

LET'S PAY ATTENTION (Hebrews 2:1-4)

Bad things happen when you and I fail to pay attention. When we don't . . .

- Pay attention to the speed limit, we may get a ticket.
- Pay attention to the teacher, we may flunk the course.
- Pay attention to our spouse, he/she may find someone who will.
- Pay attention to the checking account, we may bounce a check.
- Pay attention to proper nutrition and exercise, our health will suffer.

Do you know what the number one cause of traffic accidents is? It is not drunk driving. It is not poor, weather conditions. It is not speeding. The number one cause of traffic accidents is distracted driving. Distracted driving means the driver is not paying attention.

The cost of not paying attention is always higher than the cost involved in paying attention. You see, if you **pay** attention, that means it cost you something to stay attentive. You paid in the sense that you gave up doing what you would rather be doing. You said "no" to your flesh. You did not give in to the temptation to do something else, to think about something else, to focus on something else. You bear a cost every time you pay attention. Whatever that cost is, however, is less than the high cost of not paying attention.

In Hebrews 2:1, the author calls upon his reader, upon you and me to pay attention. To what are we to pay attention? We are to pay attention to a message. What message? We are to pay attention to the message of salvation. Verses 1-4 are a warning. We are warned as to what will happen if we fail to pay attention to the message of salvation. We are going to look at three bad things that will happen if we fail to pay attention to the message of salvation.

If We Fail to Pay Attention to the Message of Salvation, We Will Drift from It

The author Hebrews employs nautical language as he warns us about a common threat believers face. He uses the term drift. Drifting is what boat does when it does not drop anchor. The wind and the waves will move that boat in a certain direction. The act of drifting may be somewhat imperceptible. You can drift without realizing you are doing so, and if you aren't paying attention, you may drift right into danger. A boat can drift into rocks or toward the shore and risk running aground. If you are on a river, your boat can drift into the rapids or down a waterfall.

Of course, the author of Hebrews isn't truly worried about actual ships and boats. What is his real concern? What does it mean to drift in the spiritual life? It means that you are allowing the current of a godless culture to take you in the direction it is moving, and it is moving away from God, not toward Him.

If you are drifting, that means you have weighed anchor. Instead of dropping it, you

have pulled it up. What is our anchor? We read in Hebrews 6:19, “We have this sure and steadfast anchor of the soul.” That verse and the one that follows talked about who Jesus is and what Jesus has done on our behalf. Our anchor is our hope in Jesus.

If you are not paying attention to Him, you will drift. Drifting in a boat may be dangerous. Drifting away from Jesus is most certainly dangerous.

Why is the Church of Jesus languishing in America and the West? Why are baptisms down precipitously? Why is Sunday School and worship attendance down to all time lows? Why are churches dying and having to close?

To put it simply, we are drifting. We are going in the direction the culture is taking us.

I want you to pretend for a moment that we are in the dog days of summer. The temperature is triple digits. It's a hot one. Let's suppose that we decide to go to a water park to cool off. If I were to go to a water park, I know where I would spend the most time. Sure, I might slide down a long, steep incline or through a long, winding tube into a wide pool of water a couple of times. But that is not where I would spend the bulk of my time. No. I'm going to ease into lazy river. I'm going to hold on to the side of a flotation device, lay back, and let the slow current of the lazy river take me on a meandering route, and when I get to the end, I'll walk to the beginning and do it again. You don't have to think. You don't have to struggle. You don't have to climb a million steps up lugging a raft of some kind. No. You just ease in, lay back, and let the current take you away.

That, my friends, is what Christians, in large numbers, are doing spiritually. We are not fighting. We are not struggling. We are not working. We are drifting, and we are not drifting towards Jesus. We are drifting away from Jesus, and that is killing the Church. It eradicates our witness, and it consigns untold numbers to hell because we have done nothing to win them to faith in Jesus Christ.

Drifting may just be the number sin of the Church of Jesus in America.

My job, your job, our job as believers in Jesus Christ is not to drift downstream. Our job is to swim upstream and go against the current of our culture. We are to be counter-cultural Christians. We are to base our lives and live our lives according to what God's word teaches and not according to how our culture expects or encourages us to live.

