

“There’s No Excuse!”

Hebrews 2:1-4

June 3, 2018

INTRO: Let me ask you a few questions as we begin...

- What do you think God meant when He said:
 - “It is finished!”
 - “Follow Me!
 - “As the Father has sent Me...”
 - “Put on all My armor...”
 - “Love the Lord your God with ALL your heart... & your neighbor...”
 - “ALL authority on heaven & earth... “
- How important is it that we’ve heard Him?
- How important is it that we obey vs. drift away?

T/S: Today’s text (Hebrews 2:1-4) answers those questions, while exhorting us with a warning... BUT... watch how we get SO much more than a warning...

BIG IDEA: God’s truth in love will either capture you by His grace or CONVICT you for His glory (with “convict” having two levels... Truth in love will either convict you spiritually - drawing you to repent & believe, OR “convict” you eternally into a very real hell.

T/S: Listen to how John MacArthur introduces today’s text

Hell is undoubtedly full of people who were never actively opposed to Jesus Christ, but who simply neglected the gospel. Such people are in view in these four verses. They know the truth and even believe the truth, in the sense that they acknowledge its truthfulness, its rightness. They are well aware of the good news of salvation provided in Jesus Christ, but they are not willing to commit their lives to Him. So, they drift past the call of God into eternal damnation. This tragedy makes these verses extremely important and urgent.

By the time the writer of Hebrews gets to 2:1 he is impassioned. He cares about the salvation of his hearers. He is not satisfied simply with setting out doctrine and then going on his way. He longs for his readers to respond positively to what he says. He not only wants Christ to be seen and exalted, but also to be accepted. A teacher may know a lot of truth, but if he does not have compassionate concern for how people react to this truth, he is not a worthy teacher. God's Word demands response, and a faithful teacher of the Word teaches for response. - MacArthur

TEXT: **HEBREWS 2:1-4**

For this reason, we must pay much closer attention to what we have heard, lest we drift away from it. For if the word spoken through angels proved unalterable, and every transgression and disobedience received a just recompense, how shall we escape if we neglect so great a salvation? After it was first spoken through the Lord, it was confirmed to us by those who heard, God also bearing witness with them, both by signs and wonders and by various miracles and by gifts of the Holy Spirit according to His own will.

PREVIEW:

- Truth & Love have been *DECLARED*
- Truth & Love have been *DISCIPLLED*
- Truth & Love have been *DEMONSTRATED*

T/S: *“America is the world’s first culture in jeopardy of amusing itself to death.”* - Neil Postman

v.1 = **WARNING!**

There is no such thing as standing still in the Christian life. - CCE

You do not need to be far off course to end up a very long way from where you initially intended to be.

The writer of Hebrews indicates that there is only one way to fight against the danger of spiritual drift: we must pay attention to and obey the Word of God. Orthodoxy and obedience are the oars we must use for fighting against the straying current of spiritual drift.

We avoid spiritual drift by dropping the anchor of our souls in the deep waters of the Word of God.

v.2 = **WAKE-UP Call**

If you broke the Old Testament law, that law broke you.
There was no out.

(Remember the seriousness of sin in Leviticus!)

God wanted to make sure that all false prophets and blasphemers were dealt with immediately in order to maintain the spiritual and moral purity of His people.

v.3-4 = **Wow!**
~ **Declared!**
~ **Disciplined!**
~ **Demonstrated!**

*For those in the truth-teaching Church...
There's NO excuse!*

MESSAGE:

I. God DECLARED truth & love to "DELIVER" us...

Right hearing is more a matter of the heart than a function of the ear. We must hear with our hearts.

Most people do not go headlong and intentionally into hell. They drift into it.

The picture is not of an ignorant sailor, or a wantonly rebellious sailor, but of a careless sailor.

Drifting is so quiet, so easy, but so damning.

All you need to do to go to hell is do nothing.

II. God DELIVED us so we'd BE DISCIPLED

The principle is this: *the more you know, the greater the punishment for not abiding by what you know.* (Hence my fear for those who drift/walk/run away!)

The hottest places in hell belong to those who have rejected the most light.

III. God DISCIPLED us so His truth & love would BE DEMONSTRATED

See the 5 ways God DEMONSTRATED...

After it was first declared through the Lord, it was confirmed to us by those who heard, God also bearing witness with them, both by signs and wonders and by various miracles and by gifts of the Holy Spirit according to His own will.

1. God declared His truth in love
 - This reminds me of Titus 2:15...

VIDEO: *“Titus for India”*

2. God’s ambassadors confirmed His truth in love

VIDEO: *“India Mission & Ministry”*

3. God also bore WITNESS
 - a. Signs & Wonders & various Miracles
 - b. Spiritual Gifts

*If you refuse to see God in his gifts, they will
turn out not to be gifts...*

but High-Court evidence of ingratitude.

- John Piper

- c. According to His will

VIDEO: *“BRIDGE Uganda – May 2018”*

Let’s PRAY!

For this reason we must pay much closer attention to what we have heard, lest we drift away from it. For if the word spoken through angels proved unalterable, and every transgression and disobedience received a just recompense, how shall we escape if we neglect so great a salvation? After it was at the first spoken through the Lord, it was confirmed to us by those who heard, God also bearing witness with them, both by signs and wonders and by various miracles and by gifts of the Holy Spirit according to His own will.

(2:1-4)

Hell is undoubtedly full of people who were never actively opposed to Jesus Christ, but who simply neglected the gospel. Such people are in view in these four verses. They know the truth and even believe the truth, in the sense that they acknowledge its truthfulness, its rightness. They are well aware of the good news of salvation provided in Jesus Christ, but they are not willing to commit their lives to Him. So, they drift past the call of God into eternal damnation. This tragedy makes these verses extremely important and urgent.

By the time the writer of Hebrews gets to 2:1 he is impassioned. He cares about the salvation of his hearers. He is not satisfied simply with setting out doctrine and then going on his way. He longs for his readers to respond positively to what he says. He not only wants Christ to be seen and exalted, but also to be accepted. A teacher may know a lot of truth, but if he does not have compassionate concern for how people react to this truth, he is not a worthy teacher. God's Word demands response, and a faithful teacher of the Word teaches for response.

- John MacArthur

Despite the rejection of His own people, their hardness of heart, and their history of persecuting God's messengers, Jesus nevertheless ached for their salvation. "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, who kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to her! How often I wanted to gather your children together, the way a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, and you were unwilling" (Matt. [23:37](#)).

