

# Danger of Drifting Away

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[ 0 : 00 ] We've actually departed chapter 1, moving into chapter 2 tonight.

! In our time, there is a grave danger attacking the church, the true Bible-believing churches.! It's not an attack by false religion or cults, although that does happen.

It's not false teachers inside the Christian churches, but that certainly occurs as well and is a danger. But tonight I want to speak to you about the danger of drifting away from the true gospel. One of our very respected former pastors, Dr. Ed Saucier, talked about a church member he knew at another church that God had blessed financially, and he said he'd seen this more than once. And they went out with that. When that money came in, they purchased a second home on the lake along with the boat, and the church never saw them again.

[ 1 : 18 ] They were too busy on spending their weekends on the lake. This drifting away is addressed in the opening words of Hebrews chapter 2.

These are the focus tonight, these four verses. 1 through 4. 4. 4. Therefore, we must pay closer attention to what we have heard, lest we drift away from it.

5. 5. 6. 7. 7. 8. 9. 9. 9. 9. 10.

These opening verses of Hebrews chapter 2 are what theologians describe as some of the warning passages. There are several such warnings in the epistle to the Hebrews.

And I thought I would just briefly mention them. Hebrews 2 verses 1 to 4, which we're going to look at tonight. Hebrews 3, 7 to 4, 13, we'll get to that.

[ 3 : 00 ] Hebrews 5, 11 to 6, 12. Hebrews 10, 19 to 39. And Hebrews 12, 14 to 29.

In this passage, in the second chapter, we see the word drift. In the Greek language, it's perero. The literal meaning of this word is to flow past or slip away.

When translated in various Greek secular writings as slip away, it was used as a nautical term. Much like a boat can come detached from its moorings and drift away. Now the truth about people who slip or drift away from the gospel is contained in one of the old Negro spirituals with these words, everybody talking about heaven ain't going there.

And that was one of the great Negro spirituals that they sang. And it's also captured in the famous passage found in Matthew's gospel.

[ 4 : 20 ] It comes at the end of the Sermon on the Mount, which takes up, of course, Matthew 5, 6, and 7. Very famous.

I mean, you've got it. Most of you haven't memorized. Matthew 7, 21 to 23. Not everyone who says to me, Lord, Lord, will enter the kingdom of heaven.

But the one who does the will of my Father, who is in heaven. On that day, many will say to me, Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name and cast out demons in your name and do many mighty works in your name?

And then I will declare to them, I never knew you. Depart from me, you workers of lawlessness. And this is a passage we are quite familiar with, but rarely do even Christian people consider it in what I believe to be the proper context.

These people that the Lord's talking about, and it was yet future when Jesus was on earth. He's talking about a future event.

[ 5 : 36 ] They just spent a thousand years in the lake of fire, awaiting final judgment, and that time for them has arrived.

On earth, that thousand years corresponds to the millennial reign of Christ. And millennial, of course, means a thousand.

The thousand-year reign of Christ after the tribulation period, and Jesus comes back and establishes his kingdom for a thousand years.

The individuals crying out to Jesus here are obviously church people, and they had what they thought were some impressive works. They had prophesied in the name of Christ. They had cast out demons in the name of Christ. They did mighty works in the name of Christ. And they can't figure out for the life of them what we just do in the holding pattern in the lake of fire for a thousand years.

[ 6 : 46 ] And for me, there's no doubt that these people coming out of that fiery lake believe Jesus has made a mistake.

They weren't supposed to be in there because they did all these things. And surely he is mistaken by putting them there in the first place.

They try and clear their record, but pointing out the great things they did, and we have to say what they're talking about, the great things they did to earn their salvation.

Hence, we have their arguments that they prophesied, cast out demons, did mighty works. But their very argument condemns them.

It condemns them. I mean, they're depending upon a system of works theology basing their salvation on what they have done.

[ 7 : 54 ] Lord, haven't we done the following? They drifted away from true salvation, which is found only in what Christ has done.

