**Title:** Take Heed, Don’t Drift

**Text:** Hebrews 2:1-4

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**Introduction**

Well – friends: **Have you** ever **experienced drifting** of **some sort** in **your life** before?

Now – **just to ensure** that **we’re on the same page**:

* I’m ***not*** **talking about** the **deliberate kind** of **‘drifting’** that **some people do** with **their cars** – or – say – in **white-water rafting**.
* **Rather** – **I’m talking** about **unintentional** – **imperceptible** – **drifting**.

Let me just give **one example** that **we** **can all probably relate to**:

* **Have you been** in **lectures** where **you told yourself** to **pay attention** – ***only*** to **catch** **yourself daydreaming** **halfway** through **the lecture**?

Well – **guess what**?

**You** have **drifted** – in **your thoughts**.

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Well – **drifting**:

* It’s **a reality in life**.
* It’s **something *all* of us** are **prone to**.
* It’s **something *none* of us** are **immune to**.

And **the thing we need to understand** is this:

While **some consequences** **of drifting** may be **insignificant** – **others** may have **huge implications** – with **some** even **potentially deadly**.

And – friends – **this** is ***exactly*** **the** **danger** that **the author of Hebrews** is **highlighting** to **his readers** in **our passage** this morning.

**He** is **concerned** that **they *not* drift** from **the faith**.

For **drifting in such matters** has **what is arguably** the **most serious** and **disastrous** of **consequences** – **consequences** that **pertain** to **one’s eternal destiny**.

And – **thus** – the **main point** that **I want us to see** from **today’s passage** is this:

|  |
| --- |
| **We must give earnest heed to the gospel –**  **lest we drift from it to the detriment of our souls.** |

In fact – **the entire book of Hebrews** is **written** with **this one aim** in mind – namely – **to** **encourage believers** to **persevere** in the face of **rising hostility** and **persecution**.

**Some of the believers** – it seems – were **tempted** to **turn** from **the gospel** and **revert** back to **Judaism** so as to **avoid being persecuted** for **the faith**.

And **what we find** – as we **read** through **the book of Hebrews** – is that **the author** expertly **interweaves doctrinal exposition** on **the person** and **work of Christ** with **practical exhortation** for **believers** to **persevere** in light of **these glorious truths**.

And in **Hebrews 2:1-4** – **we come** to **the first** of **these exhortations**.

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**Well** – friends – **my aim** today is **simple**. It is **twofold**:

* ***Firstly*** – **I hope** to **awaken** **us** to the **immense danger** of **drifting** from **the faith** – of **drifting** from **the gospel**.
* And – ***secondly*** – **I want** to **encourage us** to **examine ourselves** to **determine** whether or not **we** **have drifted somewhat** from **the faith** – and to **realign ourselves** if need be.

Alright! **So** – ***without further ado*** – **let’s** **walk through the passage**.

And **what we see** is that **the passage neatly divides** **itself** into **two parts**:

* In **verse 1** – **the author issues a warning**.
* And – in **verses 2-4** – he gives **the reasons for the warning**.

Let’s **take each of these** in turn.

Firstly – **the warning** ...

1. **THE WARNING (v.1)**

**Look with me** at **verse 1** – **the author** writes:

*“****We must pay*** *the* ***most careful attention*** *–* ***therefore*** *– to* ***what we have heard*** *...”*

Now – **let’s stop** for **a moment** and **ask ourselves** a **basic grammar question** whenever **we see** a ***“therefore”***:

**What** is the **“*therefore*”** – **there *for***?

**Well** – I believe **it harks back** to **what the author had written** in **chapter 1** – namely:

* **The** **finality** of **God’s word** in **Christ**.
* And **the superiority** of **Christ** over **angels**.

And **because** of **these things** – **because** of **who Christ is** – **the author** writes:

*“****We must pay*** *the* ***most careful attention*** *to* ***what we have heard*** *– so that* ***we do not drift away****.”*

Friends – **what we see here** is **an urgent appeal** **combined** with **a solemn warning**.

**I want you** to **catch the heart** – the **pastoral heart** – of **the author** in **this exhortation**:

* **Our author** is **no ivory tower theologian** who is **detached** from **the reality of life**.
* ***Rather*** – **he** is **one** who **truly cares** for **the welfare** of **his people**.

