

The Danger of Drifting

Welcome: Vineyard is One Church meeting in multiple locations, so we want to welcome our campuses, Sawmill, Lane, Lavina, and our East Campus. We're glad to have you with us!

Last week Pastor Rich kicked off our Summer Sermonic Series here at Vineyard Columbus, and we've entitled this series:

SLIDE: NEVER GIVE UP SERIES

And we're studying through the entire Book of Hebrews.....and I'd like to continue this series today

It was on July 9, 1960, a middle-aged resident of Buffalo, New York named James Honeycutt took the 17 year old Daugherty and 7 year old son of a coworker for what he assumed would be a peaceful scenic boat ride on the Niagara River.

The children's mother wasn't entirely comfortable with the idea, but Mr. Honeycutt was her husband's boss, so what could she do?

So she merely insisted that her children wear life jackets.

As he had done so many times before, Honeycutt pulled his 12-foot aluminum skiff, which was powered by a 7.5 horsepower motor, 5 miles upriver from the falls and Grand Island Dock in Beaver Island State park.

The children downed their life preservers and the three of them putted out into the river.

And then, for reasons that will never be known, James Honeycutt shut off his motor.

(Till this day we don't know why)

Maybe he wanted to enjoy the scenery of the peace and quiet—maybe

Maybe he wanted to chat with the children without being drowned out by the motors roar

Or maybe he saw no point in expending valuable fuel to take them where Mother Nature could certainly carry them for free.

Nevertheless, they talked and drifted for about an hour, and eventually floated under the North Grand Island Bridge, the marker that locals who frequently boat called the point of no return.

And it was at some point, AFTER THAT, that James Honeycutt decided that it was time to start his motor

And turn around

And head for home.

He soon discovered, however that his 7.5 horsepower was no match for the mighty Niagara.

Even at full throttle, the boat continued to creep backward...and the situation went from bad to worse—when the overtaxed propeller was ripped completely off the motor.

Honeycutt then grabbed two lard and bean to row mightily toward land, fighting the most powerful waterfall on earth with only his biceps—

And as they entered the rapids above the falls the boat struck rock and capsized, throwing all three into the turbulent waters

....

The teenage girl tenaciously clung to the boat, until the torment wrested it from her grasp but she found herself not terribly far from an Island—a mass if you will in the middle of the American and Canadian Falls.

It was there she was spotted by a New Jersey sticker—who happened to be viewing the falls with his family

And he began to scream to the girl to fight her way to the island.

You're fighting for your life he later recalled shouting to her

And at the risk of his own life, the man climbed over the rail

SLIDE OF THE RAIL

And he thrust his left foot tightly between the bars, dangling precariously over trying to reach the terrified girl.

And as though scripted by a Hollywood screenwriter, on the child's third desperate lunge she managed to grab the mans thumb. And he and another onlooker pulled her to safety

Meanwhile her little brother—had long since disappeared over the precipice. And experts later conjectured that because the lad weighed only 46 points—the momentum of the water must have flung him far out beyond the falls and the jagged rocks so he landed in deep water.

And when he shot to the surface, courtesy of his life preserver, he was spotted by a member of the Maid of the Mist, the boat that routinely ferries tourists to and grow at the base of the falls,

And rescued with only a mild concussion—Roger Woodward, who is not in his mid-60's remains to this day the only person who has ever gone over Niagara Falls unintentionally and survived.

SLIDE: Picture of the rescue

And we ought to celebrate the fact that Roger Woodward is alive today

SLIDE OF ROGER WOORDWARD

This entire episode is known as the Niagara Miracle...but even as we applaud it

There is a lament we have for James Honeycutt—because his body was found three days later when it surfaced just a quarter mile downriver

James Honeycutt perished my beloved because he drifted too long—

And his story serves a a parable that there is a danger in drifting

I think this is what the author of Hebrews was trying to convey when he wrote

SLIDE: Therefore we must give earnest heed to what we have heard, lest we drift away

I want to put a tag on this text:

SLIDE: The Danger of Drifting

Let's Pray.....

