, it is important to observe that there are five (5) verses with Old Testament quotations. If that number is combined with [Hebrews 1](#) which had nine (9) verses with Old Testament quotations, that makes a total of 14 verses out of 32 verses in the first two chapters that are quoting the Old Testament. Almost one half of all of the verses in these first two chapters contain Old Testament theology – one half! Once again, the question has to be asked as to why the author would do that. It is because [these are Hebrews](#) to whom he

is writing. Their entire existence, their whole culture, and all of their religious beliefs were based on the theology of the Old Testament. Where they were, why they were there, what they believed – it is all contained in the Old Testament. So, the writer is using something that they are very familiar with to validate and authenticate what He is saying. He is not presenting some novel and contemporary idea to them. To the contrary, he is repeating truth that they have been taught all of their life. He is using the Old Testament Scriptures to convince them of who Christ is, and therefore why their life should reflect His person.

The last observation in the overview of Hebrews 2 deals with the exaltation of Christ. As mentioned earlier, in Hebrews there are two **major** elements – (1) the exaltations of Christ, and (2) the exhortations that follow. In the eighteen (18) verses of Hebrews 2, the writer says twenty (20) specific things about Christ. This overview is only going to identify the exaltations to simply emphasize how much Christ is actually being extolled and honored by the author. It is his way of bringing Christ to the attention of his readers in a way that impacts their perspective. The specific exaltations are identified in "*italics*" below.

V3 - *Christ spoke about salvation.* God has never left any doubt in His Word whatsoever relative to what salvation is and how someone receives it. Every page of the New Testament in one way or another testifies to the reality of a person's need for salvation. In [John 20:30-31](#), John provides the very reason that the Book of John was even written,

**<sup>30</sup>And truly Jesus did many other signs in the presence of His disciples, which are not written in this book; <sup>31</sup>but these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in His name.**

[Mark 1:14-15](#) speaks about the very first message that Jesus preached when He came into Galilee.

**<sup>14</sup>Now after John was put in prison, Jesus came to Galilee, preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God, <sup>15</sup>and saying, "The time is fulfilled, and**

the kingdom of God is at hand. Repent, and believe in the gospel.”

V9 – *Christ was made a little lower than the angels.*

V9 – *Christ was made to suffer death.* The only reason that Christ came was to die and to give His life as a “ransom” for sin. [Matthew 20:28](#) says,

**“just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many.”**

V9 – *Christ was crowned with glory and honor.*

V9 – *Christ tasted death for every believer.* Theologically, this means that Christ became the believer’s Substitute. No truth is more fundamental to what Christians believe than this. Without Christ, man has no prospect other than death – none. He has nothing but the very worst of all expectations that await him. But God, both in His mercy and His wisdom, has provided a sacrifice for the sinner’s sin, an acceptable sacrifice to God. His death is the very reason that He is so exalted. The word “taste” does not mean to sample, but rather to partake of something fully and completely.

V10 – *Christ was made perfect through what He suffered.*

V11 – *Christ sanctifies.* It is important to appreciate that the work of God in a believer’s life is always “progressive”. It is that work of God within the believer called “sanctification”, or the continual setting apart of the believer for God’s use and God’s glory. But what the author wants to be understood is that the entire work of sanctification flows from the sacrifice of Christ on our behalf. His consecration is the source of strength for our consecration. His sacrifice is the source and strength for the sacrifices He calls on believers to make. Christ’s commitment to fulfill His Father’s will is the foundation for the believer’s commitment to do the same. It all comes from Christ.

V11 – *Christ is not ashamed to call us His brethren.*

V12 – *Christ will declare God’s name to us.*

V12 – *Christ will sing praises to God the Father.*

V13 – *Christ put His trust in God the Father.*

V13 – *Christ has been given a family by God the Father.*

V14 – *Christ destroyed the devil through death.* Without going into detail, and notwithstanding the sovereignty of God in all things, it is still important to understand that the present world as we know it and as we see it is being ruled by fallen angels. Obviously, the chief fallen angel is Satan who the Bible refers to as the “prince of this world”. [John 12:31](#) speaking of Satan, says,

**<sup>31</sup>Now is the judgment of this world; now the ruler of this world will be cast out.**

[John 14:30](#) states the same,

**<sup>30</sup>I will no longer talk much with you, for the ruler of this world is coming, and he has nothing in Me.**

[Ephesians 6:12](#) affirms that the world is under tremendous demonic influence.

**<sup>12</sup>For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places.**

However, it is also known from the Scriptures that Satan and his demons are not the only ones around. There are also holy angels that surround and protect believers from the fallen angels. In Daniel 10, Michael the angel and another holy angel were fighting against powerful fallen angels who were influencing the rulers of Persia and Greece. Just let it suffice to say that what is happening in the unseen spiritual world involves a great conflict, and generally it is nearly impossible to fully understand and appreciate what is actually happening in that dimension. But whatever it is, the fact still remains that Christ has destroyed the work of the devil and is providing His supernatural care and protection over the lives of believers.