And **he beautifully models** for us **the truth** that **all theology** – no matter **how high** and **lofty** – is **immensely practical** – is **immensely relevant**.

**Notice** the **gravity** of **his words**:

* **These** are **urgent words**.
* **These** are **serious words**.
* **These** are **solemn words**.

**The author** here **urges his readers** to **pay careful attention** to **the things** that **they have heard**.

**It’s almost as if** **he is pleading** **with believers** who – ***it seems***! – have **become lax** in **their commitment to Christ**.

**Such** is **his care** and **concern** for **them**!

And **we see this** in the **emphatic nature** of **his words**.

**Notice what he *says*** – or **rather** – **what he *doesn’t* say:**

**The author doesn’t say** – ***“We must pay attention to what we have heard.”***

**No**! **Rather** – he says – ***“We must pay the most careful attention to what we have heard.”***

* It’s **that important**!
* It’s **that vital**!
* It’s **that serious**!

In fact – **it’s** **so important** that **it** is **not enough** to **merely pay *some*** – or ***occasional*** – **attention**.

**Rather**:

* It **demands our *all***.
* It **demands our *fullest***.
* It **demands our *greatest* attention**.

By the way – **did you notice** the **verb** – **“*must*”**?

This is **an imperative**. It’s **a command**.

This means **it** is **something** **we *have* to do**.

In other words – **it** is ***not*** **an option** – but **a necessity**.

And **not just that**.

But **this** is **also something** that **we must do *continually*** – as **the present tense** of **the verb** **implies**.

In other words:

* **This** is **not** **a** **one-off action**.
* But **an ongoing action**.
* **A** **habitual action**.

**We must *keep on* paying attention**.

And **this** is **true** ***not just*** for **the readers** **who lived** in **the first-century** – **it** is ***also* equally true** for **us today**.

For **the day and age** in which **we live** – namely – **one** that is **filled** with **many temptations** and **distractions** – **we cannot afford** to **merely pay *some* attention** – or **give *occasional* attention**.

**No**! **We must pay** **the** ***most careful* attention**! **We must give *earnest* heed**!

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Now – **the question** then becomes:

* **What *exactly*** are **we** to **give our fullest attention** to?
* **What** is to be **the object** of **our attention**?

**Well** – I believe that **the context makes it clear** that **the author** is **referring** to **the word of Christ** ***in general*** – or **the gospel** ***in particular***.

If we **flip back** in **our Bibles** to **Hebrews 1:2** – **what we see** there is that **the author** writes **these words**.

He writes:

*“...* ***in these last days he has spoken to us***– [HOW?] –***by his Son*** *...”*

That is – **God** has **spoken to us** in **the person of his** **Son** – and by **the word of his Son**.

**That** is **what we** areto **pay attention** to.

And if you **flip back** to **our passage** in **Hebrews 2:3** – **what we see** there is that **the opposite** of **“*paying attention*”** is that of “***ignoring*”** – or **“*neglecting*”**.

And **the object of neglect** is ***none other*** than **the** **“great salvation”** that **we have in Christ** – in other words – **the gospel**.

So – ***putting the two together*** – **we can** **conclude** that **the object** of **what we are to pay utmost attention** to is that of **the word of Christ *in general*** – or **the gospel *in particular***.

**We must pay attention** to **the person of Christ** – to **the word of Christ**.

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**And so** – friends – with **the centrality** of **God’s Word** and **the gospel** in mind – I want us to do a **quick heart-check** – a **self-diagnosis** together.

**So** – if you are ready – **let’s** **ask ourselves**:

* **What *exactly*** is **God’s Word** to **us**? **What’s** **our relationship** to **the Word**?
* **Do we view it** as **the divinely inspired**, **inerrant**, and **infallible Word**?
* **Are we like the Bereans** in **Acts 17:11**? Do we **study it**? Do we **delight in it**? Do we **savour it**? Or **has it become a chore** and **a burden** to us?
* Or **take the gospel** for example: **Does** **the gospel** still **amaze us**? **Are we** still **in awe** of **what God has done for us in Christ**? **Do we boast** – **do we revel** – in **the cross of Christ**? Or **have we grown cold** and **complacent** about **such things**?

