



HICKORY GROVE

BAPTIST CHURCH

The Danger of Drifting

January 23, 2022

Hebrews 2:1-4

Clint Pressley

2 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 will.

(Pastor prays)

Through many dangers, toils and snares, the song says, we have already come. And it's true, we have survived a lot. In spite of all its inherent struggles and weaknesses and faults, the Church of the Lord Jesus still stands. We survived humanism in the 1700s, the Civil war in the 1800s, Marxism and communism in the 1900s, and now secularism in the 21st Century. All of those outside threats have provided their own dangers. And as bad as they were—and are— they don't hold a candle to the unseen, almost unfelt, danger of drifting.

You know what you have to do to drift away? Nothing. What I'm talking about is the passive, nonchalance of allowing the cultural river we are in to take us wherever it wants. If life is a river and you sit on a canoe, Al Mohler says, we have two paddles: orthodoxy, what we believe; and obedience, how we live. And if we don't use them both, then we paddle in a circle as the river gently

takes us where it wants. A lot of us like that one paddle of theology, which is a good thing to have. But if that is all you have, you end up paddling in a circle and you drift down the river. On the other hand, If you have just the other paddle of doing right and having good character and you are a nice person, you have obedience down. If you are not careful you fall off on the side of uninformed legalism or, worse, unschooled niceness. Which this can feel right because you're nice. But you end up paddling in a circle, and what the preacher is doing here is telling, even commanding, us to take both oars and, now, with all your might, to fight drifting away from the faith that was once and for all delivered to the Saints.

So far in this little book the preacher has displayed the majesty of Christ and the power of the Gospel that guards our hearts against any distraction that would deflect our grace from him. And today I just want to alert you to the inherent danger of drifting that we all struggle against in the hopes that you will walk out of here convinced and motivated that you, sitting in your own little canoe, will take both oars and vow not to drift. We are prone to wander.

By God's Grace, Let's Fight the Drift

What does the preacher tell us to do? Before we go too far, let's get the first one right.

Fixate on Christ

See that little phrase, "therefore." *Therefore* we must pay much closer attention. The word "therefore" is having us look back to why we must pay much closer attention. He's pointing us back to the superiority of Christ as a sure and steady anchor for our souls. All of Chapter 1 is information about Christ designed to convince the early believers that Christ is better. Verses 1-2 tell us about the prophetic supremacy of Christ. Verse 3 you have the Levitical supremacy. Verses 4-14 show us His angelic supremacy. And back up in verses 2-3 you have the cosmic supremacy of Christ. He is creator and sustainer of all things. And all of that compiled together gives us Gospel efficacy. That's the ability, the power of the Gospel. Here is the first link in our

chain. Here is the wood that the oar of orthodoxy is made of. We need to be clear on the Gospel of God.

What do we mean by the Gospel? The Bible teaches us that God is the holy Creator who created each one of us in His image. That image, however, has been disfigured by sin. We have sinned in such a way that sin has affected every part of us. That sin has separated us from and made us enemies of God.

God punishes those who commit sin against Him. So the wages of sin is death and that is what we deserve. And yet, justice is not all that God is. He is also love. The Bible teaches that. John 3:16, that He loved the world and gave His only son. That son is Jesus. Jesus being fully God and fully man. Jesus lived perfectly; He lived in our place. He is the substitute. He lived the life we were supposed to live. He earned righteousness and that's important because, at the cross, God judged our sin by punishing Jesus and Jesus gives us His righteousness.

That is the information of the gospel. But how do you, if you are not a Christian, appropriate it? The Bible teaches that you don't. The way you become a Christian is by putting your faith in our savior and you believe that Jesus died for you. That's what it means to be a Christian. It means when you live your life there are these distinctives. And we have to be careful with those. Religious observance, church attendance, moral effort, humanitarian benevolence, political involvement, social action, there is a place for all these things but they cannot become a substitute for the Gospel. Maybe the most tragic category of people in existence are those who have joined a church, heard the word of God, know it's true, but are not willing to radically surrender to Christ. We all know people like this who have claimed to be converted but are drifting in life like a dead fish. There is no effort, no life, no direction spiritually, no urgency, no vigilance, no passion, no fixing their eyes on Jesus, and the result isn't that life stood still, the result is drifting. How do you fight it?

