

A God Sent Message of Warning

by Tim Conway

The sermon emphasizes the importance of paying attention to Christ and not drifting away from Him, warning of the severe consequences of falling away from God.

Duration: 1:00:27

Scripture: Jeremiah 32:40, John 10:27-29, 1 Timothy 4:16, Hebrews 3:6, Hebrews 4:1, Hebrews 6:12, Hebrews 10:24, Hebrews 12:25

Topics: "Faith Assurance", "Spiritual Warning"

Description

This sermon emphasizes the importance of heeding the warnings in the book of Hebrews, highlighting the need for genuine faith in Christ, the danger of drifting away, and the necessity of holding fast to our confidence in Him. The speaker urges the listeners to fear falling away from God, to repent when drifting occurs, and to find assurance in Christ through constant meditation on His supremacy.

Transcript

Lord, we know that there's lots of false religion, lots of hypocrisy. Lord, there are true children of God. There are those You have saved.

We pray, Lord, as Your name depends on it, keep these, Your sheep, keep them, hold them. Father, I pray for these men that were baptized today. I pray that they would hold the course all the way to the end.

Father, we desire to see people well saved. We've seen the cheap thing. We've seen the imitation.

Lord, we want the real thing. Men and women growing into the likeness of Christ, living in the power of the Spirit, being sanctified, hungry for righteousness, hungering and thirsting, growing in holiness, growing in a faith, growing in a determination to cling to Christ, growing in a love to Him, growing in likeness to Him, growing in appreciation and intimacy, a desire to be with Him. Lord, we pray to You, we ask You, help us, Lord, to hold the road.

Father, I pray, I pray to You, I pray in the name of Jesus Christ, the One who told us to pray using His name. He's given us such authority as to pray in the name that is above every name, to boldly approach before the throne of grace, because we do have such a High Priest, One who has entered into the veil for us, gone before us. So we come in, Lord, we come into Your very presence, and by faith, we believe that we're there.

By faith, we believe You are here. By faith, we believe that there is a presence that is unseen to our physical eye. Father, we believe it.

You are here. You are here. We pray that we would regard that with fear and trembling.

And You have spoken to us. Sin times pass through the prophets, but in these days, You have spoken through Your Son. And I pray, Lord, that we would take it for all the seriousness that it's meant to be taken when it was said.

We don't want to lightly despise what has been spoken by the Son of God Himself. These truths, Lord, I pray for salvation. I pray, Lord, that we would have to baptize seven more very soon.

Lord, drop down from above in power. Make Your Word powerful. Lord, I pray for it.

I pray that Your upholding, sustaining hand would be with our brother and sister in China. Uphold them, Lord. Uphold Ken and the three girls that work with Rebecca.

Uphold them, Lord. John and Judy and the girls, we pray for them. May You give them clear direction, clear path.

Open up a place for us to start this orphanage, Lord. I pray for the flask pullers. Lord, uphold them.

May they be bright and burning and shining lights there in Peru. Lord, I want to pray for Trevor, he and Teresa. Uphold them.

Lord, may they not weaken. May You encourage them. May the power of God be real out among those natives.

Lord, please come here. Come to this place. We pray for outpourings of the living God on the east side of San Antonio.

Please, Lord, help us now. May Your Word be real. May it be alive.

May it all happen in the name of Jesus Christ, our Savior. Amen. Would you please turn to the book of Hebrews.

And actually, you can turn to Hebrews 10. For those of you that may be visiting this morning, I'll just bring everybody up to speed very quickly. I just started the book of Hebrews last week.

And my intention is not to preach through the book verse by verse specifically, but rather to try to give us an overview. Constantly looking at the book from the big perspective. We will dive in and look at some of the details, but I want everybody to hold firm to the big picture of this book.

And last week, I primarily wanted us to look at who the book was being addressed to. Not whether or not they were actually Jews or Hebrews, but what characterized these people. Who's the book being written to? In the sense of, what are they like spiritually? And what we found there, can anybody remember what we found? What did they look like? They were weak.

They had hands that hang down. They were drooping. Anybody remember anything else? Feeble knees.

Feet that were wandering out of the way. Dull, it says. Hebrews 5, also immature.

Not ready for meat. Meat's for immature, and they weren't ready for meat. They had to be fed with milk.

Can you remember anything else? They were people that had been subjected to persecution. They were people that were needing definitive warnings. Not to drift.

Not to stray. They were people that were missing the meetings, right? We saw that. Don't forsake the assembling together of yourselves, which is the habit of some.

It began to happen to some of them. I mean, these are the kind of people that we were looking at. Well, today, again, I want to do one of these overviews because I want you to get a feel again for the book as a whole.

