

“Do Not Drift” Pt 2

Fixing Our Eyes On Jesus, Our High Priest

Hebrews 2:1-4

Rev. Jeff Stivason

March 9, 2018

Jeff: Okay. Well Don, lead us in.

Transcriber’s Note: The men sing a hymn.

Holy, holy, holy! Lord God Almighty!

Early in the morning our song shall rise to Thee.

Holy, holy, holy! Merciful and mighty!

God in three Persons! Blessed Trinity!

Jeff: Our heavenly Father, we are thankful for this day again, for the time that You’ve given to us. We’re thankful for the fact that You are holy and that You are One in Three. And Father, we’re thankful that You did not create because You needed our love, but You created out of love. And Father, we’re thankful for that.

As we bow before You this morning, we’re mindful of the fact that You expressed that love to us in the Lord Jesus Christ when we were undeserving of it. Father, in Adam we sinned and we all died. And having died we lost the knowledge, the righteousness and the holiness that You graciously gave to us. And yet in Jesus Christ that was retrieved. And we have that by faith which is not of our own, but even that is a gift from Your hand. And Father, we praise You, that You loved us when we were unlovable. We praise You for loving us when we were undeserving.

And so now we come before You, thankful that You saved us. And so we are willing and able now, through the precious work of the Holy Spirit, to open Your word and study it, to see the truth that You teach. Father, we ask that You will bring that truth to bear upon our lives in such a way that it would be life-transforming, for we need it. We need to be brought into conformity with the Savior. And yet we know that we are in His image. And so we pray, Father, that You will bring our lives and what is true of us into conformity over time. And Father, we pray that in the glorification it will be made perfect.

Father, we ask now that You’ll continue to be with Mark. And we praise You for the fact that they were able to discover what the problem was with his kidney before it progressed to the next stages. We’re thankful for that. We pray that You’ll heal him with his diabetes. We pray that You’ll overcome any complications that he may encounter. And Father, we pray that You’ll mend his body. We’re also thankful that You saw fit to leave a portion of his kidneys for him.

And Father, we’re thankful for the fact that Craig has passed that kidney stone. And Lord, we pray that You’ll bless him, as he is apart from us today. We also pray that You will be with our brother Bruce. We pray that You will continue to mend his body. We pray that the physical therapy would make him flexible and strong. And Father, we do pray that You would speed him back to us soon.

Now Father, we pray, as You turn our attention toward Your word, that Your hand would be upon us for good, for we ask it in Christ’s name. Amen.

“Do Not Drift” Pt 2

Men: Amen.

Jeff: I don't know. Is this too loud?

Men: No.

Jeff: It's not. Okay. I can't remember now which one it was, whether it was Calvin or Luther. But when they talked about what to do with a tyrant, they said that you could pray for him to get a kidney stone. *(Laughter)* Are you remembering that, Bishop? I can't remember which one it was.

Participant: It sounds more like Luther than Calvin.

Jeff: What's that?

Participant: It sounds more like Luther than Calvin.

Jeff: Yes, it really does. Okay, let's turn to Hebrews chapter 2. And today we're going to finish together in 1-4. Don, do you have that open?

Don: Yes, I do.

Jeff: Why don't you read that for us, verses 1-4?

Don: Okay. I can't read my own writing. *(Laughter)*

“Therefore we must pay much closer attention to what we have heard, lest we drift away from it. For since the message declared by angels proved to be reliable, and every transgression or disobedience received a just retribution, how shall we escape if we neglect such a great salvation? It was declared at first by the Lord, and it was attested to us by those who heard, while God also bore witness by signs, wonders, and by various miracles through the Holy Spirit, distributed according to His will.” This is the word of the Lord.

Men: Thanks be to God.

Jeff: Okay. Why don't we begin today by just recapping a little bit. We'll take a few minutes and just go over the ground that we've already been over. And this is what we did the last time. We gave the introduction and the warnings, but we didn't do the consequences and the witnesses. And so today we'll cover those last two. Let's just briefly go through the first two points so that we can get our bearings here.

I said to you that when we looked at this particular section, we were looking at a section that we needed to be familiar with because it is hortatory in nature in its exhortation. And these exhortations are going to appear at key points throughout the book. And so it's good for us to understand that this is a section that's going to be with us, and it's a type of section that's going to reoccur for the remainder of the book.

