

May 6, 2018 AM
Pastor Ken Hepner

THE LETTER TO THE HEBREWS:
3. “The First Warning – Do Not Drift Away”
Hebrews 2:1 – 4

Introduction:

This morning we reengage in our study of the Letter to the Hebrew Christians. The author writes with deep love and passionate heart-cry to a people who were in danger of **Falling Away** from their sincere devotion to **Know** and **Follow** Jesus in life! The writer wants the reader to know the powerful truth that everything that matters in our salvation is seen in and done by Jesus on our behalf.

As we study this great book what God has on His heart for us at Cedar Grove is to fix our eyes on Jesus, to remain rooted and founded in our need to **Know** His **Saving Works**! This is not just our initial salvation experience, which is being forgiven of sins and washed in the blood of Jesus, but is also being set free from the dominion of fleshly, selfish desires of our self-interest.

What these Christians were doing was walking the dangerous path of bringing their salvation experience into the human arena and what they had done and were doing for God. They were perilously close to falling away from their sincere faith relationship with Jesus Christ, precisely because they were focusing on their works and deeds for God as the proof of their salvation.

The Hebrew author again and again points them back to the **Sufficiency** of the **Ministry** of Jesus Christ for us and our acceptance of His work on the Cross on our behalf as the foundation stone of our salvation. He has one primary truth on his heart and mind as he writes: What we do for God in works and deeds is always a result of our having opened our hearts to receive the ministry of the Holy Spirit within us, making very personal what Jesus has done for us on the Cross!

The proof of our salvation is that we are invaded by the presence and power of the Holy Spirit. His nature takes up residence in our hearts. His nature is holy, self-emptying, other-oriented love, a love that desires to know the heart and mind of God in Christ Jesus! Our good deeds are not proof of our salvation unless they are deeply **Rooted** in and **Compelled** by God’s **Love** poured out in our hearts and lives by the indwelling Holy Spirit!

II Corinthians 5:14, 15 “For Christ’s love compels us, because we are convinced that one died for all, and therefore, all died. And he died for all, that those who live should no longer live for themselves but for him who died for them and was raised again.”

When we reduce our salvation experience to what we are doing in the human arena we get into the shaky ground and murky waters of our **Human Religious Effort** to please God once we have been redeemed. It is as though we are saying to Jesus: “Thank you so much for saving me, Lord Jesus! Now I can pretty much take it from here!” That is precisely what these Hebrew Christians were doing and it broke our author’s heart to see what was happening to their earlier sincere

devotion to know and follow Jesus. They were focusing on their efforts at getting it all together for God and that focus created a danger to them.

It could lead them astray from the simplicity and the superiority of what Jesus had done and desired to do in them. They were becoming self-important, and had begun to supplement what Jesus did on the Cross. They were living “**Jesus And**” something else. In their case it was: Jesus and the prophets, Jesus and angels, Jesus and Moses, Jesus and the Law, Jesus and the Priesthood, Jesus and the sacrificial system.

This letter is written by a man of God who knew the Old Testament Scriptures extremely well. The author was also thoroughly trained in the Levitical Priesthood and sacrificial system. He has key thoughts guiding his mind and key texts he quotes from memory as he writes. He has keen awareness of how completely Jesus Christ had fulfilled the Levitical demands of the Law!

It is written as a **Word of Encouragement**, and exhortation of the heart of the readers, pleading with them to remove the add-ons to what Jesus Christ had done, is doing, and will do through His “once-and-for-all” sacrifice for sins! **The author has some key points that he desperately wants his readers to know and understand, and he repeats them again and again so we won’t miss them:**

1. **He will brilliantly argue that who Jesus and is and what He has done for us is superior and sufficient to all add-ons!** He will use the Greek word “kreitton” rendered “better or superior” depending on the version you are reading thirteen times!

2. **He will seek to make application of the truth** he is expounding about who Jesus is and what He had done for the salvation of the believers. He does this by writing sixteen heads of “let us” which he precedes by or follows by the word, “therefore.”

