

MOVING TOWARD MATURITY

PREACHING THROUGH HEBREWS

DRIFTING BY NEGLECT

TEXT: Heb. 2:1-3

INTRODUCTION: Last Sunday night at the close of our wonderful night of worship, two young ladies gave their hearts to Christ, one during the invitation and one immediately after the service ended. Karen was talking with them afterwards, and when she said, "I am so glad you asked Jesus to come into your life," one of the girls responded, "Me too! I can't wait to meet Him."

And isn't that how you feel? My heart resonates with the words of the song

Oh what glory that shall be

When my Jesus I shall see

When I look upon His face

The One Who saved me by His grace

Well, we do not see His face this morning; but we hear His voice. As the author of Hebrews declared, "In these last days God has spoken by His Son." And my dear brother and sister, He is speaking to us, to all of us who make up the St. Andrew Baptist Church. Jesus is speaking to us today out of His Word. And on this occasion when we celebrate what God is doing in and through our church to take His gospel across the street and around the world, I believe that our Lord has a very special word for us indeed.

Five times in the book of Hebrews the Lord exhorts the hearers of this word. In those exhortations He commands, challenges, warns, and encourages them to action. While the whole of the book is important, whenever we come to one of these exhortations we should pay particular attention, for here is a focal point for much that is said both before and after it.

We come to the first of these five exhortations in Hebrews chapter 2. Read with me please. **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, which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed to us by those who heard Him,**

The main exhortation is phrased as a question: "How shall we escape if we neglect so great a salvation?" Actually, all that we read and studied last week and all the rest of the verses in chapter 1 was merely a preface to this interrogatory. Everything said about Jesus and about the angels was leading up to this question.

So let me do what is contrary to custom for me. I usually take what is brief and make it longer. Right now I want to take Hebrews 1 and make it shorter. So allow me to abbreviate and paraphrase the introduction of Hebrews 1 in order to focus the spot light of our attention on the question asked of us in the early verses of chapter 2.

In the past, God spoke to men through the prophets, but recently, God has spoken through His Son. Now God's Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, is the heir of all that there is in the universe. He is the creator of all things. He is the brightness of God's glory and the exact image of God Himself. He Himself sustains this universe physically and spiritually. He became the one and only sacrifice for sin, and now, He has been seated at the right hand of the Father and reigns in majesty and honor over all. Jesus is the Son of God, and God has spoken to us through Him.

Now, you know about angels, fallen and holy. As powerful, dreaded, and fearsome as are the fallen angels, led by their demonic commander Lucifer, the Son of God commands far greater power. As wonderful and majestic as are the holy angels, servants and messengers of God, the Son of God Himself is infinitely more wonderful and majestic.

In times past, you know that if men did not listen to the word God sent through angels or if they transgressed the commandments they brought from the Lord, God gave to men their just reward. So how much more then should we heed the word spoken in these last days by the very Son of God, a word that has been confirmed to us with signs and wonders and with the working of the Holy Spirit. I ask you my brother, How shall we escape if we neglect so great a salvation?

There are three very important things to note here.

I. THIS EXHORTATION IS ADDRESSED TO BELIEVERS.

A similar question is appropriate for unbelievers:

How shall you escape if you ignore so great a salvation?

How shall you escape if you reject so great a salvation?

But that is not the question here.

- A. God has spoken to us (the writer and the recipients) by His Son. 1:2 has in these last days spoken to us by His Son, ...**
- B. The "we" and "us" in 2:1-3 (six times) includes the author of the epistle who is unquestionably a believer.**
- C. The Holy Spirit clearly inspires the saved human author of the book to ask his fellow believers in the Lord Jesus Christ, "How shall we escape if we neglect so great a salvation?"**

II. HOW CAN BELIEVERS NEGLECT THEIR SALVATION?

By drifting away from what their Savior taught them. 2:1 Therefore we must give the more earnest heed to the things we have heard, lest we drift away.

The danger described is not purposefully disobeying, but carelessly drifting.

The picture here is of Christians in a boat in the middle of the river of life. The warning is not about using the powerful engine of the Holy Spirit to motor us the wrong direction or to take us to the wrong destinations. The warning is about not using the motor at all. The warning is about not going anyplace purposefully or with power, but just drifting along wherever the currents of life carry us.

A. In what ways do Christians sometimes drift away from the Lord?

1. **By drifting away from the reading, studying, and meditating upon the Scriptures.**
2. **By drifting away from fellowship with God's people.**
3. **By drifting away from witnessing.**
4. **By drifting away from stewardship**
5. **By drifting away from service to the Lord through His church.**

B. The place most churches and most Christians are in danger of drifting is in drifting away from the Great Commission.

Matthew 28:19-20 Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, ²⁰ teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, *even to the end of the age.*"

1. SABC, I commend you. And what is more important than that by far is that I am confident that the Lord commends you. As to the church at Philadelphia, the Living Lord says to us, "I know your works."
2. Let me tell you some of the reasons I commend you.
 - Last year, you **gave nearly \$200,000 to Cooperative Program and Associational Missions** out of our tithes and offerings.
 - Through our Global Outreach you **gave \$80,000 to Lottie Moon and Annie Armstrong** offerings for international and North American missions.
 - You **fed the hungry and clothed the poor of Bay County** five days a week all year.
 - You **provided** our neediest citizens with **free medical and dental care**.
 - You **helped pregnant women and young mothers** who needed someone to care.
 - And while you did all of that you **led more than 100** of them **to faith in the Lord Jesus Christ**, and some of them are active in our own church today.