And that *therefore*, which leads into an exhortation, accompanies the argument that Jesus is greater than the angels. Remember I said to you the last time we were together that this argument fit into a much larger argument, that Jesus is greater than the angels, not just because He's greater than the angels, but Jesus is greater than the angels because He's greater than the Old Covenant.

So we are contextualizing the conclusion. And when we think about it like that, in this hortatory form,--and remember, I gave you these. You didn't see these the last time. This is Snoopy, and he's shivering. And they say, “Snoopy looks cold.” And they walk over to Snoopy and they say, “Snoopy, be of good cheer!” Then they leave him and Snoopy has a question mark on his head at the end of it, right?

“Do Not Drift” Pt 2

And then this one. It's where Charlie Brown tells Snoopy to sit. Snoopy walks past him, walks into the other room, walks into the recliner, jumps up in it and sits down.

And remember, the point that I was making with you was that exhortations have to mean something from the person who exhorts. But they also have to mean something for the person who receives. And so when we come across these exhortations in the book of Hebrews, we need to remember that he's serious about the exhortation. And we need to be just as serious about hearing the exhortation. And that was the point of all that.

And I said to you that there are places in the book of Hebrews where this appears. And I read these to you the last time: 3:12: *“Take care, brethren.”* 4:11: *“Therefore, let us be diligent.”* 4:14: *“Let us hold fast our confession.”* 6:1: *“Press on to maturity.”* 10:35: *“Do not throw away our confidence.”* And then 12:1: *“Run the race.”* These are just large sections of exhortation.

And the last thing I said to you was that we need to remember that he's urging, but not doubting. He's urging these brothers on, but he's not doubting them. And we saw that, for instance, in chapters 5 and 6. He says, “I think better of you even though I'm saying hard things to you. I think better of you and have no doubts about how you'll respond to these things.”

And then there were the warnings. And the warnings were to pay close attention, to pay much closer attention. That adverb *much* does two things for us. Remember, it's a superlative. And that says that I'm all ears. It's that kind of thing, right? Talk to me; I'm listening, right? So it's in the superlative sense. Pay much closer attention. And then in the comparative sense, who are we comparing this to? And the answer was in Hebrews 3:7. *“Today, if you hear His voice.”* The idea then is that the comparison is between the church and Israel. And so Israel wasn't listening. And he's calling the church, the new Israel, to listen. And so there's a striking emphasis in terms of the comparison there that we need to take on board.

And I think that's one of the things that Sig mentioned earlier today about calming the waters, and how can the Lord calm the waters of your life? And really the text is not about calming the waters. It's about who Jesus is. And I think that's an excellent illustration as to what we're thinking about here.

Oftentimes we're going to go along and we're going to think to ourselves, I wonder who he's talking about? I wonder what the comparison is. And we're going to find that the comparison is to the church and Israel because, think about it. They're thinking about going back to Israel. And so we need to keep that in mind. That was a great point.

And then I told you the description about paying attention. That word is a nautical term. You're backing the big yacht in and you need to be careful. You need to pick something on the shore and to focus on it. And then you need to pull the boat into the dock, using that as your guide. Well Christ is our guide, and we need to keep our eyes fixed upon Him. And we need to pay close attention to Him.

And I gave you that story about drifting. And then I talked to you by asking you the question. Are you drifting? And that brings us to the point where we left off. So let me ask you. Is there any follow-up from the last time that you want to cover? Do you want to ask any questions or make any comments? Yes, Don?

“Do Not Drift” Pt 2

Don: Jeff, last week you were talking, and I don’t know. Maybe you’ll get into it. But you were talking about the consequences of drifting. Could you elaborate on that?

Jeff: I’ll tell you what. That’s where I’m going. So I am going to elaborate on that.

Don: Whatever.

Jeff: All right. Anybody else? Thanks for the nice Segway. *(Laughter)* Anybody else? All right.

So then, let’s talk about the consequences. And I don’t know about you, but you know, when I was a youngster, my dad would oftentimes give me a warning about something. And then he’d come up and he’d say to me, “Do you need me to draw you a picture?”, right? Because I wasn’t getting the warning. I needed to have the consequences spelled out for me. I was a bit of a hard learner, you know?

