

THE DANGER OF DRIFTING FROM A GREAT SALVATION

This lesson examines Hebrews 2:1–4, where the inspired writer warns believers about the subtle and serious danger of drifting away from the gospel through neglect. The passage highlights the gradual nature of spiritual decline, the weighty authority of the message proclaimed by Christ, and the unavoidable consequences of ignoring such a great salvation. The lesson unfolds the warning, its reasons, and its implications for faithful living.

Introduction:

1. Drifting is one of the most subtle dangers in the Christian life, because it often begins quietly, without obvious rebellion, as the heart gradually loses focus on the things of God (**Hebrews 2:1**). The inspired writer urges believers to recognise that spiritual decline begins not with dramatic sin but with simple neglect of what God has spoken (**Hebrews 2:1**). This introduction emphasises the need to understand the seriousness of drifting and why vigilance is essential.
2. The gospel carries supreme authority because it originated with the Lord Himself and was confirmed by eyewitnesses and by God's testimony through miracles, signs, and gifts of the Holy Ghost (**Hebrews 2:3–4**). This means that drifting is not merely losing interest but turning away from God's clearly confirmed word. The introduction therefore highlights the value and certainty of the message that calls for earnest heed.
3. At the heart of the passage stands a searching question: "How shall we escape...?" (**Hebrews 2:3**). The introduction reminds believers that ignoring the gospel brings inevitable consequences and that God calls His people to respond faithfully to the salvation He has provided. Thus, the introduction prepares the way for examining why this warning is both urgent and necessary.

1. The Danger — Lest We Drift (**Hebrews 2:1**):

- a. Drifting is a gradual spiritual movement away from the Lord, often unnoticed at first (**Hebrews 2:1**):
 - 1) The warning implies a quiet slipping, not an open rebellion, which makes it more dangerous because believers may not notice the change until much ground has been lost (**Hebrews 2:1**).
 - 2) Scripture shows that decline often begins with small steps, as illustrated when the church at Ephesus left its first love not through dramatic sin but by neglecting devotion (**Revelation 2:4**).
 - 3) Believers must recognise that drifting is subtle and progressive, calling for careful self-examination in the light of God's word (**Hebrews 2:1**).
- b. Drifting begins when believers fail to "give the more earnest heed" to the things they have heard from Christ and His apostles (**Hebrews 2:1**):
 - 1) Neglecting the word removes the anchor that keeps the soul steady in truth, leaving believers vulnerable to distraction and instability (**Hebrews 2:1**).
 - 2) Israel repeatedly lost its way when it stopped attending to God's commandments, demonstrating that neglect of revealed truth always leads to confusion and decline (**Judges 2:10–12**).
 - 3) The remedy is deliberate, attentive hearing—giving earnest heed to God's message—because drifting is preventable only through continual engagement with the word (**Hebrews 2:1**).
- c. Drifting leads toward spiritual danger, eventually producing hardness of heart and ruin if not addressed (**Hebrews 2:1; Hebrews 3:12–13**):
 - 1) A small departure today becomes a greater departure tomorrow, because sin deceives and gradually reshapes the heart away from God (**Hebrews 3:13**).
 - 2) Scripture warns that unbelief and disobedience grow when the heart is not anchored to the truth, making drifting a real and pressing threat (**Hebrews 3:12**).
 - 3) The urgency of the warning lies in its consequences, for continued neglect places the believer in a path leading away from God rather than toward Him (**Hebrews 2:1**).

2. The Reason — God Has Always Judged Disobedience (Hebrews 2:2):

- a. The message delivered by angels in the Old Testament was steadfast, and disobedience to it consistently received a just recompense (Hebrews 2:2):
 - 1) The Law given through angels, though mediated, carried divine authority and brought certain consequences for those who transgressed it (Acts 7:53).
 - 2) Israel repeatedly experienced judgment when it ignored God's commands, showing that His word is never to be taken lightly (Numbers 15:30–31).
 - 3) The point is that God has always upheld the seriousness of His revealed will, reinforcing the urgency of the warning in Hebrews 2:2).
- b. If the word spoken by angels brought punishment, then neglecting the gospel spoken by the Lord carries even greater consequences (Hebrews 2:2–3):
 - 1) The inspired writer reasons from the lesser to the greater, showing that the more glorious message brings greater responsibility (Hebrews 2:3).
 - 2) Jesus proclaimed God's ultimate revelation, making rejection of His word far more serious than rejection of earlier messages (John 12:48).
 - 3) Therefore, the weight of the gospel message intensifies the danger of drifting, for the consequences cannot be escaped (Hebrews 2:3).
- c. God's justice in dealing with disobedience underscores the certainty of consequences for neglecting salvation (Hebrews 2:2–3):
 - 1) Throughout Scripture, God consistently holds His people accountable for ignoring His word, demonstrating His righteous character (Deuteronomy 32:4).
 - 2) The inspired writer shows that this pattern continues under the gospel, where the stakes are higher because the message is greater (Hebrews 2:3).
 - 3) Thus, the warning is grounded in God's unchanging justice, emphasising the seriousness of neglecting salvation (Hebrews 2:3).