In [Hebrews 13:22](#) the entire letter is referred to as a "word of exhortation." It therefore requires a response.

To whom is the warning directed? It cannot be to Christians. They can never be in danger of neglecting *salvation*—in the sense of not receiving it—since they already have it. They can neglect growth and discipleship, but they cannot neglect salvation. Nor can the warning be to those who have never heard the gospel, because they cannot neglect what they do not even know exists. The warning must therefore be directed to non-Christians, specifically Jews, who are intellectually convinced of the gospel but who fail to receive it for themselves.

But if the warning is to unbelievers, why does the writer speak of "we" and "us"?

Does he include himself among the intellectually convinced but uncommitted? Is the author saying that he himself is not a Christian? No. The "us" is the us of nationality or of all those who have heard the truth. The author's willingness to identify himself with his readers does not mean he is in the same spiritual condition as they are. He seems simply to be saying, "All of us who have heard the gospel ought to accept it."

Many today now challenge the standard itself... & attack the apostles!

They come to church and hear and hear and hear the Word of God. They know it is true and they know they need it, but they are not willing to commit themselves and personally accept Jesus Christ. They have all the facts (*but not the MIRACLE of saving FAITH*)

In my opinion, (based on the fact that behavior reveals belief), the eternally-consequential & tragic reality is that the overwhelming majority of people in the contemporary, cultural-church today fit this description.... They are in-church but not in-Christ. Moreover, many, as described in Titus 1:16, profess Him with their mouths, but by their actions, they deny Him. – JDP

We are given three great reasons to receive salvation: the character of Christ, the certainty of judgment, and the confirmation of God.

pararheō translates here as **drift away from** and can have several meanings. It can be used of something flowing or slipping past, as of a ring slipping off a finger. It can be used of something slipping down and getting caught in a difficult place. It is used of something which carelessly has been allowed to slip away.

*Most people do not go headlong and intentionally into hell.
They drift into it.*

The picture is not of an ignorant sailor, or a wantonly rebellious sailor, but of a careless sailor.

Drifting is so quiet, so easy, but so damning.

All you need to do to go to hell is do nothing.

Jesus' warning in Luke 9:44, "*Let these words sink into your ears,*"

If you broke the Old Testament law, that law broke you. There was no out.

Two words are used here for sin: *transgression* (*parabasis*) and *disobedience* (*parakoē*).
Transgression means to step across the line, as a willful act. It is an overt sin of commission—of intentionally doing something we know to be wrong. Disobedience, however, carries the idea of imperfect hearing, but not like that of a deaf man, who cannot help not hearing.
Disobedience deliberately shuts its ears to the commands, warnings, and invitations of God. It is a sin of neglect, of omission—doing nothing when we should do something. One is active sin, the other is passive, but both are willful, and both are serious.

Look at Leviticus 24:14-16.

Bring the one who has cursed outside the camp, and let all who heard him lay their hands on his head; then let all the congregation stone him. And you shall speak to the sons of Israel, saying, "If anyone curses his God, then he shall hear his sin. Moreover, the one who blasphemes the name of the Lord shall surely be put to death; all the congregation shall certainly stone him. The alien as well as the native, when he blasphemes the Name, shall be put to death."

That seems severe, but **God wanted to make sure that all false prophets and blasphemers were dealt with immediately in order to maintain the spiritual and moral purity of His people.**

Under the Old Covenant He punished severely those who were determined to live without Him and to defy Him. He removed them from among His people for the sake of those who were pure and holy and wanted to live for Him. His judgment on the people of Israel was severe because they knew better.

Punishment is always related to light. The more light we have, the more severe our punishment.

The principle is this: *the more you know, the greater the punishment for not abiding by what you know.* (Hence my fear for those who drift/walk/run away!)

The hottest places in hell belong to those who have rejected the most light.

([Luke 12:47](#)). The Lord is talking about judgment, and...

His point is simple:

the greater the light, the greater the accountability.

In the ocean, those who row in the wrong direction are not the only ones who fail to reach their desired destination; it is also those who do not row at all. There are only two options in the Christian life: we can either sail forward in fidelity or we can drift backward in faithlessness. There is no such thing as standing still in the Christian life. - CCE

You do not need to be far off course to end up a very long way from where you initially intended to be.

The writer of Hebrews indicates that there is only one way to fight against the danger of spiritual drift: we must pay attention to and obey the Word of God. Orthodoxy and obedience are the oars we must use for fighting against the straying current of spiritual drift.

The fight of sanctification is a fight against the tides of the world, the flesh, and the devil. Either we are listening to the Son and walking in his Word, or we are drifting away from biblical thinking and getting carried away by the cultural confusion of our day.

churches and individuals end up on the wrong side of the doctrinal equation by drifting a little at a time. Churches once orthodox in their theology slowly minimize and relax their theological convictions until they become unwilling to draw boundaries or speak clearly on issues essential to orthodox Christianity and the evangelical gospel.

“Hearing” the Word of God rightly is a spiritual hearing—one that involves believing, obeying, and submitting to what is heard. Right hearing is more a matter of the heart than a function of the ear. We must hear with our hearts.

We avoid spiritual drift by dropping the anchor of our souls in the deep waters of the Word of God.

“How will we escape if we neglect such a great salvation?” He has moved from the lesser (angels/old covenant) to the greater (Jesus/new covenant). If the old covenant that came from God and was delivered by mere angels demanded retribution for sin, how much more will God judge those who have spurned the gospel now delivered to us by his own Son!

Spiritual gifts are not an end to themselves to be used for our personal, private enjoyment. Spiritual gifts edify the church ([1 Cor 14:3-5](#); [Eph 4:11-12](#)) and testify that Jesus Christ is Lord.

*If you refuse to see God in his gifts, they will
turn out not to be gifts...
but High-Court evidence of ingratitude.*

- John Piper

Neil Postman - *“America is the world’s first culture in jeopardy of amusing itself to death.”*

Hebrews 2:1-4 (ESV)

¹ Therefore we must pay much closer attention to what we have heard, lest we drift away from it.

² For since the message declared by angels proved to be reliable, and every transgression or disobedience received a just retribution,

³ 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,

⁴ while God also bore witness

by signs

and

wonders

and

various miracles

and by gifts

of the Holy Spirit

distributed

according to his will.

