

You've Been Warned Part 1

Lest We Fall

Hebrews 2:1-4, 3:12-15, 4:11-13

Memory Verses: Hebrews 3:13

MANUSCRIPT

Introduction (Me, We, & the Struggle)

We've been in the book of Hebrews throughout the summer and what we've seen should open our eyes and minds to the revelation of Jesus Christ as the supreme and unmatched God of the New Covenant. He is better than Moses and the angels. He is better than all of the prophets and priests. He is the new Adam and the new Moses. His blood speaks a better word than the blood of bulls and goats. As the Great High Priest he offers us a new promise, a new tabernacle, a new sacrifice, and a new focus; trust in Christ over trying harder!

But as we have seen... on the road of the greater themes of Hebrews there are warning signs which are worthy of our attention. These warning signs remind us that the book of Hebrews is not gentle. It was not written to coddle us and soothe us back into spiritual complacency. In fact, the book of Hebrews is more like a fire alarm ringing in a burning house. 5 alarms to be more precise. These 5 primary warning passages must cause us to pause and reflect on our relationship with Christ. They are not here to scare us away from God – but to pull us back to Him before it's too late. These warnings are God's mercy in bold red letters! They scream, “**Don't play games with Jesus. Don't grow dull to his voice. Don't drift. Don't harden your heart. Don't neglect the greatest salvation ever offered.**”

Today we are going to start with three warning passages which combine to say almost the same thing... we are in danger of falling away! Or as the bible says it... “lest we fall.” Lest is a strange word. We don't use it all that often. In fact we may never use it except in the Bible. But when we see it we know exactly what it means... Stop, focus, and don't do that thing! And as we will see today... falling doesn't just happen... falling starts casually. So casually, you might not even know its happening.

For example, I remember many years ago when I was a kid our youth group went white water rafting. Before we even started our rafting adventure our guide reminded us to stay away from this one place that was really dangerous. The problem was that the dangerous place was like two hours down the river. By the time we got to it we had all forgotten to stay away from it. We were simply talking, laughing, splashing, swimming, and before we knew it we were drifting closer and closer to the rapids we were told to stay away from. We didn't mean to

drift, we just didn't notice it. Before we knew it we were in real danger. Thankfully at the last moment we a rafting instructor yelled at us and we were able to get to safety.

The point is simple... That's how spiritual falling happens. It starts with a drift, it becomes neglect, and before you know it you are way off the course. No one wakes up one day and says “i think I'll fall away from God today.” It's quiet, slow, and subtle. Then suddenly, you aren't anything like the person you wanted to be. These passages are divine flare shots across our bow. Don't drift... don't neglect... Lest we fall!

Are you in danger of falling away? Are you in danger of drifting too far? Do you feel that you are losing your grip on your faith? This this message is for you. The main point this morning is simple... **If we casually drift, we will callously drown.**

Teaching (Expand on the Problem, God)

The first warning we must heed this morning lest we fall is this... **Listen Carefully or Drift Neglectfully.** Let's look at the first warning passage in **Hebrews 2:1-4.** When we think of falling away from God we often think of open rebellion and audacious sin; adultery, embezzlement, homosexuality, murder, alcoholism or drug abuse. But this passage makes it clear that falling away isn't necessarily rebellion in loud and defiant form. Drifting is a quiet and passive negligence. You don't even realize its happening, and that's what makes it so deadly. You don't drift from God by running from God. You drift by slowly and silently simply by neglecting to anchor yourself to Christ and his word! The verb used for “drift away” in the Greek, was used for ships who would slip past the harbor because the sailors weren't paying attention. The harbor didn't move... but because of a care free attitude, and a lack of focus, the ship missed its opportunity to anchor.

Get this... **neglect, not rebellion, is often the fastest route to ruin.** That's us. We come to church, hear the Word preached, nod our heads, say amen, and leave the church building and never pay it any more attention. Or we read our Bibles at home, but we don't process, or pray over it. We are merely chewing through the verses to get it over with so we feel like we've done our religious chore for the day. We know the Gospel but it no longer grips us. It has become background noise in the middle of our busy lives. We know the truth and yet we neglect to cling to it. **It's like that toy you really really wanted for Christmas as a kid. You dreamed of it. You looked at the picture of it in the JC Penny's catalog every single day, multiple times a day. You begged your mom for it. You went to see Santa, multiple Santa's to ask them for it. You wrote Santa a letter just incase he forgot. This was all you ever wanted. And of course of Christmas morning you got it! It was finally yours and in your hands and now your life would be complete. Except two weeks later it was sitting in a closet collecting dust**

because you grew bored of it quickly and had moved onto something else. You used to love the Gospel. It used to mean something to you, to the kid inside of you. You were enthralled with it. You had a fire in your soul that you thought would never be quenched. But as time has gone on you've just put it on the shelf and neglected it. You'd still say it matters to you... but it matters like a toy in the closet that you don't play with anymore.

In vs 2, the author says that the message delivered by angels was reliable. He's talking about the law. He's talking about the Old Covenant. Every law was important and if you broke it there was a just penalty. Eye for an eye, tooth for a tooth. Now watch this in vs.3... how shall we escape if we neglect such a great salvation? Meaning this. Ignoring the law, neglecting the law, drifting past the law, meant judgment. What happens if we ignore the cross? We fall!

