

Chapter 1 was pretty intense in that it was so thick with meaning with all the underlying comparisons and contrasts that the Spirit made. The Spirit wanted these believing Jews to know beyond a shadow of a doubt that Jesus is better than Abraham, Moses and all the forefathers, better than the priests, better than the entire Jewish religious system, and He is even loftier and far above the angelic hosts who serve Him and who just happen to also serve us.

In the same way the Spirit wants us to understand that Jesus is better than all those we have looked to for hope, strength, inspiration (including ourselves), He is better than all our leaders (religious or otherwise) to whom we go to for help and instruction, He is better than the “religion” of Christianity which so many of us came out of, and He is far superior to anything within the spiritual realms—angelic or demonic.

It is practically so important that we wrap our heads around how big and amazing Jesus really is because He is our God—we belong to Him. Yet too many of us are still walking with our heads bowed low under the pressure and weight of our lives and we live as if Jesus is not really that big after all or as if He is not delighting in the details of our lives. In fact, too often we don’t even connect the details of our lives with His majesty.

We also live as if we do not belong to the most amazing lover that we could ever hope for—a lover who constantly keeps His eyes upon us and passionately desires for us to know Him as personally and intimately as He knows us. We need to get perspective on who He is and who we are to Him and stop living as if we belong to the here and now.

In *John 17:6* Jesus said that we are no more a part of this world than He is a part of this world. And in the book of Ephesians, we learned how we must live our lives from the perspective of the spiritual into the physical and not the other way around. But still, so quickly, in our day-in-and-day-out lives, too many of us have drifted from this truth.

Honestly, to me this has been a bit frustrating because some of you have been here long enough and have heard the truth about how great of a salvation Jesus has brought to you and you should now be living in the freedom that Jesus provides both from yourselves and this world. Yet you willfully, even intentionally, choose to drown yourself in the cares and drama of your life rather than living to fulfill the will of our Father. And this is a serious problem that impacts not just you but all of us who have been fitted together in this body.

Hebrews 2:1-3

Therefore we must pay much closer attention to what we have heard, lest we drift away from it. For since the message declared by angels proved to be reliable and every transgression or disobedience received a just retribution, how shall we escape if we neglect such a great salvation?

Wow, how is that for an ominous warning. The intensity of this passage does not allow us to just read over it quickly and skip to the next set of verses. So what is going on here? Things started off so good. We were wrapping our heads around this incredible picture of the majesty of Jesus and then suddenly the whole thing takes a sudden turn; it kind of makes you want to jump back a few steps.

I have to warn you, this study is going to get very uncomfortable as we are going to learn about some shocking ways in which God deals with His own people—stuff that is not often taught in the average “feel good” message. But this letter to the Hebrews is a big warning, a big rebuke and a plea for the children of God to live as children of God. The Spirit will use as a back drop for communicating His message the story of the Israelites who came out of Egypt. From that story He will draw out parallels for our lives regarding those who live by actively believing the truth and those who live surrendered to and controlled by wrong belief and unbelief.

I would like to assign some homework. As we study in Hebrews, it would be good if each of you read Exodus through Judges and get very familiar with both the story line and the larger spiritual principles that the story reveals because their adventure is essentially our adventure when you look at our lives from the spiritual being played out in the physical.

Now because Jesus is so big and amazing and since we belong to Him and have been adopted into His family as His own, we need to pay much closer attention to what we have heard—it is essential to our experiencing all the promises that have been made to us. The Greek word translated as “much” in the ESV literally means to super-abound. We must super-abound in our efforts to believe the things that have been revealed to us about Jesus and our life in Him or else we will drift from the truth into some very dangerous territory.

Now the word “drift away” is in the *passive* tense which means that if we are not active in our faith, if we do not constantly and continually bet our lives on what we have heard, then we will by definition drift away—it just happens to us.

