

Are You Drifting?

Hebrews 2:1-4

I. INTRODUCTION: I

1. **2** Billy Norris writes of a tragically true event that resulted from “drifting”:

“Two young men were fishing above a low dam on a river near their hometown. As they were concentrating on catching fish, they were unaware that they had drifted until they were not far from the water flowing over the dam. When they realized their situation, the current near the dam had become too powerful for them to keep their boat from going over. Below the dam the water was dashing with strong force over great boulders and through crevices in the rocks. Caught by the swirling waters under the rocks, they never came to the surface. After days of relentless searching, the divers finally found one body, and then, two or three days later, the other.” --Gospel Guide

- A. What a tragedy! These two young fellows died because they were “drifting”!
- B. They only noticed they were drifting when it was too late to take corrective action.
- C. That’s what drifting will do! Drifting puts you into a precarious position before you’re aware; and then it can be too late.

2. ****** The dangers of drifting is not limited to the physical realm:

A. The consequences of spiritual drifting are as President Trump would say “Yuge!”

B. ****** The Hebrew writer warns us about spiritual drifting: **Heb. 2:1-4**: “Therefore we must give the more earnest heed [careful attention, NIV] to the things we have heard, lest we drift away. For if the word spoken through angels proved steadfast [binding, NIV], and every transgression and disobedience received a just reward, ³ how shall we escape if we neglect so great a salvation, which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed to us by those who heard Him, ⁴ God also bearing witness both with signs and wonders, with various miracles, and gifts of the Holy Spirit, according to His own will?”

- (1) The theme of the book of Hebrews is the superiority of the New Covenant vs. Old.
- (2) Angels played an important role in revealing the Old Covenant (Acts 7:53), thus, angels were highly respected by these Hebrew Christians.
- (3) They knew the Old Covenant was serious! They knew how “binding” its laws were!
- (4) They knew that “every transgression and disobedience” had a very severe and strict punishment associated with it (e.g., stoning, casting out of the camp, etc.).
- (5) The New Covenant is superior to the Old as it offers a much greater reward (i.e., remission of sins, eternal life).
- (6) ****** Therefore, the consequences of disobeying/drifting away from the New Covenant are even more consequential (**Heb. 12:25-26**: “See that you do not refuse Him who speaks. For if they did not escape who refused Him who spoke on earth, much more shall we not escape if we turn away from Him who speaks from heaven,” Acts 3:22-24).
- (7) That being true, it is essential we guard against drifting away from this superior covenant.

C. But sadly, it is not uncommon for Christians to drift toward destruction.

3. **3** Brethren, **Are You Drifting?** Would you know it if you were drifting?

- A. Periodically we all need a spiritual “check-up.” **2 Cor. 13:5a**: “Examine yourselves as to whether you are in the faith. Test yourselves..”
- B. Today I hope to stir you up for careful introspection regarding the danger of drifting from the Lord.

II. DISCUSSION:

I. **4** *Things we should know about drifting:*

A. **** Drifting requires no effort:** that makes it even more dangerous!

- (1) A boater will begin drifting if he stops rowing (Tippecanoe River).
- (2) The same is true for the Christian, which is why we are told: **Heb. 2:1:** "...we must give the more earnest heed [careful attention, NIV] to the things we have heard, lest we drift away."
- (3) Living the Christian life requires:
 - (a) Soberness: **1 Pet. 5:8:** "Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour."
 - (b) "endurance" (Heb. 10:35-39); i.e., "effort" (Phil. 2:12).

B. **** Drifting is an unconscious process:**

- (1) It is possible to drift unaware:
 - (a) In a boat, undercurrents are often unnoticeable from the surface (undertow).
 - (b) In an airplane the wind can move the plane far off course without you realizing it.
- (2) The same is true in the spiritual realm: **Rom. 13:11-14**
 - (a) Many Christians have slowly drifted away (My greatest surprise returning to Indiana!).
 - (b) Many churches have gradually drifted into error: Only one day to find themselves far removed from the Scriptures; Rev. 2 & 3 (Recall the frog in the pot!).

C. **** It's impossible to drift upstream or against the tide:**

- (1) Faithfulness to the Lord is like rowing upstream: We can't ease up and stand still, we must constantly be "*giving all diligence*" to grow in the faith (2 Pet. 1:5-11).
- (2) We must continue to grow; the moment we stop growing, we start going backwards or downwards (**2 Pet. 3:17-18:** "*You therefore, beloved, since you know this beforehand, beware lest you also fall from your own steadfastness, being led away with the error of the wicked; 18 but grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.*").