- “Therefore let us be careful that we...”
- “Let us, therefore, make every effort...”
- “Therefore let us hold firmly to the faith...”
- “Therefore let us leave the elementary teachings...”
- “Therefore let us draw near to God...”
- “Therefore let us throw off everything that hinders and sin...”
- “Therefore let us be thankful...”

3. He will give the readers **seven progressively more intense warning passages in the book, clearly calling the readers to engage with the Holy Spirit to know, love, and follow Jesus carefully in life so they do not fall away into apostasy!** He begins with the warning we will study today pleading with them not to drift away from the truth, and he will end with the seventh warning in Hebrews 12:25: *“See to it that you do not refuse him who speaks. If they did not escape when they refused him who warned them on earth, how much less will we, if we turn away from him who warns us from heaven.”*

I. Pay Careful Attention To and Obey the Message:

Hebrews 2:1 “*We must pay more careful attention, therefore, to what we have heard so that we do not drift away.*”

The writers who were inspired by the Holy Spirit to write the books of the New Testament are never content with simply giving the readers the truth and asking them to believe it. They call the readers to embrace a faith walk with the Holy Spirit that leads the believers to put into practice in our everyday lives what we are reading. The truth believed results in a **Transforming Heart** and **Mind** and transformed hearts and minds produce very different **Actions!**

Our author is seeking to give the readers a shot of adrenaline in their arms of faith through which they hold on to their deep and focused trust in Him as Savior and Lord. He is arguing from the lesser to the greater. The “therefore” in the text points us back to the truth he has just been sharing with us in chapter one.

In chapter one he is differentiating between the two revelations the Hebrew Christians understood. The first revelation is the revelation of the Law which came through the mediation of angels, what the Hebrew Christians came to know as the Ten Commandments. He writes that any choice to miss the mark or disobey that law was met with the sternest of punishments unless the believer offered the necessary sacrifices to atone for their indiscretions.

The second and far superior revelation is the final revelation of the will and the ways of God, **the Gospel of the Person and the Finished Work of Jesus Christ our Savior and Lord**. This revelation came by the very Son of God was to be heard clearly and demanded serious attention and obedience.

He argues that if the message spoken by angels required serious attention and obedience from those who heard it, how much more does the message spoken by Jesus Christ require careful hearing and obedience? The message of the life, teachings, and ministry of Jesus Christ for us all on the Cross and in the empty tomb, resurrection life and power, is of supreme importance to the hearers, demanding serious attention as matters of life and death!

His point is made and should be obvious to us all but let’s state it for clarity’s sake. If the inferior message of the Law put into effect by angels demanded punishment for disobedience, how much more does the **Superior Revelation** of Jesus Christ require the hearers to receive it and obey it or face even more dire punishment as a result? If the Old Covenant worshipers could not neglect what they heard, how much less can the believers neglect the message that came through the Son of God?

II. Our First Warning Passage:

Hebrews 2:1 – 3a “*We must pay more careful attention, therefore, to what we have heard so that we do not drift away. For if the message spoken by angels was binding, and every violation and*

disobedience received its just punishment, how shall we escape if we ignore such a great salvation?”

Our author is seeking to remind his readers of how earnestly they heard the Word of Christ, the message of the Gospel. They heard the Word of the Lord Jesus from the gospel bearers, and when they did, **their response was to open their hearts to Believe what they Heard and they Received the presence and power of the Holy Spirit.** What happened next was powerful life-change as the Holy Spirit began the process of inner transformation of their hearts and lives!

He wants them to recall that responding to the message of Jesus Christ, the superior revelation of Jesus to everything they had ever heard about in the Law and the prophets, is what gave them the power of the Holy Spirit living in them. He is laying that foundation stone again in order to make the point that we **Grow** and in **Grace** and the **Knowledge** of Jesus as we respond to the Truth of the Gospel of Christ Jesus each new day!

