

Drift

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Preacher: Rev. Donald Macleod

[0 : 00] Now I'd like to turn to reading God's Word in the New Testament in the letter to the Hebrews. Hebrews chapter 1, and I'd like to read from the beginning of the chapter.

Hebrews chapter 1 from verse 1 and reading into the beginning of chapter 2. There we read, And again when God brings his firstborn into the world, he says, And by gifts of the Holy Spirit distributed according to his will. I want to take a moment to speak to the young folk here, just for a moment.

We're going to be thinking tonight about something called drift here in the reading that we share together.

[4 : 08] Now I want to illustrate it for you. I know that some of you have a new puppy, and you're interested in dogs. And I was wondering if you ever saw a dog that would go and fetch a stick when you threw it and bring it back.

I'm sure you have. I wonder if you've ever seen a dog that would go and fetch a stick when you threw it into the water, when you threw it into a deep pool or into a river or into the sea. When you do that, some dogs will just plunge in without thinking. They're so caught up in the game. They'll swim out and they'll get it and they'll bring it back and they'll drop it at your feet and they'll want you to throw it in again.

But not every dog is like that, especially not to begin with. Some of these young puppies are a bit nervous about trusting themselves to the water.

They're not sure about it, so they hesitate. And I once had a dog like that when she was young. I wanted her to know that she could swim.

[5 : 16] And I wanted her to discover it because I knew she would enjoy it. Every dog does. And I would have a stick and I would throw it and I would throw it into a puddle. She'd go for it. I'd throw it into a pool and she'd run out and she'd get it.

I'd take it and I'd throw it into the river or into a pool in the river. And oh, she didn't like that. She would look at me. And she was just as though she was saying to me, What did you do that for? What's the matter with you? We were having a lovely time together. And now you go and you throw it in there and the whole game is ruined. And she would not go. She would bark at it. She would look at it.

She wanted it desperately. But she'd stand there and she would see it just drifting out little by little by little until it got caught up in the stream.

And then it was away and it was gone forever. It just drifted out of sight. Now I wanted to mention that to you young people here tonight because we can sometimes be like that with the gospel.

[6 : 19] We hear about Jesus and the things of Jesus and we know that God has told us there are great things in his word and he wants us to trust him. And we're not sure about that.

We're not very sure because it might mean all kinds of things will have to change in our lives. We don't know we can trust if we're ready for that.

And there's a danger in behaving in that way. We might be keen to have the gospel and have all the blessings of the gospel but we are called to receive it. We must reach out and trust Jesus and walk with Jesus.

And the temptation is that we put it off. And you know when you put off things like that to do with the gospel it's as though the gospel just drifts away a little bitty further and further and further and soon we forget it.

But it isn't actually the gospel that has drifted. It is ourselves. Because we haven't reached out. We haven't taken the time to trust God and we need to learn to trust him and when we learn to trust him when we begin to obey him we know that all things work together for good for those who love him.

[7 : 39] That dog that I had she did eventually learn how to swim. One day we were down by a river and someone else came along and he had two dogs of exactly the same kind and he picked up a stick and he threw it into a deep pool in the river and both dogs they jumped in immediately and they swam out to get the stick and my one stood in the bank there and it was as though a little light had gone in on her head and she had gone on in her head and it was as though she was saying maybe I can do that.

And she did. She climbed down into the water and she swam out. And you know she so enjoyed it that from that day on you couldn't keep her out of the water.

She was always wanting into the water. She went and she followed him and she didn't look back and I want to tell you this that you won't look back either from that moment when you begin to start following Jesus.

So if you haven't started start tonight. Whether we're young whether we're older if we haven't made commitment make it tonight because there is this difficulty with drift in everyone's life when we put off these things that will always accomplish not which you set it to do.

And tonight we pray that you would set it to do much for our blessing our encouragement our enrichment and your glory. For we ask it in Jesus' name.

[9 : 16] Amen. At the start of chapter 2 in this passage that we read from together we find these words in the New International Version of the Scriptures We must pay the most careful attention therefore to what we have heard so that we do not drift away.

But if you were to read the same thing in some of the older versions or even the English Standard Version we find that the verse begins the first word in verse 1 of chapter 2 is therefore therefore we must pay much closer attention to what we have heard lest we drift away.

