

5/3/26

Pay Attention

Hebrews 2:1-4

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Good morning. My name is Pastor David Pranga. I am the Executive Pastor, here at Brewster Baptist Church. It is a joy to welcome you, whether you are here in person or joining us online. Thank you for being with us today.

One of the things my family enjoyed, when the kids were younger, was going to Nauset Beach in the summertime. The kids loved making sandcastles, tossing the football, and playing in the ocean. They especially liked riding the waves on their boogie boards. They would ride the waves in, and then grab their boards, and go right back out again. Over and over. They loved it, and it was so much fun.

After a while, they would look up to find mom and dad. But something had changed. We were not in front of them anymore. Instead, the kids had drifted 20 or 30 yards down the beach from where they started.

Here is the unsettling part. *The whole time they were drifting, they felt like they were standing still.* That is how drifting works. They were not paying attention. Things changed, but they didn't realize it.

It's not only true in the ocean. It's true in our relationships with each other. It's true in our priorities. It's also true in our spiritual lives with God.

Nobody plans to drift, spiritually, away from God. But it does happen – quietly, gradually, and often without us even realizing it. It happens to every one of us at one time or another.

How many of us have drifted away from God? For one reason or another, we have taken our eyes off of God and turned our focus to other things. What are those areas? It may be our job, children, extended family, sports, or even the news. Before we know it, we have started drifting, and our relationship with Jesus is not where we want it to be.

Spiritual drifting has been going on for a very long time. Interestingly enough, this is not a new problem. It has been going on for hundreds and thousands of years. We see this in the book of Hebrews.

Currently, we are going through the book of Hebrews in a new series titled, "Anchored in the Unchanging Christ." Last week, we learned that the letter of Hebrews was written by an unknown author. This author loved Jesus Christ. He also loved Jewish

believers. He wrote this letter to encourage the believers, remind them of truth, and warn them that their actions were not lining up with the Word of God.

These Jewish Christians were exhausted, and they were facing persecution. They were even thinking about going back to their old way of life – of animal sacrifices and worshipping God at the temple. They were starting to have doubts of whether Jesus was the Messiah.

Last week, we learned that (1) Jesus is supreme. Jesus was greater than Moses, the angels, and the prophets. (2) Jesus' teachings and message were ordained by God. (3) For those of us who were here last week, Pastor Doug passed out an anchor to remind us that Jesus is our anchor.

Today, we move on to chapter 2, and it begins with an important warning – one that we need to pay attention to.

Let us read *Hebrews 2:1-4*. ***“We must pay the most careful attention, therefore, to what we have heard, so that we do not drift away. For since the message spoken through angels was binding, and every violation and disobedience received its just punishment, how shall we escape if we ignore so great a salvation? This salvation, which was first announced by the Lord, was confirmed to us by those who heard him. God also testified to it by signs, wonders and various miracles, and by gifts of the Holy Spirit distributed according to his will.”*** That is God's Word for us today.

1. Drifting is Subtle – But It's Real

As I mentioned, the early believers were tired and worn down. Over time, their faith had become lifeless, and some may say inactive. We see that the author wanted to give these Christians a loving and gentle warning in verse 1. ***“We must pay the most careful attention, therefore, to what we have heard, so that we do not drift away” (Hebrews 2:1).***

The word “drift” is a quiet, but powerful, word. Drifting is not a rejection of Jesus. It is not that they were openly rebelling against God. It was more that these Christians were slowly losing focus on Him. The word “drift” is dealing with movement without intention. They were moving away from God. They may not have even noticed. But they were moving away from Him.

I want you to imagine a boat that is tied to a dock. When the boat is tied up, things are very secure. The boat is not going anywhere. It stays where it belongs. But what happens if the rope begins to loosen and become unwound, even a little bit? The boat begins to move slowly, quietly, almost unnoticed. The boat slowly moves away from the dock. The boat will continue to move, maybe a long way, unless someone is paying attention to it.

Spiritually, it can happen the same way. The writer of this letter has a warning for these Christians. He has been watching and paying attention to them for some time. He loves them so very much. Yet, he is worried about them. Their faith has become passive. They have been going through the motions. The author gives them this simple warning about drifting. This is the first warning of many in the book of Hebrews.

I believe that this message is for us, today, as well. It is so easy for any of us to drift spiritually. It happens very subtly. *No one wakes up and says, "Today I'm going to drift away from God. I just don't need you."* At least, I hope no one ever says this.

