

"The dangers of drifting"

The Story of Roger Woodward

It seems incredible that anyone could pass over the Canadian Horseshoe Falls without some protection and live. Yet it has happened twice, with one plunge that was accidental and one that was intentional.

On July 9, 1960, Jim Honeycutt took his co-worker's children, 17-year-old Deanne and 7-year-old Roger Woodward for a boat ride in the upper Niagara River. Intent on giving the kids a good view of the rapids, he was soon past the "point of no return". He turned the boat around, but a shear-pin failure disabled the motor and left the boat wallowing in the swift current.

Roger was already wearing a life jacket and Deanne quickly put hers on. Seconds later the light boat flipped end over end. Honeycutt and Roger were whipped toward the brink of the Falls. Deanne was carried into the shallow rapids near Goat Island.

Within a few feet of the brink of the Falls at Terrapin Point, Deanne clutched at the hand of a rescuer who leaned far out over the protective railing. Another person grabbed her by her thumb. She was dragged to safety just in time.

Honeycutt and Roger were swept to the brink. Roger was swept over and outwards by the trajectory of the Falls. Honeycutt disappeared in the three thousand tons of water that crash over the Horseshoe Falls each second.

Moments later the Captain of the Maid of the Mist could hardly believe his eyes when he saw an orange life jacket appear in the boiling white water at the base of the Falls. Maneuvering the Maid steamship closer he saw that the boy was still alive. A life buoy was thrown and within minutes Roger Woodward was safely aboard.

He was the first person to survive the Horseshoe Falls without a protective capsule. Unfortunately, his father's co-worker, Jim

Honeycutt died in the punishing water. The Niagara River is an implacable adversary. For both stunters and unwary boaters, the chances of survival are slim.

While there is a great danger in drifting in the physical realm there is even a greater danger in drifting away in the spiritual realm...

Hebrews 2:1 We must pay the most careful attention, therefore, to what we have heard, so that we do not drift away.

Unfortunately it isn't uncommon for Christians to drift toward spiritual destruction!

So I ask us this morning, "Are We Drifting?" Would you know it if you were? With this lesson I hope to get us to examine our own lives regarding the danger of drifting away from the Lord. First lets take a look at things we should know about drifting.

I. THINGS WE SHOULD KNOW ABOUT DRIFTING

A. DRIFTING REQUIRES ABOSOLUTLY NO EFFORT...

1. Just stop oaring and a boater will begin to drift
2. The same is true for the Christian, which is why we are told: "We must give the more earnest heed, careful attention..." – Hebrews 2:1

B. IT IS AN UNCONSCIOUS PROCESS...

1. It is possible to drift unaware
 - a. In a boat, the undercurrents are often unnoticeable from the surface and you may begin to drift and not realize it.
 - b. In a plane, the wind or gravitational forces move the plane without you realizing it. You're not really aware of the speed that you are traveling.
2. The same is true in the spiritual realm
 - a. Many individual Christians have slowly drifted away. They start filling their lives with worldly things and slowly and surely they start drifting away from God.
 - b. Many churches have gradually drifted into error. They

allow false doctrine to sneak in and they don't nip it in the bud. Instead they just ignore the problem and hope it will go away then one day they find themselves far removed from the Scriptures.

C. WE NEVER DRIFT UPSTREAM OR AGAINST THE TIDE...

1. Faithfulness to the Lord is like oaring upstream
2. You must constantly be "adding to your faith..."

2 Peter 1:5 But also for this very reason, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue, to virtue knowledge, ⁶ to knowledge self-control, to self-control perseverance, to perseverance godliness, ⁷ to godliness brotherly kindness, and to brotherly kindness love.

3. You must continue to grow -**2 Peter 3: ¹⁸ but grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ**
The moment you stop growing, you start drifting down stream.

D. THE SPEED DOWNSTREAM INCREASES...

- The dangers increase with the speed of the drift
- a. When we can hear the noise of the waterfall, it is already too late
 - b. When we lose sight of land, it is more difficult to discern that we are drifting
2. As we move farther and farther from the Lord, we care less and less about what we do

E. IT IS DANGEROUS TO OTHERS...

1. A ship, just drifting, is a hazard to all other vessels at sea
When we allow ourselves to drift away from God we become a vessel for Satan and can lead people to drift right along with us.
A great example of this is the apostle Peter. Look at

[Galatians 2:11](#) Now when Peter had come to Antioch, I withstood him to his face, because he was to be blamed; ¹² for before certain men came from James, he would eat with the Gentiles; but when they came, he withdrew and separated himself, fearing those who were of the circumcision. ¹³ And the rest of the Jews also played the hypocrite with him, so that even Barnabas was

carried away with their hypocrisy.

