

GOD'S WORD IS LIFE

The Book of Hebrews

Pastor Mark Anderson

Greek Word Study of Six Key Terms in HEBREWS 2 (RSV)

1. Διαθήκη (Diathēkē) – Covenant (Hebrews 2:2)

Greek Term: Διαθήκη (Diathēkē)

Meaning: “Covenant” refers to the binding agreement established by God. Hebrews 2:2 speaks of the old covenant, delivered through angels, which carried severe consequences for disobedience. This old covenant stands in stark relief against the radical shift where Christ fulfills the law and establishes grace through His sacrifice. In this way Christ establishes a new *testament* based on promise, and not a covenant based on cooperation in the law.

2. Σωτηρία (Sōtēria) – Salvation (Hebrews 2:3)

Greek Term: Σωτηρία (Sōtēria)

Meaning: “Salvation” denotes deliverance and restoration. In Hebrews 2:3, this “great salvation” is proclaimed as God’s definitive work through Christ. It is not achieved by human effort but freely given through the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus, shattering human attempts at self-redemption. This “great salvation”, stated in the present-perfect tense refers to the completed action of salvation achieved through Christ, but also emphasizes its *ongoing*, effective presence for believers.

3. Χάρις (Charis) – Grace (Hebrews 2:9)

Greek Term: Χάρις (Charis)

Meaning: “Grace”, a word we can’t get enough of! Grace expresses God’s unmerited favor. Hebrews 2:9 describes Christ tasting death “by the grace of God” for everyone. This grace subverts human understanding, effort, cooperation in the law – all the useless baggage we like to bring to the table, as the King of Glory stoops to bear the curse of death for the unworthy, revealing God’s heart of mercy. The King of Glory descends, not to demand but to give, not to condemn but to save—leaving us with empty hands and open hearts, as grace whispers the final word: “*It is finished.*”

4. Φόβος (Phobos) – Fear (Hebrews 2:15)

Greek Term: Φόβος (Phobos)

Meaning: “Fear”, in this case, is that deep, gut-wrenching terror of death—the kind that hangs over us like a storm cloud. Hebrews 2:15 gets right to the point: Christ has broken us out of that prison. By stepping into death Himself and walking out the other side, He has loosened its grip. Death no longer calls the shots. Now, we’re free to live—really live—clinging to the promise that what happened to Him will happen to us.

5. Συμπαθεῖν (Sympatheō) – Help (Hebrews 2:18)

Greek Term: Συμπαθεῖν (Sympatheō)

Meaning: Hebrews 2:18 makes it clear: Christ Jesus doesn’t stand off at a safe distance. He knows what it means to suffer, to be tempted, to feel the weight of sin, loss, and death. There’s nothing

about being human that He hasn't taken on. But His help is no mere empathy— Christ Jesus has already won the battle against sin and death – for us. And because of that, when He helps, it's with the power to pull us through, carrying us by faith to where He is. Luther knew this power. In his great hymn he was bold to proclaim that when the tempter roars and the world shakes, we need not fear—for Christ, our Mighty Fortress, stands victorious, and *“one little word shall fell him.”* That one Word is the Gospel.

6. Πάθημα (Pathēma) – Suffering (Hebrews 2:10)

Greek Term: Πάθημα (Pathēma)

Meaning: “Suffering” refers to Christ’s experience of human pain and death. Hebrews 2:10 declares that Christ was made perfect through suffering. But caution is in order. This perfection is not an invitation to seek moral improvement through suffering. This suffering belongs uniquely to Jesus. For through the suffering of the Son of God and His Cross, He fulfilled God’s purpose, revealing His power through weakness and bringing many to glory. There, on that Cross, Christ did what no one else could—He took the suffering that was ours, perfected it as His own.