Friends – **whatever it may be** – or **wherever we may be at** – **we do well** to **heed the author’s exhortation**: **We must “*pay the most careful attention*”** to **such things**.

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**But** ***why***? **Why** **is it** ***important*** that **we do so**?

**Well** – quite simply – it is because of **the danger of drifting**.

**Look with me** at the **second part** of **verse 1**.

**We must pay** the **most careful attention** to **what we have heard**. **Why**?

*“... so that* ***we do not drift away****.”*

**That’s** **the danger**! And **it’s a *real* danger**!

It’s **the danger** of **drifting away** from **the gospel** – from **the faith** – from **Christ himself**!

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In fact – the **Greek word** for **“drift”** (**παραρρέω**) is **instructive**.

**This** is actually **a nautical term**:

* **It** is **used** of **ships** whose **anchor** ***no longer*** has **a firm** grip on **the seabed**.
* And **such a ship** is **in danger** of **drifting away** from **its moorings** – from **its safe harbour**.
* **Such a ship** is **in danger** of **being dashed** against **the rocks**.

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Friends – **that’s *exactly*** **the danger** **the author** **wants** to **impress** upon **our hearts**.

And **do you know what’s scary**?

The **scary thing** is this:

* **Such drifting** is – *more often than not* – **gradual**.
* It’s **imperceptible**.
* It’s **oblivious** to us.

And **therein lies the danger**!

**It’s dangerous** because **it often goes unnoticed** – ***until*** **it is too late**!

And **it** is **something** that **none of us** – ***no matter how long*** ***we’ve been believers*** – are **immune** **to**.

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Now – **the other thing** about **drifting** that **we need to understand** is this:

**We simply need to do *nothing*** – **nothing *whatsoever***! – and **we *will* drift**

**If we** are **passive** – **if we** are **indifferent** – **if we** are **apathetic** – **we *will* drift**.

Or – as **verse 3** puts it:

**If we ignore** or **neglect something** – **we will drift** from **that very thing**.

In other words – **drifting** is ***the*** ***result*** of **neglecting**.

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**We see** **this principle at work** in **everyday life**:

* **Take husbands and wives** for example. **Guess what happens** when **husbands** and **wives** **fail to pay attention** to **each other**? When **they neglect** the **cultivation** of **their marriage**? Well – **it’s a no-brainer**! **Such ones** will **inevitably drift further** and **further apart**. **Why**? Because of **neglect**.
* **The** **same** goes for **taking care of plants**. **How many of you** have got **green-thumbs**? Well – **I don’t**! **Give me a plant** – and **I can guarantee you its death** **in** **no time**! **Why**? Because **I doubt I’ll give it *much*** – ***if any***! – **attention whatsoever**. **The plant** **will die a *slow*** – and ***painful*** – **death** **under my care**. **Or lack thereof**!

Well – **you get the idea**?

**Whatever we fail** to **pay attention** **to** – **whatever we neglect** – **we will inevitably drift** from **that very thing**.

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**Well** – friends – **I’m not sure where** **each of you** **may be at individually**.

But **perhaps the word “drifting”** may be **an apt description** of **your current spiritual state**:

* **Maybe** **your love for God** has **grown cold** – and **you** have **become disinterested** and **indifferent** to **the things of God**.
* **Maybe** **the** **passion** and **desire** **you once had** for **God** and **his Word** has now **waned** and **grown dim**.
* **Maybe** **the things of the world** have **slowly** **but** **surely enticed** **you** and **drawn you away** from **the things of God**.
* **Maybe the challenges** or **busyness of life** have **drowned** **your affections for God** and **devotion to God**.
* Or **maybe** **the gospel** – **the glorious gospel** – that **once enthralled you** is now **a thing of the distant past**. **It no longer delights you**. **It no longer moves you**. In fact – **you** have **even started to question** **some** of **its core truths**.

**Yes** – **we** may be **attending church** and **home-groups** well enough.

**We** may **even** be **actively involved** in **ministry**.

But **deep down** – **we know** that **our hearts** are **far away**.

**Yes** – **we** may **not** be **committing blatant sins** like **murder** or **adultery**.

But **we** have **become distracted**.

**We** have **an increasing disregard** and **distaste** for **God** – for **his Word** – for **his people**.

**We** are **no longer giving the things of God** the **attention** and **priority** that **it deserves**.

In short – **we** **have drifted somewhat** in **our Christian walk**.

