

Lest We Drift Away

by

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Heb. 2:1-4

Paul, the author of “The Epistle To The Hebrews” was concerned about the spiritual well-being of his initial recipients. They were fellow Jews who had become Christians.

His concern was that they not drift back into Judaism. He deals with this problem in two ways:

- By emphasizing the superiority of Christ and the New Covenant.
- By a series of exhortations for them to remain steadfast.

In chapter one Paul wrote about:

The superiority of Christ to the prophets. Heb. 1:1-3, “*God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, Hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds; Who being the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person, and upholding all things by the word of his power, when he had by himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high.*”

The superiority of Christ to the angels. Heb. 1:4-14, “*Being made so much better than the angels, as he hath by inheritance obtained a more excellent name than they. For unto which of the angels said he at any time, Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee? And again, I will be to him a Father, and he shall be to me a Son? And again, when he bringeth in the firstbegotten into the world, he saith, And let all the angels of God worship him. And of the angels he saith, Who maketh his angels spirits, and his ministers a flame of fire. But unto the Son he saith, Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever: a sceptre of righteousness is the sceptre of thy kingdom. Thou hast loved righteousness, and hated iniquity; therefore God, even thy God, hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows. And, Thou, Lord, in the beginning hast laid the foundation of the earth; and the heavens are the works of thine hands: They shall perish; but thou remainest; and they all shall wax old as doth a garment; And as a vesture shalt thou fold them up, and they shall be changed: but thou art the same, and thy years shall not fail. But to which of the angels said he at any time, Sit on my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool? Are they not*

all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation?”

Now we come to the first of several exhortations.

- Heb. 2:1-4, *“Therefore we ought to give the more earnest heed to the things which we have heard, lest at any time we should let them slip. For if the word spoken by angels was stedfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just recompence of reward; How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation; which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them that heard him; God also bearing them witness, both with signs and wonders, and with divers miracles, and gifts of the Holy Ghost, according to his own will?”*
- Heb. 2:1, *“We must pay more careful attention, therefore, to what we have heard, so that we do not drift away.”* (NIV).
- Heb. 2:1, *“Therefore we must give the more earnest heed to the things we have heard, lest we drift away.”* (NKJV).

In which we find a warning about the danger of “slipping” or “drifting”.

The figure suggested is that of a boat drifting along at a very slow pace; carried along in the wrong direction by a subtle current.

In this lesson, I want us to examine...

- The reasons behind such an exhortation.
- Various “currents” that can cause us to “drift away”.
- The key to avoiding “drifting away”.

Let’s begin, then, with some...

Reasons for this exhortation.

The real danger of “drifting”.

It is possible for us to “drift away” from our salvation!

We can certainly “neglect” our salvation. Heb. 2:3, *“How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation; which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them that heard him;”*

Later, we will learn that we can “depart” from God. Heb. 3:12-14, *“Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God. But exhort one another daily, while it is called To day; lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin. For we are made partakers of Christ, if we hold the beginning of our confidence stedfast unto the end;”*

Also, that one can so “fall away” that it becomes impossible to renew them to repentance! Heb. 6:4-6, *“For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost, And have tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come, If they shall fall away, to renew them again unto repentance; seeing they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put him to an open shame.”*

“Impossible” – without strength, weak.

The dignity of the one through whom God has spoken.

As noted in Heb. 1:1-2, God now speaks to us through His Son.

We have seen that this Son is:

- Superior to the prophets (Heb. 1:1-3).
- Superior to the angels (Heb. 1:4-14).

We have seen that this Son is:

- The appointed Heir of all things!
- The brightness of God’s glory, the express image of His person!
- Our Sustainer and Redeemer!
- The “Firstborn” who receives worship.
- “God” enthroned and anointed.
- The “LORD” who is the eternal creator.
- The “Sovereign”, reigning at God’s right hand.

When God spoke through angels His word proved steadfast. Heb. 2:2, *“For if the word spoken by angels was stedfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just recompence of reward;”*

How much more, then, when He speaks through His Son! Will not His word prove just as steadfast? Will not every unrepented transgression and disobedience receive a just reward?

