

# Do Not Drift From What You Have Received

by Richard Owen Roberts

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*The sermon emphasizes the importance of prioritizing Christ and not drifting away from the truth of the gospel, warning of the consequences of such drifting and encouraging listeners to examine themselves and their priorities.*

**Duration:** 1:12:58

**Scripture:** Matthew 6:33, Hebrews 1:1-5, Hebrews 2:1-4

**Topics:** "Drifting"

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## Description

In this sermon, the speaker begins by discussing the importance of keeping our eyes fixed on Christ in order to fulfill our purpose. He uses the analogy of walking through deep snow and rowing a boat to illustrate the need to focus on a distant goal rather than getting caught up in the circumstances around us. The speaker then addresses the issue of drifting away from the things we profess to hold dear as a nation. He emphasizes the warning in 1 Peter 2:1-4 about the consequences of neglecting the great salvation offered through Christ. The sermon concludes with a call for individuals to stand and share if they have recently experienced a deep sense of repentance and seeking God.

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## Transcript

Let's turn our hearts and seek the Lord together. Let's pray. Our gracious King, we come, Father, together.

We come to seek your face. We thank you that you have given us a day to set aside. To turn our heart toward those things which are eternally valuable.

We thank you that our relationship with you is not limited to this day. God, we pray that you would unite our hearts to fear your name. That you would enlarge our hearts.

That we might run. To run after Christ. To run with Christ.

God, we thank you that though we were your enemies, you turned your face toward us. Though your law exposes us to be a people who prefer to live for ourselves, you didn't leave us there. But oh, our great and eternal God, you set your heart upon sinners in eternity past.

You sent your Son and then your Spirit to conquer, to purchase, to apply this great work, to seal us until the great day when we're face to face with our King. God, we pray that you would stir our hearts today. Stir them with the facts of Christ.

Stir us with the urgency of these spiritual matters. We pray, God, that you would turn our faces away from everything else. And for this short while, even, God, that we might be self-forgetful as we view the glory of our King.

And consider the great weight of these matters. God, we pray that you would help us to listen for our own souls. We pray that you'd help us to listen for the souls of those that we love.

Lord, we ask that you do a work in us that might be reflected in the way that we live. The way that we talk to each other. The way that we spend our money.

The way we eat and drive and sleep and dress. That everything might be brought under the glorious and happy rule of King Jesus. Lord, we freely confess how needy we are.

And Lord, we agree that we seem to ignore the words that we say in our prayers. So quickly forget we have nowhere else to turn but you. We so quickly forget that we are as needy this morning as we were the first day we cried out to you.

Lord, we have no plan B for our lives. We have no plan B for our families. We have no plan B for this church or our town.

We are completely cast upon you. We pray, God, that your greatness would rise before our eyes this morning in the Scriptures. That we might feel how small we are.

That your love, Lord, would be made clear. That the rights of King Jesus would be brought forward. That we would love you.

God, we pray that you would amaze us at your grace. That you would take us from amazement to gratitude and from gratitude to obedience. God, we ask that you do not leave us where you find us this morning.

We're grateful, Lord, for the many places we can look back upon in our lives to see evidences of your continued kindness. One after the next, heaped one upon the next. We agree with the Apostle John who said, Grace upon grace comes through your Son.

We thank you, Father, for the fullness, the flood, the glorious flood of grace. But, Lord, we pray, God, we have so much ground yet to take. And there's so much that Christ Jesus is owed in our lives, in our homes, in our town and world.

Lord, we pray, continue your kind work. Help us to break up our hearts. We have receptive souls, for what you have to say.

Help us to make room to rip out whatever in our lives offends you. To make room for all that is good and clean. God, we pray that you would help us in all these matters and hear our prayers through the finished work of your Son.

That he might receive all the glory due to his name here in our lives, in our town. We ask it in his name. Amen.

