

Text: Heb. 2:1-4

Title: "Why it is necessary to pay close attention to what
God says"

Time: 5/4/2014 pm

Place: NBBC

Introduction: Do you ever get any help paying attention while driving your car from the passengers in your car? I do get that kind of help from time to time. Yesterday afternoon my family was in our van, and as I was pulling out of the drive of the church a car came off of Mont Vernon Road on to Lyndeboro Road, and my wife helped me to know it was there.

She was rather emphatic about it, because she was sure I had not seen the oncoming car. I'll not tell you whether or not she was right. Then as I pulled up to the top of the hill to get on Mont Vernon, the warning came again. I stopped and two motorists, a car and a motorcycle, went by. Maureen told me to watch out, and again, I am going to plead the fifth and not share whether I needed that warning or not.

If my wife had been speaking Koine Greek on those occasions, she would have used the vocabulary we find in this first verse of chapter 2: "Take heed." That phrase can mean three things in our New Testament.

(1) It can mean *to beware in view of some impending danger* (Matt. 6:1 - practicing your righteousness before men, Matt. 7:15 - false prophets, Matt. 10:17 - men, 16:6, 16:11, 16:12, Luke 12:1 - leaven of Pharisees and Sadducees, Luke 20:46 - scribes).

(2) It can mean to *be careful about making sure something is cared for correctly* (Luke 17:3 – rebuking and forgiving a brother, Luke 21:34 – a weighed down heart, Acts 5:35 – the way the apostles are treated; Acts 20:28 – the way the flock of God is handled by elders, 1 Tim. 4:13 – the public reading of Scripture, Heb. 7:13 – officiating at the altar).

(3) Finally, the word can mean *to pay close attention to the content of something* (Acts 8:6 – to Phillip, Acts 8:10, 8:11 – the magic of Simon, Acts 16:14 – Lydia paid attention with a heart opened by the Lord to the things spoken by Paul, 1 Tim. 1:4, Tit. 1:14 – distractions like myths, 1 Tim. 3:8 – much wine, 1 Tim. 4:1 – deceitful spirits and doctrines of demons, 2 Pet. 1:19 – the prophetic word).

When our author says *take heed* in our context this evening, he is using the last meaning of the word. He wants believers to pay close attention to the content of “the things we have heard.” Those things are in the Word of the Lord (v. 2), which tells us of our salvation (v. 3).

So the author tells us to pay close attention to what God says, and he gives us some reasons for doing so. That is what the message is about this evening: “Why it is necessary to pay close attention to what God says.” Notice three reasons with me.

I. We need to pay attention to what God says because He says it by His Son (v. 1, “Therefore” = “because of this”; v. 3, “spoken through the Lord”).

Illustration: How well we pay attention is often a function of our level of respect for the person who is talking to us. Ralph Colas with his cancer-filled body managed to make it to our ACCC committee meeting last Tuesday morning. It

had been a while since Ralph could make a meeting like that. It was great to see him again, and one of his responsibilities was to give the Executive Secretary's report. Well, as he spoke from that ravaged body with great energy and love for Christ and His work, you could have heard a pin drop. Everyone was paying close attention. On that occasion our level of attention was a function of our respect for this co-laborer in Christ and all that he has been through.

Application: Well, Brother Ralph is special, but he is only a prophet like those mentioned in 1:1. Verse 2 tells us that someone better has spoken to us in these last days—God's own Son. The rest of chapter one tells us about the magnitude of the Son and His exalted claims (to God the Father (v. 5), to worship (v. 6), to eternal sovereignty (vv. 7-8), to the Spirit's anointing (v. 9), to creation (vv. 10-13), and to ultimate victory (vv. 13-14)).

Then we get to chapter two, and that chapter begins with the word *therefore*. Because what we have heard in our Bibles, especially the New Testament, comes from the Son, we should pay close attention to its content. This is emphasized in verse 3 by the author again, "Which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord."

Why read your Bible? Well, because God wrote it. When we fail to pay attention to what God says, it is not just anyone that we are treating that way. It is the exalted Son of the living God.

II. We need to pay attention to what God says because it is reliable (v. 2, "permanent"; v. 3, "so great salvation"; v. 3, "confirmed unto us"; v. 4, "being testified of God . . . according to His will"; 2 Pet. 1:19).

Application: There are a lot of messages in the world today that bombard the mind of the believer that are anything but reliable. We saw some of this in the usage we surveyed of the word translated *take heed*.

People in Acts 16:14 were paying close attention to what Simon the Sorcerer said because he could do magic. But what Simon had to say was not reliable. 1 Tim. 1:4 and Tit. 1:14 mention the way some people like to pay attention to “fables and endless genealogies, which minister questions, rather than godly edifying which is in faith” and to “Jewish fables and commandments of men that turn from the truth.”

