

THE DANGER OF DRIFTING



Today we continue our journey thru the book of Hebrews. Our focus is going to be **Heb. 2:1-4**.

Earlier I said that there are a number of things we don't know for certain about this book. The human author. The place.

But we can have a pretty good idea of the type of person the letter was written to.

It was written to Jewish Christians. These Jews had heard about Jesus Christ and that he rose from the dead, and they put their faith in Him as the Messiah and became Jewish believers. It was the fulfillment of all they had been waiting for.

But as time with on they experienced problems because of their faith in Jesus. And it is most likely that as a result of this persecution and pressure, these Jewish Christians were starting to think that maybe it would be easier just to ratchet things back. *"We can still believe in Jesus, but we will also act like our Jewish friends and not worry about living out our faith to the fullest. We'll concentrate on the things that are important to our family and friends, we'll keep the Law and we'll pull in our faith just a little bit. And things will be easier."*

It is to this issues that our text speaks directly to today. And it strongly points out the huge danger of being in such a place spiritually.

This is the first of five major warning passages in Hebrews, each designed to prevent a specific form of unbelief. (The five warnings are found in 2:1-4, 3:12-19, 6:4-8, 10:26-31 and 12:25-29.) The author is deeply concerned lest his readers (or Christians in any era) succumb to the pressures they were feeling and either renounce JC and the gospel outright or gradually turn away from the Word and lose its influence entirely.¹

As we spent 2 weeks in chapter one, **I wonder if you noticed anything?** In Chapter 1 there are no commands for the church. We are not told to do anything. The whole chapter is a declaration and celebration of God's final word to the world—Jesus

Christ the Son of God. The chapter begins, "God, after He spoke long ago to the fathers in the prophets in many portions and in many ways, in these last days has spoken to us in his Son." This is the point of chapter 1: something utterly stupendous happened in the coming of the Son of God.

This is Hebrews' way of saying what John said in his gospel, "In the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God and the Word was God . . . and the Word became flesh and dwelt among us" ([John 1:1, 14](#)). In other words, God the Son took on human form as God's final, decisive Word to the world.

The writer doesn't tell us to "do" anything because first all the writer wants to do is tell us about Jesus Christ. The Book of Hebrews, as we have already seen highlights the Superiority of JC to everything and anything.

In summary, chapter 1 says that the Son of God is the heir of all things (v. 2), he made the world (v. 2), he is the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of God's nature (v. 3), he upholds all things by the word of his power (v. 3), he made purification for sins (v. 3), he sat down at the right hand of God's majesty (v. 3), and he is greater than any angel (v. 4) because angels worship him (v. 6). He is the mighty God (v. 8).

That's the message of chapter 1: God has spoken by his Son. There are no commands for us here. Only declaration and celebration of the greatness of Jesus, the final Word of God. It all begins with Jesus.

But, when we come to Chapter 2, all of a sudden we come upon these words:

Hebrews 2:1 (NIV)¹ *We must pay more careful attention, therefore, to what we have heard, so that we do not drift away.*

This, in case you missed it, *is* a command. A command in the form of a warning. In the Greek, it starts with the "therefore" or "for this reason." *When ever you see "therefore" in the scripture, what you need to do is look at what was just said previously and you will see what it is "there for."* And the "therefore" is that God sent Jesus to be God's final, decisive Word to the world.

Let's focus on **2:1** to set the context for this section.

¹ Stedman, R. C. (1992). *Hebrews*. The IVP New Testament commentary series (Heb 2:1). Downers Grove, Ill., U.S.A.: InterVarsity Press.

We must pay more careful attention,

We – this tells us who the warning is directed to. Is it primarily to unbelievers? No. I don't think the writer was an unbeliever and he says "we." This is to believers. This is something if you are a believer, this is something you NEED to be especially careful to sincerely consider today.

Now if you are familiar with sentence diagramming (who remembers that in school?) the subject is "we" and the root of the verb phrase is "**pay attention**". Simply, the idea is "We should pay attention." That's an instruction. That's a command. "Pay attention!"

But that's not all that God is saying. I want you to note the emphasis of force that is contained in **v. 1**

We MUST pay attention! Must – sounds like this is important. Not "should" but "must". No wiggle room.

"We must pay CAREFUL attention." What kind of attention? *Careful* attention.

