



## Sermon Notes

US N°. 65

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Title: Be careful not to drift from Christ

#3 in Series on the Book of Hebrews

### 1. Warning to pay attention (cf. Heb. 2:1-4)

- a. Therefore, in light of Christ's superiority over the prophets and angels, we must be serious minded so that we do not drift away. The author uses sailing terminology to suggest the concern that they would drift away from their safe mooring onto the rocks. (v. 1)
  - i. Judaism was a "*religio licita*" and Christianity was a "*religio illicita*;" the synagogues were registered but the Church had to go underground. The temptation was to register as a Jew and escape persecution. Similar to former Soviet policy. Historically, during times of persecution, Christians divide between those who compromise and get official registration and those who do not. Meanwhile, gentile believers had no choice; the synagogues were not an option for them.
  - b. The author wonders what sort of punishment would promptly be meted out to those who reject the word of Christ, God's own Son, when the Torah provides such harsh punishment for those who only disobey the message brought by the angels. (v. 2-3)
    - i. The word "*neglect*" or "*ignore*" in verse 3 literally means to be careless or unconcerned.
    - ii. Lack of concern, apathy, and lack of intense commitment is a plague in our churches and our lives today. There will come a time in the drifting when it is too late to anchor the soul again. The current will have become swift and our lack of concern will have let us drift past the point of return. The author is not thinking of our getting to a point that God couldn't rescue us, but that we get to a point that we are disconnected from Christ and unable to stop the inevitable consequences. Paul suggests in Rom. 1:24-28 that God simply lets people go with the current in which they choose to float and drift. The author's hypothetical question, how shall we escape if we are unconcerned about so great a salvation, has a simple, clear, and tragic answer – we won't!
  - c. Paying attention is hard work; it takes effort to fight against the "*gravity of sin*." James 1:22-27, "*But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves. For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man observing his natural face in a mirror; for he observes himself, goes away, and immediately forgets what kind of man he was. But he who looks into the perfect law of liberty and continues in it, and is not a forgetful hearer but a doer of the work, this one will be blessed in what he does. If anyone among you thinks he is religious, and does not bridle his tongue but deceives his own heart, this one's religion is useless. Pure and undefiled religion before God and the Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their trouble, and to keep oneself unspotted from the world.*"
  - d. God bears witness by miracles and the gifts of the Holy Spirit distributed according to His will. Their purpose is to build up the church, making it strong and mature. When we see the gifts of the Spirit in an individual or congregation, we know that God is truly present. They are meant to be for today just as well as they were for yesterday; God changes not and neither does His acts of grace.

### 2. Jesus is superior to the angels, part 2. (cf. Heb. 2:5-9)

- a. The Jewish assumption was that angels did have a governing role in this present world. The author does not argue this; in fact, he assumes it to be true. What he states is that God did not give the angels this

authority over the world to come. Jesus' preaching of the kingdom of God that is described in the gospels was the clear announcement that the coming world had arrived with his ministry. (cf. Mt. 4:17, Luke 11:20)

