

THE DANGER OF DRIFTING

Hebrews 2:1-4

Introduction

→ Illust. – Imagine you are in a boat, drifting lazily down a river, enjoying the sunshine. You notice the water seems to be getting rougher and you are moving faster, but you pay little attention. Suddenly you realize the sign on the bank that you just passed said, “Danger: Falls Ahead.” You begin to paddle frantically, but it is too late.

How easy it is to drift in our Christian life, unknowing and unconcerned, never realizing the danger to which we are exposing ourselves.

Proposition: The truth is, we cannot afford to be negligent in spiritual matters if we are to avoid spiritual shipwreck.

As we stand at the threshold of another New Year, I believe that such a message is very appropriate. We need to be aware of the danger of spiritual negligence.

Transitional sentence: There are three demands given to us in our passage today that we need to take seriously if we are to avoid spiritual shipwreck. Let us look carefully at Heb. 2:1-4 and let us pray that the Spirit of God will speak to us today.

Pray:

The first demand is ... for commitment.

Spiritual Stability Demands Commitment v. 1

There are a couple of things we need to note from v. 1.

- A. We need to pay attention to the instructions of God
-read v. 1 (KJV - Therefore we ought to give the more earnest heed to the things which we have heard, lest at any time we should let them slip.) How can we please God if we pay no attention to what he says?
→ Illustration – As most of you know, I am a football fan. Imagine a football player sitting in the locker room as certain plays for that

weekend’s game are being described and outlined on the black-board. However, instead of listening, he is dreaming about what he is going to be doing when he gets home that evening, or about his hunting trip next week. Such a person is in grave danger of losing his job, of being let go from the team. There is a need to pay attention.

- B. There is a danger of drifting away.

We need to realize that there is a very real danger. The word “drift” or “slip” means “to glide by: lest we be carried by, pass by” – the idea that is suggested by this word is that there is a very real possibility of floating or drifting, unaware, past the danger point.

It has often been said, and I think it is not much of an exaggeration, that you cannot stand still in your Christian life – if you are not moving ahead, and growing, then you are drifting backwards.

It doesn’t take any effort to drift. It doesn’t take any effort to go downhill, or for things to deteriorate. All it takes is neglect.

→ Illust. – Describe the scene of an abandoned farm yard – tall grass, garden overgrown with weeds, fruit trees no longer producing because of grass and brush. What did it take to get that way? Did it take a lot of work to make that kind of ugly scene? No, the dilapidated condition is simply the result of neglect.

- C. Application – you’ve seen places like that. The question is: Is your house like that? I mean your spiritual house, your life.

The writer to the Hebrews warns us that neglect of spiritual things can lead to ruin for the Christian. We need to be paying close attention to the truth and the Word that has been given to us.

And so, the question – do you spend any time each day reading and studying the Word of God? Are you focussing on the things that encourage growth in your life? Or is it possible that you are drifting away in your spiritual life and are not even aware of it?

→ Illust. – refer back to boat drifting in the river.

** We cannot afford to be negligent in spiritual matters if we are to avoid spiritual shipwreck. Spiritual stability demands commitment...

The second demand in this passage is for ... obedience.

Spiritual Truth Demands Obedience (v. 2,3)

Again, there are a couple of important things to note in these verses.

- A. Even the word from angels commanded respect.
 - *discuss the understanding that the OT Mosaic law was delivered by the angels*
 - the implications of v. 2 – punishment, every aspect of the law, every breach of the law had a penalty attached to it.
- B. God's revealed Word through Jesus Christ is greater.
If the word of angels was binding and demanded obedience or else punishment, then how much more must we obey the living Word of God as revealed through the Son.
 - *Discuss the implications* – the law was also God's word – but the deliverer of the word of the new covenant was the Son of God himself.
 - The understanding of spiritual truth demands obedience.
- C. Application – obedience – do you seek to know God's Word and God's will so that you can obey it?

➔ [From Illy]... TAKING THE MEDICINE

To help an audience understand this truth, the beloved physician-preacher Walter L. Wilson used an illustration he tells about in his book *The Romance of a Doctor's Visits*. One time while he was preaching, Wilson took a vase in his hand, held it up, and said, "Let's imagine that this is a bottle of medicine, proven unmistakably to be a sure cure for coughing. I therefore could give you my word that it is able to rid you of your cough." Dr. Wilson then asked his audience, "What do you think? Could that medicine do you any good?" He paused, waiting for an answer. Several moments passed. The silence at last was broken by the voice of a little boy who cried out, "Not unless you take it!" He was right. As effective as the cough medicine might be, it benefits would never be enjoyed - unless you took it.

Spiritual truth demands obedience.

** We cannot afford to be negligent in spiritual matters if we are to avoid spiritual shipwreck. Spiritual truth demands obedience...

The third demand in this passage is ... for care and attention.

Spiritual Vitality Demands Continual Concern (v. 3,4)

Read vv. 3-4 - There is a stern warning and a reminder here.

- A. Beware of apathy in your Christian life
[From Illy]... PRECAUTION AND PREVENTION

Some years ago, the American Dental Society advertised the importance of dental care with highway signs that said, "Ignore your teeth and they will go away." For some people that's a helpful reminder, but for others it's like hitting an exposed nerve with the drill! Much expense and trouble can be avoided by developing good eating habits and practicing dental hygiene. Apparently, the American Dental Society thinks we need a strong reminder of the importance of preventive dental care.

Just as teeth need continual care to remain healthy, so does your spiritual life. A healthy spiritual life, a life of vitality and productivity thrives only with continual care and attention. Neglect will kill it quickly.

Prov 4:23 Above all else, guard your heart, for it is the wellspring of life.

- B. Remember the power and the wonder of your salvation
Read v. 4 again – this is important to maintaining a strong, spiritual vitality – to understand and remember the reality and the purpose of our salvation. When we lose the wonder of God's redeeming love for us we lose direction and purpose for our life.
- C. Application – He saved you for a purpose – Pay attention to that purpose. Give your spiritual life the care and attention it needs.
 - ** You cannot afford to be negligent in spiritual matters if you are to avoid spiritual shipwreck. Spiritual vitality demands continual concern...

Conclusion

➔ On April 10, 1912 one of the largest and most luxurious ships ever built, the Titanic, set sail on her maiden voyage from Southampton to New York City. Less than 5 days later, in the early morning hours of April 15, the Titanic struck an iceberg in the north Atlantic, resulting in the most tragic shipwreck in history, with over 1500 lives lost.

What was the major cause of such a tragedy? Apathy. There were plenty of iceberg warnings out that fateful night. But the feeling was, this ship is unsinkable, we are safe, nothing can happen to us. That lack of concern and attention to danger led to shipwreck and terrible loss of life.

Is it possible that you or I could be drifting away toward shipwreck because of apathy and neglect of God and His Word?

Apply – New Year Commitment