The whole theme it seems to me of this chapter that we have before us is about sin and warning against sin and maybe there are two sins in particular that we could apply to this here the sin of omission and the sin of commission the sin if you like of disobedience to almighty God simply because we neglect the things that we know about and the things that we have heard we neglect the strivings and the promptings of the Holy Spirit of God it isn't that we deliberately and willingly set out to do that but it's just that it all becomes so familiar to us that we become careless and there is a stark warning here for us not to be like that but the sin of commission that is also to be found here is disobedience to God by knowing his word and not doing it knowing what it is that he has to say to us knowing what the consequences are of not applying ourselves to Christ and the gospel and seeking the forgiveness and the mercy and the grace and the power of the blood to cleanse us knowing all about it being very thankful for it but something within us stops us from taking that last step and that is a deliberate disobedience to God by rejecting the Son of God that's what we're doing we maybe don't think of it in that way and we wouldn't deliberately want it to be like that but that's how it all works out and the writer here in this passage in some senses gives us illustrations of that he gives us encouragement to do with it when we read through the Bible we can see that the love of God is evident in the Bible we can see that there are times when the love of God is a tender love and that's a wonderful wonderful thing and we're thankful to

God for that that his tender love touches our hearts it encourages us and it uplifts us it inspires us it brings us together it makes us look forward to being with him and other times we discover when we read the Bible that the love of God is tough love he loves us yes but he takes tough action with regard especially to the sins of commission the sins of deliberately disobeying him by rejecting the things that he has given us to know and that's the thrust it seems to me here the thrust is that God commands those who are so privileged to know so much about his son therefore is the word that opens the first verse of the second chapter therefore what therefore because of all that has been said before all that we are given to understand all the information that has been passed on to us all the enlightenment that has come that is such a huge privilege we're not entitled to it but for anyone to know about the living God and the son of

God and the sacrifice of Christ upon Calvary and all that it means to us and what God is in his person and all that he is in time and eternity all that we have heard about him from this word and all that we have sung about him even in that wonderful praise Lord of all being thrown afar thy glory flames from sun and star and we know it and he says in the light of these things you must give urgent attention to what you do with the knowledge that you have or give careful attention to what we have heard because if we do not give careful attention to these things we will drift away Jesus in Matthew 22 and 42 he asks some people the question what think ye of Christ that's the old version

of the scripture there's a power to it isn't there you could say that there's something of that here in this passage there's a challenge you know there we are chapter 1 all that is outlined there about God and the place of his son your throne oh God is forever and ever a scepter of uprightness a scepter of your kingdom you have loved righteousness hated wickedness and so on you laid the foundations of the earth in the beginning the heavens are the works of your hands they will perish but you will remain what do we what do we think about these things what are we doing with that what think you of

[15 : 25] Jesus chapter 1 declares all the glorious things all the powerful things about almighty God that he tells us how he is worthy of worship he is worthy of the worship of the whole creation because he is superior to anything and everything that has been created in heaven above or on the earth below he is sinless he is perfect he is adored in the glory he is holy there is a radiance and a splendor about him and he is the one who is here we could say in the word and in the service and he is asking you tonight what think ye about me do you believe this enough to trust me do you believe it enough to pay close attention to what I have to say to you

I hope you believe me because as you read that passage in the opening verses of chapter two one of the things that we learn is that he is the God who is almighty all powerful all glorious but the God who cares for you and the God who cares for me what think ye of Christ Christ in other words you care for me as I care for you you can see how I care for you when you read the word of God if you walk with me you will quickly be able to see how I care for you in the circumstances of your life you'll see how prayer works you'll see how effective the word of God is when you read it that quote that we have there in chapter 2 at verse 5 or is it verse 6 what is man that you are mindful of him or the son of man that you care for him these are words that come to us we all know that they come to us from

Psalms 8 and verse 4 and we can imagine how the psalmist you know suddenly realized that this is the God who he was standing before we can imagine this psalmist coming out perhaps from his tent or where his dwelling place was on a summer or a winter evening and the sky is dark and it is filled with stars as the psalm outlines for us and he looks at it and he's looking at it in astonishment it takes his breath away to be able to see what is there in the heavens and we ourselves should appreciate it all the more because he was seeing it all that was within our own galaxy or so much of what was within our own galaxy and he felt so small in the light of that or in the sight of that and yet we ourselves know that that galaxy with its billions of stars is only one of many many and we are much smaller as a galaxy than we might imagine and within that galaxy we live in the smallest planet and on that small planet we are we are but yet a speck and as this little speck that might be you it might be me it might be the psalmist looks up to the heavens we we can suddenly become a little bit conscious of the immensity of God and the glory of God and the power of God and the creative abilities of

