

OVERCOMING THE DANGER OF DRIFTING

Heb.2:1; 2Th.3:13

Ed Dye

I. INTRODUCTION

1. The following true story reminds us of the danger and tragic results of drifting in the physical realm reported by Billy Norris in Gospel Guide.

“Two young men were fishing above a low dam on a river near their hometown. As they were concentrating on catching fish, they were unaware that they had drifted until they were not far from the water flowing over the dam. When they realized their situation, the current near the dam had become too powerful for them to keep their boat from going over. Below the dam the water was dashing with strong force over great boulders and through crevices in the rocks. Caught by the swirling waters under the rocks, they never came to the surface. After days of relentless searching, the divers finally found one body, and then, two or three days later, the other.”

2. Heb.2:1 reminds us that drifting is not limited to the physical realm, rather is very real and more tragic in another realm – the spiritual realm.
 - a. Sad, but true, it is a very common thing for professed Christians to drift away or be diverted from the Lord.
 - b. In the spiritual realm the results are even more tragic than in the physical, because it means the loss of, not just the body, but also of the soul, one of which is worth more than the whole world. Mt.16:26.
 - c. And it means eternal ruin and suffering, not just temporary pain and suffering.
3. Question: Are you drifting? Another question: Would you know it, or recognize it, if you were?
4. With this lesson, we hope to stimulate careful, diligent, honest, soul-searching introspection regarding the danger of drifting away from the Lord, to offer suggestions on how to recognize it, and then how to overcome it in case you are drifting!

II. DISCUSSION

A. TO DO THIS THERE ARE THINGS WE SHOULD KNOW ABOUT DRIFTING.

1. Drifting requires no effort.

- a. Remember the Billy Norris story. It's like drifting down stream in a boat; just stop paddling!
 - b. Which is why we are admonished in Heb.2:1: "Therefore we ought to give the more earnest heed to" – i.e., pay more careful attention to.
 - (1) What we "ought" to do, we can do!
 - c. Pay more careful attention to what? "the things which we have heard" – i.e, things we have been taught, believed and obeyed of the word of God, of the great salvation first spoken by the Lord, then by his inspired spokesmen, the Apostles of Christ, V.3. Cf. Jude 3.
 - d. Why give the more earnest heed do, or pay more careful attention to, these things? "lest at any time we should let them slip," or drift away from them, or be diverted from them!
2. Drifting can be an unconscious process simply because drifting can be by such a slow process that in its initial stages it is unnoticed.
 - a. Because of this many Christians have slowly drifted away.
 - b. By the same process many local churches of Christ drift into error – and are eventually found far removed from the truth of the Scriptures and the spirit of the faith of Christ and true Christianity.
 3. Another thing, we never drift upstream or against the tide.
 - a. Continued faithfulness to the Lord is analogous to paddling upstream; it requires continuous effort and application of certain principles.
 - b. One must constantly be doing what Peter enjoins upon those who "have obtained like precious faith" in 2Pet.1:5-8.
 - c. Also, to avoid drifting one must continue to "grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ," as Peter admonished in 2Pet.3:18.
 - (1) The moment we stop growing, we start going backward or downward, or drifting away.
 - (2) It's just like drifting downstream in a boat, which happens the moment you stop paddling upstream!
 4. Drifting is dangers, not only to self, but to others.
 - a. A ship, just drifting at sea, is a hazard to other vessels at sea.
 - b. Parents who are drifting are dangerous to the spiritual well-being of their children – they soon loose golden opportunities to bring up their children in "the nurture (discipline) and admonition (instruction) of the Lord," as Eph.6:4 requires.

- c. Saints who are drifting are dangerous to the local church of which they are members – their spiritual apathy can be very contagious – it works like a virus in the local church – can even kill the spirit and activity of it!
- 5. Driftings' speed can increase with time; and the greater its speed the greater its danger.
 - a. As one moves further and further from the Lord, the easier it becomes to go further and further; for then one cares less and less about what one does.
- 6. Drifting, if not checked and overcome, ends in the shipwreck of one's faith.
 - a. A boat adrift will eventually crash on the rocks or go over the falls to its destruction.
 - b. According to Heb.2:1-3, for those who drift spiritually through their own neglect, there shall be no escape from a just punishment.