D. **** The speed downstream increases:**

- (1) The dangers increase with the speed of drifting.
 - (a) If you can hear the noise of the waterfall, it's too late (Recall visit to Niagara Falls.).
 - (b) When we lose sight of land, it is more difficult to discern that we are drifting.
- (2) As we move farther and farther from the Lord, we care less and less about what we are doing and where we are going (Gal. 6:7-8; Hos. 8:7).

E. **** Our drifting poses dangers to others:**

- (1) A drifting ship is a hazard to all other vessels at sea.
- (2) Drifting Christians are a hazard to others:
 - (a) They are a drag on their home congregation:
 - (i) They are a source of discouragement instead of encouragement (**Jer. 20:9:** "*Then I said, 'I will not make mention of Him, Nor speak anymore in His name.' But His word was in my heart like a burning fire Shut up in my bones; I was weary of holding it back, And I could not.*"; **Heb. 10:24-25:** "*And let us consider one another in order to stir up love and*

good works, 25 not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as is the manner of some, but exhorting one another, and so much the more as you see the Day approaching.”).

(ii) They more easily fall into error (**Eph. 4:14**: “...we should no longer be children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, in the cunning craftiness of deceitful plotting.”).

(b) They are a drag on the cause of Christ (Matt. 5:13-16; cantankerous brethren can ruin a congregation’s ability to convert the lost!).

(c) Drifting parents lose golden opportunities to teach their children (Eph. 6:4; cf. 5:25ff).

F. ** Drifting inevitably ends in shipwreck:

(1) A boat adrift will crash on the rocks or go over the falls (Niagara Falls).

(2) A spiritually adrift Christian will either “die on the vine,” drift back into the world, or succumb to religious error (Some at Belleville left for the Christian Church because they were “drifting”!).

(3) For those who drift spiritually through their own neglect, there shall be no escape from a just punishment (**Heb. 2:1-3**: “Therefore we must give the more earnest heed to the things we have heard, lest we drift away. 2 For if the word spoken through angels proved steadfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just reward, 3 how shall we escape if we neglect so great a salvation...” We won’t escape!!!).

5 [The danger of drifting is real, or God’s Word would not so clearly warn against it. So again, I ask, “Are You Drifting?” To help answer the question, here are some...]

2. Common signs of drifting:

A. ** Diminishing desire to study God’s Word and pray:

(1) The Bible is a unique book: it’s a source of information that cannot be found anywhere else.

(a) Without God’s revelation, we could not know our origin, purpose, and destiny.

(i) It tells of sin’s dreadful consequences and how God saves us (**Rom. 6:23**: “For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.”; Jn. 3:16).

(ii) It provides direction for living happy, useful lives (Jn. 6:68; Psalms 1; Phil. 4:7).

(b) When one loses their desire to study God’s word, they are drifting! Rom. 10:17

(c) There are no “magic bullets”! The Bible is like every other book in one very important feature: It must be studied to be understood and applied to one’s life! 2 Tim. 2:15

(2) Prayer is a wonderful blessing; it is our direct avenue to communicate with God!

(a) Jesus, who loved His Father, prayed often (Mk 1:35; 6:46).

(b) He expressed concern that His disciples not grow weary to pray: **Lk. 18:1**: “Then He spoke a parable to them, that men always ought to pray and not lose heart,”

(c) Is it any wonder then that Paul writes: “Continue earnestly in prayer, being vigilant in it with thanksgiving”? (Col. 4:2)

(d) Think! Is it illogical for a Christian to not want to pray! NO! Rom. 1:20 (i.e., “eternal power and deity”; Gen. 1; esp. v. 16: “He made the stars also.”); Eph. 3:20

(e) When a Christian prays less and less, he is drifting more and more!

B. ** Diminishing desire to be with God’s people:

- (1) This includes attending services to worship God.
 - (a) One should always have the attitude of the Psalmist (**Psa. 122:1**: “*I was glad when they said to me, ‘Let us go into the house of the LORD.’*”).
 - (b) But if we no longer rejoice to worship God with the brethren, we are drifting!
- (2) But our association with God’s people should extend beyond the services of the church (We share the most important relationship there is! “*in Christ*”; we share a “*like precious faith*”! 1 Pet. 1:1 We share a relationship that transcends all “earthly” relationships...even “blood” relationships!).
 - (a) We are to be concerned with edifying one another (**Rom. 14:19**: “*Therefore let us pursue the things which make for peace and the things by which one may edify another.*”).
 - (b) Such edification should occur even daily (**Heb. 3:13**: “*but exhort one another daily, while it is called ‘Today,’ lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin.*”).
 - (c) The right kind of friendship strengthens us, while the wrong kind leads us to sin; we need one another on other days besides Sunday!