"We must pay MORE careful attention."

Do you see the point? This is a critical point God does not want you to miss.

Careful attention **TO WHAT?**

to what we have heard. What have we heard? The Entire first chapter is about JC. Heb 1:2...

So the first command in this book—the first duty mentioned—is that we listen to the Word of God in his Son.

Now here is a command that we need desperately to hear today. What do you listen to? Whom do you listen to? God has spoken through his Son, do you listen to him?

How does your listening to him compare to your listening to other things?

- When we want to listen to someone, we make provisions for listening.
- If we want to listen to a musical group, we make sure that we have a CD player in the car and that we have the CD.
- If we want to listen to the news, we make sure there is a radio in the kitchen or that we have a TV and that we have it turned on at the right time.
- If we want to listen to John Grisham tell his latest tale, we buy a paperback and have it with us.

On and on it goes. We all want to listen to something. And we make plans for our listening and we buy things and make sure we are not distracted. So how does all this compare to our listening to God's Word to us in his Son? Are you listening to that? Are you making provisions for that? Are your kitchen and your car and your den and your reading devoted to that?

This is not an isolated command in the book of Hebrews. This concern to get the readers to wake up and listen closely to God is repeated. For example, **Hebrews 3:1** says *Therefore, holy brothers, who share in the heavenly calling, fix your thoughts on Jesus, the apostle and high priest whom we confess.*

Consider Jesus! That's the point of **Hebrews 2:1**. Listen to him. Consider him. Focus on him. Stay close to him and keep him in your thoughts. Learn more and more from him every day—what he is like and what he says and the way he sees the world.

Then again in **Hebrews 12:1–2** (NIV)¹ *Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles, and let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us.* ² **Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before him endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.**

There it is again: "Fix your eyes on Jesus." Consider Jesus! Listen to Jesus!

One of the great burdens of this book is that we the readers will see how serious it is to listen to Jesus, the Word of God, and consider Jesus, and fix our eyes on Jesus. This is the first commandment in the book. It is not a difficult command: Listen! Consider! Look! These are not hard things to do—unless we don't want to do them. The first command of this book is not "labor for Jesus," but "listen to Jesus." He is not commanding us to work for him, but to watch him. All our spiritual life-changes come from that (**2 Corinthians 3:18**).

WHY?

so that we do not drift away.

Now comes the reason for paying close attention to what we have heard of God's Word through his Son: if we don't do this, we will drift into destruction.

Consider this word "drifting." It means *float by*. It's what a piece of bark or a leaf or a dead fish does in

the river—it floats by the boat that is being rowed up stream. It takes no life and no motion to float by. One need only do nothing, and you will float by.

Hebrews says that if we do not vigilantly pay closer attention to the Word of God, we will float by—we will drift away from God's Word.

Drifting from Christ. Do you think that ever happens? We all know people that this has happened to. Some are probably in this room. There is no urgency. No vigilance. No focused listening or considering or fixing the eyes on Jesus.

Do you think it ever happens? I'm sure it happens. In fact sometimes as I think about the casual way that it appears that many people take spiritual things... They Worship occasionally. Don't serve. Sometimes I wonder if we should be called "Driftwood Baptist church?

Christians drifting away.

Christians, this important warning says that there is a clear and present danger that we, like those early believers, can be so enticed by pressures and things in the world, that we can slowly, perhaps imperceptibly start drift away from the Lord Jesus Christ and we can slowly but surely lose our first love and our faith becomes almost a non-factor in our lives.

Drifting. The result is not a standing still, but a drifting away.

That is the point here: *there is no standing still!* The life of this world is not a lake, it is a river. And it is flowing downward to destruction. If you do not listen earnestly to Jesus and consider him daily and fix your eyes on him hourly, then you will not stand still, you will go backward. You will float by.

Drifting is a deadly thing in the Christian life. And the remedy to it, according to Hebrews 1, is, "Pay close attention to what you have heard." That is, consider what God is saying in his Son Jesus.

Hebrews 2:2 (NIV)¹² *For if the message spoken by angels was binding, and every violation and disobedience received its just punishment, ³ how shall we escape if we ignore such a great salvation*

Here the writer strengthens his instruction by placing it in contrast to something else – the OT. The OT was you see different in some ways from the New Testament and the words of Jesus Christ. The OT was not spoken thru or mediated by Jesus Christ. There were times when angels had a part, but not Jesus. And angels, we have seen pale in comparison to

Him....