I had a brother-in-law like that. He was a lot like that. You know, you’d tell him. He was the kind of kid where you’d tell him, “Don’t touch the stove.” You would give him a warning. “Don’t touch the stove.” And he would need the consequences. He was just that kind of kid, you know?

So sometimes we need more than just the warning. We might be asking why? And we need the consequences spelled out for us. And the consequences are spelled out to us in this text. And the consequences are spelled out to us in the form of, or by way of a contrast set up for us in the text.

The contrast is between the revelation mediated by the angels and the revelation mediated by the Son. That’s the contrast. He’s spelling out, then, the consequences. And that becomes important.

So when you think about this contrast, notice what he does from verse 2 to verse 3: the word spoken through the angels and the word spoken through the Lord. That immediately sets us up for the comparison.

In other words, he says, “Okay. You need me to give you more than a warning. I’ll give you the consequences of what this looks like.” So he takes us through that.

Now let’s think about this for just a minute. Think first about *the word spoken through the angels*. That’s the Mosaic covenant. The Mosaic covenant, according to this particular text, has some dire consequences connected to it. And they’re mentioned in our text. Every transgression receives a just retribution! That’s what he’s saying.

So think about that for just a minute. This Old Covenant, this Mosaic covenant, had a negative in mind as a description. I mean that’s the negative in mind that the Preacher has as he describes the Sinaiatic covenant. Every sin had a just retribution.

Now let’s think about that for a minute. What was the purpose of Sinai? Well you can go to two places in the Bible to find what the purpose for Sinai was. One of those places is in Romans 5:20. You can go there if you want to, and I’ll draw your attention to what it says in just a minute. Well no; I’ll do it now, and then I’ll mention a couple of things about it.

In Romans 5:20—and I think I’m going to read some verses before that. So look at verse 12, and I’m going to read through verse 14, and then I’ll jump down and read verse 20.

“Do Not Drift” Pt 2

“Therefore just as sin came into the world through one man, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men because all sinned,— (For sin indeed was in the world before the Law was given. But sin is not counted where there is no law. Yet death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over those whose sinning was not like the transgression of Adam, who was a type of the One who was to come.)”

And then verse 20. *“The Law came in to increase the trespass. But where sin increased, grace abounded all the more.”*

Now I just want you to think about this for a minute. What does it mean that death reigned from Adam to Moses? And yet, when after Moses he talks about sinning in the likeness of Adam. What does he mean? Well I’m going to tell you what I think he means. And you can feel free to disagree with that. Many do. This is a controversial point, and at least I’m going to tell you that up front. *(Laughter)*

Here’s my understanding of that. When he says that death reigned from Adam to Moses, what he is saying is that the sin imputed to Adam and his posterity was imputed to those living from the time of Adam to Moses, and beyond. But he’s distinguishing two epochs—Adam to Moses, and then Moses and on.

Why is he doing that? I’ll tell you why I think he’s doing that. Go back to the Garden and think about Adam for just a minute. You have Adam. He’s created outside of the Garden. Adam is taken and placed in the Garden. Adam opens his eyes. He sees God. God says to him, “This is all yours to develop. But you must keep the covenant.”

And I’m elaborating here. There’s a probationary period in which he may not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, because if he eats from that tree, he will surely inherit the curse of the covenant. He will die. However, if he obeys during that probationary period, he will receive eternal life. He will eat from the tree of life and live forever, he and his posterity. Remember, he didn’t act just for himself. He acted for others.

But he failed to do that. His wife ate. She gave him some. He ate, and their eyes were opened. And they knew that they had sinned.

Now think about that paradigm. And move forward in your thinking to the Mosaic covenant. God takes the people of Israel and he makes them, creates them outside of the land of Israel. He creates them in Egypt. He makes them a nation, then takes them and places them in the land.

And then He says to them, “This is your city to develop. However, you must obey the law that I give you. If you obey the Law, you stay in the land. If you don’t obey the Law, then you will be driven from the land.”

We know that they don’t keep the Law. There is much grace in here. This is illustrative. God is illustrating. I think He’s illustrating in the people of Israel what happened in the Garden. But they repeatedly don’t keep the covenant. And God eventually drives them out of the land.