Remember, faith is always active and never passive. This reminds me of when Jesus said: "He who is not with Me is against Me; and he who does not gather with Me scatters (**Matthew 12:30**). There simply is no middle ground. We are *in the moment* either drawing near to God or we are moving away from Him. That is just a spiritual truth that we cannot avoid.

I think one of the greatest deceptions of the enemy through which he has taken believers captive is this idea that there is some sort of middle ground of goodness that as long as we are not doing anything real bad that we are ok with God and He is ok with us. We only seem to trip out if someone does one of the "super-bad" sins otherwise we pretty much leave them alone believing everything is ok.

Think about how the "religion" works (and consider it in light of Judaism). If we are busy serving the Lord (which is akin to making the required sacrifices); if we are doing our best not to sin (which is similar to striving to keep the Law) then we think that God should be pleased and we are in this safe territory. But that is simply not the case. Either we are active in our belief in who Jesus is and who we are in Him, and we make our decisions based on those facts, or we are not. Either we live as spiritual beings that simply do not belong to this world or we live as if this is our life and this material existence is all that we have. There is no middle ground here; please do not miss this point for the consequences are sobering.

The Spirit is attempting to capture our attention by using a "if you think that was bad" kind of argument;" and personally I think He accomplished His purpose. He takes a spiritual reality that everyone would have been familiar with and that is the personal judgment that people incurred for breaking the Law of Moses and

He says that is nothing compared to what happens to a child of God who neglects this great salvation that they have been given. The judgments under the Law were horrible and exacting. Sometimes when I read the stories I shudder and honestly am a bit confounded as to their intensity and severity.

For example, ***Exodus 30:9*** says that the priests shall not offer any strange incense on the altar and that the incense they are to burn is a special mixture that is to be considered holy. Then Nadab and Abihu, sons of Aaron, decided to foolishly test that notion and decided to offer up incense that was not of this holy mixture—who knows maybe their mixture was cheaper and they pocketed a few dollars or else maybe they were just lazy. But either way, this was a big mistake. Fire came out from the Ark of the Covenant and consumed them where they stood (***Leviticus 10:1-2***). Oops.

Then in ***Numbers 16*** the people complained about Moses' leadership challenging his right and authority to hold the top spot. God opened the earth and swallowed whole those who thought they should lead and then shut the earth over them. He then sent fire out from the Ark of the Covenant to consume 250 men who were burning incense pretending that they could be priest; and He also unleashed a plague on all the people for because of their unbelief and rebellion. By the time Aaron and his priests could intercede on behalf of the people the plague had killed 14,700 Israelites. Those were pretty intense consequences just for an attempted coup and for complaining against God's leaders.

But, again, that is nothing compared to what happens when we neglect so great (or so vast) a salvation. I want us to spend some time talking about this great salvation to help you understand why the consequences for ignoring it are

so harrowing; but before that let me explain what is going on here so you do not totally freak out. I have to set the stage however with a familiar backdrop so you do not misinterpret what is being said and walk away living in some twisted fear. And this is also for those of you who are somewhat new and have not fully understood the mystery of true Christianity.

All true believers, when they accepted Christ to be their Lord and Savior, were given a new nature that was made in the image of God righteous, holy and true, (*Ephesians 2:10; 4:24; 2 Corinthians 5:17*). This new nature is where the Holy Spirit dwells within the “heart” every true believer (*Romans 8:9; 1 Corinthians 3:16, 6:19; 2 Corinthians 6:16*). Now this new nature did not replace their *old sinful nature*, it just moved in right along side of it; thus, both natures are always at work and at war with each other and our choices are never free from this conflict (*Galatians 5:17; Ephesians 4:22; Colossians 3:9*).

Our experience in Christianity is completely driven by this dualistic reality. I have tried to depicted this in these charts. Either we choose with our mind or our will to present ourselves to our new nature (and thereby abide in Christ) or we choose to present ourselves to our *old sinful nature* (who by the way is good friends with the devil) and thereby abide in our flesh. **Remember, there is no middle ground of goodness.** At any moment in time, what is produced from your life will either come from God through your new nature as He lives through you (*Colossians 1:27*)—which by definition will be good and holy—or from your *old sinful nature* and will be purely evil.

