

HEBREWS – LEVITICUS

“Drifting”

Hebrews 2:1-4

March 12, 2023

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Therefore we must **pay much closer attention** to what we have heard, lest we drift away from it. ² For since the message declared by angels proved to be reliable, and every transgression or disobedience received a just retribution, ³ 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, ⁴ while God also bore witness by signs and wonders and various miracles and by gifts of the Holy Spirit distributed according to his will¹

“This is the Word of God” – “Thanks be to God.”

Years ago when we had first built this building, the current B building, also called The Venue, was where our students began to meet every week. It was carpeted, set up a bit differently, and we actually had a basketball goal in there. We didn't have a gymnasium at that time, so we purchased one of the basketball goals that has the plastic base filled with water. Following our services on Wednesday evening, we would put the chairs to the side, turn up the music, and roll the goal to the center where guys would stay for another hour or so playing basketball. This is a natural way of disciple-making, you know.

Nevertheless, I remember one night I was playing with the guys here and as I passed the ball across the room; I heard a clang. My wedding ring had slid off my finger and flew across the room. We stopped play and everyone helped me find the ring. Simply put, I have big knuckles due to years of jamming my fingers playing basketball and my ring has to be

¹ [*The Holy Bible: English Standard Version*](#). (2016). (Heb 2:1–4). Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles.

big enough to get over the knuckle, but sometimes when my hands are cold, it's easy for the ring to slide off.

Thankfully, I found the ring and still have it. I'm wearing it now.

What does this have to do with Hebrews 2?

Look at this warning from God through the author:

Therefore we must pay much closer attention to what we have heard, lest we drift away from it.²

It's obvious now why the writer said so much in chapter one about Christ's position and superiority over the created heavenly beings called angels. The superiority statement leads to this vital warning.

“Pay much closer attention to what we have heard.” Why?

“Lest we drift away from it.”

The Hebrew word transliterated as “drift away” here is used to describe a ring slipping off a finger. So, the point is that unless the listener is intentional, careful, thoughtful, strategic...then the very real danger of drifting from theological orthodoxy and the teachings of God's Word are likely.

Like a ring slipping off, or flying off a finger, the truth can be misplaced, misjudged, misinterpreted and sadly, lost.

Many read the drifting warning and think of a ship at sea with no anchor. That too presents a great word picture.

² [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#). (2016). (Heb 2:1). Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles.

Like a notification on your GPS to avoid a certain road while traveling due to slowdowns, accidents, or construction, these warnings are given to the Hebrew believers who are sliding into doubt. They are tempted by the teachings of their past – the Old Testament, which is the Word of God, found complete in Christ through the New. The temptation the readers were facing is to ignore the truth of the Son of God and to slide back into that which they had grown up learning (which is true) but incomplete.

WHAT HAS BEEN HEARD?

What had the believers heard?

The message heard was the gospel. The good news of Jesus Christ. The message that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, superior to angels, supreme in creation. The Way, Truth, and Life. The living Word of God. They heard the final and definitive word that God had spoken through the Son (1:2)³

The danger was what many face, the ignoring of what has been heard. That which initially was heard and resonated with these new believers is becoming harder and harder to hear, by their choices (either overtly or subtly.)

Like the warning lights that appear on your vehicle's dashboard, the warnings are given and to ignore them will eventually cost you more.

Pay much closer attention – Just because you already know, doesn't mean you know. Just because you have already heard the truth, doesn't mean that you remember the truth. Just because you have already read a passage of scripture does not mean that you don't need to read it again.

This is the clear warning to these first-century Hebrew believers. These men and women facing persecution from their families, from their

³ Hughes, R. Kent. *Hebrews: An Anchor for the Soul* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2015), 79.

communities of faith, and from their government WILL find it easier to slide back into comfortable faith that costs nothing. So...pay much closer attention. Closer than what? Closer attention than you have been paying. Hear this. Listen. When Christ becomes something that you consider randomly, every now and then, as an afterthought... when church is optional, the gathering on the Lord's Day is something done when nothing else comes up, when we allow other circumstances, events, "me time" or whatever to continually pull us from the healthy, biblical church relationships needed...and commanded, drift happens.

Pay closer attention to this than you have been or you run the risk of being another group of "whatever happened to them."

And that's not a first-century issue. That's been the perpetual issue among the brethren for centuries, even now.

LEST WE DRIFT

Just in case you're hearing something not being said – this is not motivation by guilt, but encouragement based on love. If you ignore, you will suffer. You will miss out. You will not even know it likely as the other things of life fill the gaps once filled by faithful service and worship.