And what you see then is that you see a story very similar to the story you saw in Eden. And the point is this. *“Death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over those who did not sin in the likeness of Adam.”*

“Do Not Drift” Pt 2

What was the sin in the likeness of Adam for those who were under the Mosaic covenant? They sinned in the likeness of Adam in a very real way.

And then the question comes in 5:20. Why the Law? In other words, why the Mosaic covenant?

Now I’m going to answer that in just a second. But do you have anything that you want to work through on this particular point, to chew this over and extend this a bit? Yes?

Ted Wood: You might want to unpack this a little more. I’m looking around the room and I see guys distracted, which means that they’re kind of saying, “Okay, Jeff, fine; whatever.” I mean that’s some pretty heavy stuff you just unpacked.

Jeff: Some pretty heavy stuff. Yes, go ahead.

Participant: This might be what you’re saying. My understanding is that from Adam until Moses, there was no law. But because of the sin of Adam, all men still died. They were not held accountable to the Law, the Ten Commandments, because they hadn’t yet been given. But when the Ten Commandments came, sin increased now. They became even more aware of how fallen they were.

Jeff: That’s correct. However, the work of the Law was written upon the heart even prior to the giving of the Law at Sinai. But you’re right. The Law is going to come in for a particular purpose. Yes, go ahead. I think we can work it out through your questions.

Participant: I was just thinking of a particular verse to support what you said. Initially, you said that there’s controversy. So if you boil it all down, we are either in Adam or in Christ.

Jeff: Yes.

Participant: And in 1 Corinthians 15, 1 Corinthians 15:22 says, *“For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ all shall be made alive.”* I’m just thinking that we’re either one or the other. We’re either in Adam or in Christ. We’re either unregenerate or regenerate.

Jeff: That’s correct. The thing that you need to remember, though, is that you’re right. There is the federal head, Adam, and everyone is in Adam. And everyone is a sinner because of Adam’s sin. And then there is Christ who is the other federal Head. But only the elect are represented by Him, okay?

So you have two federal heads. In between that you have a type of Christ. But according to this text, you have in some ways a casting forward of the shadow of Eden upon the Mosaic covenant as well.

So what you have is that you have these two federal heads. And in between them with Israel you have something of a prefiguring of Christ and what He’ll do. But you’ll also have a looking back to Adam in sort of a historical unfolding of the plan of Israel.

And that’s basically what I’m talking about when I talk about the parallel between Adam in the Garden and Israel in the land of Egypt. It’s this historical unfolding of a story that looks very, very similar. He creates him outside, puts him in, gives him a law. He doesn’t keep the law. He’s expelled from the garden. He creates a people and puts them in the land. He gives them the Law. They don’t keep the Law. He expels them from the land. It’s a story board that looks very similar.

“Do Not Drift” Pt 2

And there’s a reason for that story looking very similar. And yet you’re exactly right. There are only two federal heads. This story of Israel really shows forward and looks back. Yes, Ted?

Ted: Perhaps you could share the controversy, why someone might disagree with that, to get clarity on what you’re saying, why it’s an issue.

Participant: Yes. So the idea of why it’s an issue if the question of in what way is that story a recapitulation, or a retelling? And historically the question has been, well, wait a minute. Are you saying that the Mosaic covenant, then, is a covenant of works reinstated? Or are you saying that it’s just a retelling of the story in order to highlight what we’re going to look at in 5:20? In other words, could Israel have merited in some way favor with God? And that’s not what I’m saying.

And I think that once you begin to talk about Israel beginning to merit something before God by their obedience to the Law, you’re on really unsteady ground. And so what I’m saying is that there is controversy about that today. And I am in the camp that says that this is a retelling of that story for the purposes of 5:20, for the purposes of the Law coming and doing what the Law was supposed to do, which we’ll get to in just a minute.

Participant: I saw another parallel in your comparison. God made a covenant with a man in Adam, and made a covenant with a nation in Moses. And He makes a covenant with us through a Man, Jesus Christ, in a covenant with the church. So that’s the other parallel.

Jeff: Yes, I think those are all there. Yes?

Participant: I think a third way to look at it is that you have the first Adam. Then you have the Mosaic law. Then the third one, to expand it further, would be the Sermon on the Mount.