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Friends – ***wherever* we may be at** – ***whether*** **we** are **drifting** or **not**:

* **The author** wants to **jolt us**.
* **He** wants to **awaken us**.
* **He** wants to **remind us** of **the very *real*** and ***present* danger** of **drifting** from **the faith**.

That’s **his pressing concern**. That’s **his pastoral heart** coming through.

**He** is **concerned** that **we *not* become indifferent** or **apathetic** to **the gospel** – that **we *not* drift** from **the faith**.

**For** – friends – **the thing is this**:

**If we do not anchor ourselves** in **Christ** and in **the gospel** – **we will inevitably** **drift away** from **Christ** / from **the gospel** to the **detriment** – even **destruction** – of **our souls**.

Thus – **the urgent warning**:

*“****We must pay the most careful attention*** *to* ***what we have heard*** *– so that* ***we do not drift away****.”*

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**Now** – ***if you think about it*** – **there** are **many things** **in life** that could ***possibly*** **cause us to drift** – but **let me just briefly mention two**.

**Two currents** or **tides** that – ***if we are not careful*** – can **cause us to drift**:

***The Tide of Persecution***

The ***first*** is **the tide of persecution**.

Yes – **this** **may not** be **a major threat** in **Australia** *as yet* – but **it is a threat** *nonetheless*.

* **When we** are ***not prepared*** to **stand up** for **the truth**.
* **When we** are ***afraid*** of **being ridiculed** for **the faith**.
* **When we** are ***not sufficiently grounded*** in **the Word**.

**We prove ourselves** to be like **the second soil** described in **Mark 4** – who – ***“when trouble or persecution comes because of the word – quickly fall away”***.

***The Tide of Distraction***

***Second*** – and perhaps **more pertinent** to us – is **the tide of distraction**.

Friends – **the truth** is that **there** are **many things in life** that **clamour** for **our attention**.

And – ***if we are not careful*** – **these distractions** – whether **busyness**, **wrong priorities**, or **idols of the heart** – may **creep in** – **entice us** – and **draw us away**.

And **we prove ourselves** to be like **the third soil** – namely – **those** who ***“hear the word – but the worries of this life, the deceitfulness of wealth, and the desires for other things come in and choke the word, making it unfruitful.”***

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**Now** – friends – **in a room this size** – it is **probable** that **some of us** may **know** of **friends** **who** **once professed faith in Christ** – or **who** were even **once zealous for Christ** – but **who** – ***for one reason or another*** – **gradually** **lost their interest** in **God** and **the things of God**:

* **They *stop* attending church**.
* **They *stop* coming** for **home group**.
* And **soon** – **they** even ***deny* the gospel** and ***abandon* the faith** altogether.

**What happened**?

Well – **it’s sad** – but **they have drifted**:

* From **God**.
* From **the gospel**.
* From **the faith**.

And **that’s *exactly* what the author** **does *not* want to see happen** to **his readers**.

**Thus** – **he issues** an **urgent plea** and **warning** to **pay attention** – ***lest*** **they** too **drift away** from **the faith**.

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Alright! So – that’s **the warning**. And it’s **a real warning**:

**We must pay** the **most careful attention** to **what we have heard** – ***lest* we drift away**.

So – having seen **the warning** in **verse 1** – let’s now turn to look at **the reasons for the warning** in **verses 2-4**.

In other words – ***why*** should we **pay careful attention**? ***Why*** is it **important** that **we be anchored in Christ** and **not drift**?

1. **THE REASONS (vv.2-4)**

Well – **the author** gives us **two reasons** – **one *negative*** – **the other *positive***.

**And – *by the way* – knowing** **these two reasons** – *I believe*! – **can act** as **a deterrent** **to us** **drifting**.

So – ***firstly*** – **the *negative* reason**.

And **that** is because of **the reality of destruction** ...

1. **The Reality of Destruction (vv.2-3a)**

**Look with me** at **verses 2-3a**. **The verse begins** with the **conjunction** ***“for”***.

That is – **the author** is **giving** **us** **the** ***reason* why** **we ought** to **pay close attention** to **Christ** and **his Word** and **not drift from it**.

