

Monday, August 17, 2009

Three weeks from today is Labor Day! Has it been a great summer of 2009 for you? What “anchors for your soul” have you discovered and how well are you using them to hold you fast, securing you from “drift of the soul”? Consider Hebrews 2:1 “we must pay more careful attention to what we have heard so that we do not drift away.” We understand what that means when in a boat on a lake, but what is it like when your LIFE is drifting? Remember the last time...we’ve all been there!

Today, dig deeply into Hebrews 4:14-16, one of the greatest passages in the Bible! Remember, Hebrews is written in mid first century to Jewish people who are struggling with whether or not they can really make the leap from trusting in their Jewish Religion with all its familiar laws and traditions, to trusting in Jesus Christ for their relationship with God and salvation from sin. Likely none of you are practicing Jews, but many of you may be in the same struggle since you’ve been raised in religion, familiar traditions and rituals which seem comfortable. But do they give you confidence of a true relationship with Holy God, or assurance that you’ll be in God’s presence the moment you die, or of complete forgiveness of your sin? Hebrews 4:14-16 is for you!

Jesus Christ’s true identity is fundamental. He claimed to be God (John 10:24-30; 14:1-11)! Hebrews 1:1-4 affirms it. His return to heaven after His resurrection is essential, for there He reigns again as Sovereign over all (Colossians 1:15-18, Heb.1:3). God’s Presence (His throne room) is open to us because Jesus, our Savior, stands there welcoming us, (Hebrews 4:14-16) having paid our full sin debt price, so we can enter forgiven (Rom. 5). Note Jesus has full understanding of your temptation battle (Heb. 2:14-18). We are invited by Jesus into God’s throne room at any time, without appointment, in any condition of need...confident we’ll be welcomed by name, without accusation, loved as a son or daughter! Have you discovered the power of a “Tent of Meeting” time (Ex. 33) daily with Jesus?

Please carefully read Hebrews 4:14-16 and make note of those things in God’s “throne room invitation” which are most important to you.

Tuesday, August 18, 2009

Have you noticed that in many arenas of human life we seek an advocate? When facing issues of law or government, we seek an attorney, right? With complex issues of finance we seek an advisor. Sometimes in employment or even family disagreement we seek a mediator or advocate. So what about standing face to face with His Majesty, Holy God? Who will stand with you then as your advocate? Considering the price of advocacy fees here in earthly courtrooms, what price do you expect to pay your Advocate when you stand before God?

Consider Hebrews 5:1-9. Advocates are selected and trained for their role of mediation. But do you see the fallacy of having a human mediator with God? Every human is sinful, thus even human “priests” need someone to be their Advocate. Jesus Christ, God the Son, is the ultimate Advocate with God the Father. He replaces the entire system of “priest” in every religion! Do you remember the veil was torn, “top to bottom” in the Temple of Jerusalem, when Jesus died on the cross? (Matt. 27:50,51). Who tore it? What did it mean?

God the Father reached from heaven to the most sacred place on earth, the Temple He had designed and instructed the Jews to construct, as a place they could meet with Him (1 Chronicles 28,29). That veil (heavy curtain) separated the “holy place”, the area where the priest entered daily to pray, from the “most holy place” which contained the ‘ark of the covenant’ and into which only the High Priest entered once annually to intercede for the sins of the Jewish people (Lev. 16). God’s tearing of this veil opened that place of sacred, private encounter with God to EVERYONE at ANYTIME. Suddenly the role of High Priest was eliminated by God, and each person is given the priestly privilege to pray for others, especially dads for their families, but ALL are given the open invitation into God’s Presence...because Jesus is the permanent High Priest who stands in God’s presence receiving us!!! Consider Hebrews 7:18-8:6. How do you thank Jesus for being your perfect Advocate? How often do you accept His invitation for a private audience with The Majesty, God? How do you enter there?