B. TO OVERCOME THE DANGER OF DRIFTING WE MUST EVER REALIZE THE COMMON SIGNS OF DRIFTING.

- 1. Diminishing desire to study and meditate on God's word and engage in prayer is a common sign of drifting.
 - a. Diminishing desire to study and meditate on God's word is evident if you are not of the same disposition as the blessed man of Psa.1:1,2. Cf. Psa.19:10; 119:11,103,127. See 2Tim.2:15.
 - b. Diminishing desire to engage in prayer and study is evident if you are not of the same disposition as the one of Psa.122:1.
- 2. Diminishing desire to be with God's people is a common sign of drifting.
 - a. This includes one's attitude toward and practice in attending services with God's people to worship God on a regular basis, and doing one's duty in the worship and work of the local church, Ac.2:41,42; Eph.4:8-16.
 - (1) Thinking of or looking upon such things as simply a duty rather than a privilege leads to weariness in well-doing; it even results in boredom rather than rejoicing in the Lord. Cf. Phil.4:4. Gal.6:9; 2Th.3:13.
 - b. This is why so many professed Christians attend only the Lord's Supper assembly, and never prepare for or accept any personal responsibility for any part of the God-ordained work

of the local church; such as, the work of edification and evangelism!

- c. This is why some allow various things to interfere with faithful, regular, constant attendance in worship and work services.
3. When the things of this world and the pleasures of this world take priority over or interfere with or cause us to fail to “seek...first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness,” this is a sure sign of not only that we are drifting; but that we have drifted!
 - a. When secular work means more to us or takes precedence over our meeting our obligations to worship and serve God, we are drifting!
 - b. When we will allow sports events to keep us and our children from services, we are drifting!
 - c. When company will cause us to stay home with them and miss worship with God’s people, we are drifting!
 - d. When the weather will keep us from the work and worship of the church, but not from pleasure or work, no matter how bad the weather, we are drifting!
 - e. When the entire family, from grand parents on down, must stay home or at the hospital and miss worship service because one member of the family is sick, even with a non-life-threatening illness, we are drifting!
 - f. When the little things of every day living are allowed to interfere with serving God in the work and worship of the church, we are drifting!
 - g. On and on we could go. But you get the point!

C. ALL IS NOT HOPELESS. THERE ARE REMEDIES FOR DRIFTING. WE CAN OVERCOME THE DANGER OF DRIFTING.

1. Keep rowing; keep paddling up stream; keep on working against the current of Satan’s pull.
 - a. Spiritually speaking, this involves diligence, Heb.11:6; Cf. 2Tim.2:15.
 - b. Keep abounding in what is often spoken of as “the Christian graces,” 2Pet.1:5-8. See 1Cor.15:58.
 - c. There is no place for “retirement,” or an “early buy-out” from faithful service to the Lord, Gal.6:9; 2Th.3:13; Phil.3:13,4.
2. Always be on guard – maintaining our vigilance in humble submission to the Lord, while steadfastly resisting the devil by putting

on and faithfully using the “whole armor of God,” 1Pet.5:5b-9a; Jas.4:7; Eph.6:10-18.

3. Keep one’s self prepared to go against the tide, even the dangerous rip-tide of sin.
 - a. There are many such tides with a strong pull to sweep us away:
 - (1) Popularity, peer-pressure, praise of men.
 - (2) Modernism, skepticism, humanism.
 - (3) Denominationalism – all human religions – with their false doctrines – doctrines of men – of all kinds.
 - (4) Liberalism and worldliness in the Lord’s church.
 - (5) Neglect – indifference, apathy, lukewarmness, lack of interest and concern for the church and its work.
 - b. If one drifts along with the majority, he is sure to be lost, Mt.7:13,14.
4. Keep our mind firmly rooted and grounded in love:
 - a. In the love of God, the Father, and in Jesus Christ, the Son of God, Eph.3:16-19; Lk.10:27; Jude 21; Eph.6:24; Jas.1:12; 2:5.
 - b. In the love of the truth, 2Th.2:10-12; Jno.8:32; Zech.8:19.
 - c. In the love of the brethren in Christ, 1Jno.4:19-5:2.

III. CONCLUSION

1. Brethren are we drifting?
 - a. The danger is real; we would be foolish to think or to say otherwise.
 - b. Many here have drifted away from the Lord; we would be arrogant, over-confident, and self-righteous to say it could not happen to us!
 - c. Are there signs of drifting in this local church?
2. We must be willing to honestly ask ourselves: Am I drifting?
 - a. Is my desire to study and meditate on God’s word and engage in prayer diminishing?
 - b. Is my desire to be with God’s people in work and worship services diminishing? To check, compare our present desire and zeal concerning such things with what it was when you first obeyed the gospel. What do you find?
 - c. Am I letting the things of this world and the pleasures of this world take priority over or interfere with or cause me to fail to “seek...first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness”?
3. If the answer to any of these questions is “Yes,” then we are drifting either as a local church, or as an individual servant of the Lord.
4. If that is the case, we need to apply the remedy to overcome the danger of drifting!