



Daily Verse and Comment

Proverbs 21:16

(16) A man who strays from the path of understanding comes to rest in the company of the dead.

New International Version

Notice the use of the word "wanders." God's children do not ordinarily deliberately plan to go astray, but whether they do or do not, regardless of the intention, the result is the same.

[Hebrews 2:1-3](#) provides an illustration in which there is no deliberate intention to [sin](#):

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.

The metaphor in "lest we drift away" is of a boat slipping its moorings and drifting away, caught in the currents it was tied against. Paul makes clear that the spiritual drifting is the result of neglecting the priorities set by our calling into the [Kingdom of God](#), just as a boat will drift away if it is not tied securely. Other parts of the [book of Hebrews](#) show that neglect becomes a factor when one is not consciously living a *purposely* directed life. The epistle's recipients were neglectfully drifting through life.

[Hebrews 5:11-14](#) shows us the result:

. . . of whom we have much to say, and hard to explain, since you have become dull of hearing. For though by this time you ought to

be teachers, you need someone to teach you again the first principles of the [oracles of God](#); and you have come to need milk and not solid food. For everyone who partakes only of milk is unskilled in the word of righteousness, for he is a babe. But solid food belongs to those who are of full age, that is, those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil.

These people had become "dull of hearing" and apparently were rapidly regressing toward unconversion. Neglect is particularly spiritually dangerous. Through neglect, they were seriously drifting into a lack of [faith](#) deep enough to have to relearn the fundamentals of this way of life. When dullness of hearing is tied to [Romans 10:17](#)—"faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God"—we can understand that, if one does not hear correctly, motivation to [live by faith](#) greatly diminishes.

Hebrews was written to encourage a congregation of neglectful and drifting people to [repent](#), to get back on track toward the Kingdom. Considering their dullness of hearing, the book of Proverbs provides what might be a shocking reality, one we hope we will not have to face if we will repent.

Now therefore, listen to me, my children, for blessed are those who keep my ways. Hear instruction and be wise, and do not disdain it. Blessed is the man who listens to me, watching daily at my gates, [waiting](#) at the posts of my doors. For whoever finds me finds life, and obtains favor from the Lord; but he who sins against me wrongs his own soul; all those who hate me [love](#) death. ([Proverbs 8: 32-36](#))

Bluntly stated, Wisdom's sage and exhortative counsel is, "Listen carefully and apply what I tell you diligently. If you do not, but instead live a life of sin, then the conclusion of the matter is that, in reality, you love death rather than life." Since our calling, have we ever pictured ourselves as loving death? Those who do not consciously and purposefully direct their lives by faith toward obedience to [God](#) in reality love death!

— John W. Ritenbaugh

To learn more, see:

[Living by Faith and God's Justice](#)

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