SLIDE: Hebrews 2: 1 - 4 (NKJV)

- (1) Therefore we must give the most earnest heed to the things we have heard, lest we drift away.**
- (2) For if the word spoken through angels proved steadfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just reward,**
- (3) how can we escape if we neglect so great a salvation, which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed to us by those who heard Him,**
- (4) God also bearing witness both with signs and wonders, with various miracles, and gifts of the Holy Spirit according to His will**

Hebrews was written to Hebrews.....to Jewish christians who had come out of the old system of Judaism; had accepted Jesus Christ and NOW were living under the faith in their new Savior

And this created problems. It created problems with their family

It created problems in a culture that was steeped with Judaism

It created problems in their personal relationship

It created problems- when they became Christians.

And so they were TEMPTED—to throw in the towel.

Give up. Walk away. Quit. Stop. And say—my faith is not worth this much headache

This is too difficult

This is too much trouble, when I was back there in my old way.....I didn't have this much trouble

I didn't have all this frustration...I could just live my life and let things be....

But now that I'm a Christian and people know I'm a Christian—its' become a problem...

So they were tempted to give up.

So the author of Hebrews writes this book to tell them....don't EVER give up.

I know it's tough, difficult and challenging—but don't you quit.

And the reason why he doesn't want them to quit

Is because God has spoken

As Pastor Rich taught us last week

He's spoken through the scriptures

And he's spoken through his SON

And his Son Jesus is savior

And Jesus is ruler

Jesus is redeemer

And Jesus is sustainer

And because he's all of that—he's all that you need

How many of you believe that

That JESUS can sustain you through the difficulties of life

And because he is all that you need

And he is Creator and Redeemer and Sustainer then we ought to LISTEN to what he has to say....

That's what the author of Hebrews is saying in verse 1

Therefore we must give the more earnest heed to the things we have heard....

And we've heard it through his son

Notice the inclusive the language that is used...he says

Therefore We. (We)

We who are Christians

We who believe He is Creator and Sustainer

We who are communities of disciples who experience God love one another and partner with Christ to heal the world

He's just not talking to them ...but Vineyard he's talking to us

That **we** ought to take time to listen to God's son—lest we drift away

I'll let you in on a little secret—I don't think he would have used inclusive language—had he not believed that all of us have a potential to drift.

I. Potential of Drifting

(Stay with me)

Ya'll that word drift ...in the Greek has a nuanced definition.

It can refer to a precious oil leaking from a faulty jar

Or a ring slipping of a finger

Or, watch this, a ship..... that misses her port

Some of you may have saw just a few days ago....that ship in Venice Italy

I believe it was called the MSC Opera, carrying over 2000 passengers, and weighing 65,000 tons

Trying to pull into port

The engine had stalled forcing the boat to drift aimlessly toward land

And when people on the land saw that the boat was not going to stop

They scurried for safety as they watched the cruise ship crash into the wharf

SLIDE: (One of these or better)?

<https://images.app.goo.gl/CqOktYD6y5WAGEuG7>

<https://images.app.goo.gl/g99xtYG8CXvzpkwb6>

And the reports were that people were shocked because they could not believe

That this long and powerful ship, designed to navigate the waters of the deep

Could possibly MISS her PORT

Because they could not keep themselves from drifting.....

It's a lesson to us that no matter how LONG you've been a Christian

Or how deep we think we are rooted or grounded in the faith

ALL OF US have the POTENTIAL TO DRIFT

We may not PLAN to drift

We may not SEEK to drift

We may not even REALIZE we're drifting

Because, WATCH THIS....drifting can be DECEPTIVE

Sometimes all it takes—is a few missed devotions

A lingering look at something or someone you desire

The right wink from the right person (wink)

The right facebook post

The right private message

An unconscious thought that bullies itself to the fore of your consideration

And before you know it we can find ourselves—DRIFTING

I'm just trying to talk to the Real Folk today that ALL OF US—have potential to drift!

This brings up a question, Preacher—because if I have the potential to drift...then how do I know I'm drifting?

You ask such great questions!