- b. "Son of man" is an OT title used for making reference to the coming Messiah or the Christ in Greek. (cf. Dan. 7:13) Not surprisingly, Jesus' favorite title for himself was "son of man." The author of Hebrews understood "son of man" to express the concept of Christ as Second Adam; second beginnings for all of creation. Paul gives the fullest treatment of Jesus as Second Adam in Rom. 5:12-21 and 1 Cor. 15:21-22, 45-49. Christ as Second Adam reversed the Fall begun by the first Adam. Through the disobedience of the first Adam, sin and death entered the world, but by the second Adam's (Christ's) obedience the possibility of righteousness and life became available to all who believe on Him. (cf. 1 Jn. 1:9)
- c. God has placed Jesus in charge of everything. (cf. Mt. 28:18, Jn. 3:35, Jn. 13:3) We do not yet see Jesus reigning on earth, but we can picture him in his heavenly glory. When you are confused by present events and anxious about the future, remember Jesus' true position and authority. He is Lord of all, and one day he will rule on earth as he does now in heaven. This truth can give stability to your decisions day by day.
  - i. The quote of verses 6-8 is from Ps. 8:4-5, "What is man that You are mindful of him, and the son of man that You visit him? For You have made him [for] a little [while] lower than the angels, and You have crowned him with glory and honor." Note that the author of Hebrews is using the Greek text of the OT, the *Septuagint*, and there is a slight difference between that brilliantly demonstrates the point he's trying to make. The Hebrew text implies that mankind was a little distance lower than God (or the gods) while the *Septuagint* indicates that man or the Son of Man (Christ) was made lower than the angels for a little while. This would be referring to His time of ministry on earth and since that status of being lower than the angels was only for a little while, then when that time was over, Christ would return to his normal state of being superior to the angels. From Heb. 1:3-4 it is most likely that the author thought that that return to superiority over the angels would have happened at Christ's ascension.
  - ii. We also see an image of the Fall when God originally placed all things under the authority of the First Adam, but who then succumbed and surrendered that authority to Satan. Therefore, through Christ all authority has been remitted to Him and He then sends us out to re-establish His Kingdom on earth. (cf. Mt. 28:18-19, "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations...")
- 3. The humanity of Jesus did not jeopardize the supremacy of Christ, but enhanced it; v Gnosticism. (cf. Heb. 2:10-18)
  - a. Jesus did not come into the world to gain status or political power, but to suffer and die so that we could have eternal life. If it is difficult for us to identify with Christ's servant attitude, perhaps we need to evaluate our own motives. Are we more interested in power or participation, domination or service, getting or giving?
  - b. Jesus' suffering made him a perfect leader, or pioneer, of our salvation (cf. Heb. 5:8-9). Jesus did not need to suffer for his own salvation, because he was God in human form. His perfect obedience (which led him down the road of suffering) demonstrates that he was the complete sacrifice for us. Through suffering, Jesus completed the work of atonement necessary for our own salvation. Jesus sanctifies us as opposed to the Law. (cf. Rom. 7)
  - i. Our own suffering should make us more sensitive servants of God. People who have known pain are able to reach out with compassion to others who hurt. We become compassionate priests to those around us.

- c. We who have been set apart for God's service, cleansed, and made holy (sanctified) by Jesus now have the same Father He has, so He has made us His brothers and sisters. Various psalms look forward to Christ and His work in the world. Here the author quotes part of Ps. 22, a messianic psalm. Because God has adopted all believers as His children, Jesus calls them His brothers and sisters.
  - i. Life on the path between fallen humanity and a holy God is a family life, a community life. It is the family formed by shared obedience and being made perfect by suffering. Jesus is not ashamed to call us brothers and sisters.
  - ii. The importance of the Church. Heb. 10:24-25, *"And let us consider one another in order to stir up love and good works, not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as is the manner of some, but exhorting one another, and so much the more as you see the Day approaching."*
    - 1. Allow for the different expressions among us. We recognize different talents and attributes among our own children, why can we not allow those same differences within our Church body?
    - 2. There may be different expressions, but there is meant to be unity of purpose and the character of the one Father.
  - d. Jesus had to become human so that He could die and rise again in order to destroy the devil's power over death (*cf. Rom. 6:5-11*). Only then could Christ deliver those who had lived in constant fear of death and free them to live for Him. When we belong to God, we need not fear death, because we know that death is only the doorway into eternal life (*cf. 1 Cor. 15*). Christ's death and resurrection set us free from the fear of death because death has been defeated. Every person must die, but death is not the end; instead, it is the doorway to a new life. All who dread death should have the opportunity to know the hope that Christ's victory brings.
  - e. The merciful, compassionate and empathetic High Priest. Heb. 2:18, *"For in that He Himself has suffered, being tempted, He is able to aid those who are tempted."* We can trust Christ to help us endure suffering and overcome temptation.
4. Warnings and Exhortations
- a. Beware of drift! Be vigilant and recognize that there is a natural *"gravity of sin"* that must be actively resisted.
  - b. The importance of family. Despite the conveniences of the modern world, God did not intend that people sit around being the Church in front of their TVs or Internet. We are supposed to *"rub up"* against one another, and *"rub off"* those annoying little imperfections.
  - c. Do not fear death. We are now in relation with LIFE Himself.
  - d. We have help when we are tempted; we no longer have to sin.