And I don't think there's any doubt that hell will be populated with many people that were not necessarily horribly evil, but they were neglectful.

They neglected the gospel and were depending on other things. And when you do that, that's no gospel. That's not the gospel.

Paul would have quoted to them the great passage in Galatians chapter 1, starting in verse 6, I'm astonished, and that's why I was told a very strong Greek word.

I'm astonished that you are so quickly deserting him who called you in the grace of Christ and are turning to a different gospel.

[ 9 : 01 ] And then Paul goes on, not that there is another one, but there are some who trouble you and want to distort the gospel of Christ. But even if we or an angel from heaven should preach to you a gospel contrary to the one we preached to you, let him be accursed.

As we've said before, so now I say again, if anyone is preaching to you a gospel contrary to the one you received, let him be accursed.

That's serious business. That's serious business. The word accursed in the SV appears here. In other translation, it is anathema.

Let them be the anathema of God, which means the eternally damned of God. And eternally damned is a long time.

That's a very long time. The only true gospel is the gospel of Christ. All the rest are fake and false.

[ 10 : 18 ] Now I think there's a lot that we can deduce from these four verses at the beginning of Hebrews, chapter 2. For one thing, I do not think these were evil people going about doing wicked things.

They were not people that were actively battling against Christ, as did the Judaizers, as did the Gnostics later, and other groups down through the ages.

It can be argued that these individuals had been exposed to the truth by the preaching in this Hebrew church.

The Hebrew believers embraced the gospel of Christ, and the minister there was preaching the gospel of Christ. But many in the church were neglecting what they heard.

So we have some neglect here. And how were they neglectful? There was a group, and we talked about them in the very first lesson in Hebrews, refusing to commit their lives to Jesus.

[ 11 : 28 ] They were observers only. Those who refused to become one with Christ, and may I say that churches across America and the world are full of them, are in grave danger of drifting right past the call of the gospel and winding up one day in eternal damnation.

That's what's going on here. And maybe there's someone in here who's not made that commitment yet. Tonight's the night. You can do it. You can do it.

You don't have to leave this building before doing it. And I would imagine all of us have family members that have not made that commitment.

I know I do. There are many such on my side of the family and on Diane's side of the family. And that's always frightening, but more so, I think, as we see the end approaching with the return of

Christ for the true church.

Now, the author of the book of Hebrews will next issue a warning to those who were merely intellectually convinced but without a genuine commitment to Christ and His finished work on the cross.

[12:56] And what a warning this is. Verse 3, How shall we escape if we neglect such a great salvation?

It was declared at first by the Lord. It was attested to us by those who heard. The Lord preached the gospel. The apostles picked it up. They passed from the scene and the people they ministered to took it from there.

And God's still raising up men to preach the gospel. I said this to Dr. McBride. Mike, I'll say it to you. I think if we could somehow magically do some genealogy, you would probably recognize you're really not that far from the apostle Paul or Peter.

A few thousand men perhaps, but God is still raising up men to preach the gospel of Christ. How can I say that they were without conviction?

Could it be that this warning was also for baby Christians in the Hebrew congregation? And I think the apostle Paul, if he were here, would say, may it never be.

[14:16] No. This does not apply to the genuine believers, though babies in that congregation taking baby steps. True believers have been born from above.

They've been redeemed by the blood of Christ and they can never be guilty of neglecting salvation in the sense of not receiving it.

They've already received it. why is that impossible? It's impossible because they've already received it. They're in Christ. The true believers in this congregation are safe because Christ has saved them for eternity.

I have good discussions with my good Wesleyan friends about that. I mean, they say, you believe in eternal life. I said, that's the only kind that Jesus promised.

That's the only kind there is. That's the only kind there is. When the Lord Jesus does the saving, it's forever.

[15:31] It's forever. He's the eternal God. Never leave us. never forsake us. Now, that does not mean that Christians cannot neglect certain things that should never be neglected.

