

Hebrews 2-1-4  
The danger of drifting!

**Introduction:**

During his freshmen, sophomore, and junior year of college Jake (not his real name) was on fire for God. He served on the student leadership team of the campus ministry. His senior year he even moved back into the dorms for the sole purpose of evangelize incoming freshmen. After college one of Jake's friend joined the army and died in combat in the middle east. This really shook Jake's faith. He wondered how a good God could allow his friend to die in combat.

Jake went on with life. He got married and then threw himself into his job. In his mid 20s he took over his dad's massive construction business with over 600 employees. Working 70 hours a week did not leave much time for the things of God. A few years later he sold his share of the company for millions. I saw him recently. It was a very sad meeting. He no longer called himself a Christian.

Jake slowly drifted away from God. The drift was imperceptible at first. This is why drift is so dangerous. The person drifting rarely has any clue that it is happening.

What causes slow drift?

More and more time spend on Hobbies.

More and more time at the office leaving little time for the things of God.

Sometimes intense trials leave us questioning God's goodness which starts the drift.

Years and years of familiarity often causes drift...

Sin causes drift... (Tim Keller story)

No one is immune from drifting.

How do we avoid deadly drift? This brings us to Hebrews 2:1-4.

This is the first of five warnings in Hebrews. All of them deal with drifting away from Christ. This is a major theme in Hebrews.

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

The word "drift" in verse 1 is a nautical term. When boats drift, the movement is nearly imperceptible, no one is concerned. But fourteen hours later the boat may end up in deadly waters, about to smash into a cliff.

**How do we avoid drifting away from Jesus? We pay close attention to three aspects of salvation!**

*Pay close attention to the history of salvation.*

*Pay close attention to the greatness of salvation.*

*Pay close attention to the truthfulness of salvation.*

**First, pay close attention to the history of salvation.**

In verses 2-3 the author of Hebrews encourages us to learn from the history of Israel. While looking at the history of Israel, the author of Hebrews argues from the lesser to the greater. This was a common rhetorical technique in the 1<sup>st</sup> century. Let's look at verses 1-2. There we learn that...

**Neglecting Angelic messengers led to punishment.**

**Hebrews 2:1–2 (ESV)** — **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,

The message declared by angels was the law of Moses. According to several NT texts, angels mediated the law of Moses (See Acts 7:53, Gal 3:19, Deut. 33:2). In other words, the angels were somehow involved in delivering the laws of Moses to the people of God.

Unfortunately, Israel ignored the law of Moses often, which mean that they ignored the angels who gave the laws of Moses. As a result, they experienced just retribution (i.e. punishment).

These punishments are described in detail in Deut. 28. Here are some highlights...

Israel lost their land and their animals.

Their wives were violated and they children became slaves.

God sent pestilence, plague, and drought.

Crops failed, enemies ruled, and the people of God were hauled off to a foreign land.

*If neglecting Angelic messengers led to severe punishment.*

**How much more... will neglecting the son of God led to punishment?**

**Hebrews 2:2–3 (ESV)** — **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?...

Again, the author is arguing from the lesser to the greater.

Jesus is much greater than the Angels. We saw this in chapter 1.

He is the creator of all things.

He is the sustainer of all things.

He is eternal.

He is God's unique son.

He is the king of kings

The angels worship him.

And he is God's final revelation (Heb. 1:2)

If neglecting the angelic messengers led to punishment, how much more will neglecting Jesus, the son of God, lead to punishment?

The word escape, used in verse 2, is often used in the context of end times judgment (Luke 21:36, Rom. 2:3, 1 Thes. 5:3). Those who drift away from Jesus by ignoring his word will surely not escape the wrath of God.

**Illustration:**

Waller hall... big party, kid bringing beer into the dorm, "who are you???"

It is one thing to ignore your brother, little sister, or friend.

It is worse to ignore your teacher...

It is even worse to ignore your parents...

But how much worse would it be for you to ignore the president of the United States of America?

**Application:**

The author is warning all of us.

Some of you think..

I can drift for a while...

I can skip out on church, fellowship, and spiritual disciplines for a season?

If the Jews were punished for ignoring the angels how much more will you be punished for drifting away from the son of God.

Notice, that the pronoun in verse 1 is the word “we.” In other words, the author is addressing the church, that is, people who claim to be Christians.

Does this imply that Christians can fall away?

What about John 10:28?

**John 10:28 (ESV) — 28 I give them eternal life, and they will never perish, and no one will snatch them out of my hand.**

Christians can't fall away, but people who think they are Christians can fall away.

