Our Greatest Treasure

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John Sutter had gone out West to California to make a living. While there, he built Sutter's Fort. Then he built a sawmill in the hopes of making money. While doing this, he found little pieces of rock that was gold colored in a creek that was too narrow that he was trying to make wider. This gold stuff was gold. He wanted to keep it quiet because he was trying to build up the inheritance for his son. However, the word got out and the 1849 Gold Rush started. People flooded into the area. Mr. Sutter's sawmill went under and he would at some point go into poverty. Before this happened, he did sign over a deed of land to his son. The son would start a small town on that land called Sacramento. It is said that the capital sits on the very land that was owned by the son. It's a sad thing to realize how the son's father didn't realize what he could have done with that gold instead of allowing it to wash down the creek for other people to scoop up. He was too focused on the sawmill and the fort. The son saw the bigger picture. Isn't it amazing what people will pass by while staying focused only on one thing – thinking one thing is important while failing to noticed something more important nearby. We started with the Letter to Hebrews last week and we'll continue with it today. The writer was trying to help those who grew up in the Old Testament tradition to better understand Jesus, who was the fulfillment of the Old Testament. In this letter, the writer tries to let them know there was something may more important than the old rituals they had followed all through their life. If the writer was here today, I believe he would say the same thing to us because many treat Jesus only as a non-important item. Many Christians today treat Jesus as you would with an old book or as yesterday's news. Do we realize how important Jesus is to us each and every day? I wonder. Let's look at what the Hebrew writer has to say to us.

Let's turn to Hebrews 2: 1-4 where we read this, "**2** For this reason we must pay much closer attention to [a]what we have heard, so that we do not drift away *from*

it.[2] For if the word spoken through angels proved [b]unalterable, and every violation and act of disobedience received a just [c]punishment,[3] how will we escape if we neglect so great a salvation? [d]After it was at first spoken through the Lord, it was confirmed to us by those who heard,[4] God also testifying with them, both by signs and wonders, and by various [e]miracles and by [f]gifts of the Holy Spirit according to His own will. (NASB- www.biblegateway.com)"

In verse one, we see two phrases used here – closer attention and drift away. The writer here is trying to stress to the Church of their day that they have received a great treasure – a great gift. They must pay a closer attention to it. The writer had finished chapter one by talking about those who inherit salvation. In the beginning of chapter 2, he tells them to pay closer attention to this gift. This is not a gift one is to take lightly. As Dietrich Bonheoffer, the German Theologian would say, "It came at a great cost". What is this salvation that is mentioned in verse 3? In Greek, it means deliverance, rescue, the state of believers being saved from righteous wrath and being in a right relationship with God (Strong's Concordance)". This salvation can only come through Jesus Christ. Those who have received this salvation must pay close attention to this great gift. One must keep an eye on it as one would when planting a new small tree. One would keep it watered and give it plant food so it can continue to grow. Do we pay attention to our salvation that we received from Jesus Christ? If we don't pay attention to it, we are in danger of drifting away from it. One only has to turn to the Old Testament and see how Israel was always forgetting their God of salvation. They were always going after other gods. When we drift away from salvation, it's usually because we neglect it or we ignore it from the very beginning. Many people everyday reject conviction, which is a byproduct of salvation. Conviction is how Jesus gets one to first take notice of the gift of salvation. Many ignore this grace. In verse three, both neglect and ignore is used by different translations. Both are very dangerous. To ignore salvation means to be in danger of hell itself. Mark tells us this in Mark 1: 14-15, "Now after John had been taken into custody, Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the gospel of God and saying, "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel.

(NLT)" To neglect salvation means one can drift away from one's first love – Jesus. We pay so much attention to earthly things; we may not pay attention to our salvation. Satan will use whatever he can to help us forget or become dull to our salvation. When he does that, we can't see the bigger part of our salvation / inheritance – eternal life with Jesus. However, there is more.

Let's continue with Hebrews 2: 5-13, "[5] For He did not subject to angels [a]the world to come, about which we are speaking.[6] But someone has testified somewhere, saying,

"WHAT IS MAN, THAT YOU THINK OF HIM?
OR A SON OF MAN, THAT YOU ARE CONCERNED ABOUT HIM?
[7] YOU HAVE MADE HIM[b]FOR A LITTLE WHILE LOWER THAN ANGELS;
YOU HAVE CROWNED HIM WITH GLORY AND HONOR[c];
[8] YOU HAVE PUT EVERYTHING IN SUBJECTION UNDER HIS FEET."

