



Hebrews 2:1-4
Warning: Don't Drift!

Summary: It is very, very possible for you to slowly drift away from Jesus.

I've got to say some hard stuff this morning church, things that will make some of us uncomfortable, things that will challenge us, upset us, things that might not fit neatly into your favorite theological camp, but I want you to see we're just following the text – we're letting Scripture speak to us, which means we're letting God speak to us. And, I don't mean to give away the ending, but when God speaks, He's typically calling us closer to Himself. So, if your spiritual toes get stepped on this morning, pay super close attention, because it just might be God pulling you in a little closer.

Several weeks ago we began our study of Hebrews and this is what we've seen: God is speaking – through Creation, through conscience, through prophets in the past, through Scripture and the Holy Spirit, and through Jesus, who is better than even the angels who have served as His messengers. If you've been here with us, you noticed all of that.

But, you might *not* have noticed there's not a single command to obey in the first chapter of Hebrews. It doesn't tell you to *do* anything. It tells you what *God* is doing and what He has done. *He* is speaking, to us, by Jesus, who is better.

But now, we turn the corner into chapter two and we're called to respond to what we've learned. We're called to react to what is happening. I want you to watch for the logic here, the call to action, as well as the consequences of not responding well, and then we'll open up a can of worms.

Hebrews 2:1 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, 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?

Here's the logic. God is speaking. But when He speaks, He calls us to repent, He calls us to stop sinning. He calls us to stop living a self-centered life and reorder ourselves around our Creator instead. He calls us to salvation and renewal and rebirth. He calls us to change. *But if we resist that call*, if we continue to do life our way, insisting on what we think is best, then a day of final judgment lays ahead of us.

You cannot miss the fact that when God speaks, He is regularly, consistently, almost exclusively talking about our need for salvation and telling us that salvation is found in

Him. Creation points us to Him. Conscience points us to Him. The prophets called people to Him. Jesus came, God in the flesh, to be with us and call us to Himself. And then after His departure, the Holy Spirit amplified the preaching of the apostles with miraculous signs and wonders as they pointed people to God.

But here's the absolute root of nearly every problem experienced by humankind: we don't care. When God speaks we get distracted by other things or we don't like what we hear; we go our own way, do our own thing, follow our own path which is why God is encouraging us, here in Hebrews, to stick close, pay attention, and change.

Hebrews 2:1 Therefore we must give the more earnest heed to the things we have heard, lest we drift away.

Notice the intentionality required here. Notice the imperative language. Notice the urgency. Notice the call to action: we must give the more earnest heed to the things we have heard.

God is not just telling us to listen. He's telling us to pay attention. You know there's a difference between hearing someone and listening to them. Actually focusing on what they're saying, considering it, retaining it, concentrating on it. Put your phone down, close your laptop, take off your headphones, and look into my eyes.

If that's true with people, how much more should it be with God? When He speaks, shouldn't we listen? Especially if He has been so patient and persist and consistent in His communication? If Almighty God tries to speak to little ol' you, shouldn't you pay attention? Of course you should. You should give the more earnest heed to the things we have heard, lest we drift away.

So let's talk about that consequence for a minute – lest we drift away.

The first thing that I want to point out is that there is a consequence to our neglect of spiritual things. You need to know that, because I'm not convinced that we all believe it.

If you are not intentional, if you are not focused, you will drift. Life, spiritually speaking, is a river, not a lake. It is flowing, and it is headed somewhere. You don't have to do anything to move - if you're afloat, you will be carried along. You can be close to God at one point in your life and farther away at another. And He's not the one moving or changing, you are.

This is a big deal, a really, really, important thing for you to know: you will not naturally drift closer and closer to God without effort. Take the most beautiful lawn, or garden, or park you've ever seen – what happens if no one tends it, no one pulls the weeds, no one fights the bugs, no one mows, clips, or prunes? How long before things begin to die and it becomes an overgrown mess? Not very long.

