

**Introduction:**

- I have heard a number of people say, "I will be so glad to put this year behind me." or "I cant wait until this year is over." How does that work? How does changing a day on the calendar make the bad year go away? If 2020 has taught us anything it should be to stay closer to God, use common sense, and live prepared the best you know how.
- "When you're driving your car and listening to a radio station, you'll get the clearest signal when you're closest to the tower," says Christian author Kent Crockett. "It's easy to hear the station's music because you are near to the source. But if you're driving out of town and going away from the tower, the radio signal gets weaker and starts breaking up. When you stop hearing that station, you'll start picking up radio signals from other stations."
  - **Application:** That's what happens in the spiritual realm. When we are spiritually close to God, we are able to clearly hear Him. But if we start drifting away, or if we're deliberately running away from God, the signal gets weaker and it becomes harder to hear His voice. It's at that point we become susceptible to hearing voices that are contrary to God.
  - When we stop following, we stop hearing. Are you away from God? If you want to hear His voice again, turn around and start heading in His direction.
  - The church heard many contrary voices in 2020. One thing that can't be said is, "That I did not prepare you." As I look over my preaching calendar of 2020, I stand amazed at what God shared with us from His word. I expect the same in 2021!
- Let me share with us a couple of things this morning that I think are crucial for personal growth in 2021. I believe Hebrews 2-4 will be important to us this year.
- *"So we must listen very carefully to the truth we have heard, or we may drift away from it."* (Hebrews 2:1, NLT)

**I. We Must Listen To Truth**

- A. *"Therefore"* vs. 1 demands a response to what we just previously heard (Chapter 1). Chapter 1 of Hebrews is all about the Last and Greatest Message. Let me give you some highlights of what was just spoken and heard, in Hebrews chapter one:
1. Chapter 1 is all about Jesus! It is all about Jesus! "Did I say, It is all about Jesus?" In chapter one of Hebrews there are no commands for the church. We are not told to do a single thing. This whole chapter is a declaration and celebration of God's final and greatest Word to the world...Jesus Christ, the Son of God. He is the message and the embodiment of it. The point of chapter one is this: **something so magnificent and so amazing so awesome and so astonishing happened in the coming of the Son of God.**
  2. Here are ten things that Hebrews 1 says about the Son of God:
    - a) He is the heir of all things (v. 2)
    - b) He made the world (v. 2)
    - c) He is the radiance of God's glory (v.3)
    - d) He is the exact representation of God's nature/character (v. 3)
    - e) He upholds all things by the word (rhema) of his power (v. 3)
    - f) He made purification for sins (v. 3)

- g) He sat down at the right hand of God's majesty (v. 3)
  - h) He is greater than any angel (v. 4) because angels worship him (v. 6).
  - i) He is the mighty God (v. 8).
  - j) That's the message of chapter one: God has spoken with finality by His Son and His Son is Creator and Sustainer and Owner and Ruler and Redeemer of the world. There are no commands for us here! Only declaration and celebration of the greatness of Jesus, the final Word of God. Jesus the Greatest message ever given!
- B. "Therefore!" Becomes a most important exhortation and warning... *we must listen very carefully to the truth we have heard, or we may drift away from it.*" Heb 2:1 NLT
1. Listen! or Drift...Exhortation followed by warning. There are five warnings in the book of Hebrews. A warning: to pay attention, against unbelief, against falling away, against deserting Christian assembly, against refusing the Lord. All of them look like drifting.
  2. The Exhortation: This is the first thing that we are asked to do in the Book of Hebrews. It is a command and not a suggestion. It is a call to live in response to the Greatest Message ever given! What is that command? What is that exhortation?
    - a) We must "**listen very carefully.**" Listen - Gr. *prosecho* - to hold firmly to a particular belief. To hold firmly to, to attend to, to continue to believe.
    - b) The word does not just mean to listen, but to listen to very carefully, to pay attention to what you have heard so that it affects how you live. Ie. Dads instruction to stay clear of the corn rollers on the corn picker. "Listen! Stay clear of these rollers always! One moment of not paying attention can cost you your life!" I have been telling us all along that we would be running daily to this book if we actually believed it to be God's Word to us.
  3. The Warning: Beware of drifting! if you do not listen, you may drift away.
    - a) Drift- To flow by, slip away, to move aimlessly. What does it mean to drift? It means to neglect the message in our passage. It means to be moving without being aware of your movement or where you are going. The implication is that it is hugely dangerous! It is dangerous to no longer hear the voice of God. It affects your life, your eternity, the eternity of your family!
    - b) What would cause us to drift?
      - (1) Spiritual sleep/slumber - the 12 disciples were too weary to watch and pray with Jesus. To be spiritually asleep is to be unaware of what is happening spiritually with you and around you. Ie. Collisions happen when people fall asleep at the wheel.
      - (2) Distractions - you lose focus for a moment, you give your focus to something else for a moment. We live in a world with so many distractions, things that divert our attention (ability to listen). Ie. Military studies this all the time (diversion). Get your enemy looking over there and we will hit him here. Distractions divert your attention.
      - (3) Other currents that we are unaware of or that are at work and not taken into consideration. IE. Sebastian Inlet: Wow! That is a place to encounter powerful currents. Fear is a current, lust is a current, complacency is a current. Put a current and a distraction together and you have a making of a disaster.