**He writes**:

*“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****?”*

**What the author** is **doing** here is **compare** **the** ***old* revelation** and **the *new* revelation**. **He** is **comparing** ***the law*** and ***the gospel***.

**On the one hand** – we have **“*the message spoken through angels*”** – namely – **the law**.

And – **on the other hand** – we have – ***albeit implicitly*** – ***“the message declared by Christ”*** – namely – **the gospel**.

And **what we find** in **this contrast** is that ***not only*** is **the message *different*** – but **the messenger** is also ***different***.

And **the author** **does this** for **a purpose**. **He** is **trying** to **drive home a point**.

And ***what’s* his point**?

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**Well** – it’s **pretty straightforward** – isn’t it?

**The author** is here **using** an **argument** from ***the lesser*** to ***the greater***.

It’s where **the author starts** with **a generally-accepted truth** – and **then moves** to **a logically-related truth** which has **even greater reason** for **acceptance**.[[1]](#footnote-1)

So – **the author starts** with **the binding nature** of **the message spoken** through **angels**.

**He starts** with the **undisputed fact** that **disobedience** to **this message** – namely – **the Mosaic Law** – was **met** with **divine punishment**.

And **this** **is what we see** throughout **the Old Testament**:

* **We think** of **people** like **Nadab** and **Abihu** in **Leviticus 10**. **Their offering** of **strange** or **unauthorised fire** was **met** with **divine judgment**. **It cost them their lives**.
* **We** are **reminded** of **Achan** in **Joshua 7**. **His taking** of the **devoted things** was **met** with **death by stoning**.
* **We see this** in **the kingdoms** of **Israel** and **Judah**. **Their persistent sinfulness** and **idolatry** **led** to **their respective falls** to **Assyria** in **722 BC** and to **Babylon** in **586 BC**.

Now – **we could give many more examples** – but **I think the point is clear**:

**Disobedience** to **the Mosaic Law** brought with it **a just punishment**.

And **having established this fact** – **the author** **turns** the **proverbial screw** – so to speak.

And **he does this** by means of **a rhetorical question**.

**He asks** – **if this is so**:

*“...* ***how shall we escape******if we ignore so great a salvation****?”*

**Answer**? It’s **impossible**! We **can’t escape** if **we** **neglect** **so great a salvation**!

**That’s the point the author** is **trying to make** – namely – the **inevitability** and **inescapability** of **judgment** **if we drift away** from **Christ** – **if we drift away** from **the gospel**.

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But ***why***? ***Why*** is it **so serious**?

**Well** – friends – **I believe** that **the severity** of **the judgment** **stems** from **the greatness** of **the salvation** that **we** are **neglecting**.

**Notice what the author calls it** in **verse 3** – **he calls it**:

*“...* ***so great a salvation****.”*

Friends – **just think about it** for **a moment**:

* **Think** of **how *great*** – **how *marvellous*** – **how *wonderful*** – **God’s love for us** is **in Christ**.
* **Think** of **the *infinite cost***to **God** in **procuring our salvation**.
* **Let’s remember** that **it cost God *nothing less*** than **his Son**.

As **1 Peter 1:18-19** reminds us – **we** were **ransomed**:

*“...* ***not*** *with* ***perishable things*** *like* ***silver*** *or* ***gold*** *–* ***but*** *with* ***the precious blood of Christ****.”*

And – friends – **it is *precisely*** because of **this infinite cost to God** in **procuring** **our salvation** that **a neglect** or **despising of it** would have **a deserving** and **disastrous consequence**.

To **put it simply**:

**Neglect** of the **most precious** of **gifts** **deserves** the **most heinous** of **punishments**.

**I’ll say it again**:

**Neglect** of the **most precious** of **gifts deserves** the **most heinous** of **punishments**.

Friends – **those who drift** and **ultimately turn away** **from Christ** can **expect nothing** but **judgment** – **eternal judgment** – at **the hands** of **the living God**.

* For **salvation** is **found** in **no one else** but **in Christ**.[[2]](#footnote-2)
* And **there** is but **one mediator** between **God** and **men** – **the man Christ Jesus**.[[3]](#footnote-3)

**Thus** – **the author exhorts his readers** – and **us**:

***“Take heed! Don’t drift! For herein lies the only basis of salvation!”***

So – **this** is **the** **first reason** **the author gives** in **exhorting his readers** to **pay careful attention** to **what they have heard** – namely:

* The **reality** – or – ***if you like*** – the **inevitability** – of **judgment**.
* ***Eternal* judgment**.

