

Image: Curious kids wandering off and getting lost.

Need: You ever feel like that kid? You look up and no one is around? We never just all of a sudden disappear. But gradually over time we make choices and succumb to distractions that move us away from devotion to Jesus. *Put a frog in boiling water and he jumps out, but slowly turn up the heat and he simmers to death.*

Context: These guys had been warned 5 times about things like drifting, denying, disowning. Drift happens over time. That's why big admonition in Hebrews is "Believe and cling to Jesus...

TODAY" You guard against drifting by standing firm today. This text captures message of Heb.

Preview: How do we overcome the problem of wandering away from Jesus through distraction?

I. **Prob:** We are tempted to wander off from the Gospel and Jesus.

- A. For them here, they were tempted to do so at the prospect of suffering for their faith in Jesus.
 - 1. He tells them to remember the leaders who initially shared with them the message of Jesus. Remember their confession (v. 7).
 - 2. Don't be carried away by strange teaching – teaching that would be more familiar and safe (v. 9). Stay close to home doctrinally. Don't wander off from Jesus (*message of each of the warning passages – salv'n in no one else*).
- B. For us, we are tempted by a myriad of things to wander off from devotion to Jesus.
 - 1. For some, the prospect of suffering causes us to wander off into something safer.
 - 2. For others, it's distractions of world that push Jesus out to the outer limits of our mind.
 - 3. Many times, we just forget that we still need Him. We think we can mature past the cross, and so we feel we've graduated from Jesus. I'll take it from here, God.
- C. The problem with wandering, as he's said throughout, is that Jesus is your center, your focal point. There is no hope in anyone or anything else, except judgment. *Apollo 13, gimble lock.*

(How do we avoid wandering off from Jesus to the edges? We stand in the center. Emma trampoline)

II. **Sol'n:** Since He is permanent, stand firm in Jesus (the center) – even if it means suffering or lacking in this world – as you look forward to life in the next (message of Hebrews).

- A. **To remember and consider and imitate:** They were told to remember their former leaders, who believed in Jesus and died in faith. They were to consider, to watch closely, the way they lived in faith regardless of what that meant, and they were to imitate that kind of faith – because they followed the unchangeable center point of faith, Jesus.
 - 1. **Verses 7-8** are similar to **ch. 11**. But examples are more near/personal. Rather than Abraham and Moses, it's Leonard and Stan...guys that many would have known and remembered. He tells them to look at their lives – faith to the end – and do likewise.
 - 2. They followed Jesus, presumably. The message they brought was the message of the unchangeable Christ. Their faith didn't disappoint because it was centered in the One who is the same yesterday, today, forever. Times change, people come and go, but He doesn't.
- B. That message of the unchangeable Christ is one of grace, not dead ritual (v. 9-12).
 - 1. His sacrifice was not like the old. The annual, temporary sin offering in which the animal was killed and the blood poured on the altar for the sins of the people – that did not last. Christ's sacrifice was altogether different.
 - a. **Lev. 16, Ex. 29** – some sacrifices the priest could eat, but not the big ones. When the blood came into the holy of holies, the flesh was incinerated outside the camp.
 - b. Wasn't offered on a physical altar which only a few could come (v. 10).
 - c. Wasn't offered merely to pacify God's wrath temporarily, but to **make the people holy** (v. 12).
 - 2. And because this Christ never changes, He is an eternal sacrifice and perpetually available as our High Priest (*again, message of Hebrews*).
- C. And so, we must stand firm in Him, even if it means suffering, as we look forward to what is to come (v. 13-14).

1. As Jesus **suffered outside the camp** on the cross, we are to take up our crosses and **go to Him** there (v. 12-13).
2. That necessarily implies the possibility of suffering and alienation as we bear the disgrace He bore (v. 13b). The one who killed the animal outside the camp was considered unclean until he performed certain acts of ritual cleansing. He was alienated (v. 11).
3. We do this as we look beyond what's here and forward to what awaits us (ch. 11).

(God has given the church people to help us work this out in the everyday. He's given us a community led by leaders whose job is to help pilot God's people to remain in the center)

III. So, as he says here, follow your leaders as they follow the unchangeable Christ.

A. Follow them as they lead in sound doctrine.

1. What he said about the initial leaders in v. 7 – to follow their message of grace.
2. Again in **verse 17** when he says to obey them because they “**keep watch.**” It's the idea of shepherding. That the leaders in the church are there to shepherd the people so they don't wander off. So obey and submit to them – make their jobs easy! (v. 17-19).

B. Follow them as they lead in devotion to Jesus.

1. Again, in **verse 7**, they were to remember, consider, and imitate the faith of those who followed Jesus in faith.
2. As leaders forsake the present to suffer the disgrace of Christ outside the camp, you emulate that faith. Follow their example as they take up their cross to follow Christ.
3. Specifically he gives some sacrifices that we are to make through Jesus as a sign of our devotion to Him (v. 15-16).
 - a. Praise as we confess who He is and what He's accomplished for us.
 - b. Doing good to others and sharing.

Conc: It's easy to succumb to the temptation to wander to the edges, leaving Christ in the background as we live this life. But the problem with that is that it takes us away from our source of life and help, Jesus, who will always be that source. The only solution is to stand in the center – firmly planted and locked into Jesus, regardless of what might come. We take up our crosses and we follow Him as we look to the future He has promised. And God has given us wonderful pictures of that in those who have gone before, and in our leaders in the present who follow Jesus in faith. So follow them in doctrine and devotion.

Image: Listen, I understand that by saying these things, I'm opening myself up and laying it on the line. But I have to preach the text. The gravity of this text is not lost on me as a leader. I say with all humility that I wake up everyday with the hope and prayer that I could lead effectively as I follow Christ – and I know that Tim would too. So I say, again, with all humility and in full knowledge that I am not perfect...follow me as I follow Christ. Our desire is that this church would be locked in to Jesus and fully devoted to Him. It is a great responsibility that leaders have been given, and most days it scares me to death. But I must say that you have never, or maybe only very rarely, anything but a joy. Let's keep our eyes on the ball as we focus on Christ...together.