Eccl. 4:9-12: “*Two are better than one, Because they have a good reward for their labor. If one falls, the other will lift up his companion. But woe to him who is alone when he falls, For he has no one to help him up. If two lie down together, they will keep warm; But how can one be warm alone? If one is overpowered by another, two can withstand him. And a threefold cord is not quickly broken.*”

1 Cor. 15:33: “*Do not be deceived: ‘Evil company corrupts good habits.’*”
 - (d) Take advantage of all opportunities to spend time with one another (e.g., potlucks).
 - (e) When a Christian prefers the companionship of people of the world, rather than fellow Christians, he is drifting toward the rocks of spiritual destruction!

C. ** Diminishing desire to share the gospel:

- (1) When one obeys the gospel, he knows God has blotted out his sins, made him a new creature in Christ, and he wants to tell the world about Jesus (Acts 8:4, 39: eunuch “*went on his way rejoicing*”).

1 Thess. 1:8: “*For from you the word of the Lord has sounded forth, not only in Macedonia and Achaia, but also in every place. Your faith toward God has gone out, so that we do not need to say anything.*”

Jn. 1:45: “*Philip found Nathanael and said to him, ‘We have found Him of whom Moses in the law, and also the prophets, wrote — Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph.’*”
- (2) Do you remember the zeal you had when you were first baptized?!
- (3) When a Christian no longer desires to take the gospel to others, he is drifting!

D. ** Increasing thrill/attraction to things of the world:

- (1) For example, greater thrill over worldly honors:
 - (a) Parents excited about children’s worldly success (e.g., sports, school, job), but don’t demonstrate any apparent concern over their spiritual growth.
 - (b) With the passing time, the entire family can drift beyond the point of no return (cf. Rev. 2:4: church at Ephesus had “*left your first love*”; 2 Tim. 4:10: Demas).
 - (c) The apostle John warns us against the love of the world and the things in the world (1 Jn. 2:15-17).

- (2) Evidenced by an increasing emphasis on the enjoyment of worldly pleasures while sacrificing spiritual things (e.g., sports, entertainment, internet, hobbies, etc. vs. worshiping with the saints; attending gospel meetings).
- (a) Paul described some who were “*lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God*” (2 Tim. 3:4).
- (b) **Thought experiment:** Imagine the apostle Paul is alive and was a member here at Westside.
- ☛ Would he attend Bible study on Sundays and Wednesdays?
 - ☛ Would he attend Sunday worship? AM? PM?
 - ☛ Would he attend our gospel meetings?
 - ☛ Would he support other gospel meetings in the area?
- (c) 2 Cor. 13:5
- (d) If we reach the point when we find more pleasure in worldly activities than meeting with others to worship God, we are definitely spiritually adrift!

6[If we are to remain close to God, it will not be easy. We need some...]

3. Remedies for drifting:

A. **** Keep rowing:** Recall Jim Valvano: “Don’t give up. Don’t ever give up.”

- (1) Spiritually speaking, this involves diligence (2 Pet. 1:5,10; Do you consciously do so?).
- (2) It also means to keep abounding in our Christian graces (2 Pet. 1:10-11).
- (3) There is no place for “retirement” in living the Christian life!

Phil. 3:12-15: “*Not that I have already attained, or am already perfected; but I press on, that I may lay hold of that for which Christ Jesus has also laid hold of me. 13 Brethren, I do not count myself to have apprehended; but one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forward to those things which are ahead, 14 I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus. 15 Therefore let us, as many as are mature, have this mind...*”

2 Cor. 4:16-17: “*Therefore we do not lose heart. Even though our outward man is perishing, yet the inward man is being renewed day by day. 17 For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, is working for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory,*”

Rev. 2:10: “*...be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life.*”

2 Tim. 4:7-8: “*I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. 8 Finally, there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give to me on that Day, and not to me only but also to all who have loved His appearing.*”

