



HEBREW S
AN ANCHOR FOR THE SOUL

WEEKS 3 - 4

WEEK THREE

READ HEBREWS 2: 1 - 4

When I was 17, I went with my family on Spring break to Cancun, Mexico. Our resort was right on the beach, and every day my brother and I would run down the beach and dive headfirst into the waves hitting the shore.

One morning, my brother and I swam further out than we had ever been. When I glimpsed back, my stomach dropped; the chairs, cabanas, and people on the beach looked like ants! As we tried to swim back, we were continually tugged back in and under the ocean. The undercurrent was so strong, I was sure we were going to drown. We had lost our focus and drifted too far out. By sheer mercy, my hand touched a bit of rope separating two beaches, and we clung to the rope catching our breath. I learned that day the danger of drifting.

In verse 1, the author uses the same language of drifting and not paying attention to "such a great salvation." In my life, I have seen people make many horrible decisions, yet personal shipwreck does not happen instantaneously, but is a slow drift. The irony for us, is that they can trace their wrong steps by looking back at where they made a wrong turn and correct course. Like my bad day at the beach, I learned through pain that I shouldn't drift into the ocean too far, but always be aware of where I am in relation to the shore. In hindsight I could have used an anchor or something to let me know when I drifted too far away.

When it comes to a relationship with God, those who abandon the Christian faith do so over time, and rarely wake up one day and decide to abandon the faith. Whether it be unanswered doubts or questions, a bad church experience, hurt received from a fellow Christian, or simply the low points of life, it all compounds if unaddressed.

One commentator says this about the dangerous threat of drifting: "There are few people who, deliberately and in a moment, turn their backs on God; there are many who day by day drift further and further away from him. There are not many who in one moment of time commit some disastrous sin; there are many who almost imperceptibly involve themselves in some situation and suddenly awake to find that they have ruined life for themselves and broken someone else's heart."

We see that the author's emphasis to avoid drifting is by looking back to the author of the gospel message: God Himself. Hebrews refers to how the Law was given to us by God through angels, in which every disobedient action, will receive just retribution. The Law shows us our sins and condemns them justly. Yet it is used by God to point to the coming Messiah, our great Savior: the God-man, Jesus. He is our great anchor who fulfilled the Law, canceled our imperfect record, and gives us his perfect record. How can we neglect loving and obeying someone who did this for us?

God is so good to His people, that he not only gave us the Son of God, but he also gave the Apostles gifts for proclamation of the gospel. For the good of God's church, He gave gifts to the Apostles in order to show the Church the power of God. He appointed men like Paul, and Peter to do miracles. These would be the signs for people then and today, that Jesus came to offer such a great and better salvation compared to the Law; for there is no salvation in the Law as Romans 3:20 tells us.

Properly built ships are all equipped with the right tool to prevent drift: an anchor. An anchor enables the ship to stay put. We too have an anchor in Jesus, how do we focus on Jesus daily and consistently in our lives? By the ordinary, routine, and often mundane commands he gives the saints.

These include: church membership, gathering for worship, receiving the Lord's Supper, and joining a community group. Also, through the daily means of knowing Jesus, such as bible reading, prayer (both corporate and private), journaling, and confession of sin both to God and believer.

The best way we can fuel our love for Christ and avoid wandering from Him is to starve ourselves of the things that tempt us to sin, and feed those that create burning affections for Christ. If God is the anchor of our hearts, he will keep us near, keep us from drifting, and preserve us til the end. As my favorite hymn states, "He'll not let my soul be lost; His promises shall last; Bought by Him at such a cost, He will hold me fast." How can we neglect such a great salvation?

EXAMINE AND JOURNAL:

Use a journal to write down all of your observations of the text. Don't be afraid to ask hard questions. Also, ask basic questions such as Who? What? When? Where? Why?

1. Would you say that Christ is the anchor of your life? Why or why not?
2. What are practical ways to anchor yourself in the love of God?
3. How does God being your anchor comfort you?

APPLY:

Use the SPECK method to make an application from these verses.