God and everything else that it speaks to us of and we feel so small we say what is man that you care for him and he does and you know you need to know that tonight as we look at this passage together we need to know that there is a tender love at the heart of this powerful God that has an interest in you and me he not only knows that we are here because he created us he not only knows that there are nations upon the earth but he knows that there are individuals and he knows each individual intimately and things when they go badly and maybe they're going badly for some here in the service tonight we can say that he cares and not only does he care he has the power to be able to do something about it why would you not want to know him why would you not want to worship him why would you not want to come into his presence why would you not want to do as he asks us in his word why would you not want to reflect upon these things why would you doubt and why would you drift what are you going to drift to what else is there that can compare with Jesus Christ and the love of God and even the fellowship of God's people and the strength that that can bring to a community and a family and even an individual it's a wonderful wonderful thing the tender love of a caring God is here in our midst and someone might say well when I read the Bible it seems to me there's so much in it that I don't understand and so there is for all of us we could say that I know that that little dog that I was talking about a wee while ago it didn't understand anything about the physics or the densities of water or whatever formulas there might be that one can calculate these things with the only thing that she knew about the water was that when she went into it it worked for her it supported her there was buoyancy there and that's all she needed to know the same is true for us in our own days if not

[21 : 38] I don't know absolutely everything that there is in the word of God I'm sure I've got as many questions as you have but this one thing I do know that when we practice the things that God has given us to believe and to be exercised in it works for us when we pray things happen when we stop to pray things don't seem to happen as we would want them to happen so wonderful God J.C.

Ryle that great bishop from another age he said this of the scripture in one place he says take away the cross of Christ and the Bible is a dark book and so it is when you think of it it's a dark foreboding place to be if you cannot stand and read it with the key in your hand and the key to understanding anything and everything within the scripture that is of importance to us is that Christ is the key Calvary is the key the presence of the spirit of God is the key but supremely we need to know that there what happened at the cross at Calvary it happened for you it happened for me it happened to Jesus it happened for those who believed in him for his disciples for his followers who were with him who saw it take place and saw him in the flesh they didn't understand it but they continued to believe and the risen

Lord met with them and they discovered that all that he had said was not work in their lives see that's an encouragement for us at the start of a communion season is it not to remind ourselves of who God is and what he has done he is the key and we all need to know that he is the key when we come more particularly to the passage the Greek verb that is used here for careful attention in that opening line pay the more much closer attention as it is in the ESV is a verb that is sometimes used in other places in literature to describe a boat that is drifting a boat that is drifting from its moorings and the sense that the writer seems to be seeking to communicate to us here is that the crew or the owner didn't pay enough attention to what he was doing he neglected to properly secure the little boat when he was finished with it when he came into the shore and he went to tie it up he didn't do it properly and perhaps when he came next time to look for it it was gone the ebb and the flow of the tide it didn't need a storm just natural gentle things it drifted away it went away with the flow it was out of sight just recently

I saw something on television it must have been a newsflash or something like that it was where the floods the monsoon had come in I think it was northern parts of India and they were showing a man being rescued by a helicopter and they told us a little bit about him and he had his own boat and it was a boat that he used for his work and for his pleasure and various things and he came ashore one night and he tied it up I don't know whether he secured it properly or not it doesn't matter but the monsoon came and the waters rose and houses were swept away and his boat was swept away and a helicopter came to rescue him and you know that is in a sense the emphasis that has been given to us here it wasn't just his pleasure and his livelihood that was being swept away but that was the lifeline for him on that occasion for him to get his family and himself to safety but it was gone securing a boat properly can mean the difference between life and death and you know there's a sense too in which you could say that it's a spiritual lifeline being properly committed and attached to

Jesus not loosely being thankful that he's there and occasionally doing his will and sometimes not being too fussed about whether we go to a prayer meeting or whether we read the word or whether we do whatever it is that we do in our different fellowships of the things that are available to us well God is here warning us against that warning us against neglecting the things that really matter and what is it that matters more than Christ himself what matters more than salvation though you have everything else in this world at the end of the day you must leave it and without Christ you have nothing and in Christ you have everything God warns about being careless about our worship and the glory of God we need to give particular attention to our place to your place and my place in eternity and to make sure that it is secure