I'm living proof that that can happen. I'm sure it didn't happen to anyone else in this room, but I can tell you it's happened to me. Are we growing in our faith? Or are we neglecting some growth? not looking for those opportunities to grow? How active are we in submitting to discipleship training? How much time do we spend in prayer?

And so on. And we could go all evening. It is a truth that in this life, true believers, more from above, we are always striving, but never fully arriving in this life.

When will that happen? John told us that in the first epistle. 1 John 3, 2. Beloved, we are God's children.

[16:51] Well, that will resonate. If you're born again, you are a child of God, God. And that's never going to be altered. We are God's children now, and what we will be has not yet appeared, but we know that when He, and that's Jesus, appears, we shall be like Him, because we shall see Him as He is.

and John wrote that a long time ago, and that's still future. But we're going to see Him as He is, and be like Him. I should also point out that the warning in Hebrews 2, 3 is not directed at those who have never heard the gospel.

This is a warning to all those who have heard the gospel. And at least at this point, have rejected the same. For whatever reason, the uncommitted in this Hebrew church, they were in church a lot of Sundays in the month.

Probably, they'd rather do that than hear a nagging wife. Why don't you wake up early, get dressed, and help me get the kids dressed, and we'll go to church?

I'm sure there's probably one or two guys that hear that, even in our day. But this is a warning, not directed to those who've never heard the gospel, this is a warning to those who've heard and so far rejected.

[18:31] And it can even be people who have gained a significant amount of head knowledge by hanging around the church. And the other way you can do that is by living with a believing spouse.

living with a believer for a wife. And we have those situations in churches. We've had them in this church. When I was police chief, I experienced this.

I had a captain, well, I had several, and I discussed with him at some length the gospel of Christ. At the end, he said to me that he was a stupid man.

and I knew he wasn't. So I asked him, I said, why would you say that? He said, this is what he said about it, I always remembered it, because I know the way to eternal life, but I also know I'm not going to do anything about it.

He said, I know that. And it was just really a short time later, maybe a year or so, when I attended his funeral, conducted by Mike's father, brother Ralph Dursham.

[ 19 : 55 ] And to almost my certain knowledge, my captain never received Christ. He never did anything about it. What little he had heard, he drifted away.

Now, Dr. MacArthur lists three reasons from this portion of Hebrews for receiving Christ. He mentions three points on receiving Christ, and the first one he starts with is we should receive Christ because of the character of Christ, his character.

Hebrews 2, 1 again, therefore we must pay much closer attention to what we have heard, lest we drift away from it. And this passage begins with the word therefore, and I know all of you remember the old adage concerning the word therefore.

When you see the word therefore in reading your Bibles or hear it from the pulpit, you have to figure out what therefore is therefore.

Why is it there? the word always refers to something that has been previously revealed. So has there been anything revealed to us concerning the character of Christ that would prompt the Holy Spirit to say to us living in the 21st century, therefore we must pay closer attention to what we've heard so you don't drift away.

[ 21 : 43 ] So have we learned anything at all in our study that would inject that word therefore something that came before? And my answer to you on that is absolutely some things have happened concerning the character of Christ.

Christ. It is all of Hebrews chapter 1 which we finished last time and we spent many we spent eight weeks studying chapter 1 and I'm certain that you remember many of the great truths concerning Christ we studied in that first chapter.

Let me mention a few and we're focusing on the character of Christ we shouldn't drift away because Jesus is the Son of God that was taught us in chapter 1.