Jeff: Well, that’s if you see Jesus as a second Moses. And some people do see Him as another Moses.

Participant: I guess I was just thinking in terms of the idea of further expounding on what true righteousness is.

Jeff: Yes, I think you’re right. I understand that. But I think that might get us into some basic—

Participant: I just wanted to spell that out as a progression.

Jeff: Yes. That’s good. Okay, so why? How do we understand this? Why does the Law come in 5:20? Well think about it like this. The Law is introduced alongside of sin.

How do we understand that? That’s the question. I want you to understand it as this kind of thing.

You walk into a counselor’s office and you sit down on the couch. And you start to tell them your problem. You think your problem is one thing. And you’re telling them. And all of a sudden they say to you, “Have you ever thought about?”

And all of a sudden, by the time that hour is over, you’ve got three more problems that you hadn’t thought about. (*Laughter*) Right?

And this is what Paul is going to tell us in chapter 7. “I didn’t know what coveting was until the Law came in. And when the Law came in and said this is what coveting is, I realized that I covet. I have this problem.”

“Do Not Drift” Pt 2

And so what does the Law do? The Law comes in to tease out the sin that reigns, that’s already reigning. It just highlights it, teases it out, makes it manifest, puts it in our face in a way that’s painful.

And so what is he saying? The Law came to show us our need for Jesus Christ. That’s what he’s saying.

Now the Law came not only to show us our need for Jesus Christ, but think about this. We are saying that the Sinaiatic covenant is dire. And if you’re under the Sinaiatic covenant, you’re living under a heavy burden.

Now the Jew who was living under the Sinaiatic covenant could have looked to the sacrifices and could have recognized in them what was coming in Christ. But typically, what do you notice when you look at the development of Jewish history? You typically notice the downplay or the underscoring of the sacrifice, and the up-playing of the Law. And when that’s the case, what do you have? You have a major problem.

I’ll never forget. I was at Grove City College and we were in this indigenous religious traditions class. And we went to these different places to visit synagogues and places like that. We were in this synagogue in Sharon, PA. And the rabbi stood up in front of us as a class and he said, “Look. The problem with you people is that you need Jesus. We have the Law.” And you know, every one of us is sitting there going, “Oh, wow! You don’t know the dire consequences of this Law!” Right?

And so if it is dire to neglect the Old Covenant, how much more dire is it to ignore the great salvation that enables us to escape the consequences of the Law in Jesus Christ! You see, that’s the point.

I think the point is illustrated in a parable in Matthew 22:1-14, if you would just go there for a second. Matthew 22:1-14. Now you probably all know this parable, I’m sure. But I’m going to read it anyway, so just bear with me.

“And again Jesus spoke to them in parables, saying, ‘The kingdom of heaven may be compared to a king who gave a wedding feast for his son, and sent his servants to call those who were invited to the wedding feast, but they would not come. Again, he sent other servants, saying, ‘Tell those who were invited. See, I have prepared my dinner. My oxen and my fatted calves have been slaughtered, and everything is ready. Come to the wedding feast.’”

Who is He talking to? He’s talking to the Jews here, right? He’s talking to the Jews.

“But they paid no attention and went off, one to his farm and another to his business, while the rest seized his servants, treated them shamefully and killed them.

“The king was angry and he sent his troops, destroyed those murderers and burned their city.

“Then he said to his servants, ‘The wedding feast is ready, but those invited were not worthy. Go therefore to the main roads and invite to the wedding feast as many as you find.’

“And those servants went out into the roads and gathered all whom they found, both bad and good. So the wedding hall was filled with guests.

“Do Not Drift” Pt 2

“But when the king came in to look at the guests, he saw that there was a man who had no wedding garment. And he said to him, ‘Friend, how did you get in here without a wedding garment?’ And he was speechless.

“Then the king said to the attendants, ‘Bind him hand and foot and cast him into the outer darkness. In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. For many are called, but few are chosen.’”

Now this story, this parable illustrates a great deal more than we’re going to use it for. But here’s what I want you to understand. I want you to understand that the consequences of our text are spelled out in this.

I want you to notice this. What did they do? They paid no attention to the message. Those who were invited paid no attention. Depending on your translation, they made light of it. And that’s exactly the word that’s used here in our text when he says, *“Pay much more attention.”* They didn’t pay attention.