The Tragedy of Neglecting Salvation ([Hebrews 2:1-4](#))

Hell is undoubtedly full of people who were never actively opposed to Jesus Christ, but who simply neglected the gospel. Such people are in view in these four verses. They know the truth and even believe the truth, in the sense that they acknowledge its truthfulness, its rightness. They are well aware of the good news of salvation provided in Jesus Christ, *but they are not willing to commit their lives to Him. So, they drift past the call of God into eternal damnation.* This tragedy makes these verses extremely important and urgent.

Right Teaching Demands Response

Into the middle of his treatise on angels, the writer interjects an invitation. He applies directly to the readers what he has been saying about Christ—that Christ is superior to everything and everyone, that He is the exalted One, that He alone can purge sin, that He is God, that He is the Creator, and that He is worthy of worship. He gives a personal invitation to his readers and hearers to respond to what they have learned. You might say that doctrine here breaks into invitation.

An effective teacher must do much more than simply present biblical facts. He must also warn, exhort, invite. By the time the writer of Hebrews gets to 2:1 he is impassioned. He cares about the salvation of his hearers. He is not satisfied simply with setting out doctrine and then going on his way. He longs for his readers to respond positively to what he says. He not only wants Christ to be seen and exalted, but also to be accepted. A teacher may know a lot of truth, but if he does not have compassionate concern for how people react to this truth, he is not a worthy teacher. God's Word demands response, and a faithful teacher of the Word teaches for response.

The apostle Paul was like this. Great theologian that he was, with a masterful grasp of philosophy and logic, he still was impassioned. In [Romans 9:1-3](#) (after eight powerful chapters explaining the gospel), Paul breaks into an outburst of concern: *"I am telling the truth in Christ, I am not lying, my conscience bearing me witness in the Holy Spirit, that I have great sorrow and unceasing grief in my heart. For I could wish that I myself were accursed, separated from Christ for the sake of my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh."*

Paul had a holy obsession that all people, especially his Jewish kinsmen, **come to Christ**. "Brethren, my heart's desire and my prayer to God for them is for their salvation" ([Rom. 10:1](#)). Here is [the character of a true teacher](#). He [is interested in more than just academics, more than just information and pedagogy](#). [He has a compassionate concern for how people respond to what they hear](#). *"For though I am free from all men, I have made myself a slave to all, that I might win the more. And to the Jews I became as a Jew, that I might win Jews; to those who are under the Law, as under the Law, though not being myself under the Law, that I might win those who are under the Law; to those who are without law, as without law, though not being without the law of God but under the law of Christ, that I might win those who are without law. To the weak I became weak, that I might win the weak; I have become all things to all men, that I may by all means save some. And I do all things for the sake of the gospel"* ([1 Cor. 9:19-23](#)).

Despite the rejection of His own people, their hardness of heart, and their history of persecuting God's messengers, Jesus nevertheless ached for their salvation. ["O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, who kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to her! How often I wanted to gather your children together, the way a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, and you were unwilling"](#) ([Matt. 23:37](#)). On another occasion he told His Jewish listeners, "You search the Scriptures, because you think that in them you have eternal life; and it is these that bear witness of Me; and you are unwilling to come to Me, that you may have life" ([John 5:39-40](#)). He had a compassionate concern that His hearers respond. Faithful teaching always demands a response.

[In Hebrews 13:22](#) the entire letter is referred to as a "word of exhortation." It therefore requires a response.

So as the writer's heart is warmed by his treatise on the superiority of Christ to angels, he inserts a moving invitation. As all good invitations, it includes both exhortation and warning—what to do and what happens if you do not do it.

The opening verses of [Hebrews 2](#) contain the first of five major warnings interspersed throughout the book—often, as here, in the middle of a discourse on one of the superiorities of Christ. It is as if the writer could only go so far without stopping to make an appeal:

"Now what are you going to do about this?" We can know all the truth there is to know about Jesus Christ and yet go to hell if we never make Him our own—by being made His own.

Warning to the Intellectually Convinced

How shall we escape if we neglect so great a salvation? After it was at the first spoken through the Lord, it was confirmed to us by those who heard. ([2:3](#))

To whom is the warning directed? It cannot be to Christians. They can never be in danger of neglecting *salvation*—in the sense of not receiving it—since they already have it. They can neglect growth and discipleship, but they cannot neglect salvation. Nor can the warning be to those who have never heard the gospel, because they cannot neglect what they do not even know exists. The warning must therefore be directed to non-Christians, specifically Jews, who are intellectually convinced of the gospel but who fail to receive it for themselves.

But if the warning is to unbelievers, why does the writer speak of "we" and "us"?

Does he include himself among the intellectually convinced but uncommitted? Is the author saying that he himself is not a Christian? No. The "us" is the us of nationality or of all those who have heard the truth. The author's willingness to identify himself with his readers does not mean he is in the same spiritual condition as they are. He seems simply to be saying, "All of us who have heard the gospel ought to accept it."

We have all met people who say, "Yes, I believe that Christ is the Savior and that I need Him, but I'm not ready to make that commitment yet."

Many today now challenge the standard itself... & attack the apostles!

Perhaps your husband, your wife, your brother, or a good friend is like that. **They come to church and hear and hear and hear the Word of God. They know it is true and they know they need it, but they are not willing to commit themselves and personally accept Jesus Christ. They have all the facts (but not the MIRACLE of saving FAITH)** but will not make a commitment.

They are like the man who believes a boat will hold him, but who will not get into it.

We believe this warning is to those who have heard the gospel, know the facts about Jesus Christ, know that He died for them, that He desires to forgive their sins, that He can give them new life, but are not willing to confess Him as Lord and Savior.

***This surely is the most tragic category
of people in existence.***

In my opinion, (based on the fact that behavior reveals belief), the missionally-consequential & tragic reality is that the overwhelming majority of people in the contemporary, cultural-church today fit this description.... They are in-church but not in-Christ. Moreover, many, as described in Titus 1:16, profess Him with their mouths, but by their actions, they deny Him. - JDP

I will never forget the lady who came into my office one day, informed me she was a prostitute, and said, "I need help; I'm desperate." After presenting the claims of Christ to her, I said, "Would you like to confess Jesus Christ as your Lord?" "Yes," she replied, "I've had it." She was at the bottom and knew it. So, she prayed a prayer and seemingly invited Christ into her life. I said, "Now, I want you to do something. Do you have your little book with you that has the names of all your contacts?" When she replied that she did, I suggested, "Let's take a match and burn it right now." Looking surprised, she responded, "What do you mean?" "Just what I said," I explained. "If you really met Jesus Christ as your Lord, if you really accepted His forgiveness and are going to live for Him, let's burn that book and celebrate your new birth right now and just praise the Lord." "But it's worth a lot of money, a lot of money," she objected. I said, "I am sure it is." Putting the book back in her purse and looking me in the eye, she said, "I don't want to burn my book. I guess I really don't want Jesus, do I?" And she left.