Hebrews chapter 1, beginning in verse 1. The first look at Christ and going through verse 4 of chapter 2, the first warning. God, who at various times and in different ways spoke in time past to the fathers by the

prophets, has in these last days spoken to us by his Son, whom he has appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds, who being the brightness of his glory and the express image of his person and upholding all things by the word of his power, when he had by himself purged our sins, sat down at the right hand of the majesty on high, having become so much better than the angels, as he has by inheritance obtained a more excellent name than they. For to which of the angels did he ever say, you are my son, today I have begotten you.

And again, I will be to him a father and he shall be to me a son. And when he again brings the firstborn into the world, he says, and let all the angels of God worship him. And of the angels, he says, who makes his angels, spirits and his ministers a flame of fire.

But to the Son, he says, your throne, O God, is forever and ever. A scepter of righteousness is the scepter of your kingdom. You have loved righteousness and hated lawlessness.

Therefore, God, even your God has anointed you with the oil of gladness, more than your companions. And you, Lord, in the beginning laid the foundation of the earth and the heavens are the work of your hands. They will perish, but you remain and they will all grow old like a garment and like a cloak, you will fold them up and they will be changed.

But you are the same and your years will not fail. But to which of the angels has he ever said, sit at my right hand until I make your enemies your footstool? Are they not all ministering spirits sent forth to minister for those who will inherit salvation? Therefore, we must give the more earnest heed to the things which we have heard, lest we let them slip. For if the word spoken through angels proved steadfast and every transgression and disobedience received a just reward, 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? God also bearing witness with both signs and wonders, with various miracles and gifts of the Holy Spirit, according to his own will.

May the Lord add his blessing to the reading of his word. Thank you for the privilege of being back again after the passage of some time. It's a great joy to see so many of you that I have learned to love over the passage of years.

Now, obviously, I'm not as strong as I used to be, and I don't see so well anymore. Over the last few weeks, I've lost the sight, basically, in my reading eye. So I'm having to wear glasses so that my distance eye enables me to read some.

But despite the age, my heart still burns with joy and thanksgiving for Christ and for the privilege of serving him. This is obviously Mother's Day. It's not always observed by everyone, and even among those who observe it, not necessarily in the same way.

But I've been thinking of the question, what is the best way for a person to honor their mother? My mother has been gone with the Lord since the year 2002 when she died at the age of 102. But still, it's in my heart to honor her. And how can I do so? I believe the very best way I can honor my mother is to honor her savior.

I can't imagine a better way to demonstrate honor to my mother than by sharing with you this morning the convictions of my heart about the first warning passage in Hebrews 2, verses 1 to 4. And I can't imagine any better way. And if you could honor your mother, then by honoring the savior, well, you say, my

mother's not even a believer. You can still honor her best by honoring Christ, because if she ends up in hell, which she may very well indeed, it will bring her at least a small measure of thanks that not all of her children are there with her.

Imagine the pain and the sorrow of a mother in hell, knowing that through her bad example, through her failure to honor the Lord Jesus Christ, her children are suffering eternal pain, even as she is. So, let us honor the Lord in a very real way this morning by paying strict attention to the word of the Lord. So, turn, if you will, again to the passage in Hebrews.

Those of you who have been a long time in this fellowship sat through a blessed season of preaching on the book of Hebrews years ago. Some of you still remember some of the incredibly powerful and beautiful truths that were brought to your attention at that time. But all of us are in perpetual danger of drifting, and indeed a great portion of the church across the nation has drifted away from the glorious truths of the gospel.

I don't wonder, but what any number who are here this morning have in some significant fashion drifted away from the truth as it is in Christ Jesus. Even if you have not, you are, as I said already, in perpetual danger of doing so. For we are living in the midst of a culture that is getting farther and farther from God.

When I look back over my own lifetime, in all the early years of my preaching, 60, 65 years ago, even 50, 45 years ago, it was as if the tide was coming in. There was this tremendous stirring and movement and flow in the direction of God. There was a mounting up of rejoicing in the truth of the word of God.