Dare we neglect the Word of God spoken through His Son?

The confirmation given this revelation.

The word spoken by the Son was confirmed by His apostles. Heb. 2:3, *“How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation; which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them that heard him,”*

Individuals who were eyewitnesses.

- Acts 10:39-41, *“And we are witnesses of all things which he did both in the land of the Jews, and in Jerusalem; whom they slew and hanged on a tree: Him God raised up the third day, and shewed him openly; Not to all the people, but unto witnesses chosen before God, even to us, who did eat and drink with him after he rose from the dead.”*
- 2 Pet. 1:16, *“For we have not followed cunningly devised fables, when we made known unto you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eyewitnesses of his majesty.”*

Men who endured much to serve Him. 1 Cor. 4:9-13, *“For I think that God hath set forth us the apostles last, as it were appointed to death: for we are made a spectacle unto the world, and to angels, and to men. We are fools for Christ’s sake, but ye are wise in Christ; we are weak, but ye are strong; ye are honourable, but we are despised. Even unto this present hour we both hunger, and thirst, and are naked, and are buffeted, and have no certain dwellingplace; And labour, working with our own hands: being reviled, we bless; being persecuted, we suffer it: Being defamed, we intreat: we are made as the filth of the world, and are the offscouring of all things unto this day.”*

The word spoken by the Son was confirmed even more! Heb. 2:4, *“God also bearing them witness, both with signs and wonders, and with divers miracles, and gifts of the Holy Ghost, according to his own will?”*

By God Himself, through signs, wonders, and miracles. John 10:37-38, *“If I do not the works of my Father, believe me not. But if I do, though ye believe not me, believe the works: that ye may know, and believe, that the Father is in me, and I in him.”*

By the Holy Spirit, with gifts according to His will. 1 Cor. 12:7-11, *“But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit withal. For to one is given by the Spirit the word of wisdom; to another the word of knowledge by the same Spirit; To another faith by the same Spirit; to*

another the gifts of healing by the same Spirit; To another the working of miracles; to another prophecy; to another discerning of spirits; to another divers kinds of tongues; to another the interpretation of tongues: But all these worketh that one and the selfsame Spirit, dividing to every man severally as he will."

Shall we neglect that Word to which such have born witness?

What we lose if we “drift away”.

We lose “so great a salvation”! Heb. 2:3, *“How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation; which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them that heard him;”*

It is a “great salvation”, because it offers such things as:

- The forgiveness of sin.
- Transformation of character by providing power over sin.
- Assurance of God’s fatherly presence.
- A clear and peaceful conscience.
- A glorious hope for eternity.

Dare we lose all this through “neglect”?

Just as those who neglected the word spoken through angels (i.e., the Law of Moses) lost their “promised land”, so there are grave consequences for those who neglect the salvation spoken of by the Son of God! Such “neglect” is possible when we “drift away”.

Following the metaphor of drifting, what “currents” might cause one to “drift”?

“Currents” that can cause us to “drift”.

The current of “time”.

In which we grow weary of doing good, a concern expressed in:

Gal. 6:9, *“And let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not.”*

As time passes by...

We can gradually lose some of the fervor of our devotion. Rev. 2:4, *“Nevertheless I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy first love.”*

We may begin to rest on past accomplishments, and cease pressing forward. Phil. 3:13-14, *“Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.”*

The current of “familiarity”.

As we become familiar with the truth, it may seem common place to us. We may lose its sense of novelty. We may take it for granted.

Like the Ephesians we may lose our “*first love*”. Rev. 2:4, *“Nevertheless I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy first love.”*

The current of “society”.

The tides of modern opinion can easily induce us. 1 Cor. 15:33, *“Be not deceived: evil communications corrupt good manners.”*

Bombarded by the secular humanism, false religions, and even plastic “Christianity” offered as “truth”, it is hard to maintain the course!