Jesus is the heir of all things. He owns the cattle on a thousand hills. I remember when Dallas Theologians were just starting and they were hurting for money and Harry Ironside the great preacher from Chicago from Moody Church he was there and they were having a prayer service and he said Lord he said the cattle on a thousand years belong to you we need you to sell some of them and give us the money and the story goes the secretary knocked on the door and there was a cattleman out there he said I just sold some cattle and I thought I'm going to give that place over there the money and did he's the heir of all things he is the creator of all things he is the radiance of the glory of God he is the exact representation of the divine nature he's the sustainer of the universe universe should fly apart atomic particle they're smaller than that it should fly apart how do electrons do that and not fly apart he sustains the universe he holds it all together he purifies his children from sin he is the one sitting at the right hand of

God the father he is worshipped and served by angels he is anointed above all others he is the unchanging eternal God just to mention a few that is a portion of the character of Christ and leads to a question how can anyone reject such a God as this God who took upon himself himself the God who are in the time when we're up there hearing about Jesus there's cars going up and down that highway out there oblivious to what's going on people reject all the time who are they rejecting the one who came into this world as God incarnate who took upon himself human flesh who died on a cross to forgive sins who paid the penalty we owe

[ 25 : 26 ] God for our transgressions who satisfied completely the wrath that God the Father has towards sinners he showed love for what it really was he offers to introduce the lowest sinner to the mighty God he offers blessing and joy beyond all of our abilities to imagine have you ever thought about this fact during the incarnation Jesus was the voice of God on earth I never thought about that when people reject the Lord Jesus they're rejecting the Father and we know that most people do reject Christ narrow is the way that leads to eternal life few there are who find it how many people are in hell or will be who came this close to salvation and then drifted away that must be the

ultimate agony as they spend eternity in that place

I read a quote by one person I didn't even write down his name all you need to do to go to hell is to do nothing just don't do anything and you'll make it you'll make it when one examines the character of Christ one would think that people would be fleeing to Jesus but that's simply not the case is it and you know go back a few millennia neither did people flee to the ark talk about Noah's ark Noah built an ark for 120 years sound like something one of my projects trust me talk to Diane no don't don't pastor don't don't don't stir you do that anyway he preached salvation for 120 years prior to the flood and no one showed up until the water was up to here on them and remember this the ark was a type of

Christ I love it when he said to Noah and his family come into the ark he was in there the Lord was already in there come on in Noah the time's arrived well there's another reason to flee to Jesus and that is the certainty of judgment this is backed up by verse 2 and 3 in the second chapter of Hebrews 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 it was declared at first by the Lord and it was attested to us by those who heard how shall people escape and the answer is they won't they will not escape

I appreciate the ESV translation used here most translations begin with the word if when it is really the word since that word implies certainty we see in these verses a brief return to the topic of angels the entire first chapter dealt with angels which were very important to the Jewish mindset and this was a Jewish congregation they'd come out of Judaism but they were linked to Judaism angels had delivered the law of God to Moses who then delivered them to the people how severe was God's law to the Jews in Moses' day well to answer that I want you to consider these verses out of the book of numbers probably don't camp out there very often numbers 15 verses 30 to 36 but the person who does anything with a high hand whether he is a native or a sojourner reviles the Lord and that person shall be cut off from among his people normally when you read that word cut off in a

Hebrew Bible translated into English that means killed because he has despised the word of the Lord and has broken his commandment that person shall be utterly cut off his iniquity shall be on him while the people of Israel were in the wilderness they found a man gathering sticks on the Sabbath day and those who found him gathering sticks brought him to Moses and Aaron and to all the congregation they put him in custody probably got the police chief to arrest him because it had not been made clear what should be done to him he said they're gathering sticks and the Lord said to Moses God spoke to Moses the Lord Jesus spoke to Moses and said the man shall be put to death for gathering sticks all the congregation shall stone him with stones outside the camp and all the congregation brought him outside the camp and stoned him to death with stones as the [ 31 : 48 ] Lord commanded Moses does that not sound a little extreme he's gathering sticks he's probably gathering sticks for firewood to cook or maybe to heat and I've been in those deserts it gets cold at night in the desert why did the Lord order him killed because this man deliberately defied the law of God God said you're not going to do that on the Sabbath as the book of Hebrews tells us every transgression and disobedience received a just retribution judgment is always related to the amount of light received those with more light receive a greater judgment the