So he tells them to get alone with Jesus, to open their hearts to be taught by the indwelling Holy Spirit who makes the Word of God alive in our hearts: **he writes to them urging them to Hear the Message so well that you are Moved to Obey it!** The word “hear” is the Greek word “prosechein,” meaning; “pay careful attention to,” “to give the more earnest heed to,” the word of the Lord Jesus Christ, the message of the Gospel!

Another way to say this is to hear and fix your minds on the truth as it is revealed in Jesus. The connotation of the word is to hear the Word of the Lord Jesus so clearly and to pay careful attention to it until its authority has convinced you of its truthfulness for your lives!

Then our author gives them and us, as readers today, his first of seven warnings against falling away from our faith in Jesus in this great letter. He is writing to them and us, for we who have heard and responded to the Gospel, if we yield to the temptation to abandon our faith our plight is hopeless! He writes the warning, against falling away from the faith, in two clear statements

First, he writes: **“Do Not Drift from the Truth!”** The author chose the Greek word “pararrain,” which is a Greek word carrying many meanings: “to drift away from,” “to slip away through neglect,” “to speak of a ring that slipped off of your finger,” a point you want to make that has “slipped your mind,” something that was once very important to you that “through neglect has ebbed away from you.”

It is also a nautical word for “a boat that has slipped its mooring and has drifted away.” The obvious connotation of using the word, “pararrain” in this sense is that the owner of the boat has carelessly tied the boat and neglected to carefully moor his boat and check on it regularly through the hour it was moored.

The author’s point should be obvious but let’s state the obvious so we are all on a level playing field. I know of no one who starts their Christian journey, responding to the gospel of Jesus Christ, repenting deeply, and inviting the Holy Spirit to live in us, to transform us, who makes

the conscious choice to drift away from following Jesus in life. We choose to let time alone with Jesus in reading the Word of God and heartfelt earnest prayer, slip from our priorities and drift away from Him.

It is almost always a gradual slipping and drifting. The path of drifting and letting the truth of God be made alive in us by the Holy Spirit, is a very clear and present danger for we who live in North America today. **We suffer loss of a Dynamic Relationship with Jesus through Preoccupation and Busyness!** From my seat as your Senior Pastor Jesus spoke the parable to the sower to us. We are a culture that embodies “the seed that fell among the rocky places and the thorns.”

Luke 8:13, 14 *“Those on the rock are the ones who receive the word with joy when they hear it, but they have no root. They believe for a while but in the time of testing they fall away. The seed that fell among the thorns stands for those who hear, but as they go on their way they are choked by life’s worries, riches, and pleasures, and they do not mature.”*

Every day of our lives here in this culture in North America, we face the temptation to treat the living word of the living Jesus with contempt. We can simply not permit His Word of Truth to enter us deeply and work in our hearts in His holy, self-emptying, other-oriented love. **We can permit the Word of His Truth to be choked by Worries, Riches, and Pleasures,** so that we do not mature!

Secondly, he writes: **“Do Not Neglect Such a Great Salvation!”** The author wants the readers then and now to hear the truth clearly, to hear so well that we engage our entire being in it. Let the Word of Christ dwell in you richly Paul writes!

This word **Engage** is another way of saying be **Captivated** by the message of your deliverance from sin and its power to enslave you! **Engage your mind with it, engage your heart with it, engage your desires, and your will with it! Don’t neglect what you have heard in Jesus!** If the message spoken by angels was binding on the hearers and disobedience was punished, how much more binding is the message of our deliverance from sin brought by Jesus Christ our Lord?

It is of intense interest to me that our author does not say, if we **Reject** the message spoken by Jesus Christ, this great salvation of our souls. He says, if we **Neglect** this word of the salvation of our souls. The connotation of this word rendered neglect, paracheue, is to hear it and treat lightly as though it is not all that important.