When she counted the cost, she realized she was not ready. I do not know what happened to that dear girl. My heart aches for her and I often think about her. I know that she knew the facts of the gospel and believed them; but she was not willing to make the sacrifice—even though what she refused to give up was worth nothing and what she could have had in Jesus Christ was everything.

There are many such people. They know the truth, they stand on the edge of the right decision, but they never make it. They just drift. And they are the ones to whom this passage in Hebrews is speaking.

The purpose of these four verses is to give such persons a powerful shove toward Jesus Christ.

The message, of course, is not restricted to Jewish nonbelievers. It is for anyone who is on the edge of decision for Christ, but who—because of self-will, sin, fear of persecution from his family and friends, or any other reason—says no to Christ and continues to neglect Him. A man is a fool, a fool beyond fools, an eternal tragedy, when he neglects to decide for Jesus Christ.

Three Reasons to Receive Christ

We are given three great reasons to receive salvation: the character of Christ, the certainty of judgment, and the confirmation of God.

1. The Character of Christ

For this reason we must pay much closer attention to what we have heard, lest we drift away from it. (2:1)

But what, you may ask, does that statement have to do with the character of Christ?

For this reason is equivalent to "therefore."

The first reason we should pay attention is given in chapter 1. It is Jesus Christ. He is called the Son and Heir of all things and the Creator of the world (1:2). He is the radiance of the glory of God, the exact representation of the divine nature, the sustainer of the universe, the purifier from sin, and the One who sits at the right hand of the Majesty on high (v. 3). He is worshiped and served by angels (vv. 4-7). He is anointed above all others, the Lord of creation, the unchangeable, everlasting God (vv. 8-12).

This is who Christ is.

Who could possibly reject Him? What kind of person could reject that kind of Christ—the Christ who came into the world as God incarnate, died on a cross to forgive our sins, paid our penalty, showed us divine love, and offers to introduce us to God and give us blessing and joy beyond imagination?

Jesus was God's voice. **Jesus was God in the world, and to reject Him is to reject God. To reject God is to reject the reason for our existence.** Because of the magnificence of the Person of Christ, a man is a fool to reject the salvation He offers. I do not understand how a person can know who Christ is, admit that the gospel is true, and still not commit his life to Him. What an incomprehensible mystery—and tragedy!

A look at some of the Greek words in [2:1](#) will help in understanding all four of the opening verses. The two key words are *prosechō* ("to give attention to") and *pararheō* ("to let slip"). With its modifier, *prosechō* is translated **pay much closer attention to** and **is emphatic.**

In other words, **on the basis of who Christ is, we must give careful attention to what we have heard about Him.**

We cannot hear these things and let them just slide through our minds. The word ***pararheō*** translates here as **drift away from** and can have several meanings. It can be used of something flowing or slipping past, as of a ring slipping off a finger. It can be used of something slipping down and getting caught in a difficult place. It is used of something which carelessly has been allowed to slip away.

But **both of these words also have nautical connotations.**

***Prosechō* means to moor a ship, to tie it up.**

***Pararheō* can be used of a ship that has been allowed to drift** past the harbor because a sailor forgot to attend to the steering or to properly chart the wind, tides, and current.

With these meanings in mind, **the verse could be translated:**

"Therefore, we must the more eagerly secure our lives to the things which we have been taught, lest the ship of life drift past the harbor of salvation. and be lost forever."

The illustration is both graphic and appropriate.

Most people do not go headlong and intentionally into hell. They drift into it.

Most people do not deliberately, in a moment, turn their backs on God or curse Him. Most people just slowly, almost imperceptibly slip past the harbor of salvation out to eternal destruction.

One writer, building on Shakespeare, put it this way, "There is a tide in the affairs of men which, taken at its ebb, leads to victory; neglected, the shores of time are strewn with the wreckage." How true.

The picture is not of an ignorant sailor, or a wantonly rebellious sailor, but of a careless sailor.

We had better take all the more heed, therefore, lest, unintentionally and unexpectedly, we one day find ourselves having forever drifted past the harbor of salvation.

We must be sure to understand that it is not the gospel that slips, as the King James seems to imply. That is not the meaning at all. The Greek and most modern translations make it clear that it is inattentive men who slip.

The Word will never drift from us. The danger is our drifting from it.

The harbor of salvation is absolutely secure. It is Jesus Christ, who never moves, never changes, and is always available to anyone who wants the protection and security of His righteousness.

By the time the letter to the Hebrews was written, countless Jews had heard the gospel, many directly from an apostle. Many, no doubt, were favorably impressed with the message, even intrigued by it. They heard it and perhaps pondered it. But most did not accept it.

Jesus' warning in [Luke 9:44](#), "*Let these words sink into your ears,*" can apply to the entire gospel.

It must get inside of us and make a change in our lives. It is not enough just to hear it. That is only the beginning, as we are reminded in Proverbs: "My son, give attention to my words; incline your ear to my sayings. Do not let them depart from your sight; keep them in the midst of your heart. For they are life to those who find them, and health to all their whole body" ([4:20-22](#)). **When you hear the Word of God, make it yours. Do not drift past it, for that is the most dangerous thing you can do.**

One cannot help wondering how many thousands of people in hell were close to salvation, how many thousands were close to being safely moored and anchored, only to drift away forever by their failure to receive what they heard and, in many cases, actually believed.

Drifting is so quiet, so easy, but so damning.

All you need to do to go to hell is do nothing.

It is extremely difficult to understand how anyone who has seen the character of Jesus Christ can ever reject Him. **As a Christian who lives everyday with Jesus Christ and experiences Him in my life, it is the greatest mystery to me that people do not rush to Him and everything He has for them.**

And so, the hearer is urged to respond because of the character of the incomparable Jesus Christ.

