

WARNING AGAINST SPIRITUAL DRIFTING (HEBREWS 2:1-3)

Today's scripture lesson is taken from Hebrews 2:1-3. Before we read the verses, we again humbly ask the Holy Spirit's enlightenment so we take these warnings seriously.

The Amplified Bible says: *"Since all this is true, we ought to pay much closer attention than ever to the truths that we have heard, lest in any way we drift past [them] and slip away. For if the message given through angels [that is, the Law spoken by them to Moses] was authentic and proved sure, and every violation and disobedience received an appropriate (just and adequate) penalty, how shall we escape [appropriate retribution] if we neglect and refuse to pay attention to such a great salvation [as is now offered]? For it was declared at first by the Lord [Himself], and it was confirmed to us and proved to be real and genuine by those who personally heard [Him speak]."*

We will now examine the topic "warning against drifting." What makes people drift away from God? Now before going into details we want to look up the meaning of "drift" so we grasp a better understanding of what we are discussing. According to Webster's dictionary: drift a noun, is an act or instance of being driven or carried along, as by a current of air or water or circumstances; a gradual shifting in position; to move about aimlessly, wander; to drive slowly or far afield. It also means to be borne along like a particle on water floating away from the shore, or a boat not anchored in the harbor, but just being blown away by the current, with no one at the wheels so it just goes with the wind, without a destination. Of course no destination means it will be lost forever.

The first group of reasons why Christians drift spiritually are the Devil, the world and flesh. We know the Devil does not want anyone to go to Heaven and he is doing everything possible to deceive and fool us into living and acting like the unenlightened people so everyone would end up with him in hell. The Devil jams our thoughts, actions and life with sports, endless TV series, films, fictional novels, news magazines and entertainments 24 hours a day. Consequently, blinding us from realizing the seriousness we need to give to our Bibles, sermons and spiritual communications with God. For example, we have all felt edgy and anxious when we were travelling for another 10 miles, and had less than half a gallon left in our gas tank with no sign of a gas station anywhere on the highway. But with a full tank, we care less how many miles we have been driving.

If we are not spiritually firm, the Devil starts to whisper in our ears, "after all, there is nothing wrong with enjoying these things; they were made for us." We all agree that Satan will not make us draw nearer to God, but farther away; and there is nothing on the Devil's agenda to encourage us to be obedient to God, but against God. Where there is unity with Christians, Satan wants division! Where there is division or separation because of obedience to God, Satan wants us to unite with professing "Christians" so they could drag us down into their sin. The Devil also makes loyal, strong believing Christians to find unnecessary reasons to disagree about a preacher's sermon or principles and thus create dissension or faction. Another faithful member goes on a Church-strike because he was not appointed a leader. Have we ever stopped to wonder why some respected members suddenly change their devotion to God and start acting like worldly person?

We need to adhere to the warning in Hebrews 2:1-3. Remember the sermon from Jesus' parable on the seed that fell by the roadside? Those who hear the Gospel, but because they do not understand it, Satan steals it from them. Or the seed that fell on rocks, which means those who hear the Gospel but because they have closed their ears to God, their Christianity does not take them far. And the seed that fell on thorny ground are those with "scattered-brain" or "worldly cares" are Christians whose concerns and lusts about yesterday, today and tomorrow's worldly activities, news, accomplishments blind their scriptural goal. The world with all its ungodly and natural interests beckon us to sin, sometimes deliberately, but By His Grace, we have already overcome them.

There are numerous reasons why Christians drift spiritually. We are taking up the warning on NEGLIGENCE. Why negligence? Let us read Hebrews 10:24-25 from the Amplified Bible, which reads: "And let us consider and give attentive, continuous care to watching over one another, studying how we may stir up (stimulate and incite) to love and helpful deeds and noble activities; Not forsaking or neglecting to assemble together [as believers], as is the habit of some people, but admonishing – warning, urging and encouraging – one another, and all the more faithfully as you see the day approaching."

Fellowship: Neglecting to fellowship with other Christians could make anyone drift away. Some Christians feel sorry for themselves about certain issues in their life and think they need time to be alone for some time until certain things are put right or aligned correctly. It is only after completing these "works" that they will feel they belong in the fold. Fellowship with other Christians encourages us to pray, look out for and share one another's love. We may not know it, but as we talk, laugh and share our experiences these go a long way in helping us stay focused. Through fellowship, the Holy Spirit keeps us "hot" and "afame" together. If you remove a hot coal from the fire it loses its intense heat, and gradually cools off and ultimately become cold. However, if it stays in the pile it remains hot and its heat intensifies as other piles are added.