I've entitled my message this morning, Hebrews, a God-sent book of warning. Now we all know what a warning is, right? I had a father who smoked cigarettes when I was growing up. And so as I'm thinking about warnings, the first thing I thought was warning.

The Surgeon General. Now that was back in the 70s and 80s. And so I couldn't remember exactly what it said or what it says today because I haven't seen a pack of cigarettes in a long time.

And so I just typed that up. I googled Surgeon General and cigarettes. Brethren, that's a warning.

When you see that on a pack of cigarettes, that's a warning. Do you know in the UK, they just have on the side of their pack of cigarettes today, smoking kills. I mean, it used to be in my day, the Surgeon General warns that cigarette smoking may be hazardous to your health or something like that.

I remember when my dad smoked. Right now in the UK, just smoking kills. In New Zealand, they actually have a foot that's decaying, covered with gain green and it says smoking causes gain green.

With a picture on every pack of cigarettes. That's a warning. I remember close to by where I grew up in Michigan, there was a sign that warned of a sharp curve ahead.

Sticker under the hood. You guys ever lifted up a sticker and you've seen somewhere around there, there's a sticker that shows a picture of the serpentine belt with a hand and the fingers are coming off. That's a warning.

Or how about this? My children and I would go to the Y over here on the east side and swim laps. There's a picture on the side of the pool that shows somebody diving into the shallow end, smashing their head on the bottom of the pool. You ever seen that sign? Something similar to that? Especially in the shallow ends? Brethren, warnings.

Just recently after the Denton conference, Ruby and I stayed another day up there so that we could spend some time with the lighters and the clouds got dark and ominous and suddenly there was a siren. Outside there was a tornado warning. We actually evacuated our room.

Went looking for a safe place. These are warnings. The very fact there are warnings is directly due to the fact that there's what? Danger.

Absolutely. Absolutely. There are things all around us that threaten to harm us.

And warnings let us know about that danger so that we can avoid the danger. I mean, that's the reality. And what happens when the signs are disregarded? You know the sign I told you about right there before the curve? There was a friend that I went to my senior year in high school with and then we went to the same college together.

We both had motorcycles. We both rode together. And this guy comes flying into that corner, disregarded that sign, and right off that corner, he couldn't hold it.

And he crashed! Why? He disregarded the sign. I mean, here's my dad smoking those cigarettes all those years of his life. Warning, warning, warning.

And he died 59 years old with cancer. Brethren, when we disregard the warning signs, warnings are meant to make us aware of the danger that we might fear that danger in order to turn us back from that danger and to miss that sign or ignore that sign is to put yourself in great peril. Bottom line.

And you know what? The greater the danger that the warning sign warns us about, the greater the peril if you ignore that warning sign, right? I mean, brethren, we have a sign over there close by where we live that says, you know, speed bumps ahead. Well, you know what, if it's dark and I happen to be going along about 35 miles an hour and I'm looking over here and I totally forget those things are there and I slam into those speed bumps at 35 miles an hour, I mean, what's the worst that happens? I put some undue stress on my shocks. Maybe punish the people that are riding in the van a little bit.

But brethren, I'll tell you this, it's altogether another matter if we ignore the warnings God gives us in the book of Hebrews. You hit the speed bump, it's one thing. The warnings in the book of Hebrews, they warn us.

Listen, this applies to you, my friend. The book of Hebrews warns us about the greatest danger of all. I want you to see this.

If you're there in Hebrews 10, turn your eyes to verse 31. It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God. I'll tell you what the greatest danger of all is.

It is God Himself. You better believe that. You fall into the hands of the living God.

Think with me. The hands of the living God. Haven't we always been told? Haven't we been taught? Didn't Jesus Himself say, no man is able to pluck you out of My Father's hands.

Haven't we come to nobles' hands as a place of unshakable security and refuge? And yet, those very same hands and the One Who possesses them is your greatest danger of all. And it is a fearful thing to fall into those hands having drifted. Oh, brethren, don't you see the danger? I'm telling you this, those hands that can be so precious, so protective, can become your worst nightmare.

Listen, God is a holy terror if we are not right in the way we fall into His hands. If we are right, if we come into those hands in a certain way, they are rock solid, stable, protecting, secure. But if you come into those hands in the wrong shape, in the wrong form, the One whose hands those are is a holy terror.

And you have everything to fear. It is absolutely fearful to fall into the hands of the living God. This is the danger presented in Hebrews.

And it's God Himself. And I want you all to feel this. This literally hits us in the book of Hebrews.

There is no book in the New Testament that gives us such descriptive, repetitive warnings. It is a book of warnings. There are other warnings, no doubt.

