

## **“The Danger of Drifting”**

Hebrews 2:1

**Illustration**—*“Back in May, the Toakai Teitoi and his brother-in-law, Lelu Falaile, wished to sail from Kiribati to Maiana, yet somehow fell victim to the strong ocean currents and soon discovered they had no idea where they were and what they needed to do in order to return home. Because they had no fresh water to drink, Lelu Falaile died after about a month, yet Toakai Teitoi managed to keep going. He now claims that he owes his life to a shark, which supposedly helped him come close to a fishing boat. Sources inform us that the man woke up one afternoon because this animal kept hitting his boat, and that once the shark got his attention, it simply swam away. “He was guiding me to a fishing boat. I looked up and there was the stern of a ship and I could see crew with binoculars looking at me,” Toakai told members of the press.”*

We hear stories like this all the time in the news of people who get too far away from the shore and drift out to sea, or of a boat and crew that become stranded at sea and, without an anchor, they drift.

**“Drift”**—*a gradual shift in position; an aimless course; to become carried along subject to no guidance or control*

The writer of Hebrews warns believers about the danger of spiritual drifting, something much worse than merely drifting out to sea. Spiritual drifting is drifting away from intimate fellowship with God. And while boats that drift may be drifting because of lack of fuel, etc., spiritual drifting happens for one reason—NEGLECT.

Far too many believers start out strong in their faith, yet they drift away when things get tough in their life, rather than staying the course. When we drift, we fail to grow spiritually mature and effective in our life.

By the way, what makes spiritual drifting so dangerous is that it is so very easy to do. All a person has to do to drift is to do absolutely nothing.

Drifting requires no effort. Staying the course, on the other hand, requires enormous energy, which thankfully the Holy Spirit supplies in our life as we yield to Him.

How do you know if you've drifted? You know that you are drifting when God's Word is collecting dust, when you can't remember the last time (if ever) you got alone with Him in prayer, and when your worship life is dry and routine.

**Charles Stanley**—*"When we lack direction, we don't simply stagnate. We continue to move, usually in an unhealthy direction."*

No one every drifts TOWARD God; they drift AWAY from Him.

Scripture is full of examples of men and women who started out strong in their faith, but drifted toward the end.

- Samson was a judge of Israel, gifted with great strength, yet he was spiritually weak and compromised
- Solomon began his reign with humility and dependence upon the Lord, but the more wives he accumulated, he drifted
- Joash was seven when he became king, was faithful but drifted
- Demas, a one-time faithful comrade of Paul and partner in the gospel, fell in love with the things of the world and drifted away

The best of us, no matter how spiritual we think we are or how long we have been saved, are all one step away from drifting.

The truth is that some here tonight are drifting.

Friend, you are in a dangerous position! And from verse 1, I want to show you just how serious spiritual drifting is.

### **1. Stems from a failure to pay attention (2:1a)**

*"Therefore we must give the more earnest heed to the things we have heard, lest we drift away."*

I can remember in school that the hardest time of day was just after lunch. Usually after a good lunch, I would find it hard to concentrate and could easily drift in my thoughts. When drifting away in thought, I was disconnected from everything else going on in class. Therefore, when my name would be called, I would immediately become embarrassed because I had no clue what was going on around me.

Drifting happens because we fail to pay attention.

**WTSP News, Tampa Bay (6/10)**—*“Belle air Beach, Florida; The US Coast Guard reports a Largo man got drunk on a pool float and drifted a mile out into the Gulf unconscious before finally being spotted by a good samaritan. The man, identified as 48 year old Jerry Whipple was found around 12:30 Wednesday afternoon more than a mile off the coast of Belleair Beach. “He didn't respond to our boat horns, he didn't respond to our yells and we were pretty close,” says boater Tim Ramsberger of Treasure Island. “At first we thought it was just some debris floating in the water.” Ramsberger called 9-1-1 after making the discovery thinking the man might be dead. Coast Guard Crews arrived and say they found the man to be severely intoxicated after waking up. “He was sitting on a small pool raft. Had no idea where he was, didn't know what time of day it was, how long he was out for, or even how far of shore he was,” says Petty Officer Brodie MacDonald of the U.S. Coast Guard. “The winds were blowing him further out. Really is quite lucky he is still alive today.” Whipple was transported to a local hospital and released. No word yet on if he'll face any charges.”*

**Romans 13:11-12**—**“And do this, knowing the time, that now it is high time to awake out of sleep; for now our salvation is nearer than when we first believed. The night is far spent, the day is at hand...”**

**“Therefore”**—*connects the truth of this verse with the truth that he has just shared; we ‘ought’ not the language of suggestion*

The conclusion is this—in light of what has just been said, the believer ought to pay careful attention in his faith.

**Ray Stedman**—*“This convinces me that the writer of this letter, whoever he was, was a preacher. There is nothing more heartbreaking than preaching to people week after week and to see certain ones constantly exposed to truth that you know could change their lives, set them free, transform their very existence and bring them out into a realm of experience they hardly believe existed; you know this, and yet you see them, week after week, lose the whole effect of the message simply because they do not pay attention.”*

Even Jesus Himself dealt with this!