Regularly, I saw entire congregations bathed in tears as they heard the word of the Lord. We regularly saw profound and enduring conversions. But now it's as if the tide is going out, and fewer and fewer people are being touched, and the multitudes who call themselves Christians are farther away from Christ now than a month ago.

Every month, the departure seems greater and greater. We are seeing much larger numbers of persons who seem to have made a good beginning, growing colder and farther from the Lord. Nominalism now characterizes the church.

People who are passionate, people who are on fire, are looked at as oddities, as if they are freaks, as if somehow they don't really belong. The pressure is upon all of us to drift with our society, and it is having incredible impact. I was in a two-week conference in Texas during the month of March, and evening meetings such as we will have here this week, but every daytime during each week was devoted to pastor's conferences.

In the pastor's conference one day, a representative from the Southern Baptist Convention for the state of Texas gave a report. A portion of what he said I had heard before, but a portion of it was shocking to me. He said we have 16.6 million Southern Baptists in America.

We have no known address for five or over six million of them. We do not know whether they are dead or alive. We do not know whether they have membership in one church or a dozen churches.

If somehow the FBI and the CIA could cooperate for a change and set themselves to find these six million, they could not discover them. Nobody knows whether they are dead or alive. The average attendance on the best Sundays in the course of a year throughout the whole nation, the best attendance on the part of Southern Baptists is five million.

That means 11.6 million members are missing every Lord's Day. But then the thing that really shocked me, he said Southern Baptist churches are throwing out of the pastorate an average of a thousand pastors every month. Twelve thousand pastors were put out of churches last year alone.

Then he said the entire weight of the whole work of the entire denomination rests on the shoulders of a million people. They do all the giving, all the going, all the labor. So, one out of 16.6 people who carry any kind of a Christian load or burden.

Now those statistics may not be particularly meaningful to you, but they are suggestive of what is happening to us as a nation. We are drifting in a most grievous fashion from the things that we profess to hold dear. Now this first warning in chapter two, verses one to four, which we will read again now, is obviously connected with what is said in chapter one.

For this reason, we must pay closer attention to what we have heard, lest we drift away from it. For if the word spoken through angels proved unalterable, and every transgression and disobedience received a just recompense, how shall we escape if we neglect so great a salvation? After it was at the first spoken through the Lord, it was confirmed to those who heard God also bearing witness with them, both by signs and wonders and various miracles, and by gifts of the Holy Spirit according to his own will. Now some of you have in mind the arrangement of the book of Hebrews, and don't need these next few sentences, but others of you perhaps have no understanding of the way the book of Hebrews is constructed, and you need to understand that in Hebrews there are two things going on at all times.

There is an incredible array of doctrine proclaimed in Hebrews, and the doctrine all focuses upon Christ. The infinite superiority of Jesus Christ to everything else is shown in Hebrews. He is compared with the angels, as we will notice in a moment in chapter one.

He is compared with the priesthood. He is compared with Moses. There is even a suggestion concerning Melchizedek, and in every single instance Christ is shown to be infinitely superior to that with which he is compared.

But in the midst of these wonderful passages lifting up Christ, showing his immensity, his greatness, the significance of Christ's life and ministry, the debt that we owe to Christ for who he is and what he has done, there are mingled in the midst of all of that these warning passages, so that it could be said of summary. The teaching of the book of Hebrews is that it is not a good beginning that matters, but a glorious ending. It really does not matter so much how you start.

It is how you finish that counts. All around us are those who seem to have made a good beginning, but as things are now drifting in their lives, there is no real hope for them of a glorious ending. I believe I can best honor both my mother and my Savior by ending life in complete confidence in Christ, by living all out all of my days, pouring all the strength and all the energy I have into serving him and bringing him glory.