The J.B. Phillip's translation of Romans 12:2 reads:

Don't let the world around you squeeze you into its own mold, but let God remold your minds from within, so that you may prove in practice that the plan of God for you is good, meets all His demands and moves toward the goal of true maturity.

Let me tell you the story of a man named Mylon LeFevre. He grew up in a musical family. His family sang southern gospel music. When he was old enough, he sang with them and played the guitar as they toured.

Eventually, he formed his own group, but they didn't confine their music to Christian music. From 1970 to 1980, he played and recorded music with people such as Eric Clapton, Billy Joel, Elton John, Little Richard, and the Who. The stress he was under led him to drugs, and the drugs almost took his life.

In 1980, he submitted his life to the Lordship of Jesus Christ. At the time, he was under contract with Columbia Records. He wanted to break his contract because instead of recording rock music, he wanted to record Christian music. His contract stipulated that the contract could only be broken by an act of God. His lawyer argued that being born again is an act of God. He won his case and got out of his contract.

LeFevre went on to collaborate with such people as Carman, Michael W. Smith, Steven Curtis Chapman, the Newsboys, and others. Eventually, his ministry shifted from music to preaching and teaching. He and his wife speak in about 75 churches a year.

What amazes me most about his story is that at the age of 17, while in the army, Mylon LeFevre wrote his first song. He hitchhiked from Fort Jackson, South Carolina, where he was stationed to Memphis, TN, a distance of 600 miles to perform with his family at a music convention. While he was there, he sang the song he had just written. When he sang, he did not realize that Elvis Presley was there. After he sang, Elvis came up to him and told him how much he liked the song. He asked for permission to record it in an album of religious music he was working on.

LeFevre said it took him about 20 minutes to write the lyrics and music, and his first royalty check was for \$90,000.

It just so happens that the first song he wrote at the age of 17 is in our hymnal. It is hymn #332, "Without Him." Listen to the words:

Without Him I could do nothing,
Without Him I'd surely fail;
Without Him I would be drifting
Like a ship without a sail.

Without Him I would be dying,
Without Him I'd be enslaved;
Without Him life would be hopeless,
But with Jesus, thank God, I'm saved.

Jesus, O Jesus!
Do you know Him today?
Do not turn away.
O Jesus, O Jesus,
Without Him, how lost I would be.

In less than 20 years after writing that song, LeFevre discovered that he was without Jesus; He was dying, He had been enslaved; he had been drifting like a ship without a sail. But, praise God, he trusted Jesus, and he was saved.

In v. 3 of our text, we find the words "a great salvation." The Christian faith offers a great salvation, and that is because Jesus is a great Savior. It is this great Savior that we want to focus upon in this part of our worship.

We began this message by saying, "If we fail to pay attention to the message of

salvation, we will drift.” Spiritual drifting is always dangerous. There is a second bad thing that happens when we fail to pay attention.

If We Fail to Pay Attention to the Message of Salvation, We Will Neglect It

What are we going to neglect? Look again at v. 3. We will neglect the great salvation that God offers.

In this passage, the author employs a Hebrew form of argument known as “light and heavy.” That means he argues from the lesser to the greater. Verse 2 contains the lesser. He makes the case that the Law was given to Moses by the angels, and what they said was discovered to be reliable. The people were not being led astray. The OT Scriptures were known to be true, and if you disobeyed what the Law said, you would be punished.

Verses 3 and 4 contain the greater. Just as the OT Law was true, this message of Salvation in Jesus is also true. And this isn’t just any salvation; it is a great salvation. We are being offered an eternal rescue because of what Jesus did on our behalf.

- He died so we wouldn’t have to.
- He paid the penalty of our sin so we wouldn’t have to.
- He bore the punishment against sin so we wouldn’t have to.

But if we neglect that, oh, there will be hell to pay. Notice that the author uses the word *neglect*, not the word *reject*. We believe, and rightly so, that those who reject the gospel, those who reject Jesus, those who reject the offer of forgiveness will be punishment, and we believe, rightly so. After all that Jesus did for us, to reject Him is just criminal. It is like spitting in the face of God for someone to say “no” to Jesus after He bled and died for our salvation.

But the word in v. 4 is not *reject*; it is *neglect*. Neglect has a softer tone to it. It means that you just didn’t get around to it. Maybe you meant to; you intended to, but the time got away from you. Other things intervened.