But nevertheless, IF the Word given through angels, was so binding that any violation, any disobedience, any lack of attention to it was subject to punishment by God THEN if that is so, then how much MORE will be the punishment for those who drift away from the Word of Jesus and the words about Jesus!

And then he then says, ³ *how shall we escape if we ignore such a great salvation!*

These are strong words. *How shall we escape* – escape from what?

Failing to pay close attention to God's Word and the drifting away that results is described in **verse 3** as "*neglecting a great salvation.*" And this is said to be extremely dangerous.

How dangerous? So dangerous that if we go on in the way of ignoring/neglecting this great salvation—not listening to Jesus day by day, and not considering Jesus, and not fixing our eyes on Jesus—the result will be that *we will not escape*. That is, we will not escape the judgment of God ([Hebrews 12:25](#); [1 Thessalonians 5:3](#)). We will be lost. We will not inherit eternal life. We will perish in hell.

Eternal security

"Hold on. Didn't you say this warning was written to believers? Yes I did. In fact, even here in v.3, the writer uses "we."

"But there's a danger that we might drift away from the Lord?" Yes, that is what it is saying, isn't it?

"But how about, Eternal Security? Doesn't the Bible teach that once we are truly Christians, we are always Christians?" Yes, I believe it does, when we understand it correctly (yet not like the superficial way that some understand eternal security).

But the Bible also teaches that the only way that we can KNOW that we are Christians is by looking at how we are living NOW. Whenever the Bible talks about assurance, it doesn't ask us to look back and remember what we may have once done. That we prayed a prayer or anything like that. At how we once lived.

But it says when we want to ask ourselves, "Are we Christians?" it asks us to take a look at *how we are NOW*. How we are living now? What we are doing now? The past can be deceptive. What matters is now!

You realize, there is a concern that flows throughout the Bible that there are always those who look like Christians, who sound like Christians, and who even think they are Christians. They sometimes gather together with other Christians and sometimes even enjoy the things that Christians enjoy, but deep inside they are not truly converted. Jesus spoke about this many times, and once he said they will meet God someday and he will say, “I never knew you.” (Matt. 7:23)

So, here’s the situation when a true Christian begins to drift away from Christ. When that happens, he/she then begins to look just like an unconverted person. In fact, even to him/herself, he cannot tell anymore for sure if he/she really is a Christian. You are in very dangerous waters when you begin drifting.

You see, one indication is that a person is “not truly converted” is that eventually they WILL drift away. Like a dead leaf, there is no life, no power and the current takes it away, wherever it wants to take it. That can be a sign that we are not truly converted and therefore we need to examine ourselves. Because although a genuine believer may also go adrift for awhile, there is a difference and you need to understand it this morning.

Drifting Is Infinitely Dangerous

Drifting is infinitely dangerous. And I pray I can waken you to be joyfully vigilant in living the Christian life of looking to Jesus, and considering Jesus, and listening to Jesus.

But if we neglect this great salvation, and drift into the love of other things, as I mentioned above, then we will not escape. We will perish.

The mark of the true child of God is that that he does not drift forever. If you are drifting this morning, one of the signs of hope that you are born again is that you feel pricked by this word. That there is a rising desire in your heart to turn your eyes on Jesus and consider him and listen to him in the days and months and years to come. That is the type of person the writer of Hebrews is convinced he is writing to – someone who, has been born again and is alive spiritually and as a result, they will hear God call to return to shore and will do so. That’s what I also pray is true of you too if you are drifting. Do it today.

And one of the signs that you may not be born again is that you hear what I am saying and feel no

desire to guard against drifting.

Two Examples

So let me summarize the dire situation that the author is speaking to.

Some Hebrew Christians have taken their eyes off of Jesus Christ and now they are afloat in the river, being carried by the currents that lead to destruction. They have life, but like some boat without power, they are being carried along like all the dead things that have no choice.

- Hudson River – Ice on rudder. But we reacted....
- Reggie and John Harris on the Ocean ... rowed, called, hailed, prayed.

Both made it to shore because when saw that they were adrift, they reacted.

Whats our reaction spiritually?

Pray, repent, LOOK TO JESUS.