And if the truth be told there are multiple ways

but let me focus on a couple, within the context of the text

1 (is this)

WE KNOW we are drifting

When

SLIDE I. We listen to God's Word but our lives do not change

Meaning this: SPIRITUAL drift —occurs when we stop paying attention what what we hear.

Remember he's writing to Jewish believers—who are second-generation...the stories of the gospel have been handed down

And because it's 'hot off the press' they have heard it over and over and over again.

You might even say that the stories they've been hearing... hav become old hat

To the point that....

Their hearts no longer burn their senses are dulled EVEN WHEN THEY HEAR the timeless message that still saves lives

It's the image of a frequent flyer who boards the airplane—and he/she hears the airline attendant...articulating the safety instructions

And though they hear them they're not listening to them.

And so the author of Hebrews says sounds the alarm PAY ATTENTION—because this is a message saves you— life, and keep you from drifting away

In fact the text says PAY THE MOST CAREFUL ATTENTION

SLIDE: Hebrews 2:1 (a) NIV

We must pay the most careful attention.....

Why is the author amplifying this message?

John Piper says Because long before communication experts coined the terms

The authors knew that there are at least three ways to gauge our listening intensity

He says first of all

1 We notice it

Then we analyze it

And then finally

We respond to it.,

Let me give it to you again, the three levels of listening are

SLIDE: LEVELS OF LISTENING: NOTICING, ANALYZING, AND RESPONDING

I think I can illustrate it like this:

One day I was walking through a store and I noticed that the store was playing some background music—and I said that’s cool they’re playing background music

But then I noticed the song that they were playing.....and the song they were playing was AMAZING Grace

And I started thinking isn’t that something?

That here

in this secular store they’re playing a sacred song

BE we all know that we live in a pluralistic society

But it’s interesting to me that Amazing grace is so well known that they can play something sacred in the midst of something secular

Ya'll I was analyzing

And then I started thinking about the grace of God toward me

HOW I WAS LOST BUT HE FOUND ME

HOW I WAS DOWN BUT HE LIFTED ME

HOW I DIDN'T DESERVE IT BUT HE SAVED ME

AND I STARTED PRAISING GOD RIGHT THERE IN THE AISLE

IS THERE ANYBODY LISTENING TO ME LIKE THAT

THAT WHEN YOU THINK ABOUT THE GRACE OF JESUS

AND ALL THAT HE'S DONE FOR YOU

YOUR SOUL CRIES OUT!

So

I noticed it

I analyzed it

And I responded to it

Are ya'll with me?

I'm glad you are because what I'm trying to birth in your spirit is that when it comes to the faith..

The litmus test for your level of listening is leveraged in how you respond to the word of the Lord []

And I hear James saying

SLIDE James 1:22 (a,b) KJV

But be ye doers of the word and not hearers only....

Because listening does not stop at what we hear but it's determined by what we DO!

So let me ask you a series of questions:

1. What do you do to let the Lord know you're listening to him?

And then

2. How do you let him know that His Voice is Valuable?

Or better yet

3. How does your listening to Him compare to your listening to other things?

Because I would argue that if we really want to listen to something someone we make provisions for listening!

You see if you want to hear the news you may turn on the TV

If you want to hear the latest song I might turn on the radio

If you want to hear a podcast you may download it on iTunes

But if you want to hear a FRESH WORD from the LORD

The question I want to ask you today/this morning is WHAT-DO-YOU-DO?

I mean do you practice devotions?

Do you get involved in Small group or some other Biblical Community ?

Or

Do you come to church consistently?

And I'm bringing this up because another way we know we're drifting is when:

SLIDE B. Apathy replaces a desire to gather with others believers

Do you know what apathy is? Ok let me ask it like this: do you care what apathy is? (Some of you will catch my play on words later)

But I'm bringing this up because drifting has a way of making you apathetic

I read a survey where they asked some folk why they no longer come to church

And one of the top answers was I..... don't know or watch this I don't even care

Because drifting has a way of making you apathetic

To the point where you rationalize yourself out of relationship (with God and relationship with others)

And I know this had to be relevant for these Hebrews

Because later on the author says Do not forsake the assembling of yourselves

Because he understood that drifting leads to disconnecting

And so he says I know you're having a hard time, I know you're catching hell

But whatever you do don't drift away from the House of God

And so he tells them not to forsake the assembling of yourselves—but instead exhort (encourage) one another

That's why I want to pause and encourage somebody

To keep coming to church

(Because) How many of you know

It's the assembling that keeps you connecting

That the fellowship of the saints helps you to cultivate your relationship with God

That when you come to churchyou demonstrate that you're not just a hearer of the word but you're a doer also.

