

LIFE GROUP LEADER GUIDE

Hebrews: Lest We Drift

Hebrews 2:1-4



5.12.2024

SERMON NOTES:

Hebrews 2:1-4 -- 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.

Several years ago, Katrina, the girls, and I went to the lake with my family. We were on the boat having a big time. We had floats out on the water around the boat. On this particular day, the current in the lake was really strong. We kept our feet on the boat or held on to a rope that connected us to the boat. But somehow or another my dad got disconnected from the boat. He slowly started drifting away from us. When he realized he was drifting, he started paddling on the float to try and get back to the boat, but he couldn't do it. The current was too strong. He had drifted too far to fight against the current. And we lost him. No, I'm just playing. We pulled the boat over and picked him up.

This idea of drifting away because of the current is a great picture and analogy of the culture we live in today. We are not living in a culture where if we are just floating, we are going to stay near the boat. We don't drift toward godliness or a life that lines up with God's commands or God's wisdom for flourishing and prospering in our lives. We drift in the opposite direction. We drift towards opposition to God. We drift towards foolishness. We drift towards self-indulgence, self-centeredness, and self-glory.

We have to be anchored. We must stay tethered. This is exactly what our passage teaches us today.

Scripture Exegesis: Hebrews 2:1-4

Therefore - Any time we see the word "therefore" we ought to ask, what is it "there for?" Therefore indicates that a principle or conclusion is about to be drawn from what has been said before it. So in Hebrews 1, we have the writer open by telling us that God has spoken to us decisively and definitively through His Son. The Living God has revealed Himself, His ways, His promises, and His salvation throughout time and history, but He has done so finally through His Son. This Son, Jesus, rules over all things. He is the One who paid for sins and rules over all things as the resurrection, ascended, and enthroned King of the world. He's greater than everything, including the angels. That's Chapter 1.

This leads the Hebrew writer to say, "Therefore," "in light of this," and then make his argument to them and us. What does he say?

Pay much closer attention to what we have heard lest we drift away. Let's break this down.

pay much closer attention - We are told to pay attention. To give focus. Don't get distracted and turn away from this. Teaching kids ministry is the art of trying to keep the kid's attention long enough to get the point across. Several times when I taught on a Wednesday night recently I had to say, "Hey guys, right here, focus in." I had to get their attention. It doesn't take much for them to stop paying attention. We are the same. Our little ADD souls run in every direction.

to what we have heard - What they heard was the gospel. They heard the Word of God. There is no secret formula for not drifting away. We must pay attention to the Word. We must be grounded in the Word.

lest we drift away - The idea of drifting away is the idea of parting from. The picture is one of moving away from the object. In this case, the object would be the message we heard from God through Christ. Jesus is the way. Pleasing God comes through following Him. Drifting away means drifting away from Christ.

In the south, there's a prominent phrase we use to describe this drifting away, "backsliding." The concept is one of departing or falling away. This is a real thing. Everyone is prone to wander. Everyone is capable of drifting away. It doesn't take much. Why? Because the bent of our fallen nature is away from God. Our natural gravitation is towards self-fulfillment and self-rule.

If a driver doesn't maintain control of the steering wheel, and uses it to guide the car, the car naturally drifts in a direction and outside the lines. So it is with our hearts. We have passions ..Passions are the impulsive, almost instinctive motions of the soul. They are good but dangerous. They are natural but need governing. They are our immediate reactions to reality, such as fear, anxiety, desire, pity, grief, and anger. There is a reason Scripture tells us to beware of the passions of our flesh. They often wage war against your soul (1 Peter 2:11). In your anger, do not sin (Ephesians 4:26). Remember that the anger of man does not produce the righteousness of God (James 1:20). Instead, entrust yourself to God (1 Peter 4:19). Which is more revealing of the "real you": your spontaneous and unguarded emotions, or your purposeful and intentional choices? Or stated differently, which is more fundamental to who you are: the feelings (passions) that spontaneously erupt from your heart, or the choices that you intentionally make to steer them? The answer is both are you. But if we don't anchor ourselves to God's Word, and stay in communion with the Lord, our passions will lead us to sin. Or in the case of our text today: cause us to drift away.

So notice that the Hebrew writer tells readers to pay attention to what they've heard so they don't drift away from the truth. So they don't drift away from the message proclaimed to them.