Do you realize that is possible to believe Jesus is who He said He is, and that He did what the Bible says He did, and to respect Him, and appreciate Him, and still not be saved.

I told you about Mylon LeFevre. As a child and teenager, Mylon sang about Jesus. He wrote a hymn about Jesus, but he never actually trusted Jesus for salvation until years later.

Jesus warns us about this very thing in Matthew 7:21-23. In fact, I think that passage is one of the scariest passages in the Bible. Listen to the words of Jesus:

²¹ “Not everyone who calls out to me, ‘Lord! Lord!’ will enter the Kingdom of Heaven. Only those who actually do the will of my Father in heaven will enter. ²² On judgment day many will say to me, ‘Lord! Lord! We prophesied in your name and cast out demons in your name and performed many miracles in your name.’ ²³ But I will reply, ‘I never knew you. Get away from me, you who break God’s laws.’”

To neglect the gospel is just as blameworthy as it is to reject the gospel, maybe more so because when you neglect the gospel you are deliberately choosing not to act on what you know to be true.

A survey back in the summer discovered that more than half of the adults in the US have gift cards, vouchers, or store credits that they haven't gotten around to using. Nationwide, that accounts for more than \$15 billion dollars of unused credit. That equals an average of \$116 per adult. An earlier survey showed that half of those gave as their reason for not using their gift card, "I haven't had time."

Just know this, as inflation continues, the value of that gift card in your purse, wallet, or desk drawer is getting less and less with each passing week and month. Some gift cards have expiration dates. When that date passes, the value of that card will be zero.

The most dangerous words in the English language are, "Tomorrow, not now, maybe later." Sadly, for some people, *tomorrow* never comes, and *not now* becomes *never*.

Isaiah counsels us in Isaiah 55:7, "Seek the LORD while He may be found; call upon Him while He is near."

Don't ignore, don't disregard, don't put off the gospel invitation to trust Christ as Savior and Lord. The best time to trust Christ was yesterday. The second-best time is today. He is a great Savior. He extends to you a great salvation.

We come today to remember Him and what He did.

So far, we have seen two terrible things that happen when we fail to pay attention to the message of salvation. First, we drift. Then, we neglect. There is a third negative consequence.

If We Fail to Pay Attention to the Message of Salvation, We Will Be Judged

Verse 3 asks the sobering question, "How shall we escape if we neglect such a great salvation?" The implied answer is, "We won't." The word *salvation* means *rescue*. If we ignore and disregard the rescue that is offered, there will be no rescue. We are offered rescue from judgment. If we don't act on the rescue that is held out, we will be judged for our sin.

Verses 3 and 4 tell us that this rescue was declared by Jesus. He is the one who went about preaching, "Repent, for the Kingdom of God is at hand." He is the one who called upon others to believe in Him. Following Him, those who responded to His message, went about preaching the same message, "Repent, and believe on the Lord Jesus."

In v. 4, we are told that God did four things to authenticate the message of the gospel. He performed signs, wonders, miracles, and gave gifts by the Holy Spirit. All of these were done by Him so as to say, "Hey, this message of the good news is true. Believe the message. Trust Jesus."

If we ignore what Jesus said, if we ignore what His followers said, and if we ignore what God has said through what God has given, we leave ourselves to the just judgment of God. Instead of receiving a great salvation, we incur upon ourselves what will be a

great judgment.

Danish philosopher Soren Kierkegaard told the following parable:

A crowded theater hosted a variety show, with various acts in it. Each act was more fantastic than the one prior, so it created louder and louder applause from the audience. Suddenly, a clown rushed on to the stage and said, "I apologize for this interruption, but I regret to inform you that our theater is on fire! You need to leave right away, and in an orderly fashion."

But the audience thought he was part of the act, so they laughed and applauded. They thought he was very committed to the role. But the clown again implored them that they needed to leave right away or they would get seriously injured, maybe even die. And again, they greeted him with loud and thunderous applause. At last, he could do no more, and so he left the building, and the people were destroyed.

(Here's the moral of the story). Our age will go down in fiery destruction not to the sound of mourning but to applause and cheering.

Don't let that be your fate. Quit drifting. Quit neglecting. Don't let yourself be judged with eternal consequences. Trust Christ today.