And **this brings us** to the **second reason why** **we should pay attention** – and it’s **a *positive* one**.

**We should pay attention** because of **the reliability of the message** ...

1. **The Reliability of the Message (vv.3b-4)**

And **this can be seen** in **three facts**.

And – ***together*** – **these three facts** **combine** ***not only*** to **give us** an **incentive** to **pay attention** – ***but*** ***also*** to **increase our guilt** should **we fail to do so**.

So – ***why*** is **the message reliable**?

***The Source of the Message (v.3b)***

Well – **it’s reliable** – ***firstly*** – because of **the *source* of the message**.

**Look** **at** the **second part** of **verse 3**.

**It tells us** that **this salvation**:

*“... was* ***first announced*** *by* ***the Lord*** *...”*

In **Mark 1:14** – we read that ***“Jesus went to Galilee – proclaiming the good news of God.”***

That is – ***Jesus* *himself*** **brought** **the message of salvation**:

* He **declared** it.
* He **announced** it.
* He **heralded** it.

And – friends – **think about it** for **a moment**:

**This fact alone** – of **Jesus proclaiming** **the message** – I believe! – **ought** to be **sufficient** to **assure us** of the **reliability** and **trustworthiness** of **the message**.

**Why**?

**Well** – simply because **the character** of **the messenger** lends **credibility** to **the reliability** of **the message**.

Thus – **we** have **sufficient warrant** to **pay attention** to **this message** – **a message** that **came** from **the Lord himself**.

But **the author doesn’t stop there**.

**He goes on** **to add** that **the message** is **reliable** – ***secondly*** – because of **the *witnesses* of the message** ...

***The Witnesses of the Message (v.3c)***

**Verse 3** continues – **this message of salvation**:

*“... was* ***confirmed to us*** *by* ***those who heard him****.”*

That is – ***not only*** was **the gospel declared by Jesus** – **it** was ***also*** **attested** by **firsthand witnesses** who **heard him**.

* **These witnesses** ***confirmed*** **what they had seen** and **heard** from **the Lord**.
* **They *testified*** to **the authenticity** and **veracity** of **the message**.
* That **it** is **something** that is **absolutely trustworthy** and **reliable**.

In fact – **there seems** to be an **Old Testament principle** at play here.

**Deuteronomy 19:15** gives **the ruling** that:

*“****A matter******must be******established*** *by* ***the testimony*** *of* ***two*** *or* ***three witnesses****.”*

And **here** – we have **not *one*** – **not *two*** – **but** ***many***, ***many*** **witnesses** who **attest** to **the** **reliability** of **the message**.

And **because of this** – **we have further reason** to **trust** – to **believe** – to **pay attention** – to **the message**.

**BUT**!!! **As if this** is ***still* not enough** – **the author** goes on to **add** – ***thirdly*** – that **the message** is **reliable** because **God himself *verifies* it** ...

***The Veracity of the Message (v.4)***

**Look at verse 4** – it says:

*“****God*** *also* ***testified to it*** *by* ***signs****,* ***wonders****, and* ***various miracles****, and by* ***gifts of the Holy Spirit*** *distributed according to his will.”*

In other words – **the message these witnesses proclaimed** was **met** with **divine endorsement**:

* It had **God’s approval**.
* It had **God’s fingerprints** all over it.
* **God *affirmed*** – **God *confirmed*** – the **reliability** of **the message** with **signs**, **wonders**, **miracles**, and so on.

**This** is **what we see** in **the four Gospels** and in **the book of Acts** where **signs** and **wonders** **accompanied** the **proclamation** of **the message**.

The **purpose** of which is to **validate** that **God** has **indeed spoken *decisively*** and ***definitively*** in **the person of his Son**.

**And so** – to **disregard** or **turn away** from **such a message** is to **betray** the **utter hardness** and **unbelief** of **one’s heart**.

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So – **to sum up**: The **second reason** why **we ought** to **pay careful attention** and **not drift** from **the message** is because of **the *reliability* of the message**:

* It is **a message** that has **its origin** in **the Lord himself**.
* It is **a message** that is **attested** to by **eye-witnesses**.
* It is **a message** that is **verified** by **God himself**.

