

DANGEROUS DRIFTING

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Illustration: On May 25, 2020, The Airbus A-320 from Lahore to Karachi was 15 nautical miles from the Jinnah International Airport. Instead of lowering the altitude, the pilot responded by saying that he was satisfied. When only 10 nautical miles were left till the airport, the plane was at an altitude of 7,000 feet instead of 3,000 feet. The Air Traffic Control (ATC) issued a second warning to the pilot to lower the plane's altitude. However, the pilot responded again by stating that he was satisfied and would handle the situation, saying he was ready for landing, the report said.

The pilot of the Pakistan International Airlines (PIA)'s crashed plane ignored three warnings from the air traffic controllers about the aircraft's altitude and speed before the landing, saying he was satisfied and would handle the situation.

The Pakistan International Airlines plane crash, in which 97 people were killed and two miraculously survived, is one of the most catastrophic aviation disasters in the country's history.

Scripture: Hebrews 2: ¹ 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.

1. CALLING NOT TO DRIFT AWAY FROM CHRIST

❖ **Hebrews 2:** ¹ Therefore we must pay much closer attention to what we have heard, lest we drift away from it.

Therefore [for this reason] we must pay much closer attention to what we have heard [What is it that they have heard?]**—**knowing that Christ is the ultimate revelation of God, knowing that Christ is the Son of God, knowing that Christ is the creator and heir of all things, knowing that Christ is the exact imprint of God's nature, knowing that Christ made purification for sins, knowing that Christ is exalted at the right hand of the Majesty, knowing that Christ is superior to angels...in others words, knowing the supremacy of Christ Jesus...

Therefore, we must pay much closer attention to what we have heard

- ▶ The author gave reasons why they must not drift away from Christ, not blind faith but reasonable faith
- ▶ They **MUST** pay much closer attention because it's a life and death issue, a serious matter, their eternity is at stake

Do not drift away [nautical language, a ship drifting away from its right direction] **from the great Saviour.**

Observe: The word “drift” also has the meaning of slow and gradual drift rather than sudden walking away.

C. S. Lewis remarked: “And as a matter of fact, if you examined a hundred people who had 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?”

Drifting away happens in two ways:

- ▶ From **sound doctrine** (orthodoxy)
- ▶ From **sound devotion** (orthopraxy). **Revelation 2:4**, But I have this against you, that you have abandoned [drifted from] the love you had at first.

Why do people drift away?

1. False doctrines (not rooted in the Word)

❖ **2 Corinthians 11:2-4**, “For I feel a divine jealousy for you, since I betrothed you to one husband, to present you as a pure virgin to Christ. But I am afraid that as the serpent deceived Eve by his cunning, your thoughts will be led astray from a sincere and pure devotion to Christ. For if someone comes and proclaims another Jesus than the one we proclaimed, or if you receive a different spirit from the one you received, or if you accept a different gospel from the one you accepted, you put up with it readily enough.”

2. Suffering

❖ **The state of the rocky soil (Mark 4:16-17):** “And these are the ones sown on rocky ground: the ones who, when they hear the word, immediately receive it with joy. And they have no root in themselves, but endure for a while; then, when tribulation or persecution arises on account of the word, immediately they fall away.” **DRIFTING AWAY DUE TO PAIN.**

3. Pleasures of the world

❖ **The state of the thorny soil (Luke 8:14):** “And as for what fell among the thorns, they are those who hear, but as they go on their way they are choked

by the cares and riches and pleasures of life, and their fruit does not mature.”
DRIFTING AWAY DUE TO PLEASURE.

Context of Hebrews: False doctrines and suffering

Encouragement: There will be persecution, rejection, suffering, temptations, worldly allurements—but Christ is worth above all the afflictions and sinful pleasures. Cling to Christ. Do not drift away from Him.

Note: We either drift or progress. We cannot be still/neutral. IF YOU ARE NOT PROGRESSING, YOU ARE DIGRESSING (without your own knowledge). IF YOU ARE NOT STRIVING, YOU ARE STRAYING. IF YOU ARE NOT PERSISTING, YOU ARE DEVIATING.

The worst thing is to drift and justify our drifting: D A Carson, “We drift toward compromise and call it tolerance; we drift toward disobedience and call it freedom; we drift toward superstition and call it faith. We cherish the indiscipline of lost self-control and call it relaxation; we slouch toward prayerlessness and delude ourselves into thinking we have escaped legalism; we slide toward godlessness and convince ourselves we have been liberated.”

How can we be safe from drifting away? Mooring is a place to tie a boat. If you don't tie a boat to a mooring, it will drift away. CHRIST IS OUR MOORING.

“Therefore we must pay much closer attention to what we have heard”

- ▶ Failure to pay much closer attention will lead to drifting away.
- ▶ Focus on the Supremacy of Christ—both in doctrine and devotion.
- ❖ **Hebrews 12:1-2,** Let us **run with endurance** the race that is set before us, **looking to Jesus**, the founder and perfecter of our faith...