But then notice. They began to drift. But to where did they drift? Or to what did they drift? Notice. They began to drift to their businesses and to their farms, and to the things that were not bad. Have you ever noticed that?

And the point is that *drifting from Christ is still drifting.*

And now here’s the point. The point is where are these folks in the book of Hebrews going to drift? They are wanting to drift not back to their farms, not back to their businesses exactly, though that’s an implication. They are drifting back to Judaism. And because they’re drifting back to Judaism, the point that I want to summarize is that *to neglect Christ is to find the dire consequences of Sinai.* Do you understand that? Do you get that? Do you see that? If you don’t see that, let me know. Tell me. Yes, Don?

Don: We have here an interesting dilemma. We encounter it here, we encounter it in Hebrews 6 and in Hebrews 10. You said yourself that this epistle was written to believers. So we have these warnings. Why do we have these warnings when the whole rest of Scripture seems to teach that true believers won’t drift, that they won’t neglect their salvation. *“He who endures to the end will be saved.”* The preservation and perseverance of the saints. Why are these warnings here if this is written to believers?

Participant: So they won’t drift.

Jeff: Yes. Let me read something to you that has been a help in my ministry for a long time in a pastoral way. This is under the Westminster Confession’s section on The Perseverance of the Saints.

“Nevertheless they may, through the temptations of Satan and of the world, the prevalency of corruption remaining in them, and the neglecting of the means of their preservation, fall into grievous sins, and for a time continue therein, whereby they incur God’s displeasure and grieve His Holy Spirit, come to be deprived in some measure of their graces and comforts, have their hearts hardened and their consciences wounded, hurt and scandalize others, and bring temporal judgments on themselves.”

And so they may drift. And the point that I would make is this. What’s the difference between an apostate and a partial apostate?

Participant: None.

Jeff: Repentance.

“Do Not Drift” Pt 2

Participant: A partial apostate?

Jeff: Yes. Let’s say that there’s a believer who is hardened in his conscience. He’s drifting. He’s in sin. He’s caught up in a pattern of sin, just like we see there. And we sit them down and we say, “Look. You’re at a key point in your life, brother. You are either going to hate us as a church because we’re going to have to continue in this course that you put us on, or you’re going to repent. Right now you are walking away from the faith. And you haven’t fully walked away, and we haven’t expelled you from it on the basis of your conduct. But you’re walking away”—partial apostasy, right?

What’s the difference between those? It’s repentance, right? If the person who is outside the church repents and comes back in, and the person who is at the midpoint turns around and walks back in, that repentance makes all the difference.

But the point is that even the person who is saved by grace can still give the appearance of drifting very hard away from Christ for a time. If they belong to Christ, He will eventually bring them back and retrieve them, and they won’t be finally lost.

But look. If you’re in that state of drifting, you lose that sense of being kept by the Lord, right? You lose it. And so the only way that you regain it is by repentance. Yes?

Participant: And the only way you repent is if somebody gives you a warning.

Jeff: Yes, you need that warning. That’s right. Okay? Yes?

Participant: The only way you repent is if somebody gives you a warning and if the Spirit convicts them. The Spirit has to be working in that warning.

Second Participant: Oh, absolutely.

First Participant: Otherwise, you’ll treat the warning with contempt and mockery.

Jeff: Right.

Participant: You know, I’ve gotten beyond that point.

Jeff: Yes.

Participant: I’m thinking about the word *apostate*—*apostasis*, the Greek word. *Stasis* is *to stay*, and *apo* is *down from*. So basically, when you’re a Christian, you stand up for Jesus. And when you’re an apostate, you stand down from Him. You no longer stand proclaiming the faith. You’re sitting down and you’re no longer doing it. So that’s just to let you know that I know some Greek. (*Laughter*)

Participant: Show-off!

Participant: There’s a difference between a backslider and an apostate. So you make that distinction. But you can’t tell which you are until the warning is given, and then people make a response.

Jeff: That’s right. A backslider looks like a guy who is sliding into apostasy, who is standing down from his profession of faith. And he needs to be warned and the Spirit needs to drive him to Christ. Yes?

Participant: I don’t know if Ted was getting to this point, but—

Ted: I was. (*Laughter*)

Participant: In Acts it says that repentance is a gift from God.