So, let me pause and ask, have you been counting on a good beginning? Everywhere I go, I talk with people whose hope of salvation is not anything occurring in the present, but in something that occurred at some time in the past. We are not saved by things that happened in the past. I repeat, it is not a good beginning that matters, but a glorious ending.

So, ask yourself with true honesty, am I flourishing in Christ now? Am I growing day after day? Do I love him more now than I did a month ago? Am I serving him with greater vigor and zeal than I did in the past?

Or am I hoping that some decision I made, some action I took somewhere in the past, is going to count for eternal salvation? Now, in the first chapter, which, as we've noticed, does pertain largely to angels, there are three combinations of patterns of seven, which become very obvious if you give any consideration. With your text in front of you, let me point out that there are seven quotations from the Old Testament in this first chapter. Verse 5, Thou art my Son.

Today, I have begotten you a quotation from Psalm 2 at verse 7, the second half of verse 5. I will be a father to him, and he shall be a son to me. Another quotation, this time from 2 Samuel chapter 4 at verse 15. And again, at verse 6, and when he again brings the firstborn into the world, he says, and let all the angels of God worship him, a quotation from Psalm 97 at verse 7. Then, in verse 7, who makes his angels winds and his ministers a flame of fire, Psalm 104 verse 4. And then, in verses 8, 9, Thy throne, O God, is forever and ever, and the righteous scepter is the scepter of his kingdom.

Thou hast loved righteousness and hated lawlessness. Therefore, God, thy God, hath anointed thee, Psalm 45 verses 6 and 7. Then, a longer quotation in verses 10, 11, and 12, Thou, Lord, in the beginning didst lay the foundation of the earth. The heavens are the works of thy hands.

They will perish, but thou remainest. They all will become old as a garment, and as a mantle thou wilt roll them up. As a garment they will also be changed, but thou art the same, and thy years shall not come to an end, a quotation from Psalm 102 verses 25, 26, and 27.

And finally, the seventh of these quotations, 13, Sit at my right hand until I make thine enemies a footstool for thy feet, Psalm 110 verse 1 and following. So, seven quotations. Then, there are seven specific things said about the angels in this first chapter.

In verse 2, it is made clear Christ is the creator. They are merely created. Now, you can't compare the created with the creator.

So, Christ is infinitely above angels in that respect. In verse 4, Christ is their superior by his very nature. They are inferior in their nature.

So, again, you can't compare the inferior with the superior. They're not alike. One is vastly above the other.

Then, in verses 4 and 5, it speaks about his name being superior to their name. In verse 6, it makes it clear they worship him. Now, the superior does not worship the inferior, except when things are all messed up, twisted, broken, when the mind is not working, when a person has become like a fool.

Then, instead of worshiping the superior, people worship the inferior, which is what's happening in our day, when men pay much more attention to their own notions than they do to God, when they're much more prone to worship themselves than they are the Almighty. But that, as I said, is a result of twisted, warped, erroneous thinking. The angels worship Christ.

Christ does not worship angels. In verse 7, the angels serve as his wind and his fire. Christ does not serve the angels.

They serve him. In verse 13, he is seated at his father's right hand. Angels are not seated at the father's right hand.

Then, in verse 14, the question is asked, are these not all ministering spirits sent out to render service for the sake of those who will inherit salvation? So, now listen to this, friends. Angels are your servant. Isn't that wonderful? You don't serve angels.

They serve you. And all of us, angels and men, are called upon to serve God. Well, it's urgent that we get priorities right, that we understand the incredible truth.

Christ is infinitely above all that he has created. And so, what we're being called upon to do is to carefully examine ourselves. Can you consciously and honestly say right now, I pay the strictest attention to divine priority.

I never confuse the inferior with the superior. I never worship the lesser, but only the greater. Well, the problem that is addressed in Hebrews is the problem of people who are being sorely tempted to allow their priorities to become confused.