Note: Believing in Christ is one thing. **Persevering in our faith in Christ till the end** is another thing.

“**Pay much closer attention to what we have heard [already know]**” Nothing new will change us, save us, or satisfy us. Don't run after something new or fad. **What we have heard**, Christ alone is what we need—today, tomorrow, and forever.

2. WARNING AGAINST NEGLECTING CHRIST

Warning [not blackmail but caution to be safe]: This generation does like warnings.

- Accident prone area, drive slow.

- Speed thrills but kills.
- Don't drink and drive.
- Wear your helmet. Safety first.

Scripture: Hebrews 2: 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?

“For since the message declared by angels proved to be reliable” probably referring to the Mosaic covenant that the Bible indicates was delivered “through angels”.

- ❖ **Acts 7:53** [Stephen's message to the Jews], “you who received the law as delivered by angels and did not keep it.” [Deut. 33:2; Gal. 3:19]

“every transgression or disobedience [against the law] received a just retribution.”

Point: Sin is an offence against God. Sin has consequences, whether it is done out of knowledge or ignorance.

- ❖ **Leviticus 5:17**, “If anyone sins, doing any of the things that by the Lord's commandments ought not to be done, **though he did not know it**, then realizes his guilt, he shall bear his iniquity.

Point: God does not ignore sin or take sin lightly. The punishment of God for breaking the law reveals His righteousness and justice. It is not injustice (just retribution). It is unreasonable to accuse Him of being unloving. You can only plead for God's mercy.

- ❖ ³ **how shall we escape if we neglect such a great salvation?**
- ❖ Similar to **Hebrews 12:25**, “See that you do not refuse him who is speaking. For if they did not escape when they refused him who warned them on earth [God through Moses who gave the law], much less will we escape if we reject him who warns from heaven [God through the Son].”
- ❖ ³ **how shall we escape if we neglect such a great salvation?**

Observe: “**If we neglect**” speaks about the possible condition, not about the certain situation.

Fact: True believers heed the warning and do not neglect salvation. False believers ignore the warning and neglect salvation.

Neglect: Not necessarily intentional but from inattention and carelessness.

Kent Hughes: Drifting is the besetting sin of our day. And as the metaphor suggests, it is not so much intentional as from unconcern. Christians neglect their anchor— Christ—and begin to quietly drift away. There is no friction, no dramatic sense of departure. But when the winds of trouble come, the things of Christ are left far behind, even out of sight.

❖ ³ **how shall we escape if we neglect such a great salvation?** Answer: We cannot escape.

Point: God has given the law and you broke the law. As a result, you deserve God's condemnation. But now Christ has come to deliver you from sin and its wages. If you neglect the Savior, how much more is the consequence for neglecting such a great salvation?

TO IGNORE GRACE IS WORSE THAN REJECTING THE LAW!

Unbelievers: The gospel is good news but it is not good news for all. Only those who repent of their sins and trust in Christ, the gospel is good news for them. But those who reject the gospel (outrightly or subtly), the gospel is dangerous news for them (the wages of sin is eternal destruction).

❖ **Hebrews 10:28-31**, Anyone who has set aside the law of Moses dies without mercy on the evidence of two or three witnesses. How much worse punishment, do you think, will be deserved by the one who has trampled underfoot the Son of God, and has profaned the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified, and has outraged the Spirit of grace? For we know him who said, "Vengeance is mine; I will repay." And again, "The Lord will judge his people." It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.

Believers: When believers neglect and drift from their devotion towards the Lord Jesus Christ, they suffer the wounds from the flaming darts of the devil, and lose heavenly rewards. Return to the Lord.

3. VALIDATING THE GOSPEL OF CHRIST

Scripture: Hebrews 2: ³ It [The message of salvation] 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 author lays the validity of the Gospel in three ways:

1. **v.3, "It was declared at first by the Lord"** [not via angels like the old covenant. The Lord Himself has come down in flesh and declared]