Dare I say it, we come to church—because that's just what Christians ought to do

And the DANGER of apathy is that it can make you drift.....to the point where you start rationalizing yourself out of some of the benefits of your relationship with God

And chances are I'm preaching to somebody whose rationalizing right now

And you're saying Pastor that sounds good...but slow your roll

Because you know I don't have to go to church to be a Christian

You're absolutely right!

But my question to you is are you hearing what I'm saying.....

I'm not saying that you need to go to church to be a Christian,

But I am saying that if you are a Christian you ought to go to somebody's church!

(That is If you're able)

How many of you know we don't go to church to be Christians.

We come to church because WE ARE CHRISTIANS!

My car doesn't have to go to the gas station to be a car

It's already a car

It's a car right now. And it aint at the gas station

But listen I took my car to the gas station this week.....not to be a car

I took it to be filled

Because it's got to get me to my destination

Ya'll we don't come to church to be Christians

We come to church because we're running out of gas!

And we need to get filled

Because God is trying to get us somewhere.....DO I HAVE A WITNESS!

We want to go where God wants us to go and we do not want to miss our destination

Because not only do we have a potential to drift

But the text tells us something else.....

For not only do we have a potential of drifting there's also a Penalty in our drifting

II. Penalty IN DRIFTING

The author unpacks this in verse 2, when he says

Slide Hebrews 2:2-3 (NIV)

(2) For since the message spoken through angels was binding, and every violation and disobedience received just punishment (3) how shall we escape if we ignore so great a salvation?

Angels and binding and punishment —Pastor what is he talking about?

Well if you haven't drifted off on me yet...I think I told you that he's talking to Hebrews

And remember these Hebrews are aware that God has spoken through scripture

Now we don't know all the scripture they had (at their disposal)

But we do know that they at least had the 10 commandments...

That were handed down from God through Moses himself

Now I know Charleston Heston didn't tell you,

But there were angels that were there on the scene

In fact if you strictly read the Old Testament you may miss it

But nestled within the depths of the NT

Around Acts 7.. we learn that the law was actually given through the angels

Slide Acts 7:53 NIV (will be a paraphrase but underline given through the angels)

And again Apostle Paul mentions these Angels in Galatians as well

So we know that the angels were on the scene somehow involved in the communication process

And this helps the author to remind the Hebrews about the consequences for not keeping the commandments

You might even say he was giving them a history lesson

Because these were the same people

When then they ignored God's commands They were captured by enemy nations

When then they ignored God's commands—— they were Robbed, and sold into slavery..

When then they ignored God's commands——they. SCATTERED throughout pagan nations

THESE WERE A PEOPLE...who knew the **PENALTY** for ignoring the message of the angels.

So the author simply says if you KNEW the implications of ignoring the angels

Then **how can you ignore** a message from the SON—who is SUPERIOR ——**to** the angels

Because if the SON is Creator

And the SON is Sustainer

And the SON is the heir of the most high

You can't get a more important message than that.

Ok how I can get you to understand this?

Sheku Kanneh Masonis a teenage prodigy

He's a rising star in classical music

And not only thatHe's the first black winner of Britain's Broadcast Corporation's young musicians award

Which means the Brother is bad

SLIDE: OF SHEKU PLAYING

He tells a story of one day receiving a phone call that changed his life.

He said when the phone call came through, I looked at the number on my cellular and I started to ignore it

But he went on to say something inside of me told me to go on and accept it

And much to his shock and chagrin—when he accepted the call—the voice on the other end of the line

Was Meghan Markle—the soon to be Duchess of Sussex herself—asking him to play at her wedding

And Many of you watched him on a worldwide stage 'playing like a boss' in front of billions of people

SLIDE: Pic of Sheku playing at WEDDING

No wonder he later said I'm so happy, I didn't ignore that call.