The author says neglecting this message of salvation is the first step to apostasy, falling away from our faith walk with Jesus! It is walking the path of imperfect hearing, or giving half-hearted attention to the Word of the Lord. It is a picture of careless hearing, or the person that does not pay sufficient attention to what is being spoken by the Lord God. **Neglect of the Word of the Lord leads to a deliberate shutting of the ears, Disobedience to the Voice of God.** So in other words, “Get Real with the truth of God as it is in Jesus!”

III. The Lord God Testifies to Our Salvation Experience:

Hebrews 2:3b, 4 *“This salvation, which was first announced by the Lord, was confirmed to us by those who heard him. God also testified to it by signs, wonders, and various miracles, and gifts of the Holy Spirit distributed according to his will.”*

Our author’s antidote for such drifting or letting the truth slip through our hearts and minds is to pay careful heed, to give our earnest attention to, to be captivated by the Word of the Lord. Listen to the progression of thought Paul wrote to the Colossian Christians when he was exhorting them to Christian living in Colossae.

Colossians 3:1 – 3 *“Since, then, you have been raised with Christ, **set your hearts** on things above, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God. **Set your minds** on things above, not on earthly things. For you died, and your life is now hidden with Christ in God.”*

He wants them to see the progression clearly. First and foremost engage your hearts in hearing and walking in the Word of Christ Jesus, then engage your minds on knowing the truth, being renewed in mind by His truth made alive in your by the indwelling Holy Spirit.

The author of Hebrews ends the paragraph by stating three ways in which the message of the Gospel of Jesus Christ is unique and deserves our full attention, our full engagement:

It is unique in its **Origin**. The message of the Gospel of Jesus Christ came directly from heaven, in and through the Person and the finished work of Jesus Christ our Lord. It does not consist of groping for or guessing what the Lord has on His mind, what He is speaking. It the very voice of God Himself in Christ Jesus speaking to us all!

It is unique in its **Transmission**. It was spoken to the Hebrew author and to these recipients of the letter by people who actually heard and witnessed the words of Jesus as He walked the earth, people who had seen Him risen from the dead, victorious over the power of sin, death, and Hell. Our author makes sure we understand the truth cannot be given second-hand. We can only teach others what we have come to know experientially.

It is unique in its **Effectiveness**. The true effectiveness of the message of Jesus Christ our Lord crucified to take away our sins, risen Lord of Glory triumphant over our sins, is in its ability to radically change the hearts and minds of people. God Himself testified to the truth of Jesus by enabling His men and women to experience the gifts of the Holy Spirit and to act in and through them to do signs and wonders. The Book of Acts is a record of the power of the Holy Spirit to recreate and work through simple, ordinary men and women who had been set free from sin.

Are you serious, he writes? Are you seriously thinking about letting the truth of God slip away from you? The Gospel reveals the ability of God to make bad people good and good people better! Get after the truth as it is in Jesus. Get real in your walk with Jesus by His Spirit.

THE LETTER TO THE HEBREWS:
3. "The First Warning –Do Not Drift Away"
Hebrews 2:1 – 4

Introduction:

We're studying the Book of Hebrews this morning! The author writes with deep love and heart-cry to a people who were in danger of F _____ A _____ from their sincere early devotion to know and follow Jesus.

As we study this great work, the Lord wants us all to fix our eyes on Jesus, to stay rooted and founded in in our need to K _____ His S _____ W _____.

He points the readers to the S _____ of the M _____ of Jesus.
Our good deeds must be rooted in the Holy Spirit pouring out His love into our hearts. It's always about being C _____ to obey Him by L _____. II Corinthians 5:14, 15

When we reduce our salvation to what we are doing we get on the shaky ground of H _____
R _____ effort!

These Hebrew Christians were becoming self-important, supplementing what Jesus did for them on the Cross:
A "J _____ A _____" something else mentality.

The author writes as a W _____ of E _____ and exhortation to his readers to follow Jesus.