And there are other places that speak strong, even severe. But this is an entire book given to a people who, remember what I told you. Remember the reason the writer says concerning Abraham and his descendants.

If they had desired it, they could have gone back to the country they came from. It's because, brethren, you can go back if you want. And that's where these Hebrews were.

Christ didn't seem all that great anymore. And the thought was there. And brethren, I'm telling you, this isn't becoming an atheist.

This is just like it says. Just drift. You just drift.

Oh, you might still claim Christ, but you just drift away from a hot, passionate love affair with Christ. You just drift. You let sin take away that fire.

And you just drift. And it says you will drift into those hands. And it is a warning.

It is a warning. The first warning comes to us in Hebrews 2, verse 1. Look with me. I want to take you through some of these today.

I want you to feel this, brethren. Hebrews 2, verse 1, Brethren, therefore. Oh, brethren, therefore.

Chapter 1 is the therefore. Christ is the radiance. You have to understand this.

By angels, the old covenant was given. But now in these days, God sent His very own Son. Your God.

O God. Your throne, O God. Your throne, O God, is forever and ever.

This Christ that He's setting forth has brought such a salvation. Brethren, we lose this sometimes because it becomes overly familiar that God actually sent His own Son. He whom He loved more than anything else, He sent Him into this world to actually be put to death for purification of sins.

This One who is right now exalted to His right hand. Do you think with that Son at His right hand looking over at Him and seeing pure beauty, pure glory, that which purely delights the Father, and then to see somebody down here in this world who slights Him, drifts away from it, and says, I like other things other than Him. What do you think is going to happen if you fall into His hands? This is what it's all about.

Therefore, He is superior to the prophets and superior to the angels and superior to His companions. That was all said in chapter 1. And He has dealt forth this great salvation. He came and He earned it.

He shed His blood for it. And it is not a trivial matter. And God the Father does not take it such.

And to offer it to men is huge. And to reject it is a crime that is unimaginable. And He says, therefore, you need to be very careful.

Therefore, we must pay much closer attention. This is what I was telling you about last time. Brethren, we need to be focusing on Christ, on His person, on His work.

We need to spend times in meditation. Closer attention, brethren! Closer attention! Do you know when you drift? It's when you stop paying close attention to Christ and to His salvation. We must pay close attention.

The mind, you must be putting it on Christ. Daily feeding on His Word, on His person, praying to Him. And don't drift from it, brethren.

It is deadly. To drift is deadly. Listen, we must pay much closer attention to what we have heard lest we drift away from it.

Well, that doesn't sound bad. We hear about people drifting and backsliding all the time. Light matter, right? I mean, some of you people there, you get too bent out of shape about righteousness and holiness.

You get too bent out of shape about this. Come on, we can be a Christian, but we don't have to take it so far. You guys are a bunch of Jesus freaks.

You take it too far. Everything in moderation, right? Well, that's not what the writer of Hebrews believes. He says, the message declared by angels, that old covenant, it proved to be reliable and every transgression or disobedience received a just retribution.

How shall we escape? Escape what? A just retribution. If we neglect. It's just neglect.

Well, come on, I go to church on Sundays. Oh really? When Christ said to carry your cross, to die to yourself and to follow Him, He meant Sunday religion? Is that what He meant? When He said, unless you forsake all that you have, you can't be My disciple. Is that what He meant? Brethren, if you fall into the hands of the living God after having drifted, He is going to give you... You know what retribution is? It basically means payment of wages due.

Can you imagine falling into His hands? You're in His hands as one who let the 10,000 things in this world that can drift a person away from Christ, and you counted them more valuable than Him and you drifted. And now you find yourself in His hands and you are face to face with the Almighty. Well, yes, I drifted away from Your Son because of... and you fill in the blank.

And what you've just done is exalted that over His Son. He said, My Son shined with My very own radiance. My very express image was planted on Him.

He bore My nature into the world. And you had something that was more important? How will you escape? Brethren, this is a warning. Take warning.

Just retribution. Brethren, I'll tell you this. You may live 110 years, but you get to the end of this life and those hands are waiting.

They're waiting. Or there's this, Hebrews 3, verse 12. We'll kind of go through these things.

But this book, and I'm not going to hit on all of them, but this book just overflows with these warnings. I mean, why in the world does somebody need so much warning? Because, brethren, the danger is this real. That's why.

Hebrews 3.12, take care, brothers, lest there be in any of you an evil, unbelieving heart leading you to fall away. Before it was drift. Here it's fall away from the living God.

But exhort one another every day as long as it is called today that none of you may be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin. Do you know how sin is deceitful? It says, I am better than Christ. That's exactly it.