I often think of a story that I read about the English explorer, William Edward Parry, who took a crew to the Arctic Ocean. They wanted to go farther north to continue their chartings, so they calculated their location by the stars and started a

very difficult and treacherous march north. They walked hour upon hour, and finally, totally exhausted, they stopped. Taking their bearings again from the stars, they discovered that they were farther south than they had been when they started. They had been walking on an ice floe that was moving south faster than they were walking north. I wonder how many people think their good deeds, their merits, and their religiousness are taking them step by step to God, when in fact they are moving away from Him faster than they are supposedly walking toward Him. That is the tragedy of it. They awake one day to find, like Parry's crew, that all the time they have been moving in the wrong direction.

A person should never be satisfied with religious feelings, with coming to church, with being married to a Christian spouse, or with church activities. He will be drifting into hell unless he has made a personal commitment to the Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

2.The Certainty of Judgment

The second important reason for accepting Christ is the certainty of judgment for those who do not do so. [Verses 2 and 3](#) tell us of the inevitability of such punishment:

For if the word spoken through angels proved unalterable, and every transgression and disobedience received a just recompense, how shall we escape if we neglect so great a salvation? After it was at the first spoken through the Lord, it was confirmed to us by those who heard. ([2:2-3](#))

The Greek here for if assumes a fulfilled condition, not a possibility. The meaning in context is that the word spoken by angels was absolute and steadfast. The phrase could be translated, "For in view of the fact that the word spoken through angels..."

Why is Old Testament law, particularly the Ten Commandments, so connected with angels? Why does the writer emphasize that angels mediated the Old Covenant? He does so because the angels were instrumental in bringing the Ten Commandments, as is clear from several passages.

[Psalm 68:17](#) gives us a clue: "The chariots of God are myriads, thousands upon thousands; the Lord is among them as at Sinai, in holiness." At Sinai, where Moses

was given the law, the Lord was accompanied by a host of angels. Moses himself reports that "The Lord came from Sinai, and dawned on them from Seir; He shone forth from Mount Paran, and He came from the midst of ten thousand holy ones; at His right hand there was flashing lightning for them" ([Deut. 33:2](#)). We believe this indicates that angels were involved in bringing the law.

[Acts 7:38](#) mentions specifically that at least one angel was with Moses at Sinai: "This is the one who was in the congregation in the wilderness together with the angel who was speaking to him on Mount Sinai, and who was with our fathers." A few verses later we are told of "the law as ordained by angels" ([v. 53](#)).

Both the Old and New Testaments tell us that angels were at Sinai and were instrumental in bringing the law. And...

If you broke that law, that law broke you.

There was no out. If a person committed adultery, worshiped false gods, or blasphemed God, he was stoned. The law was inviolable; punishment for breaking it was sure and certain. As our text says, **every transgression and disobedience received a just recompense.**

The law punished every sin.

And that punishment was fair.

Two words are used here for sin: transgression (parabasis) and disobedience (parakoē).
Transgression means to step across the line, as a willful act. It is an overt sin of commission—of intentionally doing something we know to be wrong. Disobedience, however, carries the idea

of imperfect hearing, but not like that of a deaf man, who cannot help not hearing.

Disobedience deliberately shuts its ears to the commands, warnings, and invitations of God. It is a sin of neglect, of omission—doing nothing when we should do something. One is active sin, the other is passive, but both are willful, and both are serious.

Look at [Leviticus 24:14-16](#).

Bring the one who has cursed outside the camp, and let all who heard him lay their hands on his head; then let all the congregation stone him. And you shall speak to the sons of Israel, saying, "If anyone curses his God, then he shall hear his sin. Moreover, the one who blasphemes the name of the Lord shall surely be put to death; all the congregation shall certainly stone him. The alien as well as the native, when he blasphemes the Name, shall be put to death."

That seems severe, but **God wanted to make sure that all false prophets and blasphemers were dealt with immediately in order to maintain the spiritual and moral purity of His people.**

Now look at [Numbers 15:30-36](#).

"But the person who does anything defiantly, whether he is native or an alien, that one is blaspheming the Lord; and that person shall be cut off from among his people. Because he has despised the word of the Lord and has broken His commandment, that person shall be completely cut off; his guilt shall be on him." Now while the sons of Israel were in the wilderness, they found a man gathering wood on the sabbath day. And those who found him gathering wood brought him to Moses and Aaron, and to all the congregation; and they put him in custody because it had not been declared what should be done to him. Then the Lord said to Moses, "The man shall surely be put to death; all the congregation shall stone him with stones outside the camp."

You ask, "Put to death for picking up sticks on the Sabbath?" Yes, because he deliberately defied the law of God (cf. [James 2:10](#)).

The inviolable law that God set was strong. In [Jude 5](#) we read,

"Now I desire to remind you, though you know all things once for all, that the Lord, after saving a people out of the land of Egypt, subsequently destroyed those who did not believe." That is severe judgment on unbelievers.

Now notice the word just in [Heb. 2:2](#). God is often accused of being unjust when His punishment seems to us to be out of proportion to the wrong committed. But God, by His very nature, cannot be unjust.

Under the Old Covenant He punished severely those who were determined to live without Him and to defy Him. He removed them from among His people for the sake of those who were pure and holy and wanted to live for Him. His judgment on the people of Israel was severe because they knew better.

Punishment is always related to light. The more light we have, the more severe our punishment.

Jesus was clear about this.

Then He began to reproach the cities in which most of His miracles were done, because they did not repent. "Woe to you, Chorazin! Woe to you, Bethsaida! For if the miracles had occurred in Tyre and Sidon which occurred in you, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes. Nevertheless I say to you, it shall be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon in the day of judgment, than for you. And you, Capernaum, will not be exalted to heaven, will you? You shall descend to Hades; for if the miracles had occurred in Sodom which occurred in you, it would have remained to this day. Nevertheless I say to you that it shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom in the day of judgment, than for you." (Matt. 11:20-24)

The principle is this: the more you know, the greater the punishment for not abiding by what you know. (Hence my fear for those who drift/walk/run away!)

Tyre and Sidon were terribly guilty of unbelief and disobedience, and throughout Scripture Sodom and Gomorrah typify gross ungodliness and immorality. But none of these were as guilty as Capernaum or Bethsaida or Chorazin, because these three not only had the light of the Old Testament, but the very light of God's Messiah Himself.

Mark records a similar teaching of our Lord: "Beware of the scribes who like to walk around in long robes, and like respectful greetings in the market places, and chief seats in the synagogues, and places of honor at banquets, who devour widows' houses, and for appearance's sake offer long prayers; these will receive greater condemnation" ([12:38-40](#)).