I'm sure Judas Iscariot thought he was a Christian. Some of you need to hear John 10:28 but others need to hear Hebrews 2:1-3.

We must persevere until the end to be saved. Some of the means that God uses to help us persevere are warning passages like this one. This will come up often in our Hebrews series.

*To avoid drifting....*

*Pay close attention to the history of salvation.*

**Second, pay close attention to the greatness of salvation.**

Most of this second point comes from chapter 2 of “The infinite Journey” by Andrew Davis, which is an excellent book on Christian growth.

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

What is the message that we have heard? The message of salvation, but this is not just any salvation, it is a great salvation.

**Hebrews 2:3 (ESV) — 3 how shall we escape if we neglect such a great salvation?...**

**The word great is trite...**

“THE WORD “GREAT” IS THROWN around so casually in our culture that it loses its meaning. In nature, there are the Great Lakes, the Great Barrier Reef, and the great white shark; in history, Alexander the

Great and the Great War; in literature, *The Great Gatsby* and *Great Expectations*. Every sports enthusiast likes reading the list of the “100 Greatest Baseball Players of All Time”, and Muhammad Ali called himself “The Greatest.” Even in commercial life, you can go to Great Clips for a haircut and search on Google to find “great wedding gift ideas” or a “great vacation spot.” In many of these cases, the word “great” is an overstatement. However, when it comes to the salvation Christ has won for us, the word “great” is an understatement!” (Andy Davis, 35)

### Can we fathom the greatness of salvation? No...

“In 1521, Ferdinand Magellan, in the process of leading the first ships to circumnavigate the globe, attempted to sound the depths of the central Pacific Ocean. He spliced six lengthy lines together and attached them to a cannonball. He lowered the cannon ball until the line ran out—four hundred fathoms, or about 2400 feet. Magellan concluded that the ocean was immeasurably deep—literally “unfathomable.” At that place in the Pacific, he would have probably needed as many as fifty such lines spliced together to hit bottom! Yet when we come to the infinite richness of the gospel, we are like sailors out in a rowboat, pulling pieces of string out of our pockets, splicing them together and trying to find the bottom of the Pacific Ocean.” (Davis, 37)

After writing 11 chapters on the glories of the gospel the apostle Paul writes-

**Romans 11:33 (ESV) — 33** Oh, the depth of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments and how inscrutable his ways!

**Psalms 71:15 (ESV) — 15** My mouth will tell of your righteous acts, of your deeds of salvation all the day, for their number is past my knowledge.

Why can't we fathom the greatness of our salvation? Andy Davis gives several reasons...

We don't perfectly understand how sinful we were, still are, and will continue to be, until we are glorified.

We don't perfectly understand how holy God is and how offensive were our sins against him, how hot and righteous was his wrath against us, and how great was our danger (eternity in hell).

We don't perfectly understand how great is our heavenly inheritance, how much joy and blessing awaits us when we are finished being saved, nor do we understand what kind of glory will be revealed to us (the amazing perfection of the New Heaven and New Earth) and in us (for we will shine like the sun).

We don't perfectly understand the price that was paid on our behalf, the infinite value of the blood of Christ and of the immense suffering he absorbed in propitiating the wrath of God.

We don't perfectly understand the infinite power that is at work in us and around us to guarantee our final perfection in Christ, the completion of our salvation.

We don't perfectly understand how much God does for us every day to keep us in the faith—to protect us from the devil, to resist our own fleshly sinful tendencies, to filter out temptations that are too hard for us, to feed and nourish our faith.

We don't perfectly understand the human sacrifices that were made along the way in two thousand years of Church history to ensure that we would at some point hear the true and pure gospel.

We don't perfectly understand how much of all of these same things God is doing to a countless multitude from every tribe and language and people and nation around the world. (Davis, 38-39)

Application...

Although we can't fully grasp the greatness of salvation, we can pay much more attention to the details of salvation. Is there a greater topic to devote your mental energies too? No!!!

To avoid drift we must pay careful attention to the greatness of salvation.

How do we do this?

For starters... Come to this sermon series on the book of Hebrews. Take notes, read commentaries, engage in home group discussion.

Study of the book of Romans. The book of Romans contains the most detailed explanation of the gospel in the whole Bible. Read it with a good commentary (Boice or Stott).

Read saved by grace by Anthony Hoekema

Read Gospel by JD Greear.

Read, read, read... I'm not a reader. When you became a Christian that changed!!! If you don't read, you will not grow!!!

The more you know about God's grace, the more capacity you have to experience God's grace. You can never plumb the depths of God's great salvation.