Other reasons for drifting are: negligence in praying and reading our Bibles regularly; unwilling to offer the same forgiveness to everyone; selected or deliberate acts of sinning when we know it's wrong; a wrong understanding of God's Will; or a self-righteous attitude that we already know God's Word and don't need to hear it again to grow. These are some of the actions that could make a Christian drift.

Neglecting to pray at the start of the day, or as we embark on anything we intend to accomplish for ourselves and others could make us drift. The power of prayer is too great to ignore for any long time. Prayer gives us direct communication with our Heavenly Father through our Lord Jesus Christ. The Bible is full of awesome and amazing events that happened because those affected prayed to God. To endorse our point, our Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, our Great Redeemer, prayed every time, at every opportunity, and even had to make time by getting away from the crowd to pray in the mountains, and in some instances all night.

Brethren, if we don't have the time to serve our Lord now, when will we have the time? Is it after we die? Tomorrow or next time is promised to no one; tomorrow might be too late. Remember what our Lord Jesus Christ said in Mark 8:36 *"For what does it profit a man to gain the whole world, and forfeit his life [in the eternal kingdom of God]?"* Brethren, let's

unbuckle the parachute we are walking around with, and walk with purpose so that when the wind blows it does not pull us back.

After prayer, the next reason is failure to read our Bibles regularly. God commanded in Deuteronomy 6:3-8 *“Hear O, Israel, and be careful to obey so that it may go well with you and that you may increase greatly in a land flowing with milk and honey, just as the Lord, the God of your fathers, promised you. Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one. Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength. These commandments that I give you today are to be upon your hearts. Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, and when you lie down and when you get up. Tie them as symbols on your hands and bind them on your foreheads. Write them on the door frames of your houses and on your gates.”* The Old Testament still applies to each of us today. In the New Testament, in addition to obeying these commandments, we now write and maintain the Word of God in our hearts through the Holy Spirit.

Neglecting to constantly read our Bibles can also cause a person to drift away. When we read our Bibles and sermons regularly, paying attention to God’s Word, the Holy Spirit controls our minds from going off-track. We are then in constant communion with our Heavenly Father. When we pray, the Holy Spirit sheds more light into God's Word and Commandments.

Unfortunately, believers have enough time to read worldly magazines, but little or no time for The Bible. Brethren, this shouldn't be so. May God help us set our priorities right. Eternity is not a destination to be taking lightly, and there is no second opportunity.

Do we ever think about our souls at all? How do we do about our souls? We should give the subject of religion a place in our thoughts from the beginning to the end of the year. We should not be absorbed in the pursuit of personal conveniences, businesses, pleasures, politics, money, or self-indulgence of one kind or another. Rather, Eternity, Heaven, hell, and the world to come, should be thoroughly considered, because Judgment Day is coming.

Others hop from one preacher to another trying to look for the right preacher who will tell them what they want to hear. Unfortunately, the Devil gradually makes them change their position and sooner or later drift from attending service due to lack of interest.

Some people engage in worldly sadness about things that happened or continues to happen to them; inferiority complex--comparing ourselves to others with a defeated feeling of failure; questioning why success and Godly things don’t happen to them. They decide to imprison themselves from their brethren for some time until certain things are put right or aligned correctly. They forget that we belong to the fold and share everything in Christ in sadness or joy. We shouldn't let the Devil deceive us into thinking that our brethren love us only when things are going well with us.

The next set of reasons is the fear of hearing God’s Word, afraid that the preacher might minister against the sin that they have been committing. They ignore the preacher or elders in the Church, or avoid any long conversations with them, lest they say something

that might convict them. Some of us have short-tempered attitudes that make anything anyone say annoy us. Other Christians forget what the Grace of God did while we were sinners and “worship” resentment against the other person for ages. In some cases, the offender does not even know they have done anything.

Then Sunday, the Lord’s Day. Isn’t it discouraging, and the work of the Devil, the world and flesh that the busiest day in the malls is Sunday, the Lord’s Day? Instead of dedicating the Lord’s Day to serve, worship and preach the Word, Satan gets us all busy with catching up on work, grocery shopping, entertainment, pleasure and sports, with little or no time for God or congregating with other believers. Sometimes this is a result of our desire to please or obey our bosses, friends or family, instead of God. It is also difficult to go to church on Sunday, if our job requires us to be there on some Sundays or Sundays, period. We have to continue to pray to God to help us get out of the Sunday job, so that we may have time to worship God and fellowship with our brethren.