Now our *old sinful nature* is an enemy of God (*Romans 8:7; Galatians 5:17; and James 4:4*) and therefore God will treat it accordingly. As we studied in *Ephesians*

5:6 God will absolutely go to war against your old sinful nature and pour out His great wrath upon it. That is the situation we are dealing with here in the book of Hebrews. The Spirit goes into great detail explaining to us why Jesus is the best option for us to choose and why choosing to serve our own desires because of a lack of faith (and thereby once again become subject to our *old sinful nature*) is really a horrible decision and leads to a destitute life akin to spending years upon years wondering in the desert waiting to die.

Now, if those guys in the Old Testament who violated any aspect of the Law received their just reward from God, we too should fully expect judgment against our *old sinful nature* if we continually choose out of wrong belief and unbelief to let it have power and control over our lives.

Many of you know what this is like; I know I do. The depression, the agony, the despair, the loneliness, the wanting, the pain, the paranoia, the lack of peace or rest, the fear, the anxiety, the broken relationships, the selfishness, the insecurity, the confusion, the chaotic mind, the guilt, the shame, the sleepless nights, the uncertainty, the aggression, the disappointment, the heaviness, the bondage, the conflict, the tears, the sadness, the violence, the abuse, the self-destructive behavior, and so on. And that just describes the internal torture that God allows us to endure when we give ourselves to our *old sinful nature*. Then add to it all the creative ways that God works against us in our physical circumstances and relationships to convince us that we should choose to abide in Him and it should be clear that the comparison which the Spirit makes is not understated.

The point is that we will not escape. Our *old sinful nature* is an enemy of God and God has no issues with going to war against His enemies. In fact, it is a big

theme throughout all the Old Testament as well as the book of Revelation. He loves us. He bought us with His precious blood; yes, He gave His life for us just so we can be in relationship with Him. As such, He is jealous for us. His desire is that we always live safe and protected in His arms and never find ourselves in the arms of His enemy as He does not want us giving ourselves to a lover whose only desire is to hurt us.

You know all those difficult parts of Hebrews that have tripped people up and made them think a person can lose their promise of heaven (for example, chapters 3, 4, 6, 10 and 12), well those passages are actually dealing with this issue of God going to war against our *old sinful nature*. They have nothing at all to do with our eternal inheritance but with our experience of eternity in our temporal existence here on earth. They are all addressing the choice we have to live as spiritual beings as sons of God or as fleshly beings enslaved to sin.

You might be wondering why the Spirit has to be so intense. Well let's consider this great salvation that has been freely given to us as well as the "*word*" that was spoken to us. Like the temporal judgment we experience in our here and now, we need to think of our salvation as more than just our guarantee of eternity with Jesus after we die but also our salvation in our here and now. Yes, eternity with Jesus is something beyond compare and something that we cannot really fathom, but it sure sounds wonderful and should give us plenty of motivation as to why we should super-abound in our heeding the word that was spoken to us. But our temporal salvation should also provide more than enough motivation for us to make the choice to bet our lives on the truth that has been spoken into our lives.

"Jesus saves" is a statement so rich and full of meaning. He saves us from:

- All the death produced in our lives from our *old sinful nature*.
- The legacy that was passed down to us from our parents and their parents and their parents and so on—the generational sin that has been snowballing in our families for centuries.
- All the self-destructive and dysfunctional coping mechanisms that we learned and adopted in order to deal with our lives.
- The impotency of our own strength, our own wisdom, and the counsel of our own minds, which have no access at all to the supernatural wisdom that comes from above.
- The power and domination of our lives by our emotions, desires, lusts, and the cravings lurking within our bodies.
- Bondage to sin.
- Bondage to the enemy who ruled and controlled our lives.
- Our addiction to this temporal vanishing world that is merely an illusion of reality.
- Our delusion that we can control anything.
- The fear of dying and even the fear of living.