V15 – *Christ is able to release those subject to bondage.*

V16 – *Christ gives aid to those who need it.* The idea of giving aid to believers is really a remarkable word. It

is the Greek word “*epilambanomai*” and literally means to seize, to lay hold of something. What a great picture of what Christ is doing for every believer. He has laid hold of us and seized us so that we will be guaranteed to make it to glory. Metaphorically, its primary meaning is simply to take hold of something so that it will not be spiritually harmed or injured.

V17 – *Christ was made like us.*

V17 – *Christ is a merciful and faithful high priest.*

V17 – *Christ was made a propitiation for our sins.*

Whenever the death of Christ is talked about, it must be understood that what Christ did in His death was primarily to satisfy God’s holy demands for the payment of sin. God had to have a just basis for why He could accept the sinful as pure and clean in His sight. He could not just wave a holy wand and say “You are fully forgiven”. To the contrary, there had to be a just basis for Him to even provide forgiveness. So when Christ died, He became the propitiation, or in practical terms, that which fully satisfied God’s demands for justice. The entire book of Romans is built around the simple fact that now those who deserved nothing but judgment can be fully “justified” before God. What an incredible truth!

V18 – *Christ suffered and was tempted.*

V18 – *Christ is able to help those who are tempted.*

No matter what any Christian may be going through in their life, Christ fully understands. He has gone through the same or worse. It is not that Christ is just mighty to save, but has no power to help afterward. To the contrary, He is also able to provide the spiritual help and strength needed to finish the race. That is why in [Hebrews 4:16](#),

**<sup>16</sup>Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need.**

Now, in order to read a passage intelligently, the reader must be able to see what the text is saying. A great majority of the attention given to [Hebrews 2](#) is given to the warning of v1-3. Because it is the first of the

warnings, it sets the precedent as to how theologians will handle the rest of the warnings. So, they have to be very careful with the first one. Yet clearly the emphasis of this chapter is on the exaltation of Christ and not the warning. Many have become so over-absorbed in the warning that they miss the primary content of the chapter. These twenty (20) declarations about Christ are utterly amazing. This will be found to be true throughout most of this letter. Suffice it to say, though, that if we do not pay attention to what God has to say about His Son, then we will miss not only the entire message of Hebrews, but the entire message of the Bible. It is about Christ and about how exalted and glorious He truly is. May God help each of us to clearly understand that apart from Christ we are the most desperate of all men, but through His amazing salvation we have the most glorious future imaginable.

#### ENDNOTES

- <sup>1</sup>Vine, 765-766.
- <sup>2</sup>Zodhiates, 1219.
- <sup>3</sup>Wuest, 50.
- <sup>4</sup>Vine, 553.
- <sup>5</sup>Vine, 331.
- <sup>6</sup>Vine, 779.
- <sup>7</sup>Bruce, 68.
- <sup>8</sup>MacArthur, 40.
- <sup>9</sup>MacArthur, 42.
- <sup>10</sup>MacArthur, 48 MacArthur, 48.
- <sup>11</sup>MacArthur, 63.
- <sup>12</sup>Hughes, R. Kent, 59.
- <sup>13</sup>Hughes, Philip, 103.
- <sup>14</sup>MacArthur, 52-53.
- <sup>15</sup>O’Brien, 117.
- <sup>16</sup>Renn, 955.
- <sup>17</sup>Phillips, 81

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## **NOTES**

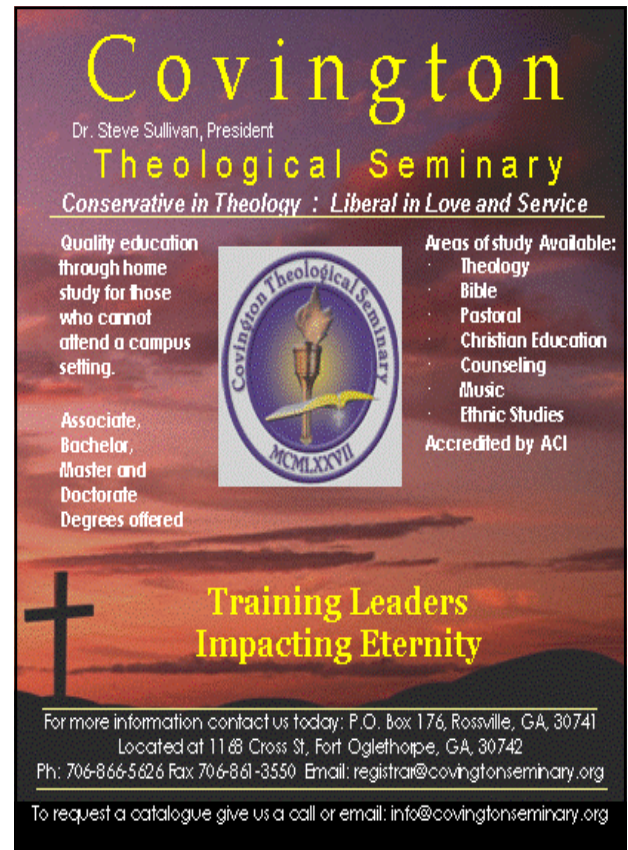
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