- You **helped rebuild homes destroyed by disaster in Galveston.**
 - You **helped a church in KY learn how to do an area wide VBS** to reach the lost and build their church.
 - And while busy in your Jerusalem, Judea, and Samaria, you did not forget the ends of the earth. You **evangelized**, strengthened a church and started a new Bible study in **the Blackheart of Mexico.**
 - You **planted 3 new churches in Brazil** in places without an evangelical witness.
 - You **planted 6 churches in the African bush** in villages that had no worship but the worship of idols before your team came.
 - You **led people to the Lord in India** and strengthened work there with orphans and helped to train pastors.
 - And **all of this you did empowered by the Holy Spirit Who worked in and through you.** And I think we ought to say a big Praise the Lord and give Him glory for great things He has done!
3. But let me tell you something about the doing of all these things. You did not do it by drifting. You did it purposefully. You prayed for it. You planned to do it. You prepared to do it. You paid to do it, and then by the grace and power of God, you did it!
 4. None of this just happened because you or someone causally drifted by.
 5. **But that does not mean that we are immune from drifting.** Drifting is a natural tendency, and we are all very much tempted by it. **We can be especially vulnerable to this temptation when we have been charging ahead at full steam in times past.** The devil makes it sound so good.

“Oh you deserve a break.”

“You need to slow down.”

“You need to take it easy.”

That is not what we need. We need to hear and to heed the exhortation from the risen Christ that we read in our text this morning.

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

Right now, in this very room, in spite of the wondrous things God has done by His power in and through SABC in missions, **there are those of you being tempted to drift away.**

1. **From prayer – Oh I used to do that, but now I don't have time.**
2. **From giving – Things are just so tight in this economy; I have to cut back.**
3. **From going – I've been before. Let somebody else go that's not as busy as I am.**

Because we are all so tempted, that is why I am providing you a commitment form today. Take it out of your worship folder right now. Hold it up.

First thing on there is a commitment to pray. Now we can all do that. And nothing we do is more important than that. So right now, put your name on that commitment form and mark off that you will commit to pray for the Global Outreach Ministries of SABC.

The second thing is to give. We can all pray, and we can all give something. If it is no more than 1 penny a week, we can all give something. You say, but what difference does my 1 penny a week make? Well that is 52 cents. If 14 of you, who otherwise would have given nothing, each give 14 cents a week, in a year that is enough to buy a Bible in the native tongue of a tribal village in Ghana, and we can give the new pastor of a church just started a Bible he can read and use to preach the gospel. The result is that dozens of other people will be saved, and the hundred people in his church will be disciplined because of your 1 penny a day.

But most of us can do far more than that. Let me suggest you start with what you gave last year and ratchet it up a notch or two. Don't just drift. Don't just stay where you are. Ask the Lord to provide more through you to take His gospel to the lost than ever before. Some of you are entrusted with great resources. Don't give until it hurts; give until it feels good.

Third, commit to going. Go to Jerusalem through one of our local missions, or Judea, or Samaria, or one of the ends of the earth missions. Mark the ones God warms your heart to or where you sense His leading. This is not a final commitment that you will buy a ticket. This is saying God I am willing if you will work out the details. But don't drift. You never end up on mission by drifting.

While I finish this message, and I am almost through, you finish completing this commitment. Decide that you will pray. Decide what to give. Decide where to go.

The last verse of our text asks **How shall we escape if we neglect so great a salvation? Heb. 2:3**

III. FROM WHAT SHALL WE NOT ESCAPE IF WE NEGLECT OUR SALVATION?

We will not escape the consequences of drifting.

- A. Drifting by neglect causes us to fail to arrive at God's intended destination for our earthly lives. Our lives end up far short of what God had purposed and desired.**
- B. Drifting by neglect causes us to get stuck on some of life's reefs. A reef keeps us from moving forward.**
 1. The reef of worldliness The reef of carnality The reef of lust
 2. The reef of complacency The reef of self pity
- C. Drifting by neglect causes us to drift past some of God's greatest blessings.**

1. The blessing of spiritual growth The blessing of maturity
2. The blessing of fruitfulness The blessing of fulfillment

D. Drifting by neglect causes us to get in other people's way.

1. Ever been in a boat stuck on a reef or a mud flat or drifting in the current without a working motor? Such a boat not only does not arrive at its intended destination, it hinders other boats who are trying to travel also.
2. So do our lives when we neglect our great salvation!

E. Drifting by neglect causes us to lose rewards that would have been ours when we appear at the Judgment Seat of Christ.

F. When we neglect the great salvation that we have received from the Lord Jesus, we end up shipwrecked, with little blessing for ourselves and little glory for the Christ who saved us with His own blood.

CONCLUSION: Dear saved brother and sister, the Spirit of the Living God is speaking through His Word to our hearts this morning. This is not a message to your lost neighbor. This is to you. This is to me. Because of Who Christ is, we are to give the more earnest heed to what He has said or we are in danger of drifting away through neglect.