

The Dangers Of

Drifting

AUTHOR UNKNOWN

"For this reason we must pay much closer attention to what we have heard, lest we drift away from it."

—Hebrews 2:1

Drifting off course is one of those great evil influences which affects the believer as much as the unbeliever. The Christian life has its own defense mechanisms ready against open attack. It's armed at all points against the obvious temptations—but it's relatively open to the subtle and deceitful influence of drifting. *"For this reason we must pay much closer attention to what we have heard, lest we drift away."* Those words from Hebrews, given to a Christian Church, are a solemn reminder to all Christians of the danger we're exposed to.

First of all, look at how silent and unnoticed the pull of drift is. If it disturbed us, if it jarred or jolted us, if it drew attention to itself, this might be enough to put us on our guard. But, look! no such warning signal is ever given. No alarm bell is ever sounded. We drift away softly and silently, like a ship floating down the tide.

This process is so unconscious because we're floating on such great currents. The currents are both within us and around us. The currents within are the drives of our natural desires—our love of ease and comfort, our fleshly appetites, and our worldliness of spirit. Around us are other tides set in the same direction—great drifts in life itself, the spirit of the age, social customs and habits, materialistic attitudes in business, literature, and entertainment. All these roll around us ceaselessly, touching us, nestling close to us, acting on us, and finding allies in the soul to which they are kin. They capture the tower almost without our being aware of what has happened.

The Path Of Least Resistance

The life of drift is a pathetically easy course to follow. It takes no output of energy to float down a stream, or to be carried forward on the crest of a running tide. All that's necessary for a life of drift is to relax, to do nothing, to let go, to cease struggling, to submit to the worldly influences within us and around us. *"The gate is wide, and the way is broad that leads to destruction."* (Matt. 7:13)

No man by chance ever drifts towards Christ. That needs energy and force of character. But to drift away from Christ needs neither. We only have to surrender ourselves to the force of our natural instincts. It's as easy as that.

It's because the life of drift is so seductively easy to follow that every person who has followed Christ for some time feels the necessity to encourage himself to stand up to and firmly resist life's drifts. Who can fail to see that simple challenge in the teachings of Jesus?

Coming Against The Tide

Christ is always urging men to develop personal initiative and determination, and to cease being tossed to and fro like leaves on the stream of life. His condemnation of the men who lived in the days of Noah was not that they were men of violence—but that they lived unexamined lives, drifting on the surface of things, yielding weakly to the infection of social influences, eating and drinking in a day of God's visitation. (See *Matt. 24:37-39*.)

His praise for John the Baptist, on the other hand, was that he was a man of inflexible moral purpose, not "a reed shaken by the wind," tossed about by every passing breeze of opinion, but one who took his own line and held to it, in spite of the consequences.

So high was Jesus' value of a directed life, and His sense of the worthlessness of a drifting life that, to secure the one and avoid the other, He judged that the most *drastic* efforts were to be taken. "Pluck out your eyes rather than miss life," He said. "Cut off your hands, your feet. Strive to enter by the narrow door." (*Matt. 18:8-9; Luke 13:24*) To be saved demands effort, thoughtfulness, and self-discipline. To be lost makes no such demands. All that's needed is merely to follow the drift. What could be easier?

Seemingly Innocent Steps

Again, let everyone understand how serious and tragic the final consequences of a drifting life are. In its early stages the gravity of drift is rarely ever seen. It's only when it has run its full course that we see the disastrous result.

Then we realize it's as deadly as the most blatant sin.

A ship can be just as effectively wrecked by drifting as by running into an obstacle on its charted course. For the masses of people who make moral shipwreck of their lives by "dragging sin

to themselves with cart ropes" (see *Isaiah 5:18*), there are many more who reach the same tragic goal by simply letting their ropes loosely slip off the dock.

There's a great story in the Old Testament which powerfully demonstrates this point. When Lot selected the lush pasture lands of the Jordan for himself, he was well aware of the evil reputation of the cities of the plain. Even in his wildest dreams he never thought of making Sodom his home. Yet that was the end he finally reached by gradual and seemingly innocent steps.

In five grim sentences the story of his moral drifting is summed up. "*He chose the valley of the Jordan*" (the location of Sodom); "*he moved his tent as far as Sodom*"; "*he lived in Sodom*"; "*he sat in the gate of Sodom*" (that is, he became one of its most influential citizens). And when the insistent angels urged him to leave this den of corruption, he had become so callous that we read, "*He lingered in Sodom.*" In Lot's ruined home and blasted soul we see the end of drift. (*Genesis 13:10, 13:12, 14:12, 19:1, 19:16*)

Stoutly Paralyzed

What should concern us more than anything is the power of drift to numb our sense of danger. Few men seriously believe that they can drift into the open jaws of Hell. Even when we are conscious that we're drifting from our charted course and that our spiritual senses are becoming duller, there's always a false hope in our minds that a little energy and effort on our part can at any time turn the whole situation around. *We underestimate the paralyzing influence of drift.*

One winter a bird was seen on a piece of wood floating down the river towards Niagara Falls. It was evidently enjoying the movement of the swiftly gliding stream. It had no sense of danger. Why should it be afraid? Didn't it have wings? Couldn't it just fly off when the point of danger was reached? So it thought, as it rested free from care on the piece of wood which carried it down near the dizzy edge.