That's how we exhort each other. Brother, sister, with Christ you have life forever and forever. All your sorrows, all your tears, they are wiped away.

Pleasures forevermore. Joy unspeakable. You have unsearchable riches in Christ.

Oh, brethren, forever and forever and forever and forever being immersed in the kindness of God throughout all these coming ages. And will you sacrifice it for a trinket? That's how we need to be exhorting one another. My brother, my sister, that sin that so easily besets you is not worth it, brethren! It's not worth it! What do you have that you would forsake your own soul for for Christ? And I'll remind you, this is speaking to brothers.

That's what it says. Brothers. Take care, brothers! Verse 14, for we have come to share in Christ if indeed we hold our original confidence firm to the end.

Do you all feel the warning? People fall away. This is one of the reasons that the church is so important. We exhort one another.

We're exhorting. Brethren, we need to exhort on the preciousness of Christ. Mark it, Christian.

Every sin that you allow into your life is a drift inducer. Listen, what does it say here? Sin does what to us? It hardens! Your conscience is tender. Christ is sweet.

The Gospel is precious. Justification by faith alone just thrills your soul. You're finding beauties in Christ.

And you let that sin in. It's just a little one. And it hardens.

There is a layer of callousness that comes. And it's usually undiscerned. It's gradual.

And it hardens. And we drift. And first you drift before you fall away.

It's this slow moving away. Brethren, when you find your brothers and sisters, it's telling you, you go exhort them. Brother, sister, do not fall away.

God, help us. And this is almost paradoxical. To fall away from the living God is to fall into the hands of the living God.

And it's a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God. And then look at Hebrews 4.1. Just after that. Therefore, while the promise of entering is rest still stands, let us fear.

Warnings are meant to make us fear so that we might avoid the danger that we're being warned about. Let us fear lest any of you should seem to have failed to reach it. Brethren, those hands are fearful for those that don't reach God's rest.

That's the idea here. This is precisely what the book of Hebrews is geared to do. It's a book of warning meant to make us fear losing our hold on Christ.

Brethren, don't play around. Don't toy with the world. Listen, you know what's just a dead giveaway? You try to exhort a brother or sister.

And they're always saying, what's wrong with that? What's wrong with that? You know, the person that they're trying to see how much of the world they can get in their lives and still be a Christian. And you say, brother, you probably ought not to do that. What's wrong with that? And you see what happens? The hardening effect is there.

Have you ever seen a person when they are head over heels infatuated with Christ? They are careful not to offend. Careful. The person who's always playing the minimal morality game, hardening is setting in.

The person that wants to see how close to the edge they can get. God put fear in us. How about Hebrews 6? Verse 7. And this is actually coming out of a portion of Scripture that is warning about being enlightened.

About tasting the goodness of the Word of God. Tasting heavenly gifts of salvation. Being exposed to the workings of the Spirit.

You see, that can happen. We get in the church. We come unto the truth.

We see the workings of the Spirit. We become affected. And what happens? Look at verse 7. Here it's put into an illustration for us.

For the lamb that is drunk the rain. You know what the rain is? It's all God's blessings. It's His Word.

It's His enlightenment. It's being exposed to the workings of the Spirit and this good gift from Heaven and what God is doing and is working. You come into the church and you get exposed to that.

You come among God's people. And that is a reality. We become exposed to that.

But what happens is when God rains down His blessings like that and the ground drinks, if it produces a crop, it's producing fruit. If it's fruitful and it's useful for those for whose sake it is cultivated, these people, they're receiving a blessing from God. But if it bears thorns, if you've got ground and you pour all these blessings into it and the life of the person is full of sin, it's just constant.

There's a practice of it. You look at them this way out of this corner of your eye and you're seeing sin. You look at them out of this corner, failure.

And I'm not pressing for perfection. I'm just telling you what the verse says. If you look at people and it's just like I can barely see fruit in their lives, they seem to look a lot like the world.

They seem to look a lot like lost people. It says these people, though they were exposed to all that Word of God, though they were exposed to all that blessings, it's worthless and near to being cursed and its end to be burned. It's a warning, brethren.

A warning! Or how about this again? Hebrews 10. Verse 24, let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works. Here it is again.

We're to be exhorting each other against the hardness of sin. We're to come into one another's lives. We're to stir one another to love and good works.

Away from being a life that is thorny. That's full of thorns and thistles. Just the opposite.

Brethren, it's not that we just press, brethren, to hold fast to Christ. It's to run this Christian life. To be fruitful.

To be full of loving fruits. Faith works through love. Galatians 5, 6 says.

It's looking to Christ. Isn't that what we saw? You take that whole chapter of Hebrews 11 and you have, by faith, Abraham obeyed. We heard in the Sunday school.