I thought about that Vineyard when I read this text

Because they tell me that 600 invitations were issued for Prince Harry and the Duchess

But Sheku's came **personally** from royalty itself

Likewise when God speaks through His Son—the Prince of Peace sends a personal message to us

How many of you know it's a message that can change our lives

And it's up to you and I to choose whether we ignore it or accept it

That's why the author says HOW CAN WE IGNORE—such a great salvation?

But since we're talking about royaltyI like how the old King James puts it, King James says:

How can we NEGLECT such a great salvation

Ya'll that word neglect means:

Abandon, not take care of....or perhaps take for granted, or just pass on by

It's the image of a drowsy sailor aimlessly drifting downstream—unaware that he/she is in danger of potentially shipwrecking their faith

All because they neglect such a great salvation

Now notice I didn't say **REJECT** salvation...

Nor did I say **FORFEIT** their salvation—because whosoever believes in Christ shall not perish but have everlasting life

But it is possible, that believers can **NEGLECT** their salvation

Meaning this—you can be so loosey goosey with your faith to the point where you can find yourself in danger of judgment....

Somebody says well preacher—how can I be in danger of judgment when I'm already saved?

Well I think I need to tell you that even **believers** will face the judgment seat of Christ

(In fact) it was the Apostle Paul who told the Corinthians

2 Corinthians 5:10 NIV (Paraphrase but put it up)

For we all must appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each of us may receive what **is due to us** for the things we have done....watch this...both good and bad.....

Let me clarify

For the believer that's not talking about judgment for eternal destination (we're already saved)

BUT IT DOES SAY WE'LL ALL BE JUDGED FOR EVERYTHING WE'VE DONE

SUGGESTING WHAT'S AT STAKE IS OUR ETERNAL REWARDS

SOMEBODY SAYS WELL PASTOR WHAT ARE THOSE REWARDS?

WELL YA'LL SINCE I'M NOT THERE YET I REALLY DON'T KNOW!

BUT WATCH THIS...EVEN THOUGH I DON'T KNOW

AND YOU DON'T KNOW

THE RELEVANT QUESTION ON THE FLOOR IS—DO WE KNOW HIM?

CAN WE SAY LIKE PAUL:

I WANT TO KNOW HIM AND THE POWER OF HIS RESURRECTION

I WANT TO KNOW THE FELLOWSHIP OF HIS SUFFERINGS

SO THAT SOMEHOW I MIGHT GAIN THE RESURRECTION FROM THE DEAD

BECAUSE HE'S THE ONE—WHO CAN KEEP US FROM DRIFTING...

AND THAT'S IMPORTANT BECAUSE WE ALL HAVE THE POTENTIAL TO DRIFT

AND THERE'S A PENALTY IN DRIFTING

BUT THE GOOD NEWS IS THERE IS PROVISION FOR OUR DRIFTING..

III. PROVISION FOR OUR DRIFTING

In other words God has provided an anchor—and a security (safeguard, deliverance) to be able to keep you and I from drifting.

Now in order to appreciate this you got to remember what the author was warning them not to do

He was warning them not to drift back into the life they use to live

That is to leave Christianity and go back to Judaism
Especially because of their persecution
And the trials and tribulations they were going through
(And more than likely I'm preaching to somebody like that today
whose getting ready to let go
getting ready to cast your faith aside
Getting ready to go back into the life you came from
Because you're experiencing one problem after another
One trial after another
And even as a believer you're having trouble seeing
How God is working things out for your good
Friend the very thing you're going through right now
Is God using that to set you up to bless you to make you
To get you to your destination
So even when persecution comes you don't have to drift down stream
And miss your port
because God has given provision
And by the way this just doesn't apply to the down and out
It applies to those of us who are up and out as well
Because how many of you know you can be economically stable and be spiritually unstable
Have airbrush fingernails but a stain glass identity
Have a brooks brothers suit—but still be broken on the inside
And the danger of drifting

Is when we frolic through life and leave our faith behind

But I came by to remind somebody that life without Jesus is really no life at all!

