
The Eternal Danger of Spiritual Drift

Hebrews 2:1-4

Introduction I am sure that all of you have said to someone else, “Please pay attention.” It is even more likely that you have heard these words with varying emphasis and strength from parents or teachers or coaches or bosses. We know how important it is to pay attention.

- Not paying attention to instructions can ruin meals, destroy equipment or give us green hair.
- Not paying attention can cause car accidents and life wrecks. It can bring wrong answers on quizzes and failure in life’s tests.
- Not paying attention can flaw the multi-million dollar Hubble telescope mirror and can sink the Titanic.

Now all of these things strike us as being terribly important in their context. But, this passage tells us that if chapter one is true (and it is), then there is an immense danger that is constantly threatening men and women, teens and children.

The Description of Our Danger

(v.1-3a)

Our responsibility to the Word we hear.

If Jesus is all that chapter one says He is, if Jesus is greater than the prophets and greater than the angels in His deity, if Jesus is the final and decisive Word of God in His revelation, redemption and rule, if angels worship and serve Him, if all that God has, is and will reveal has been spoken in Christ, then *we had better pay attention*.

As a Duty

(v.1)

The first duty in the book of Hebrews is to *listen*—that is to say, to hear and to heed what this immensely important revelation of God that Jesus is means for us.

Now the words here tell us that it is exceedingly important that we go on listening, learning and living God’s revelation, redemption and rule in Christ. It is not something we can be casual about. It is of vital importance to God and to us. For if I understand this whole text, a constant and ongoing inattention to the Word exposes you to the judgement of God and unmasks you as an unbeliever.

It is a sad fact that the words here clearly identify Christians today, yes even many of you.

Where We are Inattentive

You are not giving serious attention Jesus and to the Word.

It is something that we are hearing. Now it is something we are hearing because it is what God has spoken. And through the Scriptures, God continues to speak. So then are we hearing the Word? Do we listen to it daily? Do we see it as important to us as our food and our water?

WE ARE INATTENTIVE IN OUR READING OF THE WORD. I dare not ask this morning for a showing of hands as to how many of you have even merely read a portion of the Word (not read about a portion of the Word) 4 times this week. In fact, when was the last time, apart from church or family devotions, you read the Bible with prayer and serious attention? Loved ones, this Book is how we know Jesus. It is how we worship Jesus. It is how we love Jesus. It is how we hear Jesus.

WE ARE INATTENTIVE IN OUR HEARING OF THE WORD. O we come to church. We find our Bibles (because we can't remember where we left them last Sunday instead of where we put them this morning) and we sit and watch the people or the clock or whatever it is that can be seen from our vantage point. We sleep. We think about the week, the afternoon, the meal. And, yes, I am being rude. And no, I am not exaggerating for I have done all those things myself and I can see many of you doing them even now. Ultimately the attention you give to the Word here reflects the attention you give to the Word morning by morning and evening by evening.

WE ARE INATTENTIVE IN OUR USE OF THE WORD. When sin and trouble and difficulty come, do we instinctively go to the Word for our solution? When joys and gladness and good things come, do we express them and enjoy them in words and ways informed by the Word? When our child disobeys, or our spouse angers us or our finances frustrate us, do we search through the Bible for what God has spoken in Christ about that trouble? And do not say to me that you do not know enough about the Bible to do that—where do you think it is going to begin? Do you think that God leaves a seeking saint whose eyes are fixed on the Word struggling without answers?

So what does this bring about? What is the consequence of not paying attention to the Word, to Christ?

Where We are Drifting

This is terrifying is it not? Not paying attention to the greatness of the revelation, redemption and rule of Jesus produces drift. And this is an amazing and terrible danger.

Hebrews says that if we do not vigilantly pay closer attention to the Word of God, we will float by—we will drift away from God and His Word. We all know people like this. Some are in this room. There is no urgency. No vigilance. No focused listening or considering or fixing our eyes on Jesus. And the result is not a standing still, but a drifting away.

For you see, there is no standing still. This life is not a lake, it is a river—a torrent flowing downward toward destruction. If you do not earnestly listen to Jesus, then you will go backward. You will float by.

O listen to me. You must see that the greatest danger to you becoming comfortable, respectable and passive in your Christian life. When you think that you have enough momentum in the minimal of ministry to carry you along. Where you once were faithful to every service, now you come when it suits you. When once you served with all your heart in all you were gifted to do, now you are content to sit. Where once you struggled against every weed of sin and cultivated all of

God's graces, your garden is now choked with cares and pleasures. Loved one, you are drifting.

And in your drift you are nearing the rapids. There is in your ears the thundering roar of your life rushing over the edge. But the waters now are still calm. You are resting on your oars. You comfortably look back at where you have been instead of giving attention to where you are heading. Wake up! I say to you, wake up!

Here is God's solemn invitation to be satisfied in Jesus so that we do not drift downstream into deceitful desires. Here is God's serious command to listen, to pay attention, to firmly anchor yourself on Christ in heaven so that *you do not drift*.

As a Warning

(v.2-3a)

We are alerted to our danger, not only by being told what our duty is, but also by a stern warning. This warning comes to you as condition in verse 2, "if these things are so," followed by the consequence in verse 3. Once again the author wants to press home very forcibly how infinitely dangerous all this is.

In its Content

(v.2-3a)

Let us think of this as an assertion and then draw the consequence from it. Every word that God spoke through angels and prophets in the Old Testament has been demonstrated over and over again to be inflexible, unalterable and surely ended in the just recompense on every single violation and transgression. What God gave, what God spoke in many portions and many ways, that divine revelation could not be ignored with impunity. Even in its greater weakness and variety and diversity, it had to be obeyed. It was quite literally a do or die situation.