Now, the book of Hebrews was written in particular to Jewish believers, and apparently a good many of them were younger people, people who came from religious homes. And there was a great deal of pressure put upon these young believers. You can pretty well imagine what it's like.

We see a bit of this sort of thing even today. When a young person coming from a godless home comes to church, hears the word of the Lord, is profoundly stirred and moved by what they hear. And then they begin to pay attention to the things that they've heard.

I'm thinking of a situation where a young fellow had a burden for a friend of his. They were both in high school, and he began to urge his friend, that is the Christian fellow, began to urge his non-Christian friend to attend services at the church. And his church had a special kind of an outreach, something like what we've got planned for later this week, when I have the privilege of speaking to the young people in particular.

But the Christian boy becomes concerned about his non-Christian friend, and he's successful in getting that boy to attend a meeting. Now, don't misunderstand the boys, not converted, but he's touched. He's sober.

When he goes home after the meeting, he enters his house quietly. Instead of whamming the door shut, he closes it quietly. His father's in the living room with his feet up on the coffee table, drinking a bottle of beer, and the father cries out, who's there? And the son very quietly says, just me, dad.

Get in here. So the boy walks meekly into the living room, and the father says, where have you been? Just out with a friend, dad. I ask you, where have you been? I told you, dad, then.

Don't give me that malarkey. Where have you been? Well, dad, I told you, I've been. Now, where have you been? I'm telling you, you come out with it or I'll let you have it.

Well, dad, I went to church. You went to church? A son of mine going to church? That'll be the last time. You'll never go to church again.

And the only thing that had happened to the boy was he was subdued. The gospel touched him in a way that he entered the house quietly. You see, there is this tremendous threat for the unbeliever when he gets near a believer, especially if it's a believer in his own family.

So here are these young Christians to whom this epistle is addressed. They've come from Jewish homes, and the Jewish parents are asking the question, where have you been? And when they admit that they've been to a Christian service, and they've heard about Christ, then the parents become alarmed, and they put the pressure on them. And you can almost hear the parents saying to them, don't be a fool.

Don't listen to that religious stuff. We've got the only religion that matters. Don't you know Jesus Christ was a heretic? Don't you know that our leaders put him to death because he was a scoundrel? Don't you dare associate with that false religion.

So the pressure is on the young people to return to the bosom of their family, to the religion of their forefathers. But what the young person has discovered is that all their parents and their grandparents and their great-grandparents ever had was a shadow, a type. But Christ is not the shadow.

He's not the type. Christ is reality. All the truth that is, is in Christ Jesus.

So the appeal, don't turn back. How can you leave the only truth that is for mere shadows or types? And we face the same thing today. Christ is still the living God.

Christ and Christ alone is the Savior of the world. Anyone who drifts away from Christ leaves everything to return to nothing. So don't act like an idiot.

Don't be a fool. Hang on to that which is valid, which is true. And at the same time, these young people were being troubled by their families to return to the religion of Judaism.

There was a systematic looting of their homes and troubling of their lives. There were gangs that were organized that went about. And when a young believer left their home and went to seek the face of Christ and to worship him, they had their goods stolen and things that were necessary in their lives damaged or taken from them.

And during all of that, the ruler, an ungodly, reprobate of a man, was holding huge licentious parties in his gardens in the evening, and systematically he was sending out his palace guards to arrest young Christians and to drag them to the palace. Then these young Christians were being smeared with flammable liquids, and they were mounted on crosses, and they were set up before the garden party started. In various places throughout the gardens, these young Christians on crosses.

Then when the garden party started, they were set afire, and their burning bodies provided the light for these licentious occasions. So, the pressure was on from several directions. Turn back.

Don't run the risk of having all of your goods stolen. Don't run the risk of being light at Nero's garden party. Just abandon this religion of Jesus.

But no, they could not, for they had discovered who Jesus really is. And everything they held dear was in Christ, and no price was too great to pay for following the Lord Jesus Christ. Well, that's the background of this first warning.