Lord Jesus was clear about this listen to Matthew's gospel chapter 11 beginning in verse 20 Jesus is speaking then he began to denounce the cities where most of his mighty works had been done because they did not repent and you've read those gospels you remember the mighty works he done in those cities woe to you charzen woe to you Bethsaida for if the mighty works done in you had been done in Tyre and Sidon they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes! day of judgment for Tyre and Sidon than for you and you Capernaum will you be exalted to heaven you will be brought down to Hades for if the mighty works done in you had been done in Sodom it would have remained until this day but I tell you that it would be more tolerable on the day of judgment for the land of Sodom than for you I've heard different people get credit for this I've heard Dr.

McGee receive credit I've heard Billy Graham receive credit I don't know who's responsible but he says if God doesn't judge San Francisco he's going to have to apologize to Sodom and Gomorrah and I got to tell you I don't know if it's tonight or tomorrow night our city council is on the verge of giving another permit of guys that dress like women they've applied for another public permit so they can and a couple of schools turned out to let the little kids see them do that the first time don't

get me started confirmation of God that's the third area we want to cover tonight and then we'll be through how shall we escape if we neglect such a great salvation it 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 regrettably it is easy to pass over great truths in the scriptures we have one here which the Holy Spirit records that it is God himself who bears witness to the truth concerning Christ Jesus we said weeks ago that the gospel was first presented by Christ that ministry was carried on by the apostles who heard the message directly from Jesus then the spread of the gospel was picked up by those who heard or read the gospel from the apostles it's still spreading to this day but there's a fourth witness and that is God the father himself bears witness to his son and he confirms to us the truths concerning his son the

[ 36 : 13 ] Lord Jesus Christ that is what is meant by the confirmation of God when the Lord presented the gospel during the incarnation he did so in memorable and inspired statements John 10 38 though you do not believe me believe the works that you may know and understand that the father is in me and I am in the father Peter made this comment in Acts 2 22 men of Israel hear these words Jesus of Nazareth a man attested to you by God with mighty works and wonders and signs that God did through him in your midst as you yourselves know when they were on earth the apostles spoke with the authority of God to argue with an apostle or claim that what he was saying was wrong is to argue with God himself and no one should ever want to do that in the early days of the church

God gave confirming! gifts to the apostles to prove they were sent by God and to authenticate the gospel message they were declaring and there were four confirming signs possessed by the early apostles the gift of healing Peter and John walked down the street and their shadow cast on someone that needed healing and he was healed the gift of miracles the gift of tongues and that's glossolalia meaning unlearned foreign language it's not gibberish the Russian heard Russian the German heard German there were 17 such languages spoken at Pentecost and I always say the miracle at Pentecost was in the ear the hearer he heard in his language and the interpretation of tongues most solid conservative theologians believe these sign gifts no longer exist today why? there's no longer any need to confirm the gospel the Bible is finished it's not going to be added to can't take away from it it's complete and it is no longer necessary to confirm the gospel the great B.B.

Warfield said this he was the head of Princeton University when that was worth saving these miraculous gifts were part of the credentials of the apostles as the authoritative agents of God in founding the church their function thus confirmed them distinctly in the apostolic church and they necessarily passed away when it passed away so I'm going to let Dr.

MacArthur close our lesson tonight thus the three great reasons that a man should not neglect the gospel the three great reasons the character of Christ the certainty of judgment and the confirmation of God God has attested to the gospel with signs wonders miracles and special spiritual gifts now God attests to the truth of the gospel in the miracle and authority of his written word which culminates in the salvation of a soul you don't need a greater miracle than that so our lesson tonight is summed up with these words do not drift past God's grace there's danger in doing that let's close with a word of prayer brothers thank you father for your grace and your mercy and the peace we have with

[ 40 : 26 ] Christ lord may there be no drift in any of us may we cling to the truth of scripture commit our lives to it witness to our family and friends about it and may we look up because our redemption draweth nigh we pray this in Jesus name amen