- (4) Familiarity - causes us to not pay attention. We get so familiar we always expect it to be the same. I.e. Dads instruction to stay clear of the corn rollers on the corn picker. "Listen! Stay clear of these rollers always! One moment of not paying attention can cost you your life!"
- c) How can I know if I am drifting spiritually?
  - (1) It is easy! There is no urgency. No vigilance. No focused listening or considering or fixing the eyes on Jesus. And the result has not been a standing still, but a drifting away.
    - (a) My sense of wonder in God begins to wane.
    - (b) My intimacy with God has become ancient history.
    - (c) My love for the Word of God has become less and less.
    - (d) I am less and less aware of the downward pull of the world and the devil.
    - (e) I no longer do the basics of the faith with joy.
    - (f) I am no longer stirred by Christ and the cross.
- d) Why do we drift?
  - (1) We drift because of neglect. We neglect because we no longer consider something of value.
  - (2) We lose our first love. Our hearts slowly grow cold.
  - (3) Something else captures our attention.
  - (4) We do not remain focused. We let up. And soon follow our flesh.

## II. Consider The Price of Drifting...Our Faith

- A. We will need faith going into 2021 like never before! But if you are drifting your faith will be compromised, no longer strong, no longer functioning as it was designed to. That is the focus of Hebrews chapter 2-4. Learning from those who went before us.
- B. Learning from God's chosen people. *"These things happened to them as examples for us. They were written down to warn us who live at the end of the age."* (1 Corinthians 10:11, NLT)
- C. A compromised faith will result in our hearts turning away from God. *"So I was angry with them, and I said, 'Their hearts always turn away from me. They refuse to do what I tell them.'"* (Hebrews 3:10, NLT)
  - 1. *"Be careful then, dear brothers and sisters. **Make sure** that your own hearts are not evil and unbelieving, turning you away from the living God."* (Hebrews 3:12, NLT)
  - 2. *"So we see that because of their unbelief they were not able to enter his rest."* (Hebrews 3:19, NLT)
  - 3. Many could not find rest in 2020 because of the unbelief in their own hearts. Faith is critical in the times we are entering.
- D. A compromised faith will rob your peace and keep you from entering into His rest. *"...God has prepared this rest—has been announced to us just as it was to them. But it did them no good because they didn't share the faith of those who listened to God. <sup>3</sup>For only we who believe can enter his rest."* (Heb 4:2-3 NLT) Some manuscripts read they didn't combine what they heard with faith.
- E. *"For the word of God is alive and powerful. It is sharper than the sharpest two-edged sword, cutting between soul and spirit, between joint and marrow. It exposes our innermost thoughts*

*and desires.*" (Hebrews 4:12, NLT) vs 16 let us come boldly to His throne room of grace and mercy.

### III. Preparing for 2021

- A. **Prepare** - Webster - to make ready beforehand for some purpose, use, or activity.
1. I believe, personally that 2021 will be more challenging than 2020.
  2. I believe that fear will be your greatest enemy in 2021.
  3. With those two things in mind, how will you enter into God's rest? How will you stay in the place of peace?
    - a) Stand your ground.
    - b) Work the Word
    - c) Dismantle fear.
- B. Prepare to anchor to Christ. *"This hope is a strong and trustworthy anchor for our souls. It leads us through the curtain into God's inner sanctuary."* (Hebrews 6:19, NLT)
- C. In the NT, prepare means to make ready and readiness:
1. Readiness is demanded of, yet gives the sinner opportunity to prepare for what they are being invited to...a relationship with God.
  2. Readiness gives the Christian life a distinctive dynamic character as expectation of the goal of salvation and openness to the possibilities of action determined by this goal.

### Conclusion:

- There are going to be things in 2021 that are going to be very challenging. Let me be blunt: they will cause fear to those whose hearts are not ready to respond in faith or who are not currently hanging on strongly.
- We need to prepare for 2021 like you would prepare for a hurricane.
- We are called to stand... spirit, soul and body.
  - Prepare in the spirit.
  - Prepare mentally.
  - Prepare in the natural.
- We need to live close to Him so that we can hear Him clearly.

*"Listen to this warning, Jerusalem, or I will turn from you in disgust. Listen, or I will turn you into a heap of ruins, a land where no one lives."* (Jeremiah 6:8, NLT)

*"Then if those who hear the alarm refuse to take action, it is their own fault if they die."* (Ezekiel 33:4, NLT)

*"They heard the alarm but ignored it, so the responsibility is theirs. If they had listened to the warning, they could have saved their lives."* (Ezekiel 33:5, NLT)

*"But if the watchman sees the enemy coming and doesn't sound the alarm to warn the people, he is responsible for their captivity. They will die in their sins, but I will hold the watchman responsible for their deaths."* (Ezekiel 33:6, NLT)