*You are warning me about drifting from the Christian faith. But how do I even know that the Christian faith is true? This brings us to the last point.*

*To avoid drifting we must...*

*Pay close attention to the history of salvation*

*Pay close attention to the greatness of salvation*

**Third, pay close attention to the truthfulness of salvation.**

Sometimes we drift because we doubt!!! When we doubt what should we do? How do we know that the message of salvation is true?

In verses 3-4 we see lots of courtroom language, which means the author is attempting to build a case for the truthfulness of the gospel message. Let's look at a few reasons to believe the truthfulness of salvation.

**The truthfulness of salvation was declared by Jesus!**

**Hebrews 2:3 (ESV) — 3 how shall we escape if we neglect such a great salvation? It was declared at first by the Lord,...**

The message of salvation through Jesus Christ was not declared by a human prophet, an angel, Ellen White, Mary Baker Eddy, or Muhammad. It was declared by Jesus Christ, the Lord, the son of God, the second person of the trinity.

This is why we must listen to it.

**Hebrews 1:1–2 (ESV)** — 1 Long ago, at many times and in many ways, God spoke to our fathers by the prophets, 2 but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed the heir of all things, through whom also he created the world.

Jesus is the final authoritative prophet.

Jesus is the climax of revelation.

Jesus is the son of god.

Jesus proved that he was God, must be listened to, and obeyed by rising from the grave.

Jesus said that all those who cast themselves on his mercy will be saved!

*The truthfulness of salvation was declared by Jesus. In addition...*

**The truthfulness of salvation was defended by eyewitnesses!**

**Hebrews 2:3 (ESV)** — 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,

The message about the truthfulness of salvation through Jesus Christ was heard by the apostles. Who told them? Jesus Christ himself. Why did they believe him? Because they saw him rise from the dead.

All of twelve of the disciples, died as martyrs for Jesus. In other words, they were so sure of the truthfulness of salvation that they banked their lives on it.

### **Illustration:**

a few weeks ago, there was big news in Seattle. Someone claimed that Bill Gates went to Dicks Hamburgers to buy a burger.

David, I don't believe you. Why in the world would a man worth close to 100 billion dollars eat at Dick's drive inn? Was he really there? Yes... how do I know? There were eye witnesses.

**Show picture...**

He ordered a cheeseburger, fries and a coke. Apparently, he was there all by himself.

The image was captured by Paul Rich at the Dick's location on Northeast 45th Street in Seattle's Wallingford neighborhood, around 7 p.m. last Sunday.

God does not ask us to leave our brains at the door of the church. We believe Christianity because it is reasonable to believe Christianity. Over 500 eye witnesses saw his resurrected body and heard his teaching and reported it to us (1 Cor. 15).

Facts matter, history matters, the history of Jesus matters, we are saved because of what happened in history and the truthfulness of this history was verified by eye witnesses.

*The truthfulness of salvation was declared by Jesus!*

*The truthfulness of salvation was defended by eyewitnesses!*

**The truthfulness of salvation was demonstrated by God!**

**Hebrews 2:4 (ESV) — 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.**

In the NT, the truthfulness of the gospel was demonstrated by signs, wonders, and miracles. These three words are synonyms.

In the book of Acts the preaching of the gospel was accompanied by signs and wonders. People were raised from the dead, the lame were made to walk, the blind were made to see, and lepers were cleansed.

See Acts 2:22,43, 4:30, 5:12, 14:3, 15:12

These miracles demonstrated that the message preached came from God. When you see someone raise someone from the dead, you are more than likely going to listen to them. This is what happened in the early church. This is still happening around the world today. God still performs signs and wonders to confirm the gospel's truthfulness.

**Illustration:** Andrew and Katie Meeks and the UGM experience...

Application:

When you are tempted to drift because of doubt remember that...

*The truthfulness of salvation was declared by Jesus, defended by eyewitnesses, and demonstrated by God!*

## **Conclusion:**

I recently read a story about a guy who vacationed in Hawaii. One day he went snorkeling with a guide. The snorkeling guide warned the group not to drift out past a certain point in the bay. He said, "There is a very strong current in that part of the bay that will pull you way out to sea." To make sure that people really understood the seriousness of the drift he concluded by telling several stories about the people who ignored him. Their dead bodies were found washed up several miles down the coast.

This is what the writer to the Hebrews is doing. He is warning us about the danger of drift. Drift is deadly.

We can avoid drift if we

*Pay close attention to the history of salvation.*

*Pay close attention to the greatness of salvation.*

*Pay close attention to the truthfulness of salvation.*

Lets pray...