Going back to my story about white water rafting. I didn't need to jump out of the raft in order to drown. All I had to do was simply stop rowing, stop caring, stop paying attention, and the current and rocks would do the rest. The only thing going to keep us from drifting and falling away is to be intentional. We must not become casual and nominal. We must not merely exist. We must row, we must stay alert, and we must keep ourselves anchored in Christ. **If we casually drift, we will callously drown.**

The second warning we must heed lest we fall is this.. **Guard Your Heart or It Will Grow Hardened.** Now let's look at the second warning passage in **Hebrews 3:12-15**. This is a warning to believers. Take care brothers. This is a call to look deep inside your own heart – not the heart of others who may be lost – but your own, supposedly Christ filled heart. Do you see the danger here. There is a pattern. First we simply drift and then we become callous. First we become lazy and then we become unhealthy and hardened.

Our primary illustration is from the text. Those who were once slaves, who were freed from their bondage, who were rescued by the miracles of God still turned away from God. **They saw the Red Sea split in half. They saw the pillar of fire by night. They ate the manna and quail from heaven. They drank water from the rock. And they still fell away! It wasn't because they didn't see God work. It was in spite of God's work. Over time they let bitterness and disbelief creep into their hearts. It starts small... maybe just a little envy here or a little pride there. A few weeks without prayer here. A few little sins there. And before you know it your heart begins to calcify. It's like concrete. When you pour concrete it doesn't set up instantly. It hardens slowly. But once it does, you can't reshape it without breaking it.**

So how do we keep from growing unhealthy and hardened

hearts? **Vs13.** Exhort one another that none of you may be hardened by sin. Did you catch that? You play a pivotal role in keeping your brother or sister from falling away. And they do the same for you! This isn't time for laxity. "I'm sure they'll be alright and figure it out for themselves." No, this is wartime accountability. The soul of Christianity is on the line. Sin whispers, "you're fine." The church shouts, "don't believe the lies." **Every little ignored sin is one more layer of spiritual concrete around your heart.** Before you know it your soul has become callous. Drowned in a spiritual abyss of drift, neglect, and lack of accountability! **If we casually drift, we will callously drown.**

So I ask you, are you guarding your heart? Are others guarding your heart? Or are you just assuming things will be fine because you still have an ounce of religion you are clinging to? It doesn't work that way. You have to be prayed up, read up, and alert. On guard. Or the enemy will find you. You have to have people in your life who have permission to call you out. You have to have people in your life who see your real struggles and can speak life into you. Don't drift and don't harden. **If we casually drift, we will callously drown.**

The third warning we must heed lest we fall is this... **Strive For Holiness or Spiritually Starve.** Now let's look at the third warning passage in **Hebrews 4:11-13**. The word "strive" might sound confusing to grace-saturated ears, but it's not a contradiction. It's a call to grace-empowered effort. Yes, we have faith in Christ. Yes we trust in his strength and power and try less in ours. But that doesn't mean that we don't care. It doesn't mean we don't still give effort. **Striving isn't about earning salvation, it's about finishing the race with endurance. It's the difference between passive Christianity and active Christianity. This is a fight, a war for the soul. And what is at stake is eternal rest. That's the goal. So we must persevere. If we drift we will drown but if we strive to stay near Christ, we will enter into his rest! If we stop striving we will fall!**

And of all the things we could be striving for in the Christian life, where does the author draw our attention. To the word! I'm almost sick of saying. Just as you are sick of hearing it. But to keep from drifting, to keep from being hardened, to keep you striving... you must be in the word! God's word isn't a dead doctrine. It's living and breathing and relevant for you today. It cuts deep. It is like a surgeon who cuts out the dead cells so that you can be healed and healthy. It lays bare the soul. The word won't leave you neutral. It will either soften you or expose you.

I was reading a story the other day about a surgeon who went into remove scar tissue on a patient and instead discovered cancer. That's what the word does. It pierces through the surface and exposes what's deadly. It's not there to inform you – it's there to transform you. So we keep on striving to live a holy and effective life for Christ. We strive to read,

memorize, and meditate on the word as it makes us more holy. And if we do that we will not have to worry about falling away. **If we casually drift, we will callously drown.**

Application

So as we pull all of this together this morning, let's not mistake these warnings for condemnation. Yes, we must not drift. We must not grow hardened. We must continue to strive... lest we fall! But these aren't threats from an angry God, these are mercies of a loving father. He loves you. He wants you to be as close to him as possible. He isn't afraid that you will fall into hell... but he is afraid that you may fall away from his embrace, into an apathetic nominal religion that is boring and fruitless.

I do not believe that a follower of Christ, a Christian who has put their faith in Christ and has been sealed with the Holy Spirit can lose their salvation. But I believe we can still fall away and grow callous. And let's be honest... that is a tragedy. You have been saved for an abundant life. You've been set free to set others free. You are the light of the world.. not a dim bulb with no glow. So don't drift, don't grow hardened, don't stop striving in the word... If we drift we will drown but if we hold fast to Christ we will enter into his rest! **If we casually drift, we will callously drown.**

Conclusion

There was a major story a couple of years ago that maybe you remember seeing on the news. There was a ferry in South Korea that capsized with hundreds of students abroad. What broke the heart of a nation was this; they had time to escape. The boat didn't sink instantly. But everyone on board stayed still because they trusted that the crew had everything in control. They didn't. They trusted what they knew. They trusted in the comfort they had grown accustomed to. They ignored the signs and never made it out. And I think, how many in the church are capsizing but doing nothing about it. They are drifting, settling, hardening, instead of listening to the cries of their savior saying; move! So... today if you hear his voice, do not harden your heart!