Drifting does not usually happen in a moment. It usually happens over a period of time. Our focus, which was once on Jesus, turns to other things that seem to be urgent and important. We let things take over our life.

As I mentioned before, this may be raising our children and making sure they get to their activities. This can happen when we watch television, news, and sports, and reels on our phones. Work can take our focus off of Jesus, too.

It does not take very much for us to lose our focus on Jesus. If we don't pay attention to what we are doing, we will drift and drift further in our spiritual life.

What does spiritual drifting look like? Let me give you a few examples.

- Church attendance. You know it is important. You miss a Sunday because you went to see family off-Cape, and miss another because you let the family sleep in. Before you know it, attending church has become optional.
- Prayer. You used to pray consistently, either in the morning or night. You miss a few days, and it turns into weeks. Prayer is now just happening on occasion, when you need something from God.

- Reading the Bible. Many of us took the challenge to read the Bible last year. We carved out time to read scriptures. Then, we finished. Time has passed. We find it more difficult to read God's Word now.
- Serving People. We love serving, inside or outside the church. It made us feel good. Then, life got busy, and we had to take a season off. We stopped serving. Now, we wonder to ourselves, did we really make a difference?

Little by little, we can all drift away from God. It does not take very much. We get out of our routine. That is why the writer of Hebrews says, in verse 1, "***We must pay the most careful attention...***" Why? Because if we do not pay attention, we will inevitably start to drift. Because the pull away from God is constant and subtle. It will naturally happen to all of us if we are not paying attention.

Here is the principle we need to remember. "***If we are not intentionally paying attention, we will unintentionally drift.***"

This is not just a New Testament idea. We see this in the Old Testament, as well. King Solomon, who was the wisest person in the Bible, wrote *Proverbs 4:23*. "***Above all else, guard your heart, for everything you do flows from it.***" Solomon says that we are to guard our heart. We need to watch what we put into our heart. We need to pay attention because what you do not guard will eventually drift.

Remember point #1. **Drifting is subtle, but it's real.**

Now, here is what make this even more serious. We are not just drifting in general; we're drifting away from something incredibly valuable. Now, we move on to point #2.

2. Don't Neglect the Message

What is the message they should not neglect? "***For since the message spoken through angels was binding, and every violation and disobedience received its just punishment, how shall we escape if we ignore so great a salvation?***" (*Hebrews 2:2-3a*).

The author is reminding the Christians of the importance they placed on the Old Testament law. The message was delivered through the angels. That message mattered, and it carried weight. It also had consequences for their lives. Everyone recognized that the law was from God.

What did we learn from last week? Jesus' words and teachings are superior. How much more are Jesus' words dealing with salvation that we need to pay attention. Notice verse 4, ***"This salvation, which was first announced by the Lord, was confirmed to us by those who heard him. God also testified to it by signs, wonders and various miracles, and by gifts of the Holy Spirit distributed according to his will."***

Notice how he describes salvation. This salvation was (1) declared and announced by the Lord; (2) eyewitnesses heard Jesus speak; (3) it was testified and confirmed by God through signs, wonders, and miracles that were done; and (4) also by the Holy Spirit. In other words, this message had been verified at every level. See, God has gone through great lengths to make sure we don't miss the message He has for us.

What is the message? **Jesus Christ, the Son of God, came to earth, and lived among us. Jesus died on the cross for our sins, and rose again, so that we can be forgiven, restored, and brought back to God.** That is the great salvation.

Remember, the warning is not that these Christians have rejected the message. They have not. But they have neglected the message. They may have rationalized that it is really not that bad. Neglecting may feel harmless. But neglect is never neutral. When we neglect things, in the moment, it can feel small, but the outcome can be great. This leads to point #3.

3. Paying Attention Is Ongoing

So, what must we do? Let us go back to verse 1... **"We must pay the most careful attention."**

Paying attention is not a one-time decision. It is a daily decision. It's choosing, repeatedly, to stay anchored to the message of Jesus Christ.

When I read those words, "Pay the most careful attention," those words tell me that I need to refocus my mind. I need to be fully engaged with a renewed attention towards God.

What do we need to pay attention to? *Our relationship with Jesus.*

On a practical sense, what are we paying attention to? I know, for me, having habits and disciplines help me in my spiritual life.