Worse yet, 1 Tim. 4:1 mentions “that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils; speaking lies in hypocrisy; having their conscience seared with a hot iron.” The messages of someone like that are not very reliable.

Illustration: I had the nice opportunity yesterday to renew fellowship with a brother named Peter who came to our church for a time before returning to Grace Free Presbyterian Church, and he was telling me about some secular counselling that a friend of his had received for a troubled and wayward daughter.

As these parents went in to this psychiatrist for a parenting consultation they held hands, and the doctor at the top of his voice yelled that their holding hands was exactly the problem their daughter was having. Their daughter was not able to get between her mom and dad and divide them, and the psychiatrist had the idea that this is what made her so wayward and difficult to deal with. So his expert opinion had concluded that the reason this young lady was living in rebellion was that mom and dad held hands too much.

Application: Well, we have all heard crazy, unreliable counsel like that, some from psychiatrists, some from professors, some from friends in social media settings, some from television shows, and some from the recesses of our own desperately wicked heart.

What can counter all this unreliable noise in our lives? The reliable Word of God. Notice that the law is described as steadfast or permanent (v. 2; note that the word given by angels was the law of Sinai, see Deut. 33:2, Gal. 3:19, Acts 7:53). Each penalty God's Word renders is just and right (v. 2).

But it also tells us about a great salvation (v. 3). It has been confirmed to us in a miraculous way (v. 4). With all of this the apostle Peter agrees when he says, "We have also a more sure word of prophecy; whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day star arise in your hearts: knowing this first, that no prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation. For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost" (2 Pet. 1:19-21).

Do you want a light in a dark place? Pay close attention to the content of God's Word. It is a sure word of prophecy. It is perfectly reliable as only the very Word of God can be.

III. We need to pay attention to what God says because there are consequences for neglecting it (v. 1, "drift away", v. 2 "a just penalty", v. 3, "how shall we escape").

Illustration: One of the things that tells me to take heed when I am driving are those rumble strips on the side of the express way. Have you ever been thankful for those? I have had them alert me to the fact that I was drifting away from

the road and into a ditch due to just a lack of paying attention.

Application: Well, we ought to pay close attention to what God says because there are serious consequences for not doing so that verse 1 describes as “drifting away.”

It is like we fall asleep at the wheel, and the next thing we know we are going over the embankment and find ourselves in real trouble. It is like the author of these words sees that beginning to happen in the lives of the believers he writes to, and so he wants what he is writing here, the command to take heed to what God says, to be rumble strips that keep them from drifting too far.

He tells them to remember that God had a just penalty for Israel’s neglect of the law – namely they all died in the wilderness – and He would now owe Israel an apology if He let us escape when we neglect the New Testament truth that was given to us by the Lord and the apostles. What is the answer to the question, “How shall we escape if we were to neglect what God says?” Well, the answer is that we will not escape. The answer is that as God’s children we shall know the discipline of a Heavenly Father. That is what chapter 12 of this epistle is all about.

Conclusion: We who are parents know what it is like when a child fails to pay close attention to what we say. What hurts the most about a situation like that is that as a parent you know how wonderful life can be for your child if only he had a disposition to pay close attention to what you say. That kind of response allows a parent to bestow a full blessing of love on his child in a positive way. A parent has no greater joy than offering thanks to a child for being a good

son or daughter. Instead, however, we sometimes have to resort to disciplining an unresponsive child.

Well, those are the two roads available to us as believers — pay close attention to what God says, or learn the hard way with His chastening and discipline in our lives. We really do not have a third option. Failing to listen to what God says and getting away with it is simply not open to the true child of God.

So may we this week pay the more earnest heed to what God has said. May we do it because it is God's Son who speaks to us in His Word, because it is a sure word of prophecy that is always infallibly true, sufficient, and reliable, and because the consequences for neglect will not be escaped by us when we do not listen. What is your plan for an open Bible in the coming week?

“A man came – I think it was actually in Philadelphia – on one occasion to the great George Whitefield and asked if he might print his sermons. Whitefield gave this reply; he said, ‘Well, I have no inherent objection, if you like, but you will never be able to put on the printed page the lightning and the thunder.’ That is the distinction – the sermon, and the ‘lightning and the thunder.’ To Whitefield this was of very great importance, and it should be of very great importance to all preachers, as I hope to show. You can put the sermon into print, but not the lightning and the thunder. That comes into the act of preaching and cannot be conveyed by cold print. Indeed it almost baffles the descriptive powers of the best reporters.”

– David Martin Lloyd-Jones,

Preachers and Preaching