You fixate on Jesus. You see Him take your sin; you picture Him on the cross. You envision His resurrection and think of His love. You dwell on grace and rejoice in His mercy and pray for His help and commit to live for Christ. By God's grace let's fight the drift by fixating on Jesus.

Get serious about discipleship

Let's go back to verse 1. Therefore we must pay much closer attention to what we have heard lest we drift away from it. There are five major warnings in the book of Hebrews and this is the first one. It's emphatic. We must pay much closer attention to the message, to what we have heard. The "must" here is a command. It is paying attention. This is an applying of the mind, a bending of the will, a yielding of the soul, applying your heart to the message and placing your affection on the message. This is bringing the whole self into the conformity of Christ. If you take the Gospel lightly, and treat sinning casually and approach being a Christian nonchalantly, then you drift into a shipwreck. This is a call to take being a disciple seriously. This is Word-based evangelism. This is Christ-centered worship and heart-wrenching prayer. This is life-giving fellowship and not hollow friendship. This is the call of Christianity. It's not hearing those things and letting them pass through. Listen, most people don't bust Hell wide open; most people gently drift there without even knowing it, and the preacher is calling us to pay much closer attention to the depth and power of Christ. It is paying attention to the genuine discipleship that draws us close. It's consistent corporate worship, community and D groups. It's personal worship and living on mission. It's faithfulness at home and humility in public and focus on living your life to the glory of God. By God's grace let's fight the drift. Let's fight by fixating on Christ and getting serious about discipleship.

Embrace real accountability

Now I know that this is a part of discipleship, but I'm afraid it is a piece that has been neglected for far too long. Let me show you where I get the idea. Focus on the end of verse 1. Lest we drift away. That little phrase "drift away"

is a nautical term. The idea is of a boat tied up at the dock seemingly secure but the gentle current of the river lulls the occupants into a slumber, and that same gentle current slips the anchor rope loose without the occupants knowing it and now the boat is unintentionally and carelessly and dangerously floating down the river. Drifting happens so imperceptibly that we don't often see it in ourselves. It's part of why God has given us the church and each other as brothers and sisters so that we can speak plainly and clearly into one another's lives. You need more than just people you see at church. You need a brother or a sister in Christ who loves you too much to let you ease off into sin. Before a sin ever rises to the level of church discipline, it could have been checked by real accountability. I have a group of men that I text every single day the passage that I read in the Bible. If one of us misses a couple of days, the others are quick to gently but firmly check to see what's going on.

By God's grace let's fight the drift. Let's fixate on Jesus. Let's get serious about discipleship and embrace real accountability.

Rejoice in the greatness of our Gospel

Verses 2-4 go together in one thought. *2 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 will.*

The preacher gives us a *fortiori*, a “lesser to greater” argument. If you're doing 50 miles an hour in a 35-mile zone and you get a ticket, then doing 100 miles an hour in a 35-mile zone will surely get you a ticket and a trip to the jail. And that's the argument here. Verse 2 says, if the message declared by the angels in Galatians 3 and by Stephen in Acts 7—which is the law of the 10 Commandments—if breaking the 10 Commandments received a just

retribution, then how will we escape if we neglect so great a salvation? And the obvious answer is, we can't.

Do you see his point? As bad as breaking the 10 Commandments is, missing or neglecting or drifting from the Gospel is worse, and to prove it, he crescendos with the greatness of the Gospel. Now look how he lines out who has given witness to the Gospel in verses 3 through 4. 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 will.*

It was declared first by the Lord Jesus through His life example preaching and His work on the cross. Then the apostles with their witnessing and then recording the events. Then by God the Father through signs and wonders and miraculous gifts. And by the Holy Spirit that fills and empowers by the will of God. This is where history has been taking us: a gospel displayed and by our Triune God the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. It was preached with authority by the apostles and now given to us for joyful salvation.

How shall we escape or neglect so great a salvation! Let's not neglect it. Let's rejoice in it! By God's grace, let's fight the drift. Let's fixate on Christ and get serious about discipleship. Let's embrace real accountability and rejoice in our great salvation.

There are a few things I want you to think about as we close in prayer. Are you drifting? Are you neglecting or bored in the Gospel? Do you have a besetting sin that you need to be forgiven for or some pain that you can't get over? Let's turn that over to the Lord.

(Pastor prays)