Eccl. 12:1: “*Remember now your Creator in the days of your youth, before the difficult days come,*”

B. **** Watch for undercurrents:**

- (1) We must always be on guard for the undercurrent of temptation (1 Pet. 5:8; **1 Cor. 10:13:** “*No temptation has overtaken you except such as is common to man; but God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear it.*”).
- (2) We all have a fleshly nature which wages war against the soul (**1 Pet. 2:11:** “*Beloved, I beg you as sojourners and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts which war against the soul,*”; **Gal. 5:16-18:** “*I say then: Walk in the Spirit, and you shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh. 17 For the flesh*

lusts against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; and these are contrary to one another, so that you do not do the things that you wish. 18 But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law.”).

- C. **** Expect to go against the tide: 1 Pet. 4:3-4:** “For we have spent enough of our past lifetime in doing the will of the Gentiles — when we walked in lewdness, lusts, drunkenness, revelries, drinking parties, and abominable idolatries. 4 In regard to these, they think it strange that you do not run with them in the same flood of dissipation, speaking evil of you.”

(1) There are many tides to sweep us away:

- (a) Popularity, peer pressure, the praise of others, family (**Matt 10:37:** “He who loves father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me. And he who loves son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me.”).
- (b) Modernism, skepticism, humanism, post-modern mindset of society.
- (c) Denominationalism, false doctrines of all kinds.
- (d) Liberalism and worldliness in the church: probably the greatest enemies of the church in our lifetime.
- (e) Neglect: indifference, apathy, lack of interest and concern (i.e., Not only on our part, but these same bad attitudes among the brethren. News flash! There are hypocrites in the church!).
- (f) There are things you and I cannot even imagine today that will challenge our faith tomorrow! (e.g., ‘pc’-ism, gay marriage, transgender issues, etc.) 1 Cor. 15:58

(2) If one drifts along with the majority, he will most certainly be lost (Matt. 7:13-14).

- D. **** We must strengthen our anchorage:**

- (1) A ship’s captain goes to great lengths to ensure his boat is firmly anchored and cannot drift.
- (2) Our hope in Christ is the “*anchor of the soul*” (Heb. 6:19: our anchor extends into heaven!).

(a) We must work to be rooted and grounded in Christ:

Col. 2:6-7: “As you therefore have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in Him, 7 rooted and built up in Him and established in the faith, as you have been taught, abounding in it with thanksgiving.”

(b) Requires our minds to be anchored to the truth:

Eph. 4:14-15: “that we should no longer be children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, in the cunning craftiness of deceitful plotting, 15 but, speaking the truth in love, may grow up in all things into Him who is the head — Christ”

(c) We must properly handle the difficulties life throws at us:

Rom. 5:3-4: “And not only that, but we also glory in tribulations, knowing that tribulation produces perseverance; 4 and perseverance, character; and character, hope.”

Jas. 1:2-4: “My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into various trials, 3 knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience. 4 But let patience have its perfect work, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking nothing.”

(d) Rooted and grounded in the love of Christ:

Eph. 3:16-19: “That He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with **might** through His Spirit in the inner man, 17 that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; that you, being rooted and grounded in love, 18 may be able to

comprehend with all the saints what is the width and length and depth and height — I 9 to know the love of Christ which passes knowledge; that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.”

- (e) **PRAY!** I Thess. 5:17; Eph. 3:20 Jesus took advantage of the power of prayer to get Him through difficulties, thus, so should we! If the Son of God needed constant prayer to get Himself through life, what about you and me?!

Col. 4:2: *“Continue earnestly in prayer, being vigilant in it with thanksgiving;”*

Phil. 4:6-7: *“Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God; 7 and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.”*

III. CONCLUSION: 7

1. Brothers and sisters are you drifting?
 - A. The danger is real and we would be foolish to think or say otherwise.
 - B. Many strong Christians have drifted away from the Lord; so, it's arrogant to say it could not happen to me! **1 Cor. 10:12:** *“Therefore let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall.”*
2. Are there signs of drifting in your life? Honestly ask yourself:
 - A. Is my desire to study God's word and pray diminishing?
 - B. Is my desire to be with God's people not what it has been in the past?
 - C. Have I lost my desire to save those who are lost?
 - D. Am I too much enamored by the things of the world?
3. Brethren, our salvation in Christ is simply too great for us to neglect! ****Heb. 2:1-3**
4. Invitation

Adapted from a lesson by David J. Riggs.