



The Cost of Abandoning Christ

Last week we explored chapter 1 of Hebrews – this was a declaration and celebration of God’s final word to the world – Jesus Christ, the Son of God.

Do any of you remember what the challenge was for you this week, from last Sunday – introducing God into a conversation?

If you can’t remember or forgot, well today’s sermon may change that because in Chapter 2 of Hebrews we are given a command. This is the first command in this book. Having heard our scripture read – can anyone identify what it is?

Listen! So the first command in this book is to give heed to the Word of God in His Son. In other words, God has spoken by His Son, so listen, listen very carefully.

How does your listening to Jesus compare to your listening to other things?

When we want to listen to someone or something we usually make provisions for listening – making sure we have the items required, like CD’s for music, radio or TV to listen to the news or a favourite program and turning off background noise so we can listen without distraction. On and on it goes. We all want to listen to something and make plans for our listening so we are not distracted.

The author of Hebrews called his readers to pay attention to the truth they had heard so that they wouldn't drift away into false teachings.

We need to pay attention so we don't drift into destruction.

Consider this word "drifting." It means float by. As a child did you ever put a leaf into a river or creek and watch it as it drifted downstream? Or even have races to see whose leaf was fastest. Sometimes it would drift out of sight, carried along by the current, aimlessly.

The leaf is just floating along with the water current - it takes no life and no motion to float by. The leaf doesn't have to pay attention to anything – it just floats by.

Hebrews says that if we do not vigilantly pay closer attention to the word of God, we will float by — we will drift away from God's word. We all know people that this has happened to; maybe you are in that position today. You think there is no urgency required; no vigilance needed; no focused listening or considering or fixing your eyes on Jesus. And the result has not been a standing still, but a drifting away.

Today is the time of decision, because God's call always requires a response and carries a time limit.

That is the point here: there is no standing still. The life of this world is not a lake. It is a river. And it is flowing downward to destruction. If you do not listen earnestly to Jesus and consider Him daily and fix your eyes on Him hourly, then you will not stand still; you will go backward. You will float by. Drifting is a deadly thing in the Christian life. Drifting is infinitely dangerous. If we neglect this great salvation, and drift into the love of other things, then we will not escape. We will perish.

Hebrews tells us that the early believers were in danger of falling away from following Jesus. They had heard the words of Jesus but those words had not sunk in. The readers in Hebrews were 2nd generation believers – they had not seen Christ in the flesh. Just like us, these believers and ourselves must base our belief on the eyewitness accounts recorded in the Bible. The eyewitnesses had heard Jesus speak and then had passed on His words. They confirmed what they had seen – signs and wonders and miracles and gifts of the Holy Spirit.

You may have been raised in a believing family or church yet still be at risk from the same danger today. You hear the words and more or less agree, but just mentally agreeing to Christ's leadership is insufficient to be Christ's disciple. We must not surrender to a casual belief – that bends back and forth depending on the situation and circumstances – like a tree waving in the wind.

So are you listening to God's word to you through His Son?

Are you listening to Him? Are you making provisions for Him? Are you turning off background noise and distractions to listen to God's Word? Do your books, music and programs reveal you are listening and devoted to God?

When you are confused by present events and anxious about the future, remember Jesus' true position and authority. He is Lord of all and one day He will rule on earth as He does now in heaven. This truth can give stability to our decisions day by day.

God's grace to us led Christ to His death. Jesus did not come into the world to gain status or political power, but to suffer and die so that we

could have eternal life. Jesus took a lower position than the angels when He chose to come to earth in human form. He came to break the power of death and to taste death for everyone. Jesus makes us holy through His sacrifice – He now calls us brothers and sisters.

It is sad to say, that many today seem to be Spiritually anaemic in contrast to the early church. The early church understood something that we need to learn afresh – God’s supernatural power is available to us – the living God speaks and acts and through His power, His Spirit and His Word is able to make all things new in a way that transcends human categories. To live in the 21st century it is critical that we embrace the power of the Spirit who resides in us.

This means to dispose of some of our behaviours – not giving into pride when someone disagrees or challenges you; not wanting to always be right; not acting and reacting in a dominating way and not always wanting to get something. As a true servant of Christ we must fill ourselves with generosity, compassion, a giving attitude, humility and serving.

I am not saying that we always present a servant attitude because we are not perfect. And Jesus understands our struggles because He faced them as a human being. We can trust Christ to help us survive suffering and overcome temptation. When we face trials, we need to go to Jesus for strength and patience. He understands our needs and is able to help us. When we belong to God, we need not fear death because we know that death is only the doorway into eternal life.

What Hebrews is saying is that in the Christian life we must go on listening to God's word in Jesus. And we must do this with very close attention. We cannot treat this casually.

Consider Jesus!. Listen to Him. Consider Him. Focus on Him. Stay close to Him and keep Him in your thoughts. Learn more and more from Him every day — what He is like and what He says and the way He sees the world. Fix our eyes upon Jesus.

We cannot act as if we already know all we need to know because the Biblical reality embraces both the seen and the unseen. What is seen is only part of the world but the unseen reality is the supernatural presence of God.

“Neglecters don't escape. They fall under the wrath of God. Don't play games with your faith.”

The Christian life is first and foremost a life of contemplation — listening to Jesus, considering Jesus, fixing the eyes of the heart on Jesus. Everything else in the Christian life grows out of this. Without this, the Christian life is simply unliveable.

Are you drifting this morning? The challenge is to remain steadfast and full of hope, knowing God is faithful and to spur each other on toward love and good deeds.

There are four ways to Abide in Christ.

Remember – reminding yourself throughout the day and in every situation that you are not alone – that Jesus' presence through the Holy Spirit dwells within you.

Rejoice – Thank God that His presence is with you and that you have access to God's power and wisdom and love by your faith in Jesus.

Request – Ask for God's help throughout the day. Ask to be filled with the love of Jesus through the power of the Holy Spirit.

Renew – Each day renew your commitment to keep in step with the Spirit by opposing any inclination to fall back into just relying on yourself and your self-rule.

This is more powerful than mere intellectual assent. It is remembering His Spirit is in you and available to you. Practice the presence of Jesus daily, make it a habit, your daily spiritual discipline.

There is a simple prayer from Psalms that says: "O satisfy us in the morning with Your lovingkindness, that we may rejoice and be glad all our days."

That is our "job" as Christians: being satisfied in the morning with the love of God spoken to us in the Son of God, so that we may rejoice and be glad all our days — and so be free from the deceitfulness of downriver desires.