Wednesday, August 19, 2009

Our Walworth County fair is only a few days away now. Young people across our region have been nurturing their prize animals in hopes of ribbons. Similarly, young mothers around the world, generation after generation, learn how to very attentively watch the development of their babies and adjust their diet, moving from breast milk to solid food. How’s your spiritual diet? Are you nourishing yourself adequately for the challenges of your life? Are you “buff” or “ripped” as our teens might say, or “flabby”, or worse “malnourished”?

Consider Hebrews 5:11-16, and 1 Corinthians 3:1-3. What do you see? Now link in Ephesians 4:11-24 and 1 Tim. 4, what do you see there? Do you see a theme, a pattern? Again I ask, what’s your spiritual diet? This summer I urged you to read DAILY in God’s Word, following along the Summer Scripture reading. We also urged you to read one or more of our suggested Summer books. We produce this weekly “Digging Deeper”, all for the purpose of helping you stay growing, maturing in your Spiritual diet...so, are you in shape, strong, or still weak? Can you do a self-diagnosis and develop your personal training plan? And what if you choose to do nothing? Where will you be a year from now?

The author of Hebrews is challenging his readers to consider if they have become spiritually lazy and are cheating themselves from the growth and development God desires to accomplish in each of them...and each of us! May I tell you that for many years Christians in Asia, Africa and South America have been fearful for the Christians in America, and have told me so. Their concern? That we are weak. That we have lived such pampered, soft lives, that if our great economy failed and we began to taste the poverty they have lived in for generations, we would implode as a church and a nation. Also, that since we have never tasted persecution, if it ever came, the American church would buckle quickly. What do you think? How strong are we spiritually? How deep are our roots (Jeremiah 17:5-10)? How mature are we? What are we passing to our children (Psalm 78:1-7) and will they stand strong in desperate times?

Thursday, August 20, 2009

Our summer theme has been “Anchors for the Soul”. It was many months ago that I discovered that phrase in Hebrews 6, read the whole chapter and see if you find it.

Living in the lakes area, we understand boats adrift, anchors which do not hold, and the disaster which can result. Hebrews 6:1-6 is one of the most fearful sections of the Bible! Remember Hebrews is written to Hebrews (Jews) who are deeply rooted in Judaism and struggling greatly to trust Jesus for their full salvation. Understand please that all the phrases in Heb. 6:1,2 are aspects of Jewish religion and tradition. The author is challenging the Jewish readers NOT to return to their dependence upon Judaism rituals for their salvation, but mature to understand how each of them changes with Jesus Christ as their High Priest and Savior. Let’s look at each of them:

“*Repentance from acts that lead to death*” was why they offered sacrifices daily at the Temple, but in Jesus Christ’s personal and final sacrifice, no animal will ever again suffice!

“*faith in God*” was of course the cornerstone of their relationship with God, modeled by Abraham (Rom. 4), but faith in Jesus Christ as our Savior takes it to a new level!

“*instructions about baptisms*”, were familiar as the entire priestly function required many cleansing baptisms, as did various aspects of cleansing from child birth or illness. The Baptism of the Holy Spirit is entirely different as we become united with Christ in our Salvation (Gal. 3:26-28). Believers’ Baptism is the public act of proclaiming the saving work Jesus has accomplished in our lives and declaring our allegiance to Jesus Christ as our Savior and Lord through water baptism. (Acts 2:38-41; 8:35-38;10:44-48; 16:29-34, etc.)

“*laying on of hands*” was an important part of commissioning priests, kings and others to significant, God ordained roles. That tradition has continued in the Church as a spiritual commissioning (Acts 9:17,18; 13:1-3).

“*the resurrection of the dead and eternal judgment*” take on entirely new hope with Jesus Christ as our certain Savior! No more fear of death or judgment for we are safe in Christ!

Friday, August 21, 2009

Today read Hebrews 6:4-6 and Luke 15:11-32 together. Several important keys help us understand this powerful passage.

First “tasted” in 6:4,5. Link that with Luke 8:5-15. Can you see just as some seed falls and roots temporarily, so some people “taste” Christianity, but turn away without truly engaging their lives with God. No true regeneration has taken place, only a “tasting”.