There are three key points he wants the reader to know and understand and he makes them repeatedly in this letter:

1. What Jesus has done is superior to the add-ons, the word kreiton...
2. He will seek to make application of the truth he shares with his words "let us" and "therefore"...
3. He will give them seven progressively intense warnings against apostasy...

I. Pay Careful Attention to and Obey the Message: Hebrews 2:1

The writers of the New Testament call their readers to put into practice the truth they are reading. The truth believed results in a T _____ H _____ and M _____ and very different A _____.

He argues from the lesser to the greater with the word, "therefore" pointing back to what he wrote in chapter one. The two revelations:

1. The revelation of the Law through angels.
2. The far superior revelation is the G _____ of the P _____ and finished W _____ of Jesus Christ our Savior and Lord.

If the inferior revelation disobeyed brought punishment how much more does the S _____
R _____ of Jesus Christ require the hearers to receive it and obey it?

II. The First Warning Passage: Hebrews 2:1 – 3a

They had responded to the Gospel by opening their hearts to B _____ what they heard and they R _____ the Spirit of God to dwell in them.

His point is we G _____ in G _____ and K _____ of Jesus when we hear and respond to the truth. So he exhorts the reader to hear so well you obey the Word of the Lord.

This first warning against apostasy has two clear messages to it:

1. Do not **D**_____ from the **T**_____. The Greek word is pararrain: “to drift away from,” “to let slip though neglect.” It can also be a nautical term for a boat that has slipped from its moorings and drifted away.
 - We suffer loss of relationship with Jesus through **P**_____ and **B**_____!
 - We are the rocky and weed-infested soil the seed fell on in Jesus’ parable of the sower, Luke 8:13, 14
 - We can permit the Word to be choked out of us by **W**_____, **R**_____, and **P**_____!
2. He warns Do not **N**_____ such a great **S**_____.
 - He calls them to be totally engaged with the truth.
 - He does not say we **R**_____ the message. He says we **N**_____ the message.
 - His point is to neglect His Word is ultimately to choose the path of disobedience to the **V**_____ of God!

III. The Lord God Testifies to our Salvation Experience: Hebrews 2:3b, 4

The author’s antidote to a heart that drifts is to pay careful heed, give earnest attention to the Word of the Lord. An exhortation echoed by Paul to the Colossian Christians in Colossians 3:1 – 3.

The author reminds his readers of three ways the Gospel of Jesus is unique:

1. It is unique in its **O**_____
2. It is unique in its **T**_____
3. It is unique in its **E**_____

He tells his readers: “Are you seriously considering letting the truth of Jesus slip away from you?”

Discussion Starter Questions for Home Groups

1. The Book of Hebrews is written to address the issue of falling away from our walk with Jesus by faith. Can you name some things that lead to falling away?
2. What do you think about the truth that our obedience must always be as a result of the Holy Spirit motivating us with His love poured out in our hearts?
3. Why do you think people tend to make their/our salvation experience with Jesus about “Jesus and something else?”
4. Why do the authors of the New Testament call their readers to engage with the Word of the Lord so that they are being transformed in heart and mind?
5. The author wants his readers to know the ministry and message of the Gospel of Jesus is far superior to following the Law. Why is it superior?
6. The author tells his readers to remember that we grow in grace and knowledge of Jesus when we hear and respond to the truth. What does that mean to you?
7. He warns them to not let the truth drift from their hearts. What causes people to drift from God’s truth today?
8. He warns the reader to not neglect the Word of the Lord and he gave them his antidote. What is it? How does he want his readers to approach God’s Word?
9. Read together aloud Luke 8:1 – 8 and 11 – 15 and discuss insights you have from Jesus’ parable of the sower.
10. Read together aloud John 6:60 – 69 and discuss insights you have about the power of Jesus’ words in His disciples’ hearts and minds.
11. Do you believe and seek to engage with what the Bible teaches as you read it? Do you engage your heart with the truth and are you changed as you read it?