

## TWO MAJOR POINTS

The early morning and evening discussion has proved invaluable in discovering areas that need clarification in any series. As we finish our current series, there are two major points of clarification. This evening, let me get this across in one lump sum. It would work best if we wrote down any comments and we'll hit them after.

## CLARIFICATION #1: SHIPWRECK AND DRIFT

### In the shipwrecking one's faith; there are no accidents.

Let's start with this: There are three Ways to shipwreck one's faith.

We mentioned last week that the term "**backsliding**" is never found in the New Testament. It was an Old Testament term, literally meaning to turn away. The relationship of the Old Testament was a legal covenant. It was between the Hebrew people and God in the same way any two parties would form a binding covenant.

#### Genesis 15

9. So He said to him, "Bring Me a three-year-old heifer, a three-year-old female goat, a three-year-old ram, a turtledove, and a young pigeon."

10. Then he brought all these to Him and cut them in two, down the middle, and placed each piece opposite the other; but he did not cut the birds in two.

... [\[Go to online manuscript. See a commentary on the full passage\]](#)...

17. And it came to pass, when the sun went down and it was dark, that behold, there was a smoking oven and a burning torch that passed between those pieces.

***It was the way a legal covenant was made.*** The idea being that by walking between the pieces, one was saying, may the same thing happen to me if I walk away from this covenant. (Jeremiah 34:18-20)

### -The New Testament is a different relationship with God.

#### Hebrews 10

12. But this Man, after He had offered one sacrifice for sins forever, sat down at the right hand of God,

...

14. For by one offering He has perfected forever those who are being sanctified.

15. And the Holy Spirit also witnesses to us; for after He had said before,

16. "This is the covenant that I will make with them after those days, says the Lord: I will put My laws into their hearts, and in their minds I will write them." (Promised back in Jeremiah 31:33, but not then in effect.)

The ***Old Testament concept no longer applies because it is not an external law any more.*** It is an ***internal*** transformation opened up through the Messiah and brought to life in the Holy Spirit.

***That is not to say that there are not ways of destroying*** this new covenant. There are at least, 3 ways:

#### #1 Blasphemy of the Holy Spirit

##### Mark 3

28. "Assuredly, I say to you, all sins will be forgiven the sons of men, and whatever blasphemies they may utter;

29. "but he who blasphemes against the Holy Spirit never has forgiveness, but is subject to eternal condemnation."

To blaspheme is to vilify or rail on God. In verse 28, Jesus talks about blasphemy in general. It is possible for the lost to rail on a God they know about, but do not know. As Jesus said at His death, “**forgive them Father, they do not know what they are doing.**” (Luke 23:34)

However, verse 29 deals with railing on the action and person of the Holy Spirit. The idea of the passage is that they vilify God, they “shout Him down” while they are in an encounter with Him. This is not simply, getting mad at God. This is a hostile rejection of God as He approaches us. It is turning God into an enemy after He has reached out to save in love. God cannot offer forgiveness if forgiveness if the act of forgiveness itself, is turned into a villainous act.

## #2 Looking back

Luke 9

62. But Jesus said to him, “No one, having put his hand to the plow, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God.”

This passage deals with a person who has engaged the call and invitation of God but then sets aside that relationship for other priorities.

## #3 Drifting

Hebrews 2

1. Therefore we must give the **more earnest heed** to the things we have heard, lest we **drift away**.
2. For if the word spoken through angels proved steadfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just reward,
3. how shall we escape **if we neglect so great a salvation**, which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed to us by those who heard Him,
4. God also **bearing witness both with signs and wonders**, with various miracles, and **gifts of the Holy Spirit**, according to His own will?

First, this verse speaks of ***people who have experienced God in a real way***. They have ***witnessed***, they have been ***empowered***. The word, “*drift*” means to “*flow by*” or “*carelessly pass or miss*.” What we need to see is that **even though it is careless, it is not accidental**. Verse 3 carries a verb, “neglect.”

Paul uses the same idea again later when he is talking to Timothy, as he warns of the ultimate outcome.

1 Tim 1

18. This charge I commit to you, son Timothy, according to the prophecies previously made concerning you, that by them **you may wage the good warfare**,

19. having **faith and a good conscience**, which **some having rejected**, concerning the faith have **suffered shipwreck**,

20. of whom are Hymenaeus and Alexander, whom I delivered to Satan that they may learn not to blaspheme.

Paul is not speaking from theory. ***He mentions actual people***. These people also waged good warfare once. They possessed faith and a good conscience. This translation (NKJ) says they “***rejected***.” That is not incorrect, but lacks a certain clarity. The original Greek “ap-o-theh’-om-ah-ee” also means *to thrust away, to shove, or push off, to cast away*.

It implies ***more than rejecting something offered***. It implies something that has been received and then deliberately cast away. Faith is a boat that was docked, but then untied and set adrift.