Second, “fall away” Hebrews 6:6 and “drift away” 2:1 are similar. Neither are intentional, rebellious, willful rejection. A boat adrift is different from a boat running full speed away. However, both are very dangerous, for they may not realize the rate of drift nor how far away they have drifted. In such a drift they may not sense or realize a need or desire for return, as they may find their drift comfortable as their hearts harden to God.

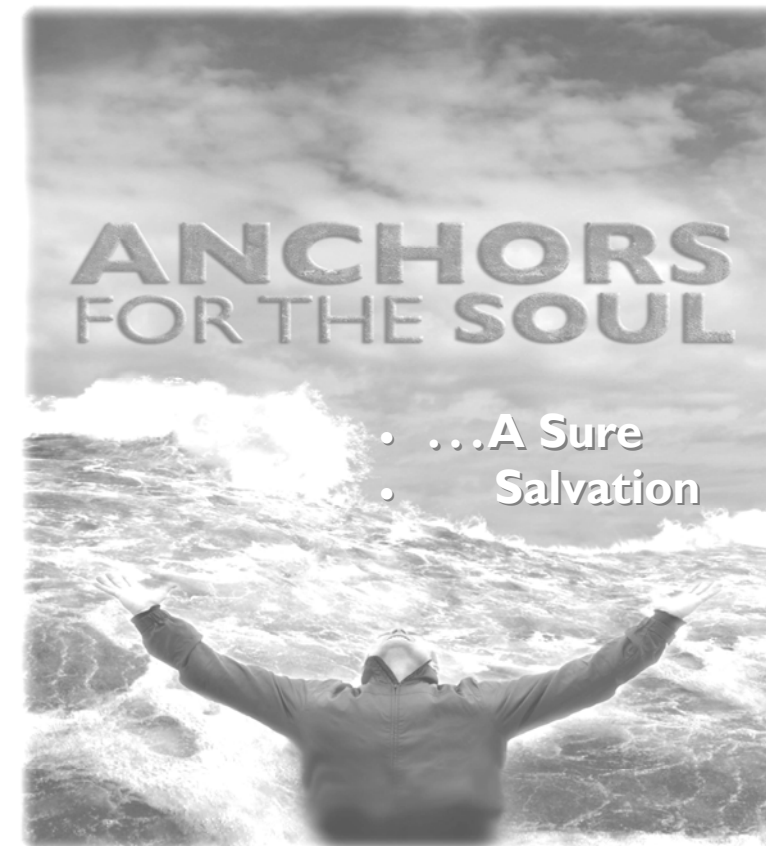
Third, “they are crucifying the Son of God all over again” is a state of living (Heb. 6:6). The process of Jesus’ suffering, beatings and crucifixion was a long, agonizing, experience resulting from repeated, ongoing rejection by many people crying for His death (Matt. 26,27). When living in a state of open rebellion against God, a person is in a sense reliving that experience of rejecting Jesus, over and over. In that state, there is such hardness of heart, repentance is rare.

Fourth, however, is the Biblical teaching of the security of our Salvation. It is essential we understand that Jesus Christ earns our Salvation through His atonement death (1 John 4:9,10) and God the Father and the Holy Spirit apply it to our lives in transforming us from condemned sinners to righteous sons and daughters! Regeneration (John 3:3-7); Adoption (Romans 8:14-17); Justification (Romans 4:25-5:21; 2 Cor. 5:21); Reconciliation (Colossians 1:21,22) and all of Ephesians 1! Our ONLY involvement in our salvation is Confession and Repentance of our Sin (1 John 1:9), Faith in Jesus Christ and His complete atonement work (Ephesians 2:8,9) and Trust in God to accomplish His full work of our complete Salvation. Nothing can undo that...John 6:37-40, 10:28-30! Celebrate!!



Pastor Doug Anderson

August 17 - 21, 2009



Verse of the Week

"Let us then approach the throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need." Hebrews 4:16

A Disciplemaking Tool
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