If the revelation of the Old Covenant, if that Word spoken by God through angels exacted that kind of judgment, then what do you think will be the judgment as a result of the greater, final and decisive revelation in Christ and His Word?

In its Consequence

Now think about these words in verse 3. It is question. It is meant for our minds not merely hear that it is impossible to escape, but to actually say, "I cannot escape" in response to the question.

What is our second danger here in this paragraph? Neglecting our salvation. Piper put it best in the following words.

"Now this is a sobering word for the world and for the church, because most people *do* neglect the greatness of salvation. How many people do you know who give serious, sustained attention to the salvation accomplished by Christ—who love it, and think about it, and meditate on it, and marvel at it, and feel continual gratitude for, and commend it to others as valuable, and weave it into the lesser things of their lives and set their hopes on it? Do you live this way? Do I? It is not astonishing how neglectful we can be of our great salvation?

"Is there a sense of greatness in your mind about your salvation? Do you respond to the greatness of your salvation? Of do you neglect it? Do you treat your salvation the way you treat your will or your title to your car or the deed on your

house? You signed it once and it is in a file drawer somewhere, but it is not really a very great thing. It has little daily effect on you. Basically, you neglect it. So this an astonishing word to us. To neglect our great salvation is to come into judgment and there will be no escape.

“And this message is not just for us. It is for the world. This great salvation is the good news, the gospel of the glory of the blessed God. It is the salvation (and the only salvation) that brings man to God. The world neglects this salvation to its eternal peril.

“Well, what is it—this great salvation? What He’s saying is: Don’t neglect being loved by God. Don’t neglect being forgiven and accepted and protected and strengthened and guided by Almighty God. don’t neglect the sacrifice of Christ’s life on the cross. Don’t neglect the free gift of righteousness imputed by faith. Don’t neglect the removal of God’s wrath and the reconciled smile of God. Don’t neglect the indwelling of the Holy Spirit and fellowship and friendship of the living Christ. Don’t neglect the radiance of God’s glory in the face of Jesus. Don’t neglect the free access to the throne of grace. Don’t neglect the inexhaustible treasure of God’s promises. This is truly a great salvation. Neglecting it is very evil.”

Is your life covered with the dust of neglecting your salvation?

So here are the great and terrible dangers.

- Not paying attention to the Word with the consequence of drift.
- Neglecting our salvation with the consequence of judgment.

But what is it that makes our response to the Word of Jesus and His salvation so important?

The Reason We Are In Danger

(v.3b-4)

The reliability of the Word we have.

Now let me ask you. Did you feel a strong command to give attention to every word, every sentence, every pronouncement that President Clinton said and a grave danger if you neglect the hopes and salvation he offered? Absolutely not. Why is that so? Because we learned that his promises and pronouncements were unreliable. Today’s truth is tomorrow’s lie.

But when we come to the Word, we come very differently. We come to what we are absolutely sure is reliable and authoritative and sufficient. The author here is answering a very important question. In fact, this very same question is being asked today, not only by unbelievers, but by professing people within the church.

How do I know that the Scriptures are the revelation of Christ? How do I know that the message given and commands required and the principles verbalized and the God revealed in its pages is trustworthy?

Spoken by Christ (v.3b)

The New Covenant revelation we have begins with the life and ministry and teaching of Jesus Christ. The great New Covenant truths which tell us how great our salvation and our Savior are was first taught by Jesus. Those words which we now read were then spoken by our Lord. But we were not there. So how can we be sure?

Confirmed by the Apostles (v.3b)

What Jesus taught was confirmed to the author and others who did not walk and talk with Christ on a daily basis, by those who did. So the author of Hebrews and others who came to Christ after His resurrection were utterly convinced of those truths because they were taught them by men who walked with Christ.

Attested by God (v.4)

But how could we be sure that what they were saying about God and about Christ was true? What would authenticate their testimony seeing that Jesus was ascended into heaven? God authenticated their exposition and explanation of the words and works of Christ by signs and wonders and various miracles and by distributions of the Spirit.

In other words, we know the New Covenant is true and reliable and worthy of our attention and trust as the revelation of Christ because God gave these signs and wonders and miracles to the apostles and prophets who were the instruments of that revelation.

So we had better pay attention to this Book and to the greatness of the salvation and the Savior it speaks of because we can trust its accuracy and authority.

Now, I said that some are still asking this same question today. There are many ways of making the Word secondary, insignificant and insufficient. But one of the most appalling ways is to add to its truth and to claim that you have the same authenticating signs as the apostles and prophets *when all the verbs of this text are in the past tense*. Signs and miracles and wonders and distributions of the Spirit were given to those who were writing the Scriptures. Their authenticity and authority was therefore attested to. But not so today. This Book is finished. What God has spoken and what He yet speaks, He does so *in this Book*.

- One of the signs that you may not be born again is that you hear what I am saying and see no danger in drifting nor feel a desire to guard against drifting and are not really gripped by how great your salvation really is. May God's Word cut like a scalpel deep into your hard heart and open it up so that you will feel with amazing pain how awful your sin really is. Then may you turn to Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith. May you trust Him. **Conclusion**
- And one of the signs of hope this morning is that many of you may be startled up to realize the danger you are in. You have suddenly come to realize that you are drifting. You have a rising desire to set your eyes on Jesus, to give attention to His Word and to stop neglecting the greatness of the salvation with which you were redeemed.