Jeff: That’s right. 11:5, right?

“Do Not Drift” Pt 2

Transcriber’s Note: Acts 11:15. “When they heard these things they fell silent. And they glorified God, saying, ‘Then to the Gentiles also God has granted repentance that leads to life.’”

Participant: I don’t think it’s only talking about the repentance that we need when we first become Christians. That’s saving repentance. It’s also—

Jeff: That’s because you’re a monergist through and through. (*Laughter*)

Participant: Yes, absolutely. (*Laughter*)

Jeff: All right. So let’s think about the witnesses as we wrap up here. To witness is to be a martyr, right? It’s to give testimony to something. And the question is witness to what?

And the answer is *it*. What’s the *it* in the text? Well, it’s the word that’s spoken of by the Lord.

Now I want you to think about this for a minute. There’s another rendering. And Philip Edgecombe Hughes, who has a wonderful commentary on the book of Hebrews, I might add,—a wonderful, rich commentary. Philip Edgecombe Hughes writes, “*It was first spoken of by God through the Lord. What was? This message, this message of great salvation. But catch the difference. It was first spoken by God through the Lord.*”

In other words, what he does is that he says how the Greek is actually to be rendered. In our English translations we often miss the mediatorial aspect of Christ. But when we compare it with the text that we just looked at, we see that that’s exactly what the Preacher is doing. It was first spoken by God through the Lord. And the message of the Sinaiatic covenant was spoken by God through the angels.

And so what he’s doing is that he is helping us see through the Greek that God has a mediator for the Sinaiatic covenant and that was the angels. And He has a Mediator for the new, and it’s His Son Jesus Christ.

And the point is this. Again, remember! You neglect the one salvation for the other, and you’re going to face the dire consequences of the other.

But “*those who heard confirmed it.*” So in other words, it’s the way we have it translated. We have it translated like this. It was “*spoken by the Lord and confirmed by the Lord through miracles.*” And in between, in our English translations, “*those who heard confirmed it.*” And Edgecombe Hughes is saying that really, when you look at the Greek, they belong together. And then the idea that those who heard what was spoken by God through the Lord Jesus Christ was confirmed.

Now the interesting thing is that when you look at this text closely, one of the things that you ask yourself is this. Who heard? Who heard it? And notice that the Preacher says that “*it was attested to us.*” It was confirmed to us.

In other words, he didn’t hear it like Paul heard it on the Damascus road from the Lord, “*like one abnormally born,*” right? He didn’t hear it like that. The Preacher in this text seems to be a guy who heard it through the preaching of the Word. And it was confirmed in him, attested to him. And so the idea is that it’s from the Lord, in the preaching.

(*Unclear*) We say that the point of the Preacher to the Hebrews—and here’s why I think he makes that point—he says, Be where Jesus is proclaimed. You know, you’ve got

“Do Not Drift” Pt 2

this whole bolus of Christology. Be where this Jesus is, right? And that’s why. Because this is the word spoken of through the Lord. And it’s this great salvation that saves us from the dire consequences of the Mosaic covenant. And that’s the drift that you’re feeling. Don’t do it. Don’t drift. Go ahead.

Participant: One of the things that we take for granted as believers is the fact that it says that God was also testifying with them. When Jesus was baptized, heaven opened and God spoke, and there were witnesses who heard that. On the Mount of Transfiguration God gave testimony. He gave witness. “*This is My Son. Listen to Him.*” I think we overlook that. People say, “I wish I could hear a voice from heaven.” Well, He did. He spoke from heaven and testified that of all the people in the world, this man is the One who represents Me.

Jeff: Yes, and I think that the reference there to the miracles and the signs that are attestations are contextualized in what you’re saying. They’re contextualized in the gospel itself, right?

So why do we wonder about the increased demonic activity in the Gospels? And then it seems to taper off, right?

Well we shouldn’t wonder about that, right? If the Son of Man is coming to earth to bring climax to the gospel message, we should expect Satan to oppose Him with all the forces He has, right? And we should also expect miracles and signs and wonders, not just at the point of the gospel, but we need to remember this.