Or, let's use another example – let's say you work really hard, get yourself in great physical shape, you've got your nutrition and diet really dialed in, you've been training for a specific goal, avoiding injuries, and you reach peak performance, you're happy with what you've

done, what you've accomplished. What happens if you decide to take a few weeks off and just kind of cruise? Will you be able to pick right back up where you left off? No. You experience deconditioning.

It's why the first few weeks of school are rough each year, students have taken the whole summer off and the teachers feel like they've lost everything they learned.

Life is full of examples that prove there is a downward drift that pulls on us all, that tugs us away from what we want to be, what we work to become. The problem is, the same drift applies to our relationship with God and so, [we must give the more earnest heed to the things we have heard, lest we drift away.](#)

So, let's go ahead and open up that [can of worms](#)¹ now. What does it mean to [drift away](#)?

Is it possible to drift so far that you lose your salvation? If we let things go, or if we don't take them as seriously as we did at an earlier point in life, can we drift right out of salvation? Can we still [escape if we neglect so great a salvation](#)?

I want you to notice something – the text doesn't give a clear answer either way. It doesn't say, 'But don't worry, it's all theoretical - no matter how far you drift it'll be OK as long you said a certain prayer and got baptized. If you check the right boxes, you could drift across the ocean and you'll be alright.' No. It doesn't say that, does it? In fact, the whole tone of the passage is a warning. It's an imperative.

[Hebrews 2:1](#) 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,](#)

Tell me, what part of that says, 'Don't worry, it'll all work out, you're fine?' No. It's a call to action, a call to change in light of the consequences of neglecting our focus on God. So, as a pastor, I cannot in good conscience tell you everything is going to be OK because you prayed a prayer and got baptized one time back then.

But let me make a point here – neglecting God, turning from God, preferring other things to God, *is the root of all sin*. It's what sin is. God says one thing and we choose something else. *Every sin is a turning away from God.*

That can happen flagrantly, defiantly, contemptuously, or it can happen subtly, incrementally, bit by bit which is actually the bigger threat for most of us today. Few people consider deliberately defecting from God in one big, sudden, step, they just drift away slowly over time, as the tide of life and culture pulls you further and further away.

¹ An American expression meaning to discuss something that is complicated and exposes additional difficulties as you examine the subject.

The question we're asking though is, how far away is too far? How far can you drift from God and still retain your benefits? Could you drift so far that you actually leave the faith? Can you slip away from the church and God? Can you lose your salvation?

The first thing I want to say to the person asking those questions is: are you sure you, or whoever you're asking about, is really saved? You're asking where the boundary line is and whether or not you can cross it, and I want to know are you sure the person we're talking about is on the right side of the line in the first place?

Do you understand what sin is? Do you understand what you've been saved from? If sin is doing what you want to do instead of what God commands, if the first sin in the Garden of Eden was defying God's clear instruction, then what are you doing way out here in the border regions with your back turned to God asking how much farther you can go and still be OK?

Can you walk away from God? Yep. Sure thing. 100%. You bet. *That's what every sin is* – a departure from Him. The question is, once you've learned that, once you've appreciated that's what you're doing, can you knowingly, consciously, continue to drift away and still be OK? Well, I'm not willing to stand up here and make some contorted theological argument that finds a way to say yes.

Instead, I want to point you to passages in Scripture that encourage you to abound, to press in, to draw near, to receive the fullness of all that God wants to give as you draw near. Passages that say things like:

2 Corinthians 7:1 Therefore, having these promises, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.

Ephesians 5:8 For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Walk as children of light ... 11 And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather expose them.

Romans 15:13 Now may the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.

Colossians 2:6 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.

John 15:5 I am the vine, you *are* the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing.