It produces obedience. Don't tell me you believe in Christ. Don't tell me you found Him to be more precious than anything else and then you're not willing to follow Him and do what He did and say what He said.

You see, it's a sham. So we go to our brothers and sisters and we say, brother, Christ is worth it. Lay down your life for Him.

Live for Him. By faith, look all the things in Hebrews 11 that they did. They conquered.

They triumphed. They were sawn asunder and they held the day. Oh, they could have gone back, but they said no way.

We desire a city. A city that is not made by hands. A city where Christ is.

That's what we want. Even though in that day, they didn't know exactly who that was, we do. It's the city of our King.

It's the city of Christ. And we encourage our brethren, brethren, stay the path. It's worth it.

It may get hard. You may suffer. There may be trials.

Oh, but it is worth it. Just like that sister we read about. Oh, you can put the thumb screws on me.

You can put the ankle screws on me. I can faint. I can pass out.

But brethren, do not dishonor Christ. It is worth it. And that day she was married to the true bridegroom.

Oh, brethren, it is worth it. What a celebration in heaven. The joy of one of Christ's coming now made perfect.

The spirits of these just men and women made perfect now in the celestial city. Brethren, it's just around the corner. This doesn't momentarily light affliction.

But brethren, we don't want to drop this. We don't want to let go. Let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, not neglecting to meet together as is the habit of some.

Brethren, meeting together is imperative. Being in the church when it meets is imperative to your life. But encouraging one another and all the more is the day drawing near.

And here it is again, for if we go on sinning deliberately, this is where we need to stir one another. This is where we need to encourage one another. Brethren, I'll tell you this, the Christian's not perfect.

But that person that gives themselves to deliberate sin, who basically says, I know this is wrong and I'm going to do it anyway, oh, you are on dangerous, dangerous ground. If you deliberately sin after receiving

the knowledge of the truth, this is the same kind of thing we saw over in Hebrews 6. Exposure to the good Word of God. Coming to a knowledge of the truth.

If you sin deliberately after receiving the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins, a fearful expectation of judgment, a fury of fire that will consume the adversaries. And right after here is where it says, it is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of a living God. How about Hebrews 12, verse 25? For if they did not escape, who's they? I'll tell you who didn't escape.

The ones we found out about and we will look at much more closely, those Hebrew children out in the wilderness. They didn't escape. They died.

They died. They didn't enter the rest. They were kept out.

And if they did not escape when they refused Him who warned them, that was Moses on earth, much less will we escape if we reject Him who warns from heaven. Do you see the logic in this? It's kind of like this. When Moses was given the Word of God and they despised it, they didn't enter the rest.

Now, if Jesus is far superior to Moses and He comes bearing a greater salvation, a greater message, and you despise that, do you think somehow it's going to go easier? He's saying no. You're going to receive a just retribution. And if it's a greater crime, then your payment is greater.

Be in fear here. Now, brethren, are you getting a sense of the warning of the book of Hebrews? Do you feel the sense that there's danger? You might not. You know, I realize for all that, you may not.

You see, when I was growing up in Michigan, my buddies and I would go swim in Lake Michigan a lot. There were certain parts of that coastline that had a tendency to get undertow. You get the waves and the wind just right and it was an undertow.

And they would fly the red flag. It was a warning. Warning! You don't want to go swimming today.

The undertow is bad. But you know what? People still die! Why? Well, here's basically what happens. They come to the beach.

You're young. You're 21 years old. Red flag.

We're strong. We're good swimmers. We come and swim here all the time.

You see, you disregard it because you think that doesn't apply to me. That applies to little kids. Of course, they're going to get swept out.

That undertow would either take you way out, you'd get exhausted and you wouldn't be able to make it back and you'd die, or it would just pull you under and you're gone. And young men, 21 years old, 25 years old, will die because they just disregard it. And you see, brethren, this exactly can happen to us with regards to the warnings in the book of Hebrews.

You know why? You know how this happens? Well, it's logic that basically goes somewhat like this. Well, my understanding of the Bible is that you can't lose your salvation. Once you're saved, you're always saved.

And I'm saved. Conclusion? I'm safe. Deduction? The warnings don't apply to me.

Brethren, whatever warnings I encounter in Scripture about falling away, if I reason like that, they miss me. They go right by me. Not too long ago, I received an email like this.

Pastor? Now listen to this. This is so common. Pastor, I know that at one point in my life I experienced true salvation.

There's his first premise. I know that at one point in my life I experienced true salvation, but, and here's the but, I feel and see that I have slid back quite a bit. He's drifting.