Now, let's consider systematically the warning passage itself. There is an urgency and a necessity in this warning. Verse 1 of chapter 2, we must pay closer attention to what we have heard.

Now, you have to realize what the author of Hebrews has been inspired to do. And in order to get a proper grasp of this, I've got to put in front of you a very consequential issue. Who received the most? People

under the old covenant, under the law, or people under the new covenant, people under Christ? Now, that's a simple question, but it needs to be settled carefully in our minds.

Who received the most? Now, friends, if you haven't done any serious Bible reading at all, you know at least something of the seriousness with which many in the Old Testament regarded the religion to which they had committed themselves. I want to read just a few words from the book of Nehemiah, simply as an illustration of what I'm saying. Listen carefully.

This is from the ninth chapter. You don't need to turn there. You might want to make note of it for future reference.

On the 24th day of the month, the sons of Israel assembled with fasting in sackcloth and with dirt upon them. And the descendants of Israel separated themselves from all foreigners, and they stood and confessed their sins and the iniquities of their father. While they stood in their place, they read from the book of the law of the Lord their God for the fourth of the day.

And then for another fourth, they confessed and they worshiped the Lord their God. Now, I have something I want to ask you. I would like each of you who sometime in the last month have equaled their seriousness to stand to your feet and tell us about it.

I'm asking you to stand to your feet if you have covered yourself with dirt and have wept and prayed in fasting and in sackcloth. Go ahead and stand now. Everyone who has covered themselves with dirt and wept in sackcloth and ashes sometime in the last month.

Or maybe the month is too brief a time. Let's say over the last year. Go ahead and stand now.

What about standing in place, listening to the word of God being read for the quarter part of the day? If you divide night and day into equal segments, 12 hours each, a quarter part of the day is three hours. Or if you're thinking that eight hours of night, 16 hours a day, then a quarter part of the day is four hours. So, everyone now who has stood in place listening to the word of God read for three or four hours, you please stand.

And then let's add the other part, another three or four hours confessing sin and worshiping the Lord. Now, most of us have heard the biblical principle, to whom much is given, much is required. And anybody who has thoughtfully read the Bible knows that Christ, our high priest, who someone mentioned in prayer this morning, offered himself once.

Everyone knows that a high priest who offers himself once for the sins of the people, and no additional offering is necessary because that one offering covers all sin for all time. Everybody knows that that's a better high priest. So, we obviously have a better high priest than anybody in the Old Testament had.

Furthermore, every high priest in the Old Testament died, and he had to be replaced with another high priest who died, who had to be replaced with another high priest who died. But Christ is a high priest who lives forever. Everything you look at says what they received in the Old Testament is a small fraction of what every person now has through Jesus Christ.

But here's the simple and the sad truth. Many of us have never been a fraction as serious about the kingdom of God as was Moses, and Moses didn't have anything in comparison with what you have. We haven't been nearly as serious as the people in Nehemiah's day, and yet the people in Nehemiah's day

had virtually nothing in comparison with what we have.

You get the picture. Because we have received so much more than they received, the duty upon us is vastly greater than it was upon them. They had received the law.

We have received the grace of God in Christ. At the heart of the law was the message, thou shalt not. At the heart of grace is the message, thou shalt.

What is owed on our part is infinitely greater than what was owed on their part. And so the question in front of us, has our response been appropriate to what we have received? So, let me pause and ask you to ponder that question personally. Has your response to Christ been appropriate to what you have received in Christ? We remember that in the third chapter of the book of the Revelation, God spoke very strong and hard words to those people who were neither cold nor hot.

And he said concerning them that because they were neither cold nor hot, he would spew them out of his mouth. Would it be surprising if God were to spew out of his mouth all nominal Christians all around the world? I'm simply asking you, has your response to Christ been appropriate in terms of what you have received? So, the warning is don't drift from what you have received. So, let's ask ourselves, have I drifted in any way? Now, a person who's drifting is a person who appears to be without an anchor, who goes with the tide or with the drift of the church.