[27 : 20] I read some time ago about a ship's captain who asked his crew who had gone ashore and got themselves into trouble it was a naval ship and this man had a crew that he was very proud of but one night they went ashore and they got into all kinds of bother and they were brought before him by the military police and he had to deal with the situation and he asked them why do you behave in such a crazy way when you get away from the discipline of the ship when you're on board everything is fine and then you go ashore and you behave in this way and as the senior officer he had a sense of responsibility for his crew and also he felt a sense of responsibility for the port that had given him shelter and the people that lived there and one of the men pointed to a small yacht and he said sir when we are on leave we're like that little sailing boat that was drifting about in the bay before them we go with the flow we drift with the breeze in other words what he was

saying is they went ashore and they got into company and they followed the crowd and it didn't lead them to a good place not good to follow the crowd and they forgot to remember all they had signed up for when they signed up to serve the king or the queen as it would be in our day they were in the service of the king as it was at that time and I mention that because the point for us here to remember tonight is that we too are in the service of the king but the king that we service the king of kings he is lord of all lords and he commands us to give careful attention to what we have heard all that we have ever known lest we drift away do something with it in other words is what he is saying believe it and practice it that senior officer that captain he looked at the yacht and he said to his men yes look that thing is driven by the breeze but it's the rudder that steers the ship it isn't the breeze that carries it to it's different that directs its destination and he pointed to a man who sat at the helm and he pointed out that he was the one who was in control he was a man with a mind and a map and he knew where he wanted to go and the same is true for us we have a manual before us in the word of

God we have a mind that is given to us by almighty God we have all these privileges that are ours and it is for us to steer our way through the tides and the waves and the rocks of life James 3 and 4 look at the ships he says though they are so large and are driven by strong winds they are guided by a very small rudder wherever the will of the pilot directs them James 3 and 4 the captain cared enough about these men to want to go well with his men it wasn't simply that he wanted to exercise punitive punishment over them but he cared for what they were doing with their life in the same way that Jesus cares for us he is after all according to Hebrews 2 and 10 again in a different verse from the new king James he is the captain of our salvation so

Christ is a Christ who cares he cares when we drift away from him into an alternative lifestyle and we go with what society does rather than what scripture teaches he cares when we let ourselves go with the flow because we don't want to stand out from the crowd we can understand what it is like for young people perhaps who don't want to stand out from the crowd because the crowd notice and the crowd will ridicule so often and the crowd would tease those who would dare to be different and we if we know anything about the Bible we know that it runs counter culture to the moral and the ethical ethos of the society of our day and increasingly it is so there's a one time naval chaplain who wrote a hymn his name was Reverend Norman Macleod he was in ministry and for a time he was working with naval ratings and because of the problems that he saw around him from day to day he wrote this hymn courage brother to those who wanted to do their own thing that God would have them to do rather than the way that the world was having them to go courage brother do not stumble though thy path be dark as might there is a star to guide the humble trust in God and do the right and then I take a couple of the verses and corrupt them together and say just as he has put it some will hate thee some will love thee some will flatter some will slight cease from man and look above thee trust in God and do the right no matter who we are we know that these things are true we know that there are those who will hate us for what we are for what we profess there are those who will love us because of it there are those who will flatter us and there are those who will slight us but we have an opportunity to show that we are going to cease from man and look above us do it because we know that this

Christ that we are called to worship and to testify for is a Christ who cares he cares when we neglect prayer he cares when we neglect the reading of God's word he cares when we neglect attending upon the means of grace and worship when we neglect the quiet place and the reason he cares is that he knows that this is what will weaken us spiritually to the point where we will begin to drift away from him we are not paying earnest heed to the things that we have been taught and the emphasis again in the original of this passage is that it's as though everything that was poured into us as a result of the teaching that is found in the first chapter of Hebrews it's as though it all begins to pour out to drain away like water from a leaky bucket we don't notice it going but when we really need it badly it's all gone so he says watch out for that watch out for that be aware of the risks as well as the nature of the blessings remember remember how