And though my conviction is still with me, I feel it is fading, though I struggle to regain my faith. Here's a young man who plainly says I am sliding back. My conviction's fading.

I struggle to regain my faith. Sounds to me a whole lot like the Hebrews. Sluggish, dull, immature, fading, in need of stirring up, needing to be warned not to drift.

Doesn't it? And yet, this young man makes this assertion right off. That I know I was saved. You see, I spoke one time at the Bible study about making shipwreck, and when I was done, this girl came up to me and said, you make it sound like you can lose your salvation.

Just last week, I got done. Just on what I was doing, laying some very preliminary things in Hebrews, and a young man came up to me and he said, I'm just wondering about this. He said, my pastor teaches you can't lose your salvation.

Isn't it amazing? You can't even teach Hebrews and people are saying, what are you saying? You're saying you can lose your salvation? It's because there's no understanding. People aren't getting this. Listen, what Scripture says is this, that if you hold the way, if you cling to Christ, if you hold your confidence to the end, you'll be saved.

You see, brethren, we are being saved. And we are being saved. And we will be saved if we hold on to the end.

And if you drop out, are you saying does that negate past salvation? No, it doesn't negate that. But you see where the assumption is faulty? This young man is faulty and the warning never touches him right at this point. His fatal assumption is to assure himself he's a Christian while he's drifting away.

What Hebrews says is if you hold your confidence in Christ, if you wake up and you're living your days looking to Christ, going to His Word, days of struggle but you're calling on Him, days when you're dull but you're going back to Him, and you're pressing on, that's your confidence. Well, brethren, no doubt you'll be saved. Because by faith we're saved.

And when that faith keeps glued to Christ, faith is looking outside self. It's looking to Christ, clinging to Christ. And when your life is that, of course you're going to be saved.

Of course you have been saved, are being saved, will be saved as Scripture says. But I'll tell you this, all the warnings are this, if all of a sudden you're letting sin creep in, it's better than Christ, you're drifting away, even though you maintain a profession, even though you still go to church, but He's just not the same. It's kind of falling away.

The religion that you once had doesn't so much excite you anymore. Proclaiming the excellencies of Him who called you into His kingdom, you're just not there. Your mouth doesn't speak a whole lot about Him.

The things of the world are becoming more interesting, drawing you away. For you to say, but I know I was saved. Brethren! How do you think there are so many people in Matthew 7 that are saying, oh no! Lord, Lord! We did mighty works and we prophesied, we cast out demons.

He says, I never knew you. How do you think we get so many people? It's because the warning signs are waving all over. Drifting, drifting, drifting! Go back! And people don't even see them.

But I was saved. Once saved, always saved. And they totally miss the warnings.

Listen to this. John Piper. He said this, this past September, I spoke to the student body of Wheaton Christian High School.

I took as my topic, 10 Lessons for Fighting Lust. Lesson number 6 was this, ponder the eternal danger of lust. My text on that point was Matthew 5.28-29 where Jesus says, everyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart.

If your right eye causes you to sin, pluck it out and throw it away. It's better that you lose one of your members than that your whole body be thrown into hell. Piper says, I pointed out that Jesus said heaven and hell are at stake in what you do with your eyes and with the thoughts of your imagination.

After the message, one of the students came up to me and asked, are you saying then that a person can lose his salvation? It's the same thing all over again. Now, Piper says this, this is exactly the same response I got a few years ago when I confronted a man about the adultery he was presently living in. I tried to understand his situation and I pled with him to return to his wife.

Then I said, you know, Jesus says that if you don't fight this sin with the kind of seriousness that is willing to gouge out your own eye, you will go to hell and suffer there forever. He looked at me in utter disbelief as though he had never heard anything like this in his life and said, you mean, you think a person can lose his salvation? It's amazing. It's everywhere.

I don't doubt we have folks in this room that think that same way. So Piper says this, so I have learned again and again from firsthand experience that there are many professing Christians who have a view of salvation that disconnects it from real life and that nullifies the warnings of the Bible and puts the sinning person who claims to be a Christian beyond the reach of biblical threats. And this doctrine is comforting thousands on the way to hell.

Brethren, Jesus said if you don't fight lust, you won't go to heaven. Just like the rest of these warnings. These warnings.

If you don't adhere fast to Christ but drift, you don't go to heaven. It's that plain. You can say, oh, what about my past? And maybe some of you are saying, well, then do we walk through life doubting all the time? Should we doubt our salvation? Can we be certain that we're saved? Doesn't all this just dash our confidence to pieces that when we see people can fall away? Absolutely not.

Absolutely not. That's not what the writer of Hebrews is doing. He is saying it is clinging to your confidence that is the way home.