It's a frog in the kettle moment – a slow death. A slow drift.

Soon, the ring is off your finger, and you have no idea when it fell off and where it is.

This faith drift is seemingly epidemic today with the onset of what has been called evangelical deconstructionism. Suddenly, many people who grew up in the 80s, 90s, and early 2000s going to church, attending youth camp, doing mission trips, hearing messages on biblical purity, listening to CCM and wearing matching T-shirts with their church friends have determined that they were embedded in a Jesus junk propaganda machine and are wiser now than ever. Thus, they have

walked away while their parents continue to attend church wondering where they went wrong.

The answer – you didn't do wrong (of course, we could all do better) but every generation is susceptible to the drift. Either individually or collectively. In most cases, the walk away from faith was not immediate, nor intentional. It just...sort of happened.

C.S. Lewis said it this way, “And as a matter of fact, if you examined a hundred people who lost their faith in Christianity, I wonder how many of them would turn out to have been reasoned out of it by honest argument? Do not most people simply drift away?”⁴

The drift.

Think of it this way. Imagine you and your family are going to the beach. You're married and you and your spouse are going to set up a beach umbrella and put the chairs out. You have kids and you have the boogie boards and you and the kids are ready to go into the water, play in the waves and body surf. Your spouse is content reading a book and sitting under the umbrella. It's a good day.

As you're in the water playing with the kids you look back at your spouse under the umbrella. All good.

Then, you decide to just relax and float. Lo and behold you look up and without even realizing it has happened, your spouse and your umbrella are no longer right in front of you. The waves have moved you. The drift has occurred and as long as you worked to stay in front of your umbrella and spouse, all was good, but when you relax, don't focus, don't think about it and let the waves move you, you end up way down the beach.

The drift.

⁴ Lewis, C.S. *Mere Christianity* (New York: Macmillan, 1976), 124.

It's an overly simplified illustration but the point is clear – to find yourself far from where you need to be...just stop paying attention. Go with the flow. Don't worry about it.

Therefore we must pay much closer attention to what we have heard, lest we drift away from it.² For since the message declared by angels proved to be reliable, and every transgression or disobedience received a just retribution,³ 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,⁴ while God also bore witness by signs and wonders and various miracles and by gifts of the Holy Spirit distributed according to his will⁵

HOW SHALL WE ESCAPE IF WE NEGLECT SUCH A GREAT SALVATION?

The warning lights are flashing, and the love is clearly revealed to these brothers and sisters. Salvation is the great gift of God through Christ. The good news is that we have hope in him. He is the only Way, Truth, and Life. Therefore, if we neglect such good news, ignore the truth, take another way, and seek to live our lives under our own version of truth, go back to our safe, comfortable faith (good, though incomplete) what will be the result?

How shall we escape if we neglect such a great salvation? Simple answer – we won't. You won't. You can't.

Oh family, listen to this clearly. Of all the believers in the history of Christendom, perhaps our current evangelical version is the most comfortable and with this comfort comes the ease of drift. And if there is drift away from the truth, then it becomes clear that we never believed.

⁵ [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#). (2016). (Heb 2:1–4). Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles.

Easy Christianity is deadly.

The grace offered to us by Christ did not come without a cost.

Dietrich Bonhoeffer wrote of this in his book on discipleship, which seems prescient knowing he was killed by the Nazis of Germany for his willingness to not compromise his faith and walk.

“Cheap grace is the preaching of forgiveness without requiring repentance, baptism without church discipline, Communion without confession, absolution without personal confession. Cheap grace is grace without discipleship, grace without the cross, grace without Jesus Christ, living and incarnate.”⁶

In other words, a Christianity built on cheap grace is easily walked away from. But the message of scripture is clear. The writer of Hebrews gives fair warning – pay much closer attention, lest you drift. Stay focused. Stay engaged. Trust God. Have faith. Believe. Surrender. And walk well.

Warning – there are many who will seek to pull you away, but Christ remains faithful. Don’t relax your faith.

As Christ said in John 14... “Believe in God, believe also in me.”

You can believe the one who is Truth.

The New Testament nowhere teaches that an initial acceptance of the saving message is sufficient without perseverance in faith.⁷ So “I prayed a prayer years ago” may not be indicative of true salvation. Friends...are you family? Let’s ensure that is the case today.

⁶ Bonhoeffer, Dietrich. *The Cost of Discipleship* (New York: Touchstone, 1995).

⁷ Schriener, Thomas R. *Hebrews: Evangelical Biblical Theology Commentary* (Bellingham, WA: Lexham, 2020), 84.