**Matthew 11:15**—**“He who has ears to hear, let him hear.”**

Drifting stems from a failure to pay attention to the revealed truth of God. In a day where more people would rather be enamored by games and trivialities, the voice of the Holy Spirit is crying out, calling upon us to be captivated by glory and truth.

## **2. Slowly forgets basic truth (2:1b)**

*“Therefore we must give the more earnest heed to the things we have heard, lest we drift away.”*

Not only does drifting stem from a failure to pay attention, but it also shows that a person has slowly forgotten basic truth.

**“Give the more earnest heed”**—means that we must give careful attention to the truth

**“Things we have heard”**—the truth of who Jesus is

Think about how the tide comes in and how the tide goes out. It happens slowly, but surely. When the tide is going out, if you are not careful, you can find yourself swept out with it. Slowly, so slowly, and little by little, the tide can take a person out to sea.

If you are not careful to pay careful attention to the things you have heard, to the revealed truth of God, you can easily find yourself in a season of drifting.

We should preach the gospel to ourselves every day we live.

**Jerry Bridges**—*“The reality of present-day Christendom is that most professing Christians actually know very little of the gospel, let alone understand its implications for their day-to-day lives. My perception is that most of them know just enough gospel to get inside the door of the kingdom. They know nothing of the unsearchable riches of Christ.”*

What little bit we know, we tend to forget, and must remind ourselves of its truth on a daily basis.

**Dietrich Bonhoeffer**—*“With irresistible power desire seizes mastery over the flesh.... It makes no difference whether it is sexual desire, or ambition, or vanity, or desire for revenge, or love of fame and power, or greed for money.... Joy in God is...extinguished in us and we seek all our joy in the creature. At this moment God is quite unreal to us, He loses all reality, and only desire for the creature is real.... Satan does not here fill us with hatred of God, but with forgetfulness of God.... The lust thus aroused envelops the mind and will of man in deepest darkness. The powers of clear discrimination and of decision are taken from us. The questions present themselves: “Is what the flesh desires really sin in this case?” “Is it*

*really not permitted to me, yes — expected of me, now, here, in my particular situation, to appease desire?”... It is here that everything within me rises up against the Word of God.”*

### **3. Subjects us to peril on life’s sea (2:1c)**

*“Therefore we must give the more earnest heed to the things we have heard, lest we drift away.”*

Drifting stems from a failure to pay close attention to our faith, and it slowly forgets revealed truth. A third danger is that drifting subjects us to peril on the sea of life with all its unknowns.

The point is that if we are not careful to give earnest heed to the life-changing truth of Christ, we will drift in our spiritual life. If there is no proactive, intentional obedience and application of truth in my life, I will drift away in devotion. It is not a matter of “if” but a matter of “when.”

What kind of tide takes those out who are spiritually adrift?

First, there is the tide of years and time.

Many who were at one time faithful and passionate in service to Christ, for whatever reason, over time allowed the circumstances of life and the changing of times to callous them over. Sure, they have kept up appearances for appearance sake, but inwardly they know that their heart is far from passionate devotion.

Robert McQuilkin writes:

*I fear the dark may come too soon,  
Or do I mean too late?  
That I should end before I finish  
Or finish, but not well.  
That I should stain Your honor, shame Your  
Name, grieve Your loving heart.  
Few, they tell me, finish well,  
Lord, let me get home before dark.”*

Far too many allow their hearts to drift away slowly over time. One day, they find themselves old and gray, and spiritually cold.

Second, there is the tide of familiarity with the truth.

It is so easy for the familiar, the most often repeated and heard to become merely commonplace. This is where we are in the buckle of the Bible Belt.

“Familiarity breeds contempt.” And such contempt and complacency leads one to drift.

Third, there is the tide of busyness.

If you are not careful, the hustle and bustle of our fast-paced generation can sweep you out to sea spiritually. People are more busy now than they ever have been, but never has so little been accomplished.

Someone has well said that a tiny snowflake is a beautiful thing, but when the air becomes full of them and they begin to pile up, you can quickly get buried under their weight.

The load begins to pull on the anchor, and when it gets loose, when the winds come, you can quickly find your vessel heading toward the rocks where nothing but shipwreck awaits.

Fourth, there is the tide of going through motions.

The Bible says that it is entirely possible to have a form of religion, but no power to go along with it. Legalism and rule keeping takes the place of passionate, heartfelt worship. Maintenance takes the place of ministry. Such a mindset will sweep you out to sea spiritually.

**John MacArthur**—*“The English explorer, William Edward Parry, once took a crew to the Arctic Ocean. They wanted to go farther north to continue their chartings, so they calculated their location by the stars and started a very difficult and treacherous march north. They walked hour upon hour, and finally, totally exhausted, they stopped. Taking their bearings again from the stars, they discovered that they were farther south than they had been when they started. They had been walking on an ice floe that was moving south faster than they were walking north.”*

How many people think that their good deeds, their religiousness, are taking them step by step to God, when in fact they are moving away from Him faster than they are supposedly walking toward Him?

This is the danger of drifting!