Hell is a very real place. In the New Testament it is called a place of eternal fire ([Matt. 25:41](#)), where the worm does not die and the fire is not quenched ([Mark 9:43-44](#)). It is called a lake of fire which burns with brimstone ([Rev. 19:20](#)), a bottomless pit or abyss ([Rev. 9:11](#); [11:7](#); and others), outer darkness where there is continual weeping and gnashing of teeth ([Matt. 22:13](#)), and black darkness ([Jude 13](#)).

There are degrees of punishment in hell.

The hottest places belong to those who have rejected the most light.

Listen to Jesus' own words: *"And that slave who knew his master's will and did not get ready or act in accord with his will, shall receive many lashes, but the one who did not know it, and committed deeds worthy of a flogging, will receive but few. And from everyone who has been given much shall much be required; and to whom they entrusted much, of him they will ask all the more"* ([Luke 12:47](#)). The Lord is talking about judgment, and...

His point is simple:

the greater the light, the greater the accountability.

This truth is given as clearly as possible in the book we are now studying.

"Anyone who has set aside the Law of Moses dies without mercy....How much severer punishment do you think he will deserve who has trampled under foot the Son of God, and has regarded as unclean the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified, and has insulted the Spirit of grace?" ([Heb. 10:28-29](#)).

The person who knows and understands and believes the gospel, but drifts away from it, will experience the severest punishment there is.

So certainty of judgment should be a powerful motivation for accepting Christ.

3. The Confirmation of God

How shall we escape if we neglect so great a salvation? After it was at the first spoken through the Lord, it was confirmed to us by those who heard, God also bearing witness with them, both by signs and wonders and by various miracles and by gifts of the Holy Spirit according to His own will.
([2:3-4](#))

[God spoke, confirmed, then bore witness & His disciples repeated & exhorted...]

[God's greatest gift is saving grace = The Gospel...]

[God's 7 complimentary gifts come in the form of "supporting grace" =

1. God's gift of grace is present & implied although not "listed"
2. God's own spoken & recorded "Word"
 - a. God's own directly spoken (and written) Word
3. God's "Workers"
 - a. God's holy, saved, set-apart, sent-ones: His lips & finger tips!
 - b. God's worshipping Word-walkers & Word-workers. (vs. Word-talkers & Word-slackers!)
 - i. Great Commission texts!
 - ii. 2 Timothy 2:2ff
 - iii. Titus 2:1 & 2:15
4. God-given, disciple-sharing "Signs"
5. God-given, disciple-sharing "Wonders"
6. God-given, disciple-delivered "Various Miracles"
7. God-given, divinely-distributed, disciple-stewarding "Spiritual Gifts"

The third important reason for accepting Christ is the confirmation of God. The gospel was first given by Christ and was then confirmed by the apostles who had heard Him in person.

Even more importantly, however, it was confirmed by God Himself bearing witness.

When Jesus preached the gospel, He also did some things that made it even more believable. He said, *"Though you do not believe Me, believe the works, that you may know and understand that the Father is in Me, and I in the Father"* ([John 10:38](#)). When He claimed to be God and then did things that only God could do, He confirmed His divinity and, consequently, the truth of His message. On the Day of Pentecost Peter reminded his hearers that "Jesus the Nazarene [was] a man attested to you by God with miracles and wonders and signs" ([Acts 2:22](#)).

God gave similar confirming signs through the apostles, the first preachers of the gospel after Christ Himself. Many of their listeners no doubt said, "Why should we believe them? What proof do we have that their message is from God? There have always been a lot of false teachers around. How can we know that these are true?" So God bore His apostles witness by giving them the ability to do the same things that Jesus had done—signs, wonders, and miracles. And they did indeed perform astounding miracles. They raised the dead and healed many diseases and afflictions, and through these wonderful works God confirmed their ministry. To argue with an apostle about the gospel, therefore, was to argue with God. Their preaching and teaching was divine truth, substantiated by miraculous works.

As if this confirmation were not enough, God also gave the apostles special **gifts of the Holy Spirit according to His own will. According to His own will** seems to be inserted here partly to keep us from getting confused about the source of certain spiritual gifts (cf. [1 Cor. 12:11, 18, 28](#)).

Dr. Earl Radmacher, president of Western Conservative Baptist Seminary, once told me of his receiving a pamphlet in the mail that gave the steps necessary to get the Holy Spirit. First you were to say two phrases, "Praise the Lord" and "Hallelujah," three times faster than normal for a period of ten minutes. If you did that long enough you would lapse into a strange language and then get the Holy Spirit. That is as ridiculous as it is blasphemous. Gifts of the Spirit are according to His own will, not our efforts.

The primary point at the end of [verse 4](#) is that the apostles' gifts of the Holy Spirit were additional confirmation by God of their message and ministry. The gifts mentioned in [Hebrews 2:4](#) were miraculous gifts, not promised to believers in general. [Romans 12](#) and [1 Corinthians 12-14](#) representatively illustrate the non-miraculous spiritual gifts that were not limited to the apostles.

In [Acts 14:3](#) we read that Paul and Barnabas "spent a long time there [Iconium] speaking boldly with reliance upon the Lord, who was bearing witness to the word of His grace, granting that signs and wonders be done by their hands." Paul explained to the Roman Christians, "In the power of signs and wonders, in the power of the Spirit; so that from Jerusalem and round about as far as Illyricum I have fully preached the gospel of Christ" ([Rom. 15:19](#)). As an apostle he had the gift to do these miracles. In another letter he says, "The signs of a true apostle were performed among you with all perseverance, by signs and wonders and miracles" ([2 Cor. 12:12](#)). These special works, therefore, belonged exclusively to the apostolic age. They were not to last indefinitely, and they are not for today.

What were these gifts specifically? I believe there were four—healing, miracles, tongues, and interpretation of tongues. These gifts all ceased with the apostolic era. They have no need to exist today because there is no such need to confirm the gospel.

Even in New Testament times these confirmations were given solely for the benefit of unbelievers. "So then tongues are for a sign, not to those who believe, but to unbelievers" ([1 Cor. 14:22](#)). When God's written Word was completed, the other confirmations ceased. If someone comes along today and says, "Thus says the Lord," how do you know he is genuine? You check what he says against Scripture. Benjamin Warfield, the great Bible scholar, said, "These miraculous gifts were part of the credentials of the apostles as the authoritative agents of God in founding the church. Their function thus confirmed them distinctively in the apostolic church, and they necessarily passed away with it."