There are passages in the Bible that tell us about not doing any work or labor on the Sabbath (now the Lord’s Day, Sunday), but we will read just one of them. Let us pay attention to what God is telling us here in Isaiah 58: 13-14: *“If you keep your feet from breaking the Sabbath and from doing as you please on my Holy Day, if you call the Sabbath a delight and the Lord’s Holy Day honorable, and if you honor it by not going your own way and not doing as you please or speaking idle words, then you will find your joy in the Lord, and I will cause you to ride on the heights of the land and to feast on the inheritance of your father Jacob.” The mouth of the Lord has spoken.”* Those are deep instructions and demand an encore. We pray that God will help us to be serious about the Scriptures, and consider these warnings.

We should not forget that the only important thing to us in this world and the next is doing and being in God’s Will. It is not easy, but with God everything is possible, with the Holy Spirit’s power.

For records purposes, all seven days in a week are the Lord’s Days. Our forefathers also picked a mid-week day, Wednesday, to strengthen our concentration to worship. The Sabbath Day, Saturday, or day of rest, was set aside when our Gracious Lord and Savior Jesus Christ completed His Atonement Work on the Cross and rose early on Sunday morning. He therefore gave us a new Day to worship and share the Gospel, instead of resting as the Sabbath required. Matthew 28:1, Mark 16:2, Luke 24:1 and John 20:1 *“After the Sabbath, at dawn on the first day of the week, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary went to look at the tomb.”* We should spend enough time with the Lord on a daily basis to reinforce us as Daniel did. Daniel 6:10 *“Now when Daniel learned that the decree had been published, he went home to his upstairs room where the windows opened toward Jerusalem. Three times a day he got down on his knees and prayed, giving thanks to his God, just as he had done before.”*

As we learned from a previous sermon, some people take life as sports, just as Esau practiced as an outdoorsman. An outdoorsman sets time aside for sports and other activities, participating in or watching it, with no time left for God His Creator and Jesus Christ the Redeemer of our souls. When all the energy is spent on such things, the door is left open for the Devil to creep in and continue to distract us from paying attention to God’s

Will. Our allegiance and love begins to shift to the wrong direction and sooner or later, if we are well grounded in the Lord, we lose sight and drift away. Let us pay extra attention to what the Apostle John warned us about in 1st John 2:15-17: "Do not love or cherish the world or the things that are in the world. If any one loves the world, love for the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh [craving for sensual gratification], and the lust of the eyes [greedy longings of the mind] and the pride of life [assurance in one's own resources or in the stability of earthly things] – these do not come from the Father but are from the world [itself]."

Talking about Eternity: Let us make an illustration here: At one time in our life at home, at work, at school or just plain life experience where we were overwhelmed in ecstasy, full of so much joy and happiness that all we wanted to do was just sing "Hallelujah" and "praise God" because we were so grateful for God Love and the deliverance, and wish the day or moment will never end. Well, the eternal life God that has provided for us through our Lord Jesus Christ is much, much, more. For the Bible says 1 Corinthians 2:9 "But as it is written, eye has not heard, nor the ear heard, nor has entered the human heart the things God has prepared for those who love him."

How many of us today are willing, for the sake of Jesus Christ, to turn our backs on our daughter, son, friend or boss, and say "NO." No, that is not God's Will. Matthew 19:29 says "*And everyone who has left houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or children or fields for my name's sake, will inherit eternal life.*" And 2nd Chronicles 16:9 says "*For the eyes of the Lord run to and from throughout the whole earth, to show himself strong in the behalf of them whose heart is perfect toward Him.*" To be sure, Isaiah 64:4 confirms it by saying "*For from of old, men have not heard, nor perceived by the ear, nor has the eye seen a God besides You, who works and shows Himself active on behalf of him who [earnestly] waits for Him.*"

So we read that lovely passage again. "*Since all this is true, we ought to pay much closer attention than ever to the truths that we have heard, lest in any way we drift past [them] and slip away.*"

Some of the other things that make people drift away is the lack of a sense of direction in their life; not sure if they should lay everything on the altar or hold some back as Saphira and her husband did to their loss (Acts 5:1-10).