For in subjecting all things to him, He left nothing that is not subject to him. But now we do not yet see all things subjected to him. [9] But we do see Him who was made [d]for a little while lower than the angels, *namely*, Jesus, because of His suffering death crowned with glory and honor, so that by the grace of God He might taste death for everyone.

[10] For it was fitting for Him, for whom are all things, and through whom are all things, in bringing many sons to glory, to perfect the [e]originator of their salvation through sufferings.[11] For both He who sanctifies and those who are [f]sanctified are all from one *Father*; for this reason He is not ashamed to call them brothers *and sisters*,[12] saying,

"I WILL PROCLAIM YOUR NAME TO MY BROTHERS,
IN THE MIDST OF THE ASSEMBLY I WILL SING YOUR PRAISE."[13] And again,
"I WILL PUT MY TRUST IN HIM."And again,
"BEHOLD, I AND THE CHILDREN WHOM GOD HAS GIVEN ME." (NASB – www.biblegateway.com)

We can't allow ourselves to become dull to this precious gift – gift of salvation. In verse 6, the writer states who are we that Jesus would be mindful of us. We don't deserve the gift of salvation, but Jesus allowed Himself to be made a little

lower than the angels. He did this by being born with the human body or flesh. He allowed Himself to suffer death and all that contains to it – all the suffering including mental and spiritual anguish. Jesus tasted death for everyone (verse 9). Jesus stood in our place on the cross. In the story called, A Tale in Two Cities, by Charles Dickens, a man becomes friends with a family during the French Revolution of 1789. The husband is captured and sentenced to death in France. The friend decides to go to the prison and switch places with the husband and has the husband smuggled out. The friend is beheaded instead of the husband. The husband is able to go back to his family. The family would cherish the memory of that friend as long as they live because of the sacrifice. I think verse ten states very well what Jesus did for us, "10 For it was fitting for Him, for whom are all things, and through whom are all things, in bringing many sons to glory, to perfect the [e]originator of their salvation through sufferings. (NASB)" That family cherished a friend who sacrificed his life for the family. How much more should we be thankful every day for Jesus who suffered and died for our own sin? Not only that, but verse 11 tells us Jesus is the one who makes us holy. This is another gift that comes from the gift of salvation. John Wesley described holiness as a renewal of the soul in the image of God and a universal love filling the heart, and governing the life. Plus, all of this allows us to be called His children. There is no better inheritance as this – better than gold itself. What else does Jesus, our treasure, give us?

Let's finish with Hebrews 2: 14-18, "14 Therefore, since the children share in [a]flesh and blood, He Himself likewise also partook of the same, so that through death He might destroy the one who has the power of death, that is, the devil,15 and free those who through fear of death were subject to slavery all their lives.16 For clearly He does not [b]give help to angels, but He gives help to the [c]descendants of Abraham.17 Therefore, in all things He [d]had to be made like His brothers so that He might become a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make [e]propitiation for the sins of the people.18 For since He Himself was [f]tempted in that which He has suffered, He is able to come to the aid of those who are [g]tempted. (NASB-www.biblegateway.com)"

The writer repeats again that Jesus had to be born in the flesh as the Son of God so that He can destroy the one who has the power of death – the devil. This is included in our gift of salvation. The devil will be destroyed when Jesus comes back at the end of this age and death will be destroyed for good. When Jesus comes back, a new heaven will be made and we will get a new heavenly body – a perfect body. For this to happen, Jesus had to come on this earth in an earthly body to suffer what we suffer on a daily basis. The writer says Jesus became our high priest. Jesus became our high priest and sacrifice at the same time. Priests represented God before humanity and humanity before God in the Old Testament. Jesus represents us before God and allowed Himself to be sacrificed for us as well. The Son of God made atonement for the sins of the people as Scripture tells us in verse 17. Our High Priest offered His blood and body as our sacrifice for our sin. This is a gift we must never forget and must give thanks as much as we can. Jesus is our most important treasure – never forget that.

The Strongest Strong's Concordance. Zondervan: Grand Rapids, 2001