Now, here's what I want to point out about these passages: some put the emphasis on you – things you should do and not do. Others put the emphasis on God, what He has done, will do, and is doing in your life. They come at it from different angles, but they're all talking

about things that flow out of you having a relationship with God. A healthy, vibrant, growing, enduring relationship with God, the kind of relationship that exists when you [give the more earnest heed to the things \[you\] have heard, lest \[you\] drift away](#), when you do not neglect so great a salvation.

God has all these things to offer you, all these things to share with you, why do you want to ask how far is too far to go away from Him? Why are you wandering out there inspecting the border fences instead of hanging out closer to the Father's house?

Well, again, let's be honest, let's deal with this. Because people do drift. People do wander away. People do drop out of church. Let's talk about three reasons why.

Reason Number One - we've already talked about this, but let's just say it again: maybe they're not walking away, maybe they were never really saved in the first place. This is true for people who have been exposed to Christian things but never really accepted Christ. They grew up in a Christian culture, in a Christian home, maybe even went to church or Christian school – they learned the language, did the things, but it was never real for them, they just did it because they had to. They went with their parents, they went with their spouse, they could tolerate it, but it was never really their conviction and there was never any real conversion even if they said the prayer and got baptized.

Reason Number Two, and somewhat related: familiarity breeds contempt. You get to the point where you know all the songs, you know all the stories, you know what the pastor or Bible Study leader is going to say, and things that were once fresh, new, exciting and invigorating are kind of boring and dull and predictable and so you start to tune things out, you pay only half attention, you begin to drift, but everything is still so familiar it doesn't seem like a problem, you're just bored.

Look, this is a very real danger. If you don't apply the things you know, base your life and your decisions on them, you're just acquiring Biblical knowledge, names, dates, facts, ideas, concepts, it can become very academic. You suffer from what has been called the fatal cubit, the information is all in your head, but it's not moving your heart. And that's often because you're not applying it.

We went through a season at my house where my kids enjoyed watching these competitive cooking shows like Beat Bobby Flay – they'd sit there and watch other people cook, completely engaged, they could tell me everything that happened, but I always thought it was strange because it never translated into a desire on their part to come into our own kitchen and cook.

Is that you spiritually speaking? You like watching other people come up here, sing some songs, maybe listen to some guy talk for 45 minutes about God and spiritual things, you walk out feeling good about it all, but you've stopped going back into your own kitchen and cooking at home? If you're not engaged, if you're not applying what you're learning spiritually to the issues of your life, if you're not growing and changing, sooner or later, you're going to get bored, and you're going to drift.

Reason Number Three: distraction. We live in an attention-based economy. Everyone wants your attention. They want your likes. They want your clicks. They want your eyes and your ears. They want your data. You know the saying, if you're getting something for free, then you're product – and that's the way so much of our world is today online. They do whatever they can to keep you engaged and they collect as much data about you as they can in the process which they then use to analyze your habits or sell to others.

And as we said before, it's not a fair fight for adults or kids. It's you and your self-control against PhDs in Behavioral Psychology and a whole team of billionaire funded developers with real time engagement analytics constantly making tweaks so the tech is more engaging. But yeah, you're always in control when it comes to your use of technology and it never brings out the worst in you, right?

I'm going to tell you straight up – your Bible is not going to be more entertaining than your phone, or tablet, or X-box, or TV. It's not. Because your Bible is trying to speak to your soul. It wasn't developed to manipulate your dopamine production. God is working on an eternal timeline.

But go back and think again about the example we shared earlier of physical health – how many of us put off going to the gym, or going for walk, getting some exercise, or cleaning up our diet because *we're too busy right now?*

If you keep doing that, if you keep living under the tyranny of the urgent, will you ever reach your goals? No. You have to put the big blocks in place first and let everything else flow around them. You have to [give the more earnest heed to the things you have heard, lest you drift away](#), excuse by excuse, click by click, distraction by distraction.