- ❖ **Hebrews 1:2**, but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son...
 - ❖ **The declaration of Christ Himself in Matthew 4:17**, From that time Jesus began to preach, saying, “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.”
2. **v.3, “it was attested to us by those who heard”**—the testimony of the apostles
- ❖ **1 John 1:1-2**, That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we looked upon and have touched with our hands, concerning the word of life—the life was made manifest, and we have seen it, and testify to it and proclaim to you the eternal life, which was with the Father and was made manifest to us...
3. **v.4, While God also bore witness** (God adding his witness to theirs) **by signs and wonders and various miracles and by gifts of the Holy Spirit distributed according to his will.**
- a. God has spoken through His Son. God has spoken through the apostles. God bore witness [validated] to what He spoke through Christ and His apostles.
 - ❖ **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
 - ❖ **2 Corinthians 12:12**, The signs of a true apostle were performed among you with utmost patience, with signs and wonders and mighty works.
 - God had done signs and wonders through Christ and apostles to establish the truthfulness of the gospel and given in the Holy Scripture.
 - b. The ultimate purpose of signs, wonders, miracles, and supernatural gifts is to point people to the supremacy of Christ revealed in the gospel—not to miracles, to miracle-workers, to people.
 - ❖ **John 20:30-31**, Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book; but **these are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.**
 - c. **Gareth Lee Cockerill (Professor of Biblical Interpretation and Theology)**: The author of Hebrews makes no attempt to duplicate these events but bases his argument on their past occurrence as confirmation

of the apostolic testimony. Thus he gives no encouragement either to those who would seek to replicate such “signs” or to those who would preclude God’s providing such confirmation in the present.

Summary: Three great reasons why we must not drift away from Christ and neglect God’s great salvation: The supremacy of Christ [2:1], God’s great judgment [2:2-3], God’s validation of the gospel [2:4].

Self-introspection Questions:

Donald Whitney’s book “Ten Questions To Diagnose Your Spiritual Health” proposes:

1. Do you thirst for God?
2. Are you governed increasingly by God’s Word?
3. Are you more loving?
4. Are you more sensitive to God’s presence?
5. Do you have a growing concern for the spiritual and temporal needs of others?
6. Do you delight in the bride of Christ (i.e. the church)?
7. Are the spiritual disciplines increasingly important to you?
8. Do you still grieve over sin?
9. Are you a quicker forgiver?
10. Do you yearn for heaven and to be with Jesus?

Sermon Discussion Questions:

1. How can people drift away from Christ, and what is the antidote for drifting?
2. What are the three reasons the author of Hebrews provided not to drift away from Christ?
3. Why is neglecting salvation a severe issue?
4. According to the author of Hebrews, what three things validate the gospel of Christ?
5. In the following ten questions to diagnose your spiritual health (by **Donald Whitney**), **what areas provide warning signs in your Christian life:**
 1. Do you thirst for God?
 2. Are you governed increasingly by God’s Word?
 3. Are you more loving?
 4. Are you more sensitive to God’s presence?
 5. Do you have a growing concern for the spiritual and temporal needs of others?
 6. Do you delight in the bride of Christ (i.e., the church)?

7. Are the spiritual disciplines increasingly important to you?
8. Do you still grieve over sin?
9. Are you a quicker forgiver?
10. Do you yearn for heaven and to be with Jesus?

EXPOSITORY PREACHING PREPARATION WORKSHEET

Name: C STEPHEN DAVID

Passage: Hebrews 2:1-4

Date: 7th August, 2021

1. How does the **context** inform the meaning of this passage? Please consider: a) the literary context (passages before and after the passage), b) the historical context (circumstances of the audience), and c) the biblical context (citations/allusions or historical connections to other books that the author is making).

Literary Context: The passage above speaks about the supremacy of Christ over prophets, cosmos, and angels, and the passage below about how Christ is the founder of salvation in his humanity and conquering death.

Historical Context: To the Hebrews, the Jewish community that had converted to Christianity. These people have a significant amount of knowledge of the Old Testament Scriptures. Their conversion brought on them suffering and persecution. As a result, some turned back from Christianity to Judaism. The author of Hebrews shows the supremacy of Christ and encourages them not to fall away.

Biblical Context:

2. How has the author organized this passage? Please a) show the **structure** in sections with verse references and b) explain what strategies you used to see this **structure**.

v.1 – Not drifting from salvation

v.2-3—Warning against neglecting salvation

v.4—Validating the gospel of salvation

3. Drawing on your work to this point, state the **author's aim** for his audience (in one short sentence).

The author's aim is to teach his audience to cling to Christ and drift from Him.

4. What is the **fallen condition** that necessitated the writing of the passage?

- Drift
- Neglect

5. What parts of this passage **connect to the gospel** of Jesus Christ? What part of the gospel is in view?

- Neglecting such a great salvation points to Christ's great sacrifice on the cross for people's salvation.

6. Drawing on your work to this point, what **conclusion** will you argue to your audience (in one short sentence)? What **applications** will you make for your audience (with a view of the biblical solution to the fallen condition)?

Argument: I want to argue and convince my congregation not to neglect Christ but cherish Him both in doctrine and devotion.

Applications:

- Do not drift from Christ
- Do not neglect Christ

- Consider the validation of the Gospel of Christ

7. What is your **sermon title** and your **preaching outline**?

Sermon Title: Dangerous Drifting

Sermon Outline:

1. Calling not to drift away from Christ
2. Warning against neglecting Christ
3. Validating the Gospel of Christ