**Therefore** – ***in light of all these*** – **we have reason to believe**.

In fact – **it** **is** **imperative** that **we pay much closer attention** to **the gospel** – to **the Word of God** – for:

* It is **a trustworthy message**.
* It is **a reliable message**.
* It is **an authoritative message**.

And **it is a message** that **we ignore** to **our own peril**.

**Conclusion**

**So** – friends – ***as we close*** – **let me do so** with **a word of clarification** – and **a word of application**.

***A Word of Clarification***

Firstly – ***the clarification***.

I know **we talked a lot** about **the need** to **pay attention**. And – ***indeed*** – **that’s what we *need* to do**!

But **what I want to clarify** is this:

**What we need to understand** is that **our paying attention** to **God** and **the things of God** is ***not*** the **grounds** of **our salvation**. **It** ***in no way* merits salvation**.

**Scripture** is **clear** that **salvation** is ***by* grace alone** – ***through* faith alone** – ***in* Christ alone**.

**However** – ***having said that*** – **what I want us to get** is this:

**Our paying attention** to **God** and **the things of God** – while ***not*** the **grounds** of **our salvation** – is ***nevertheless*** an **evidence** of **our salvation**.

It is **evidence** that **we** have **been saved** – that **we** have **been born again**.

Or – **to use** an **agricultural metaphor**:

**Our paying attention** to **the things of God** is **the fruit** – ***not*** **the root** – of **our salvation**.

And **I believe this** is **what the apostle Paul** is **getting at** in **Philippians 2:12-13** – where **he exhorts us** to:

*“...* ***work out our salvation*** *with* ***fear*** *and* ***trembling*** *–* [**WHY**?] *– for* ***it is God*** *who* ***works in us*** *to* ***will*** *and to* ***act*** *in order* ***to******fulfill******his good purpose****.”*

**In other words**:

**Our working out** is an ***evidence*** of **God’s working in**.

Or – **if you like**:

**Our perseverance** is an ***evidence*** of **God’s preservation**.

And **I believe** that **the warnings** that **we see** in **the book of Hebrews** are simply ***the means*** by which **true believers** are **kept** and **preserved**.

That’s **the clarification** I want to make.

***A Word of Application***

Alright! With **that caveat** in place – let’s move now to **the application**.

***How*** **can we** **apply** **today’s message**?

Well – **there** are **many ways** **we could do it** – but **let’s do it this way**.

**Knowing** the **propensity** of **our hearts** to **drift** – **let’s ask ourselves** honestly:

* ***How*** is **our spiritual walk** today?
* Are we **walking with Christ**?
* Are we **paying attention to Christ**?
* Are we **abiding in his Word**?
* Are we **reading it** – **meditating upon it** – **responding to it**?

Friends – **in the event** that **you think** **you** **may have drifted somewhat** in **your Christian walk** – I want to **encourage** you – **talk** to **Ben** or **one of the elders**.

I’m sure **they** will be **more than happy** to **talk to** – and **pray with you**.

But – **more importantly** – ***if that is us*** – **let’s ask God** to **awaken us** from **our spiritual slumber**.

**Let’s** **stop the drift**.

And **let’s run back** to the ***ever-open*** – ***ever-embracing*** – **arms** of **our great** and **merciful High Priest** – **the Lord Jesus Christ**.

**Let’s resolve** – ***by the grace of God*** – to **fix our eyes** on **Jesus** – the **author** and **perfecter** of **our faith**.

And **let’s pay much closer attention** to **his Word** – to **reading** – **hearing** – **meditating** upon – and **obeying it**.

**Let’s anchor ourselves** – our **thoughts**, our **affections**, our **devotion** – in **Christ** and in **his Word**.

And **let’s treasure** – **let’s cherish** – **the gospel** – the **great salvation** that **we have in Christ**.

**For**:

* In ***so doing*** – **we** will be **making our calling** and **election sure**.[[4]](#footnote-4)
* In ***so doing*** – **we** **show** that **we** are **truly his disciples**.[[5]](#footnote-5)

Let us pray.

1. Phillip Long. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Acts 4:12 [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. 1 Tim 2:5 [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. 2 Pet 1:10 [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. John 8:31 [↑](#footnote-ref-5)