Why is that? Well, he's about to tell them. It's because the message they heard is reliable, and it warns that every transgression and disobedience will receive just retribution. Let's break that down.

message is reliable - The Bible is 66 books written over 1500 years, by 40 different authors, in 3 different languages, and on 3 different continents, all telling one central message of God's redemption of His creation, including a people marked by sin, but restored by His grace. The message is attested by eyewitnesses, including (as we see in our text) signs and wonders. One of the messages that is reliable is what follows next:

every transgression and disobedience received just retribution - The message of the old covenant was simple: You obey, you live; you disobey, you die. Under the old covenant, every transgression of the law demanded a just penalty. God doesn't wink at sin. Sin will be punished, not only in the lack of flourishing in this life but if not repented from, punishment in the life to come. We are deserving of Hell for any and every transgression. People don't seem to understand this. We minimize the severity of sin because we've minimized the holiness of God. Most in our culture think the idea of Hell is primitive and extreme. They see it as an overreaction to sin. But again, this only reveals our wrong thinking.

If I strike this podium, nothing happens. If I strike someone in the front row, I may get an assault charge and may spend a few hours in jail. If I strike the governor of Tennessee or the POTUS, I'll go to jail for quite a long time. What changed? It isn't that I did anything different in terms of my actions. What changed was the importance and status of the person on the other end of my action. You see it? So what is sin against our Creator, the Holy and Righteous God who commands us on how to live and we rebel knowingly against Him?

God is a just judge. Every transgression and disobedience receives its just retribution or payment.

how shall we escape - Escape what? Isn't that the question? What is it the writer is questioning how we'll escape if we drift away? It's the retribution for our transgressions and disobedience. How will we escape the justice of God? In the Bible, that is called "the wrath of God." Friends, none of us want to experience the justice of God. The godliest person you know doesn't want God's justice. We want God's mercy.

My sweet 96-year-old grandmother passed away in November of 2022. She is one of the best humans I've ever met or known. She was my Gan-Gan. But Gan-Gan couldn't stand before the justice of God. No matter how sweet, kind, and godly she was, she was not perfect. And that is God's standard of justice. She didn't want justice from God...she wanted grace and mercy from God. And that is true for all of us.

There is a justice coming though. If we do not listen to this message and heed its call to trust Christ, we cannot escape the retribution for our sins. If we drift away, we can't escape. There is no escape because everyone will stand before God one day. Nobody can hide. Nobody can sneak through. Nobody can escape.

if we neglect such a great salvation - This great salvation is that which Jesus accomplished for us. He lived a perfect life of righteousness and credits it to the account of the person of faith. He died a sinner's death as a substitute for sinners and credits it to the account of the person of faith. In Christ, every transgression and disobedience is placed on Him. We are forgiven. We are given a clean slate. Our record is expunged. We are declared innocent, justified.

Neglecting this salvation is what happens when you drift away from what you've heard. And the neglect of this salvation is drifting toward self-destruction. Retribution and justice for every transgression and disobedience we've committed.

It was declared at first by the Lord - Jesus came and taught about the Kingdom. He opened up their understanding of everything the Old Testament was teaching...which all pointed to Him.

, and it was attested to us by those who heard - Then the apostles, the witnesses of Christ, carried the message out from Israel into the world. The gospel was written and preserved. The message of the gospel, and the doctrine of Christ, was attested by the signs and wonders that accompanied it, including the giving of the Holy Spirit (while God also bore witness by signs and wonders and various miracles and by gifts of the Holy Spirit distributed according to his will).

So we know the message. We have the message. That's how Hebrews begins: God has spoken. God has made Himself known. It is through Jesus. He has delivered the Word of God to us. Therefore, don't drift away from it. Pay attention to what you've heard. To neglect this great salvation leads to destruction. Nobody can escape it if they neglect it. That's the message.

A few application points for us:

1. We see here the importance and connection between doctrine and practice.

Hebrews 1 lays out a strong doctrinal argument and Hebrews 2 begins by telling us that our lives should be lived in light of that truth. Faith and practice. This is huge throughout the Bible. It's not enough for us to simply claim to believe the right things. True belief comes out in our lives.

Imagine if Dave Ramsey was discovered to have mountains of credit card debt, took car loans, did balloon mortgages, and didn't have an emergency fund. That wouldn't change anything about the helpfulness of his doctrine, but we could say for certain that he was a hypocrite because his doctrine and practice were at odds with each other.

The same is true for Christians. To proclaim faith in Christ is more than a doctrinal affirmation. It is matched with our lives.

2. We must commit ourselves to paying attention to what we've heard.

This isn't complicated, but it is difficult. We are constantly needing to refocus our attention.