Because

Money without Jesus is Poverty

Education without Jesus is Ignorance

Wisdom without Jesus Is foolishness

Love without Jesus is Lust

Home without Jesus is Like Hell

Marriage without Jesus is Miserable

Life without Jesus is Death

And

Salvation without Jesus is impossible

**BUT JESUS SAYS I COME THAT YOU MIGHT HAVE LIFE AND HAVE IT MORE
ABUNDANTLY**

THANK GOD THAT THERE IS A PROVISION!

That's all that the author of Hebrews is trying to say

Keep your eyes on Jesus

Because he's the one who can keep you from drifting

And the reason why I know that to be true

Is because of what He says in verse 3 (read it when you get home)

He says because the Lord Proclaimed it

Those who heard him confirmed it

And even God verified it

(Don't miss this)

He

The Lord Proclaimed it—because Jesus said I am the way

Others confirmed it—meaning that people like Peter preached it and John wrote it down

But then he said

GOD CONFIRMED IT

How? Preacher—by the signs, wonders, the miracles and the gifts of the Holy Spirit

He's pointing back to the book of Acts

Where it says in several places

Slide Acts 5:12(a)

And through the hands of the apostles many signs and wonders were done among the people....

But then he talks about the gifts of the Holy Spirit

Suggesting that when you and I use the gifts that The Spirit of God has given us—we verify the very power of God

Hear Me:

There's NO SUCH THING AS A STATUS-QUO CHRISTIAN

Meaning this:

God has not designed you to drift

But He has empowered you to swim

Even if you have to swim against the currents or persecution

Even if you have to swim against the currents of injustice (of racism and sexism)

Even if you find yourself in deep waters today God has given you provision and power to SWIM

I close with this

My father taught me to swim years ago

And I remember the first time he took me to the beach

And I was so excited to be in the ocean that I drifted past the point where my feet could not touch bottom

And I CRIED OUT TO MY DADDY IN FEAR—DADDY, I NEED YOU TO HELP ME

BUT IN SPITE OF MY FEAR MY DADDY DIDN'T COME AND GET ME

HE SIMPLY SHOUTED TO ME SON—I NEED YOU TO SWIM

I came by to speak to somebody who's drifting in deep waters

God's word to you—is to SWIM

I know you're in deep—but swim

I know the diagnosis isn't what you wanted—swim

I know they broke your heart—SWIM

I know you don't know how it's going to turn out—BUT SWIM

Because God has not designed you to DRIFT

He's empowered you to swim to your destination

MINISTRY CALL

Some people who are drifting today

1. **Drifting without a lifeline, you're drifting without an anchor——we use to sing a song there's a song out on the ocean and it's moving this old way, and if your soul's not anchored in Jesus you will surely drift away. If you're hear today and you don't have Jesus as an anchor—and you know and God knows you're out there aimlessly drifting—in a few moments I'm going to ask you to stand and by standing you're saying pastor—and pastor I'm in deep waters and I need a lifeline—I need a safeguard I need something to save me and deliver me right now——-I want to ask you to stand. [Campus Pastors back to you, but if you're here today.....**
2. **I'm saved but I've been drifting—I've been that status quo Christian that you were talking about—I've been drifting in my devotions, drifting in my prayer life, I'm don't want to be a spiritual casualty—want to turn my life around**
3. **Reason why you've been drifting—you're tired—you've been trying to swim against the current—maybe the current is persecution, or disease...the IMAGE salmon swimming up stream—and you need the power of God to make it.**

CLOSING ANNOUNCEMENTS:**GUEST CENTRAL:**

Remember, if you are a guest today please come to Guest central after the service---we'd love to meet you!

SPECIAL BOXES OFFERING—MIDDLE SCHOOL CAMP

This weekend we're doing a special offering for Middle School families who can't afford camp. Please drop cash or check in the poor boxes on our way out to make sure everyone who wants to go to Middle School camp can.