- (1) Church – Am I making church a priority? I love what Pastor Doug has mentioned – if you can make it to work, you can make it to church.
- (2) Am I making time for small group, Bible class, or Sunday School?
- (3) Prayer – Am I praying to God daily? Am I praising God, confessing my sins, thanking Him and asking him for my needs?
- (4) God's Word – Am I feeding my soul by reading the Bible daily?
- (5) Serving Others – Am I using my gifts to serve others? By serving others, I am showing people God's love.

These are just a few disciplines that I think are important. The goal is not to be perfect. The goal is to be consistent. If we want to grow in our relationship with Jesus, we all need to have disciplines, habits, and activities in our life to help us set our eyes on Jesus.

I believe we are either growing with God, or we are drifting away from him. That is why there are many scripture verses that call us back. *Colossians 3:2* says, “**Set your minds on things above.**” And in *1 Timothy 4:16*, “**Watch your life and doctrine closely.**”

This passage is not just giving a warning. I see it as an invitation to come back to Jesus, focus our lives on the Kingdom of God and teachings of Jesus.

Years ago, a man was out fishing alone, early in the morning. The water was calm, quiet, and peaceful. He dropped the anchor. He settled in, and focused on his line. After a while, he was completely absorbed in what he was doing. Time had passed. Eventually, he looked up and looked around. Something felt off. The shoreline did not look the same. At some point, his anchor had come loose – and while he was not paying attention, he had drifted much farther than he had realized. There was no moment when it happened. No sudden shift. Just a slow, steady movement in the wrong direction.

That is the warning of *Hebrews 2*. If we don't pay close attention to our lives, we will continue to drift away from Him.

Let me ask you a question. **Where are you drifting right now?** I want you to think about that question. I am guessing that, as I look over the crowd in this room, we are all at different places in our journeys with God. This will look different for everyone.

For some of us, we need to **Come Back** to Jesus. We have been living our life in our own strength. Our eyes are focused on the world, and our eyes are on ourselves. We know it. God knows it. I want to encourage you to come back to Jesus.

For some in this room, we need to make a decision to turn to Jesus and follow Him. This is the most important decision you will ever make – to come back and follow Jesus. We need to ask Jesus into our heart, to make him the anchor of our life.

For some of us, we need to **Re-Focus** and **Pay Attention**. We know, deep down inside our soul, that we have been focusing on the wrong things in life. We need to ask God for help, this morning, to see things in our lives that we need to change.

For some of us, we need to make our spiritual life a priority again. This could be by attending church regularly, being part of a small group, or serving. For others, it might be that we need to spend more time in prayer and Bible study.

I can tell you from my own experience, when I make it a point to pay attention to Jesus, my heart grows in love, and I can extend grace and mercy toward others.

The call, this morning, is simple – Pay Attention. God has given us a message worth holding on to, a Savior worth listening to, and salvation too great to neglect.

Let us pray. [Prayer by John Calvin]

Grant, Almighty God, since you have been pleased to receive us into your favor, and daily invite us to come to you, and set before us your Son, in whom all fullness of blessing is found – grant that we would not be carried away by the distractions of this world, nor led astray by our own desires, but would remain firmly fixed on you, holding fast to your truth, so that we may never fall away from you. Instead, enable us to persevere in the calling you have given us, until we reach that blessed rest which has been secured for us by the blood of your only Son, Jesus Christ. Amen.

Questions for Discussion or Reflection

1. Can you think of a time when you “drifted” from something important without realizing it at first? What happened? How did you correct the drifting?
2. Read *Hebrews 2:1-4*. What stands out to you about the phrase “pay much closer attention” in verse 1? Why do you think the author uses such strong language?
3. What are some of the biggest distractions in your life that pull your attention away from Jesus? How can we, as Christians, fail to pay careful attention to what God tells us?
4. The passage gives us, the reader, a strong warning about drifting. Why do you think spiritual drifting is more common and more dangerous than outright rejection? What is the difference between the two?
5. Where do you see subtle “drifting” happening in your spiritual life (time with God, prayer, church involvement, attitude, etc.)?
6. Verse 3 warns us about neglecting our faith. What are things we neglect in our relationship with God? Why is doing these things so important?
7. What did God do to validate the gospel message? How does the author show that the message of salvation is trustworthy and important? Why does remembering this help us stay anchored when we are struggling?