One time, there was a brother who had a prominent position with a Bank. He got a promotion, which meant he had to leave the city where he attended church and relocate to a different city where there was no church branch in or around that area. To make things worse, the promotion required him to either take that higher position or lose it. He committed it into God's Hand, and decided NOT to take promotion. He lost his job. From that high secular position he went on to do a menial job. Believing the promise of our Lord Jesus Christ, which promised us that *whatever we gave up in His Name, He would reward us a hundredfold, and with Eternal Life,* Matthew 19:29. Whenever we put God first in whatever we do, He will bless us, most especially, spiritually.

Serving and obeying God, and especially giving up a position or refusing a position should not be something new to us, for it's been done many times over in Bible times. We

remember the case of Moses, when he left all that luxury and the throne of Egypt to be with his brethren, the Hebrews. He was looking forward to a better life beyond this fleeting life down here. The case of Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego is another special example of faith and obedience in the face of death. And Daniel, who did not care for his life about the king's order, but went on his daily spiritual duties to God. The 11th chapter of Hebrews lists the names of such spiritual men and women.

The influence of other people; such as letting things we see them do or things they might say influence our own life, may cause a person to drift away. That is why we need to commit into God's Hands the people we keep company with who are not converted. Otherwise, we start liking some of the things they do and how they do them. Before we know it, we are a carbon copy of their life.

Frustration in our Christian life may cause us to also drift away. Frustration is discouragement, that started out with doubts of our belief in God. Being defeated over and over again with the same sin causes frustration and put doubts in our minds. And Satan makes us start thinking, maybe I am not meant to be a Christian or I can never be like my fellow brethren. We should not allow the devil to plant such thoughts in our minds or frustrate us in any way. Our Heavenly Father is the same yesterday, today and forever. What He did for our brethren in Bible times, He will also do for us in these last days! We just have to put everything in His most able hands.

The last but not the least is God's tithing. Like once-in-a-while Bible readers, some Christians only tithe when they receive an extra cash for their "over-time" pay. We argue that we need that little 10 percent to purchase something or save for another day. Therefore, God will understand if we skipped once. Others pay their house rents, credit card bills or other loans before the due date, but postpone paying God's ten percent because "God can wait." No wonder when we skip paying our tithes, suddenly something bad happens in our home life that require us to immediately spend hundreds of dollars to fix, e.g. our automobile. Do we postpone fixing it? No, we fix it right away, because we would not have any other convenient means to go to work. Or consider getting a driving violation ticket from the highway patrol. Do we postpone paying the fine? No, we pay right away, or else risk arrest and confiscation of our driver's license. Malachi 3:10 encourages us all to *"Bring the whole tithe into the storehouse, that there may be food in my house. Test me in this," says the Lord Almighty, "and see if I will not throw open the floodgates of heaven and pour out so much blessing that you will not have room enough for it."*

We should not wait for interruptions in our life, such as death in our family, an accident or fright of a few minutes of sickness to take our service to God Almighty seriously.

But now, in spite everything, the good news is that no matter how far we have drifted, there is forgiveness for those who repent. There is a Father waiting at the door to receive us back with open arms, waiting to come in and dwell with us, if we will let Him in. Our Heavenly Father through our Lord Jesus Christ has paved the way for the drifting boat to return to shore and anchor, never to roam at sea again. What wonderful news!

We all need to believe in the forgiveness of sin. John 3:16. The forgiveness of our sins has been purchased by the Eternal Son of God, our Lord Jesus Christ. He did it by living, dying on the Cross, and rising again from the grave, as our Substitute, in our behalf.

Christ has bought it for us at the price of His own most precious blood, by suffering in our stead on the cross, and making satisfaction for our sins. Every individual, therefore, must receive for himself by his own personal faith, lay hold on by faith, appropriate by faith, and make his own by faith.

In closing, let us continue to pray for one another for the Lord to help us to walk the narrow path that leads to the narrow gate that leads to the NEW JERUSALEM, eternal bliss with our Heavenly Father, our Lord Jesus Christ, and heavenly host and all Christians who are called to the Great Banquet that has no end. AMEN!

We are always glad to give Scriptural advice and counsel to those who desire to write us about their problems, and to remember their requests for prayer in our services.

In addition, we publish sermons on other subjects, which take up in detail teaching on how to deal with God successfully and be delivered out of all our troubles. We will gladly send them to those who desire them for their own use or for others.

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