It's not walking around in doubt. Listen, as long as you rise up every morning and you know I love Christ, I want to be in His Word, I want to live for Him, I'm looking to Him. Lord, I have a hard day ahead.

I can't do these things without You. I trust in You. I can do all things through You as You strengthen me.

I trust You. I trust You to take me to this city that doesn't have foundations here. I trust You to get me through today.

I trust You to keep me from falling. Lord, I love You. I love the doctrine of justification by faith.

I know I'm a sinner. I love the fact that there is a real Gospel that says that no matter how bad a person is by faith in Christ, I can be pure as the new fallen snow. I love that! Listen, it doesn't say you should look at yourself when you're like that and say, oh, I have to doubt all the time.

No, that's the confidence it wants you to have. Hebrews 3.6 We are His house if indeed we hold fast our confidence and our boasting. Brethren, are you boasting in Christ? Hold to it! When you get to the place where you're boasting in other things, then you fear.

Or how about Hebrews 3.14 We have come to share in Christ if indeed we hold our original confidence firm to the end. Hebrews 6.11 We desire each one of you to show the same earnestness to have the full assurance of hope. It's all about confidence.

It's all about assurance. What the writer is saying, brethren, if you slip away, it's this, if you are deliberately sinning, you say I know what God wants, I know what Christ says, and I'm not going to do it. Oh, then you better fear.

Because if you go on deliberately sinning after you hear about this, you're in trouble. And if you get to the point in life where you're dull, you're immature, you're slowing down, you're sluggish, the arms droop, the knees are feeble, your feet are strained, you better beware. And the writer of Hebrews says, brother, sister, come back to this confidence.

You see, when a person is confident, if I die today, I go to Christ, he can live like a madman! The violent! I'll tell you, when you have a confidence like that, it puts a violence in you. And the violent take heaven by storm. Again, reminded of Pilgrim's Progress.

And Pilgrim takes up that sword and goes to hacking. And he fought his way through there. I'll tell you what, assurance makes a man bold.

A woman confident. She presses through. I've got Christ.

I can do radical things. I can be creative in ways that I lay down my life for Christ and love others. I can give my life for this.

Brethren, we need to press on with that. We need to encourage one another with that. And there's no conflict between fear.

Some people think, well, how can I have assurance? How can I have confidence? And all the time I'm walking around with this fear. You're saying that this whole book is meant to drive a deep fear into us. And that's right, brethren.

The writer of Hebrews can say both. Hebrews 4.1 says, therefore, while the promise of entering His rest still stands, let us fear. And he can also say Hebrews 6.12 that says that we ought to have this earnestness to have full assurance of hope until the end.

You see, brethren, if I see a warning sign, I fear it. I heed it. Listen, they're not a contradiction.

It says I'm assured in Christ. I believe I'm getting through. I believe He's taking me.

But if I start drifting off and sin becomes clinging, weights clinging, I'm being beset, I'm dulling down, I look at that and I say, I need to fear this. There's a warning sign. And I run back.

Back to my confidence. I crawl under Christ's arms. It's confident here.

Out there in the world, out there straying, that's not good. That's not confident. You see, brethren, what God said in the New Covenant is this.

Jeremiah 32.40, He says, I will put My fear in them that they not depart from Me. You see, that's what true salvation looks like. He puts His fear so that we don't depart.

So here's the true Christian. He's walking through life and here he is. He's at the Grand Canyon and there's a sign.

Warning. Thousand foot cliff. You see, the Christian says, oh, I fear that.

I'm running back over here to safety where I've got confidence and assurance. The man without that, the woman without that, they say, forget about that. They go over and play around by the edge.

That's what happens. Brethren, God puts His fear in the hearts of His people when He knows all of a sudden that Christ isn't as precious, isn't as real, communion with Him isn't as sweet as it was before. He sees these sins.

He feels these weights. And He repents. They've crept in.

He comes to God's Word and He says if we go on sinning deliberately after receiving the knowledge of the truth and he's thinking, oh, man, I did sin deliberately the other day. And he's afraid. And he says, Lord, I'm sorry.

I know I did that on purpose. Lord, forgive me. And he runs back.

And he can have confidence. But if you're able to say, well, I know that was sin, and you're just justifying yourself, you're going to hell. You just live that kind of life where you deliberate sin and you're doing this, it doesn't matter what you have.

Brethren, you and I need to have a theology that says no matter what we claim happened yesterday or 20 years ago or whatever, no matter what claims we had, it doesn't matter if I've been an elder in the church for 10 years and I preach to people and God uses it to help people. It doesn't matter. We need to have a theology that says if I stray and I walk away and I fall away from the living God and I go into deliberately sinning, I just drift.