[34 : 53] God lovingly warns in 2 Corinthians 6 and 14 with these words do not be yoked together with unbelievers for what fellowship us like with darkness he asks and there are those who would perhaps think about these words simply in terms of marriage and not being married to someone who doesn't believe or share our faith and of course that is all a part of it but it's much more than that this is to do with the whole of life it's to do with the way we live a relationship to Jesus it's what we associate with and who we mix with the things that we engage in and we seem to be gods and

we seem to be the worlds or are we seen to be as people who no one can figure out whether we are the lords or we are the worlds because the lord wouldn't have us to be like that you see what god is really warning about there is that if you go down that route your faith whatever it is that you have within you it will be tossed and driven by every wind of change that happens in your life you won't know how to cope with things you would be like a ship without an anchor without a lifeline the imagery of

James 1 and 6 we ourselves know that life is always going to have trials they will come it's not maybe but definitely they will be there there will be trials there will be temptations of one kind or another and there will be times in our lives perhaps when we feel as though everything is so out about control that we don't know what to do or where to turn and in situations like that surely it's good to live so close to God or to have some commitment to God in such a way that we can hear we are near enough to him to be able to hear the still small voice of God remind us as he did in Isaiah 43 and 1 fear not for I have redeemed you remember I am with you I am the one who cares for you I created you I have sustained you I have redeemed you I have called you by your name it is no accident you are mine

I will be with you whether it is the rivers the waters or the rivers or the fire good to know that maybe nobody else we can talk to anyone about whatever it is that goes on in our lives there are times like that maybe we would feel utterly helpless and despondent as many and do foolish things but for the fact that we know that God is with us when we pass through the waters I will be with you surely it's better to be able to hear something like that from God than perhaps what is said in Genesis 6 and 3 where God looked upon the people of his creation and was disappointed and said my spirit shall not always strive with man what is it that these people did that was so awful that

God spoke in these terms about them what did they do and you know when you think about it and boil it down to sort of common denominator we could put it that way it just did what everybody else was doing that's it they decided to go with the flow the commitment was to the flow rather than to God they neglected to remember and that's the thrust of things here the thing is you keep Christ in your life continually and Christ will keep you because as he has said in this chapter he is mindful of you tender love from God sometimes he uses tough love to bring his reluctant people back to him and the term that's used to drift away is one that's elsewhere used to describe a ship that has deliberately set out to avoid the port the harbour the safe haven that it was ordered to go into it's as though the crew said to themselves well things are going fine for us let's just go our own way let's go and do our own thing let's forget about

God and his word life is good we can have all that we want you know how this the psalm says the storm is changed into a calm at his command and will tender love of God that isn't it so that the waves which raged before now quiet are and still and God can do that and he does that maybe we can all testify to that but you know the reverse is also true it can be said the calm is changed into a storm at his command and will God doing it see that's what Jonah discovered when he deliberately disobeyed the clear word of the Lord to go with a message down to Nineveh Nineveh was a terrible place and God was bitterly disappointed with all that was going on there and he wanted his prophet to go on to tell them to repent or perish basically would be the message

[40 : 44] Jonah didn't like the idea he didn't know how he would be treated he didn't think he would reception so he decided that he would go to chop and he would find a ship that would take him to Tarshish he would get away from the place that he was in because he didn't want to be bothered with the conviction that comes from God that he should go and do as the Lord has said he maybe thought well I'll have a better time down there than I would at Nineveh but he didn't have a better time and he couldn't get away from the presence of the Lord because it wasn't part of God's plan for his life and he couldn't escape the I or the will or the plan of God for his life and neither can we see these two events the storm changed into a calm or the calm changed into a storm both done by God but they're both done out of love one tender love the other tough love and each have the correct response so friends don't be distracted by being casual with what

God has given for our blessing don't be distracted by being casual with the ordinance of the Lord's table and the Lord's supper and the invitation to come and to do this in remembrance of me we don't want to be disobedient we don't want to be careless we don't want God to have to draw us back painfully like Jonah but we do want to experience the richness and the fullness of the joy of the Lord and may that be all that this weekend will hold for you let's pray together for a moment heavenly father we thank you for your word and we thank you for being here among us and we

thank you for ministering to us and pray that you will bless each heart here in your presence and you would allow us to arise and to go out from this meeting by the grace of God knowing that your grace is all sufficient for us and your strength is made perfect in our weakness so hear our prayer take away our sin and part us with your blessing in Jesus name amen