Sin to Avoid

Promise to cling to

Example to follow

Command to obey

Knowledge to gain

WEEK FOUR

READ HEBREWS 2:5-13

We are obsessed with success in America. This is especially seen when observing major companies and their founders. Think of Apple, a company founded in a Palo Alto garage in the '80s. Now Steve Jobs is a household name, everyone knows what an I-Phone is and Apple logos are ubiquitous. Consider McDonald's, which at one time was just a small burger joint, but now epitomizes fast food. Recently, the man who put McDonald's in every little town, Ray Kroc got his own movie biopic. We love stories of small companies reaching high and attaining their lofty goals, or of people who come from nothing but become somebody. Starting small, but making it big, is the American dream.

In verse 9 of this passage says, "*But we see him who for a little while was made lower than the angels, namely Jesus, crowned with glory and honor because of the suffering of death, so that by the grace of God he might taste death for everyone.*" This is the reverse of the American dream; going from big to utterly small. Instead of striving for "upward mobility", this is, as Henri Nouwen calls it, "downward mobility". Jesus Christ, crowned in glory and co-eternal with God the Father, became a man and "tasted death for everyone". Everything exists for him: our marriages, work, children, and homes; our joys, sufferings, and passions; our loves, hopes, disappointments, and dreams. Nature in all its splendor exists to tell of the glory of God. From the vast mountains of Montana, to the lions of Africa, all exist to glorify God. As the Psalmist says, "*The heavens declare the glory of God, and the sky above proclaims his handiwork*" (Ps.19:1).

All of this begs the question, what went wrong with us? Author Andy Crouch says the two questions humans most often ask themselves are, "what was I created to be? And why am I so far from that?" The answer lies in our fallen condition. The Apostle Paul in Romans 5:12 puts it this way: "*...as sin came into the world through one man, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men because all sinned.*" We were created to have dominion and subdue creation, but due to the fall we are now being subdued by it, a reversal of the created order. This is why the Psalmist asks, "*what is man that you are mindful of him, or the son of man, that you care for him?*" As G.K. Chesterton says, "whatever else is or is not true, this one thing is certain: we are not what we were meant to be."

So, where is our answer? It is the radical message of the Gospel that He who is Big, became small; small for those whom He loves. By suffering on the cross, he "brought many sons to glory." As one commentator says, "He died to rid us of our frustration and our bondage and our weakness and to give us the dominion we ought to have. He died to re-create us until we become what we were originally created to be."

In Greek thinking, prevalent during biblical times, the gods were seen as detached from material life. Greeks believed that matter was evil and the spiritual world was good. The gods were apathetic, cruel, and disinterested in human affairs, and salvation meant escaping the material world. In contrast, Christianity understands that salvation is through *attachment* rather than detachment. Christ identifies with our pain, suffering, and hardships. One commentator beautifully shows Christ's identification with Christians:

It is almost impossible to understand another person's sorrows and sufferings unless we have been through them. A person without a trace of nerves has no conception of the tortures of nervousness. A person who is perfectly physically fit has no conception of the weariness of the person who is easily tired or the suffering of the person who is never free from pain. A person who learns easily often cannot understand why someone who is slow finds things so difficult. A person who has never known sorrow cannot understand the pain at the heart of the person into whose life grief has come. A person who has never loved can never understand either the sudden glory or the aching loneliness in the lover's heart. Before we can have sympathy, we must go through the same things at the other person has gone through—and that is precisely what Jesus did.

In our economy, you receive a crown once you've accomplished something great in the eyes of people. Greatness is to go from small to big by achievement. But in God's economy, Jesus received a crown by doing the exact opposite, through suffering and by becoming small. The beautiful promise of sanctification is our hope, if we walk with Jesus, we will be made like him. Through Christ's life and suffering, we can become what we were intended to be.

Lastly, in Christ - the founder of the Church - we see him turn the world's paradigm of glory upside down. The American dream is going from small to big; only one founder changed the world by doing the opposite. The Apostle Paul shows how in Philippians 2:6-8, "who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross."

EXAMINE AND JOURNAL:

Use a journal to write down all of your observations of the text. Don't be afraid to ask hard questions. Also, ask basic questions such as Who? What? When? Where? Why?

1. In your life, how does Jesus going from big to small challenge you?
2. How does it comfort and encourage you?
3. We that Christ identifies with our pain and struggles, how does that comfort you today?

APPLY:

Use the SPECK method to make an application from these verses.

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