I forsake and neglect this Gospel, I'm going to perish. And we need to have that kind of theology, brethren. That kind of theology.

And what we need to remember is this, God appoints means by which He saves His people. He appoints means. These warnings are means.

He puts His fear in us and then puts these means there. There's a cliff. You know how it was when Pilgrim was walking in Pilgrim's Progress.

You had this swampy deal on one side of the path and a cliff on the other side of the path. If you fell this way, you went off to your destruction. If you went this way, you got caught in this stuff and it destroyed you.

And so we walk and there's these warning signs and God puts His fear in us and now as we walk, these signs are all along us. Warning, warning. So we keep straight.

And when we begin to stray, there's that warning sign. Deliberately sinning. And it causes fear.

And we come back. Brethren, there are means. Do you see what the means are? We need to exhort one another while it's called today that we not be hardened.

We need to not forsake the assembly together. Brethren, if you minimize the value of the church, it can be destructive. And if you don't believe that, listen to 1 Timothy 4.16. You know what it says there? Paul says to Timothy, you preach this truth that I've taught you.

And he says by so doing, you will save yourself and those who hear you. I think a lot of times people read that and they're like, whoa, I can't even fit that into my theology. I don't even understand what that says.

So we run away from it. Brethren, I'll tell you, it's right back here to this same reality. It's saying this.

You come and you sit in the church and you get exhorted by the brethren. And they keep you from becoming hardened. And then you sit and you listen to the men that God has called to preach and teach to you and by it, they save themselves and you save.

You get saved. Well, how? Because under this preaching, we're calling you back all the time. All the time.

Back to this confidence in Christ. Warning signs we put up. We exhort you.

We warn you. We admonish you. We rebuke you, instruct you, teach you.

And it's constantly working out towards your salvation. These are the means that God has set up to get His elect to the end. He saves through means, brethren.

And if you say these means don't matter, if you say this preaching doesn't matter, and those meetings don't matter, and the exhorting of the brethren don't matter, brethren, they do matter. They're right in the middle of these warnings. So, brethren, I want you to see last week I exhorted you all that what this whole book of Hebrews is about intermixed in all these warnings and in all these kind of negative pictures of what these Hebrews were like, it's all Christ.

It's the supremacy of Christ. And last week I was exhorting you, brethren, meditate on Christ. Meditate on His supremacy.

This book is about how He's greater than Abel and greater than Levi and greater than Abraham and greater than Aaron and greater than Moses, greater than the angels. Brethren, just fill yourself with the greatness of Christ. And last week I showed you the life of Chalmers and Edwards and Simeon and how they had just focusing on the person and work of Christ just had tremendous experiences.

But what I want you to see is that exhortation is not meant just to have you filled with the Spirit or filled with joy. It's meant to get you to the end. It's saving.

When you fill your heart and mind, your contemplations and meditations with Christ, and we're exhorting one another to do it, and we're preaching to one another to do it, constantly Christ, Christ, Christ. By it, I'm saved and you are saved. Brethren, if we believe our Bibles, of course, my sheep hear my voice and I know them and they follow Me.

And I give them eternal life and they will never perish. And no one will snatch them out of My hand. My Father who has given them to Me is greater than all and no one is able to snatch them out of My Father's hands.

Brethren, those hands we've been talking about, when a sinner is saved, they hold Him. That's what Scripture teaches. But, the elect of God will hear God's warnings and they will fear.

The elect of God will drift at times and then fear and take the warning and run back to Christ. The elect of God will struggle, feel their hands hanging heavy, at times dull, but the elect will become alarmed and they will repent. They will hold fast their confidence.

Yes, the elect of God are most assuredly and certainly to be saved. But they will not be saved apart from fear and warnings and church meetings and exhortations that prevent hardening, nor apart from meeting together and stirring up one another to love and good works and attending to the preaching that God uses to save the preacher and the hearers. Do you all see that? Yes, there's security.

Those hands are secure. But there's a way. As I heard Bob Jennings say one time, he talked about the tapestry.

All of our lives are these tapestries. And see, God doesn't bring us through in a vacuum. He brings us through using all of this machinery to get us to the end.

And I hope you all see it. Brethren, confidence. Confidence.

And you don't establish confidence in Christ unless you're immersing yourself in those promises. You know, confidence is confident in something, right? It's not confident in nothing. It's confident that when I look at Christ, He is greater.

It is such a great salvation. I'm not trading this for the world. And to get there, you've got to be thinking on it.

You've got to have a mindset on things above or you don't make it. Brethren, that's my encouragement. That's my exhortation.

Those are the warnings of the Scriptures. I hope you feel that. It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.

May God help us. Amen.

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