In addition, to what He saved us from, He also Jesus saved us in order to love others with His agape love; the kind of love that only derives from the divine—the kind of love to which we would have no access if He did not live in us and live through us. Others search for love their entire lives; yet we are the ones who have been given perfect love. And, what is amazing is how that love can manifest itself through our frail human bodies and be lavished on others. It's truly supernatural.

Think about it! This is such a great salvation. This means that we do not have to live in the mess that has been handed down to us and forced upon us by our ancestors. We do not have to live by the rules that have been set down by this world and its self-seeking mercenary system. We do not have to be enslaved to religion with all its never ending demands upon our life. We have been set free from it all.

In fact, we can experience the divine and express the divine here and now; and I am not talking about some ethereal expression of “divine consciousness” that is really no more than just a veiled form of selfishness, self-love, and intolerance. I am talking about Jesus through the Holy Spirit living in us and being expressed through our physical bodies to others (*Colossians 1:27*).

This is hard core and radical. This is the good news that we need to let others know about. Our salvation is great, vast, enormous, and extends from now throughout all eternity. It is so great that we must not neglect the truth that has been spoken into our lives—the truth which informs us how to practically experience our salvation day-in-and-day-out moment-by-moment.

Now let’s take a look at the “word” that was spoken into our lives—the “word” to which we are to heed and pay attention. Now I am going to just pull from what we have already studied in the Gospel of John and the letter to the Ephesians; so I hope it is somewhat fresh in your minds.

First from John: We have been given new life from heaven (**3:6**). We have been given living water that will take away our thirst—that craving within the soul of every man, woman and child for more (**4:14**). We have passed from death into life (**5:24**). We have been assured that Jesus will not lose any of us, but we will all be

raised to eternal life (**6:39**). In the same way that Jesus lived by the power of the living God, we will live because of Him (**6:57**). We have received the words that are spirit and life (**6:63**). We will have rivers of living water flowing out from our lives to others (**7:37**). And, if we follow Him we won't be stumbling through the darkness, because we will have the light that leads to life (**8:12**).

As we learn about Jesus we will come to know the Father (**8:19; 14:7**) and we will be able to recognize Jesus' voice in our lives (**10:5, 16, 27**). In addition, we will know the truth and the truth will set us free (**8:32**). We can experience life in all its fullness (**10:10**). We will never perish but live eternally (**10:28, 11:26**). We will be honored by the Father for following Jesus (**12:26**). He knows us each so well (**13:18**) and we are clean before Him (**13:10**).

He is preparing a place for us with the Father to shelter us and protect us from the time of indignation that will pour out upon this earth. Accordingly, He will come again and get us and we will forever be with Him (**14:1-3**). We will do the same works that Jesus did—even greater works (**14:12**). We can ask for anything in Jesus' name (*according to the will of the Father*) and Jesus will do that work through us (**14:13-14**).

We have been given a Counselor—the Holy Spirit of truth (**14:16-17**) who will teach us all that we need to know (**14:26; 15:26**). As Jesus is in the Father, we are in Him and He is in us (**14:20**). Jesus will reveal Himself to each one of us who believes (**14:21**). Jesus also gives us the gift of peace of mind and heart—a peace that is not like what the world has to offer (**14:27**).

If we remain or abide in Jesus we will bear much fruit and glorify the Father (**15:5-8**) and the good news is that we can remain in His love and in so doing we

obey Him (**15:10**). We can be filled to overflowing with His joy (**15:11**). We are called friends of God (**15:15**) and therefore we are guaranteed that since the people in the world hated Jesus they will also hate us—sorry it comes with the package (**15:20-21**).

The Holy Spirit will also guide us in all truth (**16:13**). Because we know Jesus, we have the right and privilege to go directly to the Father and ask Him anything in the name of Jesus (**16:23-24**). In fact, we have always belonged to the Father (**17:6**). As such, we are no more a part of this world than Jesus was a part of this world (**17:16**).