I’m going to say something. And this may be a little more technical, but let me put it like this. If you’re more of a charismatic or Pentecostal believer, then I’ll apologize up front, because it’s easier to apologize up front, right? (*Laughter*) Okay. Anyway, one of the reasons why I think our Pentecostal brothers get it wrong is because they have two envelopes. And they put Pentecost in an envelope where it doesn’t belong.

What do I mean by that? Well, when you look at the historical unfolding of salvation, it’s called the *historia salutis*. You think about the work of Christ. You think about His birth, His life, His death, His burial, His resurrection, and then everybody stops. But it goes on to His ascension and His outpouring of the Spirit.

Participant: Amen.

Jeff: And so we put all of those cards in the *historia salutis*, the historical unfolding. So Pentecost, what we see in the book of Acts, is part of that work of Jesus Christ in the historical unfolding of the gospel.

We have a tendency to put it in an envelope of experience. And we say that this experience needs to persist all the way through every church age. And what I’m saying is no. That was part and parcel of the historical unfolding. It’s part and parcel of Him receiving gifts upon His ascension outpouring them, and there being this great hoopla. And we should not expect that to continue through every church age. That’s part of a particular aspect of Christ’s work, and not more.

I’m glad we’re out of time. (*Laughter*) You can obviously disagree next time, if you remember. (*Laughter*) No, really, are there any questions? Go ahead.

Participant: If you can pick that up next week, because I was just with a brother this week who is of that persuasion and loves the Lord.

“Do Not Drift” Pt 2

Jeff: Sure.

Participant: Two different camps. So how do we bring our camps together?

Jeff: Well, I think we bring our camps together by not majoring on those things. And, you know, part of the problem is that sometimes we will major on those things because we want to stamp them out of that group. And they will major on those things by telling us that we are really not Spirit-filled because we haven't done x, y or z. So there's a majoring on those things on both sides.

I personally think that a wonderful example of a man I don't fully agree with on things like ecclesiology and charismatic gifts is Martyn Lloyd-Jones. But I'll tell you what. Martyn Lloyd-Jones was a Reformed man who was a charismatic. And he wrote a book from the phrase in 1 Peter about joy—*Joy Unspeakable* I think it's called. And he pulls in a lot of Puritan literature to support his position. It's really kind of an exciting book to read, actually. You know, if I was going to be a charismatic, it would have been at the point of time that I finished that book. I was so excited when I finished.

But anyway, my point is that I think that's a guy where you find the two poles brought together in a nice harmony whether you agree with him or not. And he was the kind of guy who didn't make that a sticking point for anybody. So I think it can be done.

But when both groups kind of major on stamping the one out, or making the other submit to it as an experienced that must be had, we're never going to get by that, you know? Yes?

Participant: Let me just leave one thought.

Jeff: Yes, please.

Participant: It's of a different slant, because we've got to contemplate this. It seems to me, as you read the New Testament, that part of the normal expectation of a congregation's life is the preaching of the gospel, the celebrating of the sacraments, and signs and wonders accompanying. Now certainly I've known you. You believe that the preaching of the gospel is God in Christ a work in the Spirit now in power.

Jeff: Absolutely.

Participant: Therefore I don't see why you couldn't or shouldn't expect some signs and wonders.

Participant: Amen.

Jeff: Yes. And I should say that I'm not a cessationist.

Participant: Oh, really?

Jeff: Yes. I'm not a cessationist. I am open, but cautious. *(Laughter)*

Participant: Peace, brother. *(Laughter)*

Second Participant: Can you explain cessationism, please?

Jeff: Yes. *Cessationism* means that after Pentecost God doesn't do any more of those signs and wonders and gifts, like speaking in tongues. And the *open but cautious* view says that I don't think that's the way God normally works, but His hands aren't tied. He can do what He wants.

Participant: I thought *cessationist* meant that you believe that South Carolina should withdraw from the Union. *(Laughter)* That's Texas.

Jeff: That's 3 Corinthians. *(Laughter)*

“Do Not Drift” Pt 2

All right, let's pray. Father in heaven, thank You for this day. We pray that You'll bless our time in it. And we ask, Lord, that You will magnify Yourself in our lives. We pray, Father, that Your hand would be upon us for good in all things. And we pray that Your kingdom would be extended through us, for we ask it in Christ's name. Amen.

Men: Amen. (*Applause*)