Thus, the three great reasons why a man should not neglect the gospel of salvation are: the character of Christ, the certainty of judgment, and the confirmation of God. God has attested to this gospel with signs, wonders, miracles, and special spiritual gifts; but now He attests to it in the miracle and authority of His written Word.

Let it not be said of you that you neglected Jesus Christ. History tells us that failure to shoot a rocket at the precise time of night caused the fall of Antwerp, and Holland's deliverance was delayed for twenty years. Only three hours neglect cost Napoleon the battle of Waterloo. **Neglect of Christ's salvation will cost you eternal blessing, eternal joy, and will bring you damning judgment and eternal punishment. Do not drift past God's grace.**

- MacArthur New Testament Commentary

Main Idea: If God exacted retribution against those who broke the old covenant, how much more should we heed the message of the new covenant delivered to us by the last Adam, Jesus Christ?

- I. **Heeding the Warning Signs of Spiritual Drift ([2:1-3a](#))**
 - A. The potential of spiritual drift
 - B. The danger of spiritual drift
- II. **Hearing the Witnesses of God ([2:3b-4](#))**

In today's world we are virtually drowning in an ocean of communication, media, and advertisement. At all times, somebody somewhere is trying to get our attention and deliver a message to us. Commercials, billboards, Twitter feeds, political campaign ads, television preachers, entertainment, conversations, and a thousand other things flood our eyes and ears. The key to navigating these treacherous waters is deciphering which messages are worthy of our focus.

This section of Hebrews urges us to pay the utmost attention to the most worthy of messages. In short, God has spoken. He has spoken in his Son. The most important message we can hear is the message that comes from the Father through the Son in the incarnation of the Lord Jesus Christ. That God has revealed himself and made a way for us to be saved through faith in the person and work of his Son is the most earth-shattering news we will ever hear. God has spoken to us in Jesus Christ. What could possibly be better news than that?

Heeding the Warning Signs of Spiritual Drift

Hebrews 2:1-3a

The Potential for Spiritual Drift

Words like “*therefore*” and “*for this reason*” help us come to the right conclusions when reading Scripture. **Hebrews 1** establishes the superiority of Christ over the angels in a breathtaking display of Old Testament biblical theology. But what was the point of this display? What should we take away from the author’s argument? The words *for this reason* direct us to the appropriate application. Given the superiority of Christ over the angels and his identity as the divine Son of God, Jesus both demands and deserves to be heard. In the Old Testament, messages from angels (cf. [Heb 2:2](#)) came with such authority and power that their recipients were often nearly frightened to death. How much more then should we lend our ears to God’s words now that “he has spoken to us by his Son” ([Heb 1:2](#))! We must “pay attention”—we must *listen*—to the God who speaks. How foolish to ignore him!

We do not listen to the Son so that we can puff ourselves up theologically. Doctrine is not for bludgeoning our brothers and sisters in Christ, nor is it for impressing our neighbors. We engage the Bible with the utmost seriousness in order to commune with God himself and thereby not “drift away.” The language of drifting conveys nautical imagery. *In the ocean, those who row in the wrong direction are not the only ones who fail to reach their desired destination; it is also those who do not row at all. There are only two options in the Christian life: we can either sail forward in fidelity or we can drift backward in faithlessness. There is no such thing as standing still in the Christian life.*

Spiritual drift is often imperceptible when it starts. But just like boats at sea, our souls can veer almost entirely off course in moments. **You do not need to be far off course to end up a very long way from where you initially intended to be.**

The writer of Hebrews indicates that there is only one way to fight against the danger of spiritual drift: we must pay attention to and obey the Word of God. Orthodoxy and obedience are the oars we must use for fighting against the straying current of spiritual drift.

Theology and practice will keep us sailing forward in fidelity. *The fight of sanctification is a fight against the tides of the world, the flesh, and the devil. Either we are listening to the Son and walking in his Word, or we are drifting away from biblical thinking and getting carried away by the cultural confusion of our day.*

Sadly, we witness theological and spiritual drift all too often. It is the story of many denominations, churches, families, and individuals. Even the most cursory knowledge of church history demonstrates that heresy and theological liberalism do not capsized denominations and churches with one revolutionary wave. Instead, **churches and individuals end up on the wrong side of the doctrinal equation by drifting a little at a time. Churches once orthodox in their theology slowly minimize and relax their theological convictions until they become unwilling to draw boundaries or speak clearly on issues essential to orthodox Christianity and the evangelical gospel.**

So how do we avoid the danger of spiritual drift? The answer is the beginning of [Hebrews 2:1](#). We must “pay attention all the more to what we have heard.” The importance of “hearing” God’s Word pervades Scripture. Paul reminds us, “Faith comes from what is heard, and what is heard comes through the message about Christ” ([Rom 10:17](#)). Of course, when Scripture talks about “hearing,” it means more than just audibly perceiving God’s Word. For example, concerning those who did not believe him, Jesus said, “looking they do not see, and hearing they do not listen or understand” ([Matt 13:13](#)).

“Hearing” the Word of God rightly is a spiritual hearing—one that involves believing, obeying, and submitting to what is heard. Right hearing is more a matter of the heart than a function of the ear. We must hear with our hearts.

Christian faithfulness has no secret formula. God sanctifies us through his Word ([John 17:17](#)). We avoid the danger of spiritual drift by reading, hearing, meditating on, and obeying Scripture. As B. B. Warfield said, “When Scripture speaks, God speaks” (*Inspiration and Authority of the Bible*, 119).

We avoid spiritual drift by dropping the anchor of our souls in the deep waters of the Word of God.

The Danger of Spiritual Drift

Verse 2 further explains this point (notice the connecting word “for,” which provides the grounds of the author’s argument). Verses 2-3 confuse many readers because the passage is comprised of is quite a long sentence and is a little complicated. Therefore, we will look at each phrase individually so that we can understand the sense of the whole verse.

What is the “message spoken through angels”? A quick survey of the Old Testament reveals that angels delivered many messages on behalf of Yahweh and that each of these messages was “legally binding” and reliable. The New Testament also records several angelic messages in the gospels, such as the announcement of Christ’s birth in [Luke 2:10-11](#), or the announcement to Cornelius in [Acts 10:1-8](#). However, as the following phrase makes clear, the message mentioned in [Hebrews 2:2](#) is probably referring to the Mosaic covenant that the Bible indicates was delivered “through angels” ([Acts 7:53](#); cf. [Deut 33:2](#); [Gal 3:19](#)).