Here is a personal anecdote to illustrate how “carelessly passing” is not mere accident. Once while flying as a passenger, I was sitting next to a young mom. Her husband sat across the aisle with their toddler on his lap. The husband was not wearing his seat belt for take-off and somehow the flight attendant missed it. There is a reason that seatbelts are required for take-off. Physics says that a crash at even 60 miles an hour, without a seat restraint, is the equivalent of a ten-story fall. If there was an accident, not only would that child suffer a ten-story fall, the weight of a grown adult in the same fall would crush him.

In as nice a way as possible, I made this known to the mom and pointed out her husband. As we rolled into position for take-off, she repeatedly asked her husband to strap in. He repeatedly and adamantly refused. To this day, I am mystified by his stubbornness. The point is; it was a careless act, but if there had been a crash, the death of his child would not have been an accident. The dad was repeatedly warned but he stubbornly refused to heed the warning.

From whatever way it comes, every shipwreck of faith has the same dynamic; it came from intentional and stubborn choices, even drifting.

There are two big implications to this:

1. **The wreck of one’s faith has no excuse.** No one will be able to stand before God and say, “it was just an accident.” As Romans 14:11 prophesies, every tongue will confess, but no one will be offering excuses.
2. **The good side of this is; if we are responsible, that means we have an active part** we can play to make sure we don’t drift. Even as it involves the empowerment of God, it also involves our power of choice.

## CLARIFICATION #2: PERFECTION & “HITTING THE MARK”

*The second clarification deals with hitting the mark.*

It has been commented several times that ***we cannot hit the mark perfectly***. As it was stated this morning, that may sound humble, but it is not a Biblical statement. Just because we are not yet in a glorified state of perfection, doesn’t mean we can ***never*** experience perfection.

***We are ordered over and over to be sanctified, perfected, completed, and finished.*** What we know is we don’t reach perfection and stay there, but we ***can*** hit the mark. We can be balanced perfectly, we can be centered, it is just that we are constantly pulled one way or another. That is why there has been such a strong emphasis on learning the signs of drift. We can correct, and re-correct, and correct again!

***There is danger of a strange dynamic if we believe we can never hit the mark perfectly.*** We have turned Christianity ***from a quest to hit the mark to; not drifting too far away***. If our Christian quest is to hit the mark, it is a Christian mentality based on ***success***. To hit the mark is to have the most powerful experience in Christ.

If the objective is to not drift too far; it is a Christian mentality based on ***failure***. We will fail, we will never hit the mark in this life.

That in turn, changes the most basic question of our Christian experience. ***It shifts from, how can I reach the most powerful experience, to- how far can I drift and not shipwreck my faith? -Or how far can I drift and not lose my salvation?*** Is it any wonder we live in a church culture prone to the most watered-down and compromised spiritual views! The natural current of our faith become outward on our graph as opposed to inward; especially the fourth square of drift!

**Allow me to propose one last way to look at our diagram.**

Consider the lines and complementary truths as being in some form of spiritual life, even if it's imbalanced. But the life only exists within the circle of these truths. ***What exists beyond those anchor points?***

We end up outside the light of Christ. It is the realm of the lost. It is where the shipwreck of any faith is complete. Here's a question for us: If the arrows pointing out represent spiritual drift; what would arrows pointing to the center represent?

***To follow the arrows outward leads to merging with the world. To follow them inward would be to separate out of the world and center with God.*** There is a word for that, "sanctification."

In the Old Testament, ***the tools of the Temple were sanctified***. They were set aside for a holy purpose and could not be used for anything else. In the New Testament, we are the Temple. We are the tools. We are sanctified. We are set apart. **There is grace in salvation; but there is power in sanctification.**

On the church website, we have a wonderful devotional page that offers several daily devotionals and reading plans. Last week, Oswald Chambers devotional offered this:

When we pray, asking God to sanctify us, are we prepared to measure up to what that really means? We take the word *sanctification* much too lightly. Are we prepared to pay the cost of sanctification? The cost will be a deep restriction of all our earthly concerns, and an extensive cultivation of all our godly concerns. Sanctification means to be intensely focused on God's point of view. It means to secure and to keep all the strength of our body, soul, and spirit for God's purpose alone. Are we really prepared for God to perform in us everything for which He separated us? And after He has done His work, are we then prepared to separate ourselves to God just as Jesus did? "For their sakes I sanctify Myself..." ([John 17:19](#)). The reason some of us have not entered into the experience of sanctification is that we have not realized the meaning of sanctification from God's perspective. Sanctification means being made one with Jesus so that the nature that controlled Him will control us. Are we really prepared for what that will cost? It will cost absolutely everything in us which is not of God.

Are we prepared to be caught up into the full meaning of Paul's prayer in this verse? Are we prepared to say, "Lord, make me, a sinner saved by grace, as holy as You can"? Jesus prayed that we might be one with Him, just as He is one with the Father (see [John 17:21-23](#)). The resounding evidence of the Holy Spirit in a person's life is the unmistakable family likeness to Jesus Christ, and the freedom from everything which is not like Him. Are we prepared to set ourselves apart for the Holy Spirit's work in us?