Now, get this straight. I've tried to make it clear, but I want to make it even clearer. The church itself in America, it's a drift.

If you just go along with the typical church, it's guaranteed that you're drifting. It's only by the grace of God that here and there, there's a church that is being remarkably true to the word of God. I think you have the privilege of being part of a church that is at least earnestly seeking not to drift.

So, you have the blessedness of a church at least that will help you in this matter, but the majority of people around us don't even have that much. But ask again the question, is there any drifting occurring on my part? Is there anything that I once held dear that I no longer hold dear? I was speaking on Wednesday of this past week in my own church. I'll just simply say for the sake of you who have been kind to me over the years, I used to think that when I got older, life would grow simpler and easier, and that it would be easy to live the victorious life.

Now, it's nice to think that that may still happen, but I can tell you as I approach the year 80, it hasn't happened yet. My life this past year has been a whole lot more complex than at any time in my past. For while I have been maintaining the itinerant work that I have been doing for decades, I've also become the interim pastor of a church in Roselle, Illinois.

So, every Sunday when I haven't been preaching somewhere out of state, I've been preaching there. It's been a wonderful privilege, but it's been a tremendous strain upon me to keep up with the schedule. We've been dealing with 1 Peter on Wednesday nights, and this last Wednesday we were talking about the passage in the third chapter of 1 Peter that requires us to keep our eyes fixed on Christ in order to fulfill.

I asked the people, when did it storm so terribly earlier in the year? Now, most of you don't know where I live and don't care, and it doesn't matter, but all around my place of residence and my place of work, we had drifted snow, so that the snow piles were up to my eyeball. Our snow removal equipment was behind

a door that had six foot of snow piled up against the door. It took me four hours just to get the door open.

But anyway, I said to the people on Wednesday night, when you're trying to walk through snow that's up to your hips, is the best thing to keep your eyes on the steps that you're taking? Or is the best thing to fix your eyes on a distant point? If you've ever tried walking in three foot of snow, you know how difficult it is to go a straight line. You can't possibly achieve it by watching your steps. You can only hope to achieve it by fixing your eyes on some distant goal.

It's similar to rowing a boat. Did you ever try to row a boat in a straight line by watching the swirling water around the boat? No! If you want to reach the goal, you fix your eyes on a distant point that is not moving. And in this passage that is critical.

If we are going to hold fast to what we have received, we have got to fix our eyes, not upon the circumstances surrounding us, but upon the place where Christ has called us to be. So, again, the question before us, in any fashion, have you let the precious things of Christ slip? I wish there was some way to put every person here under examination to resolve that question with certainty. Now, this warning passage is made incredibly meaningful by placing it in context with what used to be over against what is.

So, we have these words in verse two, for if the word spoken through angels proved unalterable, and if every transgression and disobedience received a just recompense of reward, how shall you escape if you neglect so great a salvation? Now, let's think about that. What does it mean when it says every transgression, every disobedience received a just recompense of reward? For it was received through angels, and it has proved unalterable. Now, it goes back to Sinai, and this we need to be sure we've got a hold of.

When the law was given on Mount Sinai, everyone was commanded to obey every word that the Lord spoke. And those of you who have recently re-read the passages understand that the response of the people was everything the Lord says we will do. Now, that was a noble statement, and perhaps even sounded convincing, but the simple truth is they did not keep their own word.

They did not hold steadfast. So, what this passage is saying, while they said that they would hold steadfast every word the Lord spoke, they did not. And because the word that was spoken to them was delivered to them at the hands of angels, every transgression and disobedience received a just recompense of reward.