The next phrase is, in a sense, a summary of the old covenant as delivered through angels: every sin justly deserves punishment. That’s the logic of Torah. [Deuteronomy 30:19](#) summarizes this principle:

I call heaven and earth as witnesses against you today that I have set before you life and death, blessing and curse. Choose life so that you and your descendants may live.

The message is simple: You obey, you live; you disobey, you die. Under the old covenant, every transgression of the law demanded a just penalty.

The point of the author's argument is now a little more obvious when he writes, **“How will we escape if we neglect such a great salvation?” He has moved from the lesser (angels/old covenant) to the greater (Jesus/new covenant). If the old covenant that came from God and was delivered by mere angels demanded retribution for sin, how much more will God judge those who have spurned the gospel now delivered to us by his own Son!**

This judgment is explicitly portrayed in [Revelation 19](#) as Christ returns to ***“trample the winepress of the fierce anger of God, the Almighty”*** ([Rev 19:15](#)).

The danger of spiritual drift is not only that we might miss out on a spiritually flourishing life; the true danger of spiritual drift is that we abandon the gospel itself and find ourselves under the judgment of God.

The gospel is good news. The good news is only good, though, when it is accepted in place of the bad news. The bad news is we are truly deserving of hell for our transgression of God's righteous requirement. The really bad news is we will be even more accountable to God if we reject Christ. The seriousness of the gospel cannot be overstated. The gospel is good news for those who repent of their sin and trust in Christ. It is terrible news for those who do not.

Hearing the Witnesses of God

Hebrews 2:3b-4

[Hebrews 2:3-4](#) further shows how Christ's superiority over angels relates to the danger of spiritual drift. Again, the contrast is clear: failure to heed the reliable message brought by angels brings retribution and death. How much more guilty, then, are those who reject the "great salvation" declared by the incarnate Lord himself?

This new stage in redemptive history brings great privileges, but also great responsibilities.

The author indicates that the message of the new covenant inaugurated by Christ (this "great salvation") is superior to the message delivered by angels in at least four ways.

First, it was "spoken of by the Lord." Once again, the author leans heavily on his previous declaration that God has now spoken to us "by his Son" ([Heb 1:2](#)). These words are essential for understanding the logic of the theology of Hebrews.

Second, this message was "confirmed to us by those who heard him." Though we may not often think of it, the New Testament consistently teaches the profound theological importance of the testimony of the apostles to the person and work of Jesus Christ. After all, Christ set apart the apostles and commissioned them to function as the foundation of the church ([Eph 2:20](#)). We do not believe myths and legends about Jesus. **The message of the gospel has come down to us from the credible eyewitness testimony of the apostles.**

Third, God himself "testified" to the veracity of the gospel "by signs and wonders" and "various miracles." Many Christians, while rightly affirming the historicity of God's miraculous works, misunderstand their purpose. The author of Hebrews reminds us that miracles do not exist for their own sake. They do not ultimately point to themselves. Instead, miracles attest and validate God's major works in redemptive history. In the New Testament, miracles attest and confirm the truth about the identity and work of Christ.

Finally, the "gifts from the Holy Spirit" attest to the truthfulness of the gospel and its superiority over the message delivered by angels.

Again, the author of Hebrews helps us strip away our misconceptions about why spiritual gifts exist. **Spiritual gifts are not an end to themselves to be used for our personal, private enjoyment. Spiritual gifts edify the church (1 Cor 14:3-5; Eph 4:11-12) and testify that Jesus Christ is Lord.**

As Paul explains in [Ephesians 4:8](#), Christ has ascended on high, and now, with all authority in heaven, showers gifts on his church. Gifts within the church, therefore, bear witness to Jesus Christ as the resurrected Lord and to the superiority of the new covenant over the old.

- Christ-Centered Exposition Commentary

THREE Types of DRIFTERS: Commit & Dismiss vs. Commit & Admit vs. Commit & Repent

QUOTE: (warning “by gifts” BUT also... “about” gifts!)

If you refuse to see God in his gifts, they will turn out not to be gifts but High Court evidence of ingratitude. When we presume upon them and do not cherish God’s grace in them, “Because of your hard and impenitent heart you are storing up wrath for yourself (Romans 2:5).

Now we see that every experience in life is designed to magnify the cross of Christ.

Apart from the cross, there is only judgment—patience and mercy for a season, but then, if spurned, all that mercy only serves to intensify judgment.

- John Piper

There is a war going on in the world between Christ and Satan, truth and falsehood, belief and unbelief. There are weapons to be funded and used, these weapons are the Gospel and prayer and self-sacrificing love (2 Corinthians 10:3-5). The stakes of this conflict are eternal and infinite: heaven or hell (Matthew 25:46).

I need to hear this message again and again, because I drift into a peacetime mind-set. I am wired by nature to love the same toys that the world loves, I start to fit in. Before you know it, I am calling luxuries “needs” and using my money the same way unbelievers do. I begin to forget the war. It is a terrible sickness. And I thank God for those who have forced me again and again toward a wartime mind-set.

We are at war. Both pleasure and pain are laced with poison, ready to kill us with the diseases of pride or despair.

- Piper (“Don’t Waste Your Life”)

Neil Postman - *“America is the world’s first culture in jeopardy of amusing itself to death.”*

Biographies are a great antidote to cultural myopia and chronological snobbery. We have become almost incapable of handling any great truth reverently and deeply.

It is one of the defining marks of Our Time that God is now weightless. He has become unimportant. He rests upon the world so inconsequentially as not to be noticeable. Those who assure the pollsters of their belief in God’s existence may nonetheless consider him less interesting than television, his commands less authoritative than their appetites for affluence and influence, and his truth less compelling than the advertiser’s sweet fog of flattery and lies. That is weightlessness. It is a condition we have assigned him after having nudged him out to the periphery of our secularized lives....

ILLUSTRATION from WWII:

The Marines fought in World War II for forty-three months. Yet in one month on Iwo Jima, one third of their total deaths occurred. They left behind the Pacific’s largest cemeteries: nearly 6,800 graves.

The message someone had chiseled outside the cemetery:

***When you go home
Tell them of us and say
For your tomorrow
We gave our today***