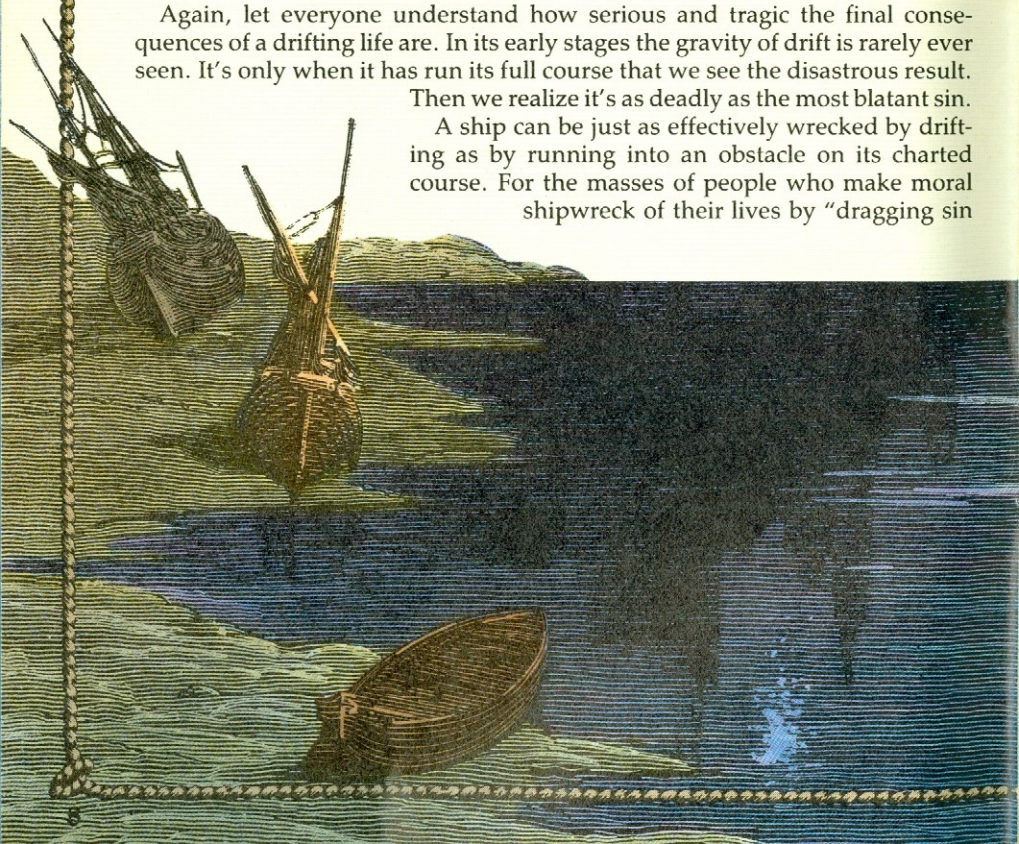
When it reached the point of danger it tried to soar, but alas! it could not. The river's mist had frozen upon its wings, and so it miserably perished as the waters plunged over. Isn't there a serious danger that our habits fix us so immovably to the drift of our circumstances that we cannot free ourselves, even when we want to?

The Anchor Of The Soul

What can we do to end the terrible consequences of drifting, and stop the influence of these currents in life that threaten to destroy us? The author of Hebrews gives this practical exhortation, "*We must pay much closer attention to what we have heard, lest we drift away from it.*" (*Heb. 2:1*) The translators questionably insert the phrase "from it," which is not in the original Greek. The insertion of these words lessens rather than increases the gravity of the moral issue.

The writer's meaning is that, if we become indifferent to what God has spoken, not only do we miss the encouragement of His teaching, but our lives cease to have stability, and become carried along by chance and circumstance. We drift away to any tragic goal.

"*What we have heard*" are just the great Gospel facts, truths, values, and warnings, which make and keep us morally and spiritually healthy. These



Gospel truths, if seriously followed, have the power to give direction and stability to our character.

And in support of this point, this writer never gets tired of counseling his readers to "consider Christ," in whom all Gospel truth is incarnated. Read again the story of Christ's life and reflect on the significance of His Cross which shows His militant protest against a life of drifting. Let the strong resistance of our Lord to all the drifts of His time lay hold upon our minds and saturate our innermost being, until it steels our wills to a similar endurance.

Above all, let us align our lives to the power of His risen life, and we will be able to hold our ground and stand firm and immovable. It is written that He is able to keep us from falling (*Jude 24*), and again, "*May our Lord Jesus Christ Himself and God our Father, who has loved us and given us eternal comfort and good hope by grace, comfort and strengthen your hearts in every good work and word.*" (*II Thess. 2:16-17*) Let us pay close attention to these facts. Let them be the directing, stabilizing forces in our lives.

Let us anchor our souls to them and above all to **Him**, the ever-living One, who supports and guarantees all these things. There is only one absolute refuge from drifting, and that is to be safely anchored. A ship securely anchored never drifts. And a life anchored to Christ by the four cables of faith, hope, love, and service, consciously made and continuously tested, will never drift.

"... we who have fled for refuge in laying hold of the hope set before us. This hope we have as an anchor of the soul, a hope both sure and steadfast." (*Heb. 6:18-19*)