Let me give you a few quick diagnostic questions I got from Tony Reinke over at Desiring God². As I do, let me say this – the online world and the eternal world are *not* inherently enemies, but you have to ask yourself is the busyness of your life, and the distractions that are always available to you, everywhere you go, depriving you of life and vitality in your soul? Are the digital distractions in your life making you better, or worse, in the scope of eternity? Consider these questions:

1. How much of my media use is for escape? And what am I escaping?
2. Does my screen time leave me more recharged or more depleted?
3. Is my media diet enriching my time with Christ or eroding it?
4. How consistent is my personal devotional life?
5. What does my prayer life look like?
6. Are my digital desires serving my God-given duties, or are they distracting me from them?

² <https://www.desiringgod.org/messages/who-will-have-your-attention>

Again, your X-box, your phone, your tablet, your TV, your laptop is not inherently bad, in fact you can enjoy them heartily and give God thanks for them, *as long as you're in control of them*. The problem is, too often, they're in control of you. And they keep you from the things and the people that matter most over the long haul.

God is speaking, but we're not always listening. We can't hear because we're too distracted, we hear but don't listen because we're bored, or we hear but keep going our own way because we're just not saved.

The problem isn't with God. It's with us. So, the question remains, [how shall we escape if we neglect so great a salvation?](#) And the answer is, we won't.

Which is why God speaks. Mercifully, patiently, persistently. He keeps speaking. He keeps calling. He keeps warning. And He keeps welcoming us when we return.

So, what do you need to do this morning? Have you been drifting? And if so, what needs to happen next? How is God getting your attention? What will it mean for you to [give the more earnest heed to the things you've heard?](#)

Friends, when God speaks, it's always the same thing – *come closer to Me*. Turn from your sin, and come to Me. Turn around and come home. Come back.

Some of you need to cross the fence because you're on the wrong side, you need to be welcomed in the family of God.

Others of you have been wandering out in fields wondering where the fence line is and what happens if you cross it, you need to come back to the house.

Some of you have never left the porch, but you're distracted – you're getting points for attendance, but not attention.

The response is the same for us all – draw closer to the God who is drawing close to you, the God who is speaking to us in Jesus, reaching out, drawing us in. He is speaking so let us listen, let us [give the more earnest heed to the things \[we\] have heard, lest \[we\] drift away](#), let us not [neglect so great a salvation](#).

Let's pray.



Sermon Application and Discussion Questions

Hebrews 2:1-4

Warning: Don't Drift!

Summary: It is very, very possible for you to slowly drift away from Jesus.

- Where are you most likely to drift in your life?
- Have you been through, or seen someone else go through, a drifting away?
 - What lessons did you learn?
 - What leads someone to drift?
 - What leads them to return?
 - What would you say to, or do for, someone you noticed drifting away?
 - Where is the line between showing concern about someone's drift and 'meddling' that leads to their aggravation and further drift?
- Read Deuteronomy 6:4-9. What kind of life is this describing? How might this help people 'give the more earnest heed to things they've heard'?
- What is a positive benefit of emphasizing true Christians cannot lose their salvation?
- What is a positive benefit of suspecting you could drift away from salvation?
- What proactive, intentional steps do you/could you implement in your life to stay spiritually focused?
- The following diagnostic questions come from Tony Reinke³ and are intended to help us diagnose the spiritual impact of digital media on our hearts and our tendency to drift due to distraction:
 1. How much of my media is for escape? And what am I escaping?
 2. Does my screen time leave me more recharged or more depleted?
 3. Is my media diet enriching my time with Christ or eroding it?
 4. How consistent is my personal devotional life?
 5. What does my prayer life look like?
 6. Is communion with God drab and boring? Or is it alive?
 7. How do Christ-centered sermons and songs land on me, and what does this say about the affectional health I bring with me on Sunday?
 8. Are my digital desires serving my God-given duties, or are they distracting me from them?

³ <https://www.desiringgod.org/messages/who-will-have-your-attention>