

Victoria Ave/Emmanuel Baptist

Sunday, May 17, 2020

Hebrew 2:1-4

Warnings in Hebrews - #1 Beware of Drifting

Let me introduce you to a group of people with a long history of worshipping God. Many come from homes where parents, grandparents, and even further generations back have been worshipping God.

Within this group there is a generous number of worshippers who are “first generation” believers. They heard the “Good News,” believed, and became foundational to the church.

BUT...there is a problem! The church is being inundated with beliefs that are confusing them. They are being taught things that seem beneficial and helpful – but there is something just not right!

These teachers say that their ideas are from God. Some of the teachings even claim to be from well-known, influential, trustworthy teachers. The problem is that they deviate from what they were originally taught from Scripture.

Does this church problem sound familiar? It should! It is happening all around us in 2020!

Our foundational belief systems – what we often call “orthodox” – or as Baptists would say “Biblical” or “fundamental” (a term that has taken a turn for the worst over the years) – is being threatened!

The rise of social media has brought with it a platform for what I like to call “pop theologians.” Authors, speakers, media influencers who have taken “exception” to what the Bible teaches, and they decide to re-interpret the Biblical material for a kinder, more loving, more open minded “Christian.”

These “influencers” are very good at their craft. They are likeable, charismatic and charming, kind hearted, and they often love the world around them far better (sadly) than many churches or individuals who call themselves “Christians.” The problem is that the principles they are teaching are UNBIBLICAL! Too many believers are being led away from Jesus!

This first group that I introduced to you is actually the group/church that we find in the book of Hebrews.

This church was probably a house church or a group of house churches in or near the city of Rome. Rome was founded on the banks of the Tiber river around the same time that the Old Testament prophet Amos was preaching against the northern kingdom of Israel.

Rome, in the 1st century A.D., has over a million inhabitants and is literally the center of the universe! The Roman Empire spans continents. There is a strong Jewish population and Christianity has established a church.

The threat that the church in Rome is facing is the temptation and pressure to reject Christianity – and the major belief under fire is what we call “Christology” or the belief and understanding of WHO Jesus is and what He accomplished.

Jesus is the cornerstone of Christianity. How can we be “Christ-followers” or “little-Christ” if we start denying that Jesus is “the Christ (Messiah), the Son of the Living God.” When you stop believing that Jesus is fully God/fully man, then you cease to be a Christian.

Some of you may think that I am being a bit harsh – maybe even legalistic – but if Jesus is not who he said he was, then Christianity tumbles like a house of cards.

We don’t know who the author of this powerful letter is. Some think Paul or Barnabas and others have suggested such biblical characters as Priscilla!

Hebrews was written to encourage Christians who were struggling with their commitment to Christ. They were discouraged and becoming complacent.

The letter to the Hebrews is a masterclass on WHO Jesus is and WHY we should hold fast to our beliefs even as we struggle!

Within the teachings and the encouragement of the text – the author also gets “real” with the people and issues. Throughout the letter, a series of “warnings” or “wake-up calls” are given to believers.

Let’s look at the first warning found in Hebrews 2:1-4:

2 So we must listen very carefully to the truth we have heard, or we may drift away from it. ² For the message God delivered through angels

has always stood firm, and every violation of the law and every act of disobedience was punished. ³ So what makes us think we can escape if we ignore this great salvation that was first announced by the Lord Jesus himself and then delivered to us by those who heard him speak? ⁴ And God confirmed the message by giving signs and wonders and various miracles and gifts of the Holy Spirit whenever he chose. (NLT).

For a complete understanding of the context of these warnings, I encourage you to read Hebrews 1. I would also encourage you to start reading the entire book of Hebrews. When you get done – start again! There is no better way to understand than to read multiple times and really get a feel for the message.

A major theme running through the verses is that “Jesus is superior.” In chapter 1, the author jumps in with both feet and establishes the supreme authority of the Son of God! ***HE IS THE ONLY ONE YOU LISTEN TO!***

This warning is often called the “warning against drifting.”

When you bring a boat into dock, you will throw out your mooring rope and secure your craft.

The mooring line often has a noose at the end that goes around the mooring post. The post is often shaped like the letter T so that the rope will stay secure. If the mooring post is just a pole that goes straight up and down, there is a great possibility for the rope to “slip its mooring.”

The gentle rock of the boat on the water is enough to start inching the mooring rope up the post until it eventually slips off. This allows the boat to drift from the dock.

It isn't a violent storm – but the gradual, gentle motion that cause drifting.

Our warning is to make sure we “anchor” our beliefs to what is right and true! That anchors is found in Jesus!

We are warned to “not drift from the teachings we have learned! When you have learned something of value – you become accountable for that knowledge! Many of you have had jobs where you have to learn a new skill, or a new way of doing

something. If you succeed in mastering the skills you will succeed in your work...but if you can't master the skill, you will likely lose your job.

As Christians, we have been taught and have received the words of life, the understanding of the good news of the Gospel! We have been taught who Jesus is! The warning is for us. We are warned not to compromise that knowledge. We must not become complacent in the tasks we have been given.

The passage of time has the bad habit of making something extraordinary – ordinary! The excitement and vitality of knowing Christ can become “ordinary” over time. Remember your excitement when you were baptized? Do you still have that passion?

The warning against drifting is not about getting through the momentous struggles of life – but rather the everyday routine.

Perhaps we should call it **complacency**! We run the risk of saying, “Sure Jesus is God – and we are grateful for salvation BUT I still have to live life! I'll serve God in MY own way, in MY own time – perhaps when I become less busy at work, or when I have fewer commitments.”

Complacency becomes a “faith killer.” Over time we stop practicing/exercising our faith and we drift away from Jesus. We run the risk of needing our faith and finding it no longer exists! We did not pay attention and it drifted away!

Do you see yourself in this warning? Is Jesus just another aspect of your life rather than the central, foundational core of your very being? THER IS HOPE! You CAN stop drifting.

In Revelation there are letters sent to seven churches. One of these churches was Laodicea. The Laodicean church was the “lukewarm” church. It was neither hot nor cold for Jesus. You might not realize that being called lukewarm was significant to this church. Laodicea had no natural water supply so a series of aqua ducts were built to bring water from a supply about 5 miles away. By the time it arrived, it was lukewarm and nasty to drink. This is a perfect description of the drifting, complacent Christian!

THERE IS HOPE! Let's see what Jesus' words of hope for Laodicea (and us) are in Rev. 3:20:

²⁰ “Look! I stand at the door and knock. If you hear my voice and open the door, I will come in, and we will share a meal together as friends.

Too often this verse has been used as an evangelism tool. The unbeliever is promised that Jesus will come “into their hearts” if they just open the door...

This verse is actually a powerful promise to the drifting Christian. Jesus wants a VIBRANT relationship with you! He is waiting for you! He is knocking – open the door back up to Him! IT ISN'T TOO LATE!

If you open the door – he promises to come in and share a meal as friends. This imagery of hospitality is a very intimate, passionate idea.

May we heed this first warning to take the truth that we have heard and hold on tightly – through the stressful and through the peaceful times!

Next week – Warnings in Hebrews: #2 – Consider the Power of God’s Word (4:12-13).