Here we see at this moment that Peter was drifting away from the truth and from God and because of his negative influence he brought Barnabas along for the ride.

Parents who are just drifting, will soon lose golden opportunities to teach their children - [Eph 6:4](#) And, ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath: but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.

F. IT ENDS IN SHIPWRECK...

1. A boat adrift will crash on the rocks or go over the falls
2. For those who drift spiritually through their own neglect, there shall be no escape from a just punishment - [Heb 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,**

The danger of drifting is real, or there would be no need to warn against it. So again I ask, "Are You Drifting?" To help answer the question, here are some...

II. COMMON SIGNS OF DRIFTING

A. DIMINISHING DESIRE TO STUDY GOD'S WORD AND PRAY...

1. The Bible is a unique book - a source of information not found anywhere else
 - a. Without God's revelation, how could we truly know our origin, purpose, destiny?
 - b. It tells us of sin's dreadful consequences, and how God saves us from sin
 - c. It provides direction for living happy, useful lives –

[Psa 1:1](#) **Blessed is the man Who walks not in the counsel of the ungodly, Nor stands in the path of sinners, Nor sits in the seat of**

the scornful; 2 But his delight is in the law of the LORD, And in His law he meditates day and night. 3 He shall be like a tree Planted by the rivers of water, That brings forth its fruit in its season, Whose leaf also shall not wither; And whatever he does shall prosper.

When one loses their desire to study God's word, they are drifting! Prayer is a wonderful blessing - an avenue to communicate with God! Jesus, who loved His Father, prayed often - Mk 1:35 (before daylight); Luke 6:12 (prayed all night) He expressed concern that His disciples not grow weary to pray

Lk 18:1 Then He spoke a parable to them, that men always ought to pray and not lose heart,

-- When a Christian prays less and less, he is drifting more and more!

B. DIMINISHING DESIRE TO BE WITH GOD'S PEOPLE...

1. This includes attending services to worship God
Everyone should have the same attitude of the Psalmist –

Psa 122:1 I was glad when they said to me, "Let us go into the house of the LORD."

If we no longer rejoice in the worship of God in the presence of brethren, we are drifting! Fellowship with God's people extends beyond the services of the church because we are to be concerned with edifying one another. Paul states this in

Ro 14:19 Therefore let us pursue the things which make for peace and the things by which one may edify another.

This type of edification should occur daily

He 3:13 but exhort one another daily, while it is called "Today," lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin.

It is important for us to have good Christians friends that will be there for us in our time of need. You see the right kind of friendship strengthens us, while the wrong kind leads us to sin -

Ecc 4:9 Two are better than one, Because they have a good reward for their labor. 10 For if they fall, one will lift up his companion. But woe to him who is alone when he falls, For he has no one to help him up. 11 Again, if two lie down together, they will keep warm; But how can one be warm alone? 12 Though one may be overpowered by another, two can withstand him. And a threefold cord is not quickly broken.

This is what a good Christian friend will do for you but, if you allow yourself to get caught up with the wrong kind of friends they will do nothing but harm you in the long run. Paul says,

1 Co 15:33 Do not be deceived: "Evil company corrupts good habits."

When a Christian prefers the companionship of people of the world, rather than fellow Christians, he is drifting toward the rocks of spiritual destruction!

C. DIMINISHING DESIRE TO SHARE THE GOSPEL...

When a person first becomes a Christian and they realize what a wonderful blessing they have received through Jesus Christ they are usually on fire for the Lord and they can't wait to tell people what God has done for them and how much better they feel about their life now. When a person is excited about something especially when it's a life-changing event is natural for you to want to share this good news with everyone. However when a Christian no longer has the desire to tell people about God and how they were saved then they are drifting!

D. INCREASING DESIRE OVER THINGS OF THE WORLD...

When we start desiring things of the world more than we desire godly things we are setting ourselves up to drift away from the Lord.

The apostle John warns us against the love of the world and the things in the world

1 John 2:15, Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. 16 For all that is in the world -- the lust of the flesh, the lust of the

eyes, and the pride of life -- is not of the Father but is of the world. 17 And the world is passing away, and the lust of it; but he who does the will of God abides forever.

Paul warned Timothy in [2 Ti 3:4](#) that there would be some who would be "**lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God**" - If we reach the point when we find more pleasure in some worldly activity than meeting with others to worship God, we definitely are spiritually adrift!

We have examined several signs of drifting away from God. Now lets take a look at some....