Now, what is that alluding to? Well, listen to these words that I'm reading from the book of Deuteronomy chapter 33 verses 1 and 2. Now, this is the blessing with which Moses, the man of God, blessed the sons of Israel before his death. And he said, the Lord came from Sinai and dawned on them from Seir. He shone forth from Mount Pera.

And he came from the midst of myriads of holy ones. At his right hand there was flashing lightning for them. So, when the law was given, by God, to the people of Israel on Sinai, there were myriads or thousands and thousands of angels who were there.

And so, this warning says, if those who received the law at the hands of angels did not keep it, and every one of them suffered for their disobedience, and every one of them did suffer for their disobedience, how many of those that left Egypt entered the land of promise? Every man among the army of Israel died in the wilderness because of their unbelief. Only Caleb and Joshua entered the land. So, the thrust is simple.

They only got the law at the hand of angels. And because they did not honor God and keep his word, every one of them died in the wilderness. Now, you've got to be out of your mind to think that those of us who have received the gospel, not at the hands of angels, but from the Son of God himself, can get away with what they didn't get away with.

The simple, absolute truth is, every transgression, every disobedience received a just reckoning. And the warning is, if you drift, you've got to be realized and face the fact that what you're drifting from is vastly more consequential than they drifted from. Now, has that sunk in? Has that become a significant part of your whole life? Your responsibility to God is vastly greater than the responsibility of Abraham or Moses or King David or Nehemiah or any other prophet, priest, or king.

And therefore, what's demanded of us is infinitely greater. So, the question is asked, how shall we escape if we neglect so great a salvation? Then you understand that in verses three and four, what is very plainly taught is, that which we are neglecting, that which we are disobeying, was not given to us at the hand of angels. But, as I already stated, delivered to us by Christ Jesus himself.

So, if we neglect what Christ himself proclaimed, and if we neglect what was certified as accurate by those who heard, that's what this passage says. It isn't as if Christ just got up and spoke and everybody has to depend upon his word. No, it's more than that.

Christ not only spoke, but he certified as authentic everything he said by what happened in connection with it, and above all else, by his death and his burial and his resurrection. So, we're asked not merely to believe the words of one who was crucified by those who hated him, but it has been certified to us by signs, by wonders, by acts of divine power, which are of incredible consequence. So, friends, the first warning passage is straightforward.

How shall we escape if we neglect so great a salvation? Now, it is perfectly clear that there is only one means of salvation provided by God, and that is Christ Jesus. If you neglect the only means that God has provided, then your case is hopeless. But some of us feel, well, I haven't neglected it.

I do believe it. But you see, the thrust of this passage is more than just asking, have you given mental assent to these truths? The question before us, have we acted appropriately? That's the key. Is your action appropriate? We saw at least a little bit of what was considered appropriate for the law given at the hands of angels, and we've read very plainly every transgression and disobedience received a just recompense or reward, but we're not being held by that standard.

We have been given so much more, and I'm pleading with you, don't respond to Christ with the nominal, careless, lazy spirit of the age. Give to Christ everything you are. Be to him all that he has called you to be.

Lord helping us, we will work our way carefully through these warning passages over the next several days. But I want to step down here among you. It's very hard for me to stand in one place, but this is such a treacherous thing up here that John said he'd rope me in if I didn't promise I would stay there.

But I want to come right down and ask you, with great concern, are you responding to Christ in a fashion truly appropriate? After all, you're less than dirt. I mentioned out of the Nehemiah passage that they put dirt upon themselves. They sat in ashes.

Why? Because that's the best way anybody has ever figured out to show your understanding of how worthless you are. When you cover yourself with dirt, when you sit in ashes, you acknowledge that you are

a hopeless mess. But Christ, and Christ alone, is the answer.

And an all-out devotion to Jesus Christ, absolutely mandatory. So, I close by pleading with you to give to Christ all that you are. And to do so not in a one-time decision, but in a lifetime of following him with all your heart.

But because it is a warning passage, it is necessary to say, if you don't, you'll have all of eternity to regret it.

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