We will be made pure and holy by the words of truth which have been spoken to us (**17:17**). We have been given the glory which the Father gave to Jesus (**17:22**) and we are all being perfected into one—Jesus in us and the Father in Jesus (**17:23**). And finally, Jesus has revealed the Father to us and will keep on revealing Him to us so that the Father's love for Jesus will be in us and Jesus will be in us (**17:26**).

Wow, and that is just John. Are you getting a clue as to how great our salvation is and how we need to pay attention to these truths and let them become our hard and fastened practical reality. Are you ready to hear the word that has been spoken over your lives in the book of Ephesians? Take a breath this is equally as powerful and overwhelming.

From Ephesians Chapters 1-3: We have been blessed with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ. He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, in order that we would be holy and blameless before Him. In love He predestined us to adoption as sons through Jesus Christ to Himself according to

the kind intention of His will, to the praise of the glory of His grace, which He freely bestowed on us in the Christ.

In Him we have redemption through His blood. We have been forgiven of all our sins and trespasses (both our intentional and unintentional sins), according to the riches of His grace which He lavished upon us. In Him we have also obtained an inheritance. We were predestined according to His purpose who works all things after the counsel of His will; and all that has happened in our lives has not been random, but has been with a purpose according to His will.

We have been sealed in Him with the Holy Spirit of promise, who was given to us as a pledge of our inheritance, with a view to the redemption of God's own possession (in other words, we are His possession and we will be redeemed). He made us alive together with Christ and raised us up with Him and seated us with Him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, so that in the ages to come He might show the surpassing riches of His grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus.

For by grace we have been saved through faith; and that not of ourselves, it is the gift of God. We are a new creation of His workmanship (His very own masterpiece), created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand so that we would walk in them.

We have been brought near by the blood of Christ and He Himself is our peace. Through Him we have access in one Spirit to the Father. As gentiles we are no longer separated from those that God chose but we are fellow citizen with all the saints. We belong to God's household, and because of Christ and our faith in Him, we can now come fearlessly into God's presence, assured of His **glad** welcome.

From His glorious resources He will strengthen us with His mighty power through His Spirit in our inner-man (our new creation), and He will be more and more at home in my heart as we trust ourselves to Him. He will cause our roots to go down deep into the soil of His marvelous love, and He will give us the power to understand how wide, how long, how high, and how deep His love really is so that we can know (fully experience) the love of Christ which surpasses comprehension.

We can be filled with the fullness of Christ; and by His mighty power He is able to accomplish through us infinitely more than we would ever dare to ask or hope.

We are all being built together into a dwelling of God in the Spirit, the foundation of which has been built upon the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus Himself being the corner stone in whom the whole building, being fitted together, is growing into a holy temple in the Lord.

And from Ephesians Chapters 4-6: We are all one body, we have the same Spirit, and we have all been called to the same glorious future. There is only one God and Father who is over us all and in us all and living through us all. He has given to each of us special gifts according to the generosity of Christ to equip us all to do His work and build up the church, the body of Christ.

We can obtain such a unity in our faith and knowledge of Jesus Christ that we will be mature, full grown in the Lord, measuring up to the full stature of Christ. Then will not waiver back and forth tossed to and fro; instead we will hold to the truth in love and become more and more in every way like Christ.

We can throw off our *old sinful nature* and be renewed in our minds and display to others our new nature because we have been made into new people created in the image of God righteous, holy and true. We can live a life filled with

God's agape love for others. We are full of light; the light that produces only that which is good, right, and true. We can know the will of the Lord as a fruit of allowing ourselves to be filled with the Spirit in every room within the corridors of our soul. Being filled with the Spirit will result in our relationships as brothers and sisters in the Lord, husbands and wives, parents and children, employees and employers all honoring the Lord.