Such things can move us away from the simplicity and wisdom of our Lord! 2 Cor. 11:2-3, *“For I am jealous over you with godly jealousy: for I have espoused you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ. But I fear, lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtilty, so your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ.”*

The current of the “flesh”.

Our warfare is not only without, but also within. 1 Pet. 2:11, *“Dearly beloved, I beseech you as strangers and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul,”*

Our flesh is constantly waging war against our souls, and against the Spirit who desires that we follow Him. Gal. 5:16-17, *“This I say then, Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh. For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other: so that ye cannot do the things that ye would.”*

The current of “daily concerns”.

The constant pressure of daily cares, anxieties, duties, etc., can distract us.

Jesus warned against this on several occasions.

- Luke 8:14, “*And that which fell among thorns are they, which, when they have heard, go forth, and are choked with cares and riches and pleasures of this life, and bring no fruit to perfection.*”
- Luke 21:34, “*And take heed to yourselves, lest at any time your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting, and drunkenness, and cares of this life, and so that day come upon you unawares.*”

Any and all these things can slowly move us away from the Lord and His great salvation if we are not careful! However, as we return to our text, we can learn...

The key to prevent “*drifting away*”.

We must give “*the more earnest heed*”.

Imagine yourself in a canoe, in a river with a slow moving current. Failure to pay constant attention leads to drifting. The drifting may be subtle, but often by the time you realize it, it is too late! Last minute corrections may be made, but even then one may still run into the brush, crash into the rocks, or go over the falls!

Only by giving earnest heed can that be avoided.

So it is with our salvation! We must be “*diligent*” to the task at hand.

- 2 Pet. 1:5, “*And beside this, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue; and to virtue knowledge;*”
- 2 Pet. 1:10, “*Wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure: for if ye do these things, ye shall never fall.*”

There is no place to be half-hearted about this! Phil. 3:12-15, “*Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect: but I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus. Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus. Let us therefore, as many as be perfect, be thus minded: and if in any thing ye be otherwise minded, God shall reveal even this unto you.*”

Note that we must give the “*more*” earnest heed. We are to be more earnest than those who heard the word of God spoken through angels (i.e., the Israelites).

Because we have the word of God spoken through the Son, which pertains to a salvation greater than that enjoyed by them, to whom more is given, more is required!

Luke 12:48, “*But he that knew not, and did commit things worthy of stripes, shall be beaten with few stripes. For unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required: and to whom men have committed much, of him they will ask the more.*”

Are you more earnest in giving heed to what you have heard, than those saints in the Old Testament?

We must give such heed to the “*things we have heard*”.

The “*things we have heard*” refer to:

- The Word of God spoken through His Son.
- The great salvation.
- The gospel of Christ in all aspects!

How can we do this?

The Bereans provide a good example. Acts 17:11, “*These were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so.*”

- In the way in which they initially listened (“*received the word with all readiness*”).
- In the way in which they followed up (“*searched the scriptures daily...*”).

Certainly through earnest attention whenever God’s word is proclaimed and earnest study of God’s Word on our own.

With the sort of study of God’s Word when entered into with a prayerful devotion to God. Psalms 119:18, “*Open thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of thy law.*”

And concluded with a prayerful desire to please God. Psalms 119:10-11, “*With my whole heart have I sought thee: O let me not wander from thy commandments. Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee.*”

Are you giving “*the more earnest heed to the things we have heard*”?

Conclusion.

We have been blessed to receive “so great a salvation”.

- A salvation spoken to us first through God’s own Son!
- A salvation then confirmed by God Himself, the Holy Spirit, and those who heard Him!
- A salvation much greater than any offered before!

But please note carefully...

One need not “reject” or “actively fight” against this great salvation to “receive a just reward”.

Those who simply “*drift away*” through “neglect” will also not escape! Escape what? From what we shall learn, it will be “much worse punishment”!

Heb. 10:28-29, “*He that despised Moses’ law died without mercy under two or three witnesses: Of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing, and hath done despite unto the Spirit of grace?*”

Have you neglected this great salvation Jesus offers? If so, may this move you to repent, and cause you to give “*the more earnest heed*” to the gospel of Christ!