3. The Question — How Shall We Escape? (Hebrews 2:3–4):

- a. Salvation is "so great" because it was first spoken by the Lord Himself, giving it supreme authority and value (Hebrews 2:3):
 - 1) Jesus is the source of the gospel message, making it the highest revelation of God's will (John 6:68).
 - 2) To neglect such salvation is to disregard Christ's own words, placing the soul in grave danger (Hebrews 2:3).
 - 3) The greatness of the salvation offered heightens the seriousness of the warning, demanding a faithful response (Hebrews 2:3).
- b. The message was confirmed by those who heard Him, providing reliable eyewitness testimony (Hebrews 2:3):
 - 1) The apostles bore direct witness to Jesus' teaching, miracles, death, and resurrection, giving the gospel historical and spiritual certainty (Acts 2:32).
 - 2) Their testimony forms the foundation upon which the early church received and transmitted the message (Ephesians 2:20).
 - 3) This confirms that we stand on a well-attested message, leaving no excuse for neglect (Hebrews 2:3).
- c. God also bore witness through signs, wonders, miracles, and gifts of the Holy Ghost (Hebrews 2:4):
 - 1) These works demonstrated divine approval of the message preached by the apostles (Mark 16:20).
 - 2) The miracles were not random displays of power but intentional confirmations of the gospel's truth (Acts 14:3).
 - 3) God's testimony removes all grounds for doubt, making neglect of salvation both unreasonable and dangerous (Hebrews 2:4).

Conclusion:

1. The warning against drifting calls every believer to examine the heart, recognising that spiritual decline begins quietly through neglect rather than open rebellion (**Hebrews 2:1; Revelation 2:4**). This reminder urges believers to guard their devotion and remain anchored to God's word, lest they slip gradually away from the truth (**Hebrews 3:12–13**).
2. The authority of the gospel magnifies the seriousness of drifting, because the message was spoken by the Lord, confirmed by eyewitnesses, and testified by God Himself (**Hebrews 2:3–4**). This certainty leaves no room for indifference toward salvation and calls believers to respond with reverence and obedience (**John 12:48**).
3. The question "How shall we escape?" stands as a timeless call to faithfulness, reminding believers that God provides salvation with clarity and confirmation, yet holds His people accountable for their response (**Hebrews 2:3**). This appeal urges Christians to give the more earnest heed, recognising that escape is impossible if the gospel is neglected (**Hebrews 2:1**).

Applications:

1. Believers must cultivate deliberate attentiveness to God's word, recognising that neglect is the first step toward drifting. Regular reading, meditation, and obedience keep the heart anchored and stable (**Hebrews 2:1**).
2. Christians should take seriously the authority of the gospel, remembering that it was given by the Lord and confirmed by God. This reverence motivates deeper commitment and guards against casual or careless attitudes toward spiritual things (**Hebrews 2:3–4**).
3. The question "How shall we escape?" should lead believers to renewed seriousness about sin, repentance, and faithful endurance. God calls His people to value salvation highly and respond with wholehearted devotion (**Hebrews 2:3**).
4. Since drifting is often unnoticed, Christians should encourage one another regularly, helping each other remain steadfast and avoid the dangers of slow spiritual decline (**Hebrews 3:12–13**).

Questions:

1. What does Hebrews warn believers about when it speaks of drifting, and why is this danger so subtle (**Hebrews 2:1**)?
2. Why does the inspired writer argue from the lesser to the greater when comparing the word spoken by angels to the gospel (**Hebrews 2:2–3**)?
3. How does the role of eyewitnesses strengthen the certainty of the gospel message (**Hebrews 2:3**)?
4. In what ways did God bear witness to the gospel through signs, wonders, miracles, and gifts of the Holy Ghost (**Hebrews 2:4**)?
5. Why does the inspired writer ask, "How shall we escape?" and what response should this question produce in believers (**Hebrews 2:3**)?

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Questions & Answers:

1. What does Hebrews warn believers about when it speaks of drifting, and why is this danger so subtle (**Hebrews 2:1**)?

Answer: The question concerns the gradual nature of drifting and why believers may not notice it, and the answer is that the passage warns about a slow, unnoticed movement away from the Lord caused by neglect of His word (**Hebrews 2:1**).

2. Why does the inspired writer argue from the lesser to the greater when comparing the word spoken by angels to the gospel (**Hebrews 2:2-3**)?

Answer: The question focuses on the reasoning behind the comparison, and the answer is that if disobedience under the lesser message brought judgment, then neglecting the greater message spoken by the Lord must bring even greater consequences (**Hebrews 2:2-3**).

3. How does the role of eyewitnesses strengthen the certainty of the gospel message (**Hebrews 2:3**)?

Answer: The question addresses the importance of testimony, and the answer is that those who heard Jesus confirmed His message with reliable witness, providing the church with a well-attested foundation for faith (**Hebrews 2:3**).

4. In what ways did God bear witness to the gospel through signs, wonders, miracles, and gifts of the Holy Ghost (**Hebrews 2:4**)?

Answer: The question highlights divine confirmation, and the answer is that God used these manifestations to validate the truth preached by the apostles, demonstrating His approval of the message (**Hebrews 2:4**).

5. Why does the inspired writer ask, “How shall we escape?” and what response should this question produce in believers (**Hebrews 2:3**)?

Answer: The question concerns the purpose of the warning, and the answer is that the inspired writer uses this question to underscore the impossibility of avoiding consequences if salvation is neglected, calling believers to earnest heed and faithful devotion (**Hebrews 2:3**).