- Reading Scripture and teaching that develops our worldview, knowledge, and understanding (by the way, this grows us in wisdom, and maturity, builds resistance against sin, etc.)
- Prayer
- Gathering to Worship
- Singing
- Community with Believers

3. We must guard ourselves against drifting away and neglecting our salvation.

If you neglect the things I mentioned a moment ago, you will neglect your salvation. But what is some evidence that it is happening:

- a growing coldness and disinterest in the things of God
- an unwillingness to put habitual sin to death
- an increasing effort to rationalize unbiblical behavior, attitudes, and ideas
 - dating an unbeliever
 - identifying with the latest thing out there (LGBTQ, woke, race stuff)
- a growing orientation toward pleasing people more than God
 - unwilling to say unpopular things in fear of rejection
 - perpetuating things you know to be lies to keep the peace
- a lack of friendships with other Christians (bad company corrupts good morals - 1 Corinthians 15:33)

This text was actually the last passage R.C. Sproul preached on before he passed away. Sproul is one of my favorite theologians. He concluded that sermon with these words: ***"Beloved, if you come to church every single Sunday of your life and go to Sunday school every single week of your life, you may still be neglecting this great salvation. Is your heart in it? That is what I am asking you. I cannot answer that question for you. You know if you are neglecting your salvation. I do not have to tell it to you. I just have to tell you what the consequences are if you continue in that neglect. So, I pray with all my heart that God will awaken each one of us today to the sweetness, the loveliness, the glory of the gospel declared by Christ."***

Don't neglect this great salvation or drift away, friends. Pay careful attention to what you have heard so that you may flourish and thrive under the blessing and promises of your God.



- How was your week? What is one thing you're grateful for and one thing that challenged you?
- How did you GROW in obedience to Christ over the last week?
- Where did you GO to share the gospel or have a spiritual conversation with someone?



- **REVIEW:**

- Read **Hebrews 2:1-4** and then have someone else in the group read it again, preferably from a different version.
- What big takeaways did you have from the teaching?
- Additional Scripture:
 - Hebrews 1:1-4
 - Acts 7:53
 - Mark 16:15
 - 1 John 2:2
 - 2 Corinthians 5:21
 - 2 Corinthians 12:12
 - Mark 16:20
 - Matthew 10:1
 - John 14:26
 - Acts 1:8
 - Isaiah 11:2
 - Mark 14:38

- **REFLECT:**

- What is Paul referring to drifting away from in verse 1?
- How did the message prove reliable?
- How was it passed down?
- What evidence is presented to validate the message?
- What are some things that may cause us to drift away?

- **RESPOND:**

- What are some things you can do to keep from drifting away?
- What is some evidence that we are drifting away?
- What might we drift towards?

- **MEDITATE:**

- Hebrews 2:2-4 -- *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.

- **MEMORIZE:**

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

LOOK AHEAD



- **FOLLOW:** How will you follow Jesus this week and grow in your love and understanding of Him?
- **FISH:** Who in your sphere of influence needs to hear this story, your story or the gospel?
- **PRAYER:**

- Pray over any request from your group members.
- Kids Pastor - **Nick Judd**
- Ministry - **TJC Kids**
- **Pray for our long-term units on the field:**
 - The Wilsons
 - The Grays
 - The Starks
- **Pray for our mid-term sent ones on the field:**
 - Kaesi
 - Ethan & Dustin (May 16 - June 30)
- **Pray for our short-term teams:**
 - Southeast Asia Team #2 departing on June 15
 - London Team departing June 30
 - Asian Pacific Rim Team #2 departing August 16
 - Central Asia Team #2 departing on September 27
- **Pray for the lost - Unreached People Group (UPG):** Afar in Djibouti



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- **Population in Country:** 334,000

- **Global Population:** 2,785,000
- **Christian Adherent:** 0.03%
- **Evangelical:** 0.01%
- **Primary Religion:** Islam
- **Primary Language:** Afar
- **Summary:** The Afar (or Danakil) claim to be descendants of Noah's son Ham. They live in the East African countries of Djibouti, Ethiopia and Eritrea. The Afar of Djibouti live either along the coastline bordering Ethiopia, or in a portion of the Danakil Desert that stretches across Ethiopia into Eritrea. Djibouti is sometimes called "a valley of hell" because it has one of the hottest, driest climates in the world and suffers from drought. Most Afar are nomads who herd sheep, goats, cattle and camels and some are fishermen. Market day is important to the Afar and some travel great distances to sell and buy necessities. A man's wealth, however, is measured by the size of his herds. They are a proud people who emphasize strength and bravery.
- **Prayer Focus:** The few Afar believers are isolated, with social pressure to return to Islam. They need the Holy Spirit's strength to hold on to their faith in Christ. Ask the Lord to bring forth a movement to Christ among the Afar people this decade.
- Want to keep up with other Unreached People Groups? Download the Unreached of the Day App <https://joshuaproject.net/pray/unreachedoftheday/app>