III. REMEDIES AGAINST DRIFTING

A. KEEP ROWING...

If you don't want to drift in a boat you keep oaring. The same thing is true spiritually We need to strive with all diligence to grow in our faith. Yes we need to abound or increase our faith daily.

[2 Peter 1:5](#) But also for this very reason, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue, to virtue knowledge, 6 to knowledge self-control, to self-control perseverance, to perseverance godliness, 7 to godliness brotherly kindness, and to brotherly kindness love. 8 For if these things are yours and abound, you will be neither barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. 9 For he who lacks these things is shortsighted, even to blindness, and has forgotten that he was cleansed from his old sins. 10 Therefore, brethren, be even more diligent to make your call and election sure, for if you do these things you will never stumble;

There is no place for "retirement" in living the life of a Christian! – Just look at Paul for an example. He lived a faithful life unto death. [2 Tim 4: 7](#) **I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith:**

B. WATCH OUT FOR UNDERCURRENTS...

We must always be on the lookout for undercurrent of temptation. Peter tells us,

1 Peter 5: 8 Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour.

Peter goes on and tells exactly how we watch out for this.

9 Resist him, steadfast in the faith, knowing that the same sufferings are experienced by your brotherhood in the world.

C. EXPECT TO GO AGAINST THE TIDE...

There are many tides to sweep us away

- a. Popularity, peer pressure, the praise of others
 - b. Modernism, skepticism, humanism
 - c. Denominationalism - false doctrines of all kinds
 - d. Liberalism and worldliness in the church - probably the greatest enemies of the church in our lifetime
2. If one drifts along with the majority, he certainty will be lost

Mt 7:13- " Enter by the narrow gate; for wide is the gate and broad is the way that leads to destruction, and there are many who go in by it. 14 "Because narrow is the gate and difficult is the way which leads to life, and there are few who find it.

D. WE MUST HAVE STRONG ANCHOR...

1. Rooted and grounded in Christ

Colossians 2:6 As you have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in Him, ⁷ rooted and built up in Him and established in the faith, as you have been taught, abounding in it with thanksgiving.

2. Minds must be anchored to the truth

Ephesians 4:14 we should no longer be children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, in the cunning craftiness of deceitful plotting, ¹⁵ but, speaking the truth in love, may grow up in all things into Him who is the head

The reason why we should be motivated to have a strong anchor in

Christ is found in,

Hebrews 6:18 that by two immutable things, in which it is impossible for God to lie, we might have strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold of the hope set before us. ¹⁹ This hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast, and which enters the Presence *behind* the veil.

The verses teach us that if we will remain anchored in Jesus we can know that we possess the unshakable hope of having heaven as our home.

CONCLUSION

1. Brethren, are we drifting?
 - a. The danger is real; we would be foolish to say otherwise
 - b. Many strong Christians have drifted away from the Lord and we would be arrogant to say it could not happen to us!
2. Are there signs of drifting in your life? Honestly ask yourself:
 - a. Is my desire to study God's word and pray diminishing?
 - b. Is my desire to be with God's people not what it has been in the past?
 - c. Have I lost my desire to save those who are lost?
 - d. Am I desiring the things of the world too much?

If we see that we are drifting from the Lord in any one of these then let us encourage one another to give earnest heed as warned by the writer to the Hebrews:

"Therefore we must give the more earnest heed to the things we have heard, lest we drift away. For if the word spoken through angels proved steadfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just reward, 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..."

Brethren, our salvation in Christ is simply too great for us to neglect!

The Old Scow

The dumping scow that can be seen marooned in the upper rapids just above the Falls and opposite the Floral Showhouse, has been there since August 6, 1918. It is an aging reminder of near tragedy and a spectacular rescue. □The steel barge **was loaded with rock** and had two men on board - Gustav Lofberg and James Harris. The scow was being towed to the upper river by a Hydro tug when its towline broke and it set adrift. Fortunately, **the men thought to open the dumping hatches in the bottom of the craft and the scow was grounded** 767 m (838 yd.) from the brink of the falls, where treacherous rapids surrounded the men.

Frantic efforts were made to rescue the men all that night and until late the next day. Finally a breeches buoy was rigged from a powerhouse on shore to the rig. After several attempts were made to throw a line across to the rig the line became tangled, preventing the buoy from reaching the barge.

William "Red" Hill Sr., a famous Niagara River daredevil volunteered to swing himself out to the obstruction hand-over-hand above the raging water. The breeches buoy finally reached the scow and the men aboard were rescued. Today, the steel barge is now a part of the Niagara legend and a favorite resting spot for gulls.