

Are You Drifting?

I. Billy Norris writes of a tragic event that resulted from "drifting":

"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." (Gospel Guide)

II. The danger of drifting is not limited to the physical realm

A. In Hebrews 2:1, we find a warning against drifting

B. Sadly, it is not uncommon for Christians to drift toward destruction!

[Brethren, "Are You Drifting?" Would you know it if you were? With this lesson I hope to stimulate careful introspection regarding the danger of drifting away from the Lord. Consider...]

III. THINGS WE SHOULD KNOW ABOUT DRIFTING

A. DRIFTING REQUIRES NO EFFORT

1. Just stop oaring or tacking against the wind, and a boater will begin to drift

2. The same is true for the Christian, which is why we are told:

"We must give the more earnest heed..." - Hebrews 2:1

B. IT IS AN UNCONSCIOUS PROCESS

1. It is possible to drift unaware
 - a) In a boat, the undercurrents are often unnoticeable from the surface
 - b) In a plane, the wind or gravitational forces move the plane without you realizing it
2. The same is true in the spiritual realm
 - a) Many individual Christians have slowly drifted away
 - b) Many churches have gradually drifted into error
-- Only one day to find themselves far removed from the Scriptures

C. WE NEVER DRIFT UPSTREAM OR AGAINST THE TIDE

1. Faithfulness to the Lord is like oaring upstream
2. You must constantly be "adding to your faith..." - 2Peter 1:5
3. You must continue to grow - 2Peter 3:18
-- The moment you stop growing, you start going backwards or downwards

D. THE SPEED DOWNSTREAM INCREASES

1. The dangers increase with the speed of the drift
 - a) When we can hear the noise of the waterfall, it is already too late
 - b) When we lose sight of land, it is more difficult to discern that we are drifting
2. As we move farther and farther from the Lord, we care less and less about what we do

E. IT IS DANGEROUS TO OTHERS

1. A ship, just drifting, is a hazard to all other vessels at sea
2. Parents who are just drifting, will soon lose golden opportunities to teach their children - Ephesians 6:4
3. Many are tossed to and fro and carried about by every wind of doctrine - Ephesians 4:14

F. IT ENDS IN SHIPWRECK

1. A boat adrift will crash on the rocks or go over the falls
2. For those who drift spiritually through their own neglect, there shall be no escape from a just punishment - Hebrews 2:1-3

[The danger of drifting is real, or there would be no need to warn against it. So again I ask, "Are You Drifting?" To help answer the question, here are some...]

IV. COMMON SIGNS OF DRIFTING

A. DIMINISHING DESIRE TO STUDY GOD'S WORD AND PRAY

1. The Bible is a unique book - a source of information not found anywhere else
 - a) Without God's revelation, how could we truly know our origin, purpose, and destiny?
 - b) It tells us of sin's dreadful consequences, and how God saves us from sin
 - c) It provides direction for living happy, useful lives -Psalm 1:1-3
-- When one loses their desire to study God's word, they are drifting!

(1) Prayer is a wonderful blessing - an avenue to communicate with God!

(a) Jesus, who loved His Father, often prayed - Markk 1:35; 6:46

(b) He expressed concern that His disciples not grow weary to pray - Luke 18:1

-- When the Christian prays less and less, he is drifting more and more!

B. DIMINISHING DESIRE TO BE WITH GOD'S PEOPLE

1. This includes attending services to worship God

a) One should always have the attitude of the Psalmist - Psalm 122:1

b) If we no longer rejoice in the worship of God in the presence of brethren, we are drifting!

(1) Fellowship with God's people extends beyond the services of the church

(a) We are to be concerned with edifying one another - Romans 14:19

(b) Such edification should occur even daily - Hebrews 3:13

(c) For the right kind of friendship strengthens us, while the wrong kind leads us to sin - cf. Ecclesiastes 4:9-12; 1Corinthians 15:33

-- When a Christian prefers the companionship of people of the world, rather than fellow Christians, he is drifting toward the rocks of spiritual destruction!

C. DIMINISHING DESIRE TO SHARE THE GOSPEL

1. When one obeys the gospel, he knows God has blotted out his sins, made him a new creature in Christ, and he wants to tell the world about Jesus - cf. Acts 8:4; 1Thessalonians 1:8
2. When a Christian no longer has the desire to take the message of salvation to others, he is drifting!

D. INCREASING THRILL OVER THINGS OF THE WORLD...

1. Such as greater thrill over worldly honors; for example:
 - a) Parents of one young man were excited beyond measure over a worldly honor he had received
 - b) They had never demonstrated such emotion over spiritual matters
 - c) Within the passing time, the entire family had drifted beyond the point of no return
-- The apostle John warns us against the love of the world and the things in the world - 1John 2:15-17
2. Such as increasing enjoyment in worldly pleasures
 - a) Paul described some who were "lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God" - 2Timothy 3:4
 - b) If we reach the point when we find more pleasure in some worldly activity than meeting with others to worship God, we definitely are spiritually adrift!

[Such are some of the signs of drifting away from God. If we are to remain close to God, it will not be easy. Here are...]

V. REMEDIES AGAINST DRIFTING

A. KEEP ROWING

1. Spiritually speaking, this involves diligence - 2Peter 1:5,10
2. It also means to keep abounding in our Christian graces - cf. 2Peter 1:5-8
3. There is no place for "retirement" in living the life of a Christian! -Philippians 3:12-15; 2Corinthians 4:16

B. WATCH OUT FOR UNDERCURRENTS

1. We must always be on guard for undercurrent of temptation
2. For we have a fleshly nature which wages war against the soul - 1Peter 2:11; Galatians 5:16-18

C. EXPECT TO GO AGAINST THE TIDE

1. There are many tides to sweep us away
 - a) Popularity, peer pressure, the praise of others
 - b) Modernism, skepticism, humanism
 - c) Denominationalism - false doctrines of all kinds
 - d) Liberalism and worldliness in the church - probably the greatest enemies of the church in our lifetime
 - e) Neglect -- indifference, apathy, lack of interest and concern
2. If one drifts along with the majority, he certainty will be lost - Matthew 7:13-14

D. WE MUST HAVE STRONG ANCHORAGE

1. Rooted and grounded in Christ - Colossians 2:6-7
2. Minds must be anchored to the truth - Ephesians 4:14-15

3. Possessing an unshakable hope - cf. Hebrews 6:18-19
4. Rooted and grounded in the love of Christ - Ephesians 3:16-18

VI. CONCLUSION

- A. Brethren, are we drifting?
 1. The danger is real; we would be foolish to say otherwise
 2. Many have drifted away from the Lord; we would be arrogant to say it could not happen to us!
- B. Are there signs of drifting in your life? Honestly ask yourself:
 1. Is my desire to study God's word and pray diminishing?
 2. Is my desire to be with God's people not what it has been in the past?
 3. Have I lost my desire to save those who are lost?
 4. Am I too much enamored by the things of the world?

If in any way we must confess that we are drifting, then may we encourage one another to give earnest heed as warned by the writer to the Hebrews:

"Therefore we must give the more earnest heed to the things we have heard, lest we drift away. For if the word spoken through angels proved steadfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just reward, how shall 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..." (Hebrews 2:1-3)

Brethren, our salvation in Christ is simply too great for us to neglect!