We have been given God's supernatural armor to protect ourselves (head to toe) from the lies and attacks of the invisible enemy that we face every day of our lives. We have been given salvation as a helmet to protect our head; truth as a belt to protect our loins; righteousness as a breastplate to protect our vital organs. We have been given peace between us and God as a protection over our feet. We have a mighty shield of faith that can deflect every burning accusation and lie that the enemy shoots towards us. We also have a mighty sword in the Word of God that can defend and attack so that we can hold our ground and stand in place resisting the devil. And finally God desires to give us peace and love with faith and slather us completely in His grace.

How many of you have quickly forgotten these truths and have already drifted away from it? I cannot help to think that if daily, weekly, you reviewed these truths and held them close to your heart and mind (and made decisions accordingly) that you would be abiding in His peace and love with faith finding yourself completely slathered in His grace.

The truths that have been spoken into our lives in this little body are incredible and all God asks is that we choose to let them be our truth—to internalize everyone of them in a very personal way so we will live in the great salvation that has been given to us. I can only imagine if I tried and pulled out all the truths

spoken over us in the Laying the Foundation, How God Speaks, and the Faces of Love series, we would be here for another hour or two just bathing ourselves in the layers and layers of truth that have been spoken over our lives.

Consider this your personal reminder. Pay much closer attention to what you have heard. Give your super-abundant focus to heeding the truths that have been given to you so you will not drift from it. Instead, choose to live in its beauty and security every day of your life.

Have you ever noticed that when I sit with each of you and work through issues that the root of the problem always comes back to some aspect of these truths that you have been unwilling to believe or continue to walk in? Yes it's true. You know these truths for sure, but you must come to believe them with your entire being. These truths need to be your food, your water, your air, your clothing, your perfume, your makeup, and your' everything. This is how we will avoid finding ourselves in those situations where we leave God no choice but to go to war against our *old sinful nature*.

Others before us have successfully lived this life of faith. They chose to make the realities disclosed by the Word of God their personal truth and they bet their lives on it. They rejected what they had known to be true in their flesh. Now it is our turn to follow in this pathway of faith.

Hebrews 2:3-4

It [this great salvation] 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.

The point of this passage is that this great salvation is not illusory but it has been declared and attested to both through the testimony of men but also through the testimony of God who utilized signs, wonders, miracles and gifts of the Holy Spirit to convince us that it is all true. And according to the Law that demands that all facts of judgment be proven by 2 to 3 witnesses (***Deuteronomy 17:6***), the Spirit has made His case. Jesus said it, the Apostles testified to it, the Father bore witness to it, and the Holy Spirit also gave His mark of approval.

In a layered sort of way, this passage also alludes back to the time in Egypt where God delivered the Israelites (and it was a great deliverance) utilizing signs, wonders, miracles, and the supernatural gifts given to Moses, Aaron and so on (see ***Deuteronomy 4:34***). The Spirit is pricking their memory and reminding them of the glory that was experienced by their ancestors and letting them know that God saves in the same way today and His salvation is always much bigger and far grander than we could ever anticipate because it is based in the supernatural.

Is your daily life based in the supernatural? It can be. It should be! It needs to be! Don't neglect so great of a salvation that has been given to you. Be active in your faith and super-abound to live in this amazing salvation. It belongs to you and Jesus wants you to enjoy it in the same way He wants you to enjoy Him. So give heed to these truths. By the way, this instruction to give heed would have brought to mind a pivotal passage from the Old Testament which we should also find a way to follow.

Deuteronomy 6:4-9

"Listen, O Israel! The Lord is our God, the Lord alone. And you must love the Lord your God with all your heart, all your soul, and all your strength. And you must commit yourselves wholeheartedly to these commands that I am giving you today. Repeat them again and again to your children. Talk about them when you are at home and when you are on the road, when you are going to bed and when you are getting up. Tie them to your hands and wear them on your forehead as reminders. Write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates.

Let's Pray