

## Spiritual Drifters (Heb 2:1-4) – 19 July 2015

As a church we're going through the Bible and we today are in the book of Hebrews. If you have your Bibles, turn with me to Hebrews and chapter 2 and this is a journey in our series called greater because this is about the supremacy- the greatness of Jesus Christ, God's Son. Hebrews chapter 2 and verses 1 to 4 will be the basis of our thinking today. There's a pastor who conducted a lunch for some 10 members who are just baptized, and he spoke to them these things, he said, 'If the church statistics are accurate in America, then this is what's going to happen to 10 of you. All 10 of you gathered here, within three years, one of you would leave the church because of a divorce. Three of you would leave the church because there's something unhappy that has happened, your feelings are hurt and you decided to go. One of you would leave because a certain disaster or tragedy would strike. Two of you would leave because of moral failure and shame, and another two of you would leave just because you're disinterested in the things of God. So out of 10 of you, if statistics are right, in- at the end of three years, only one will remain happily, faithfully serving God.'

I'm not sure if his statistics are all together accurate but it does go to show that people can leave and drift and slip away quite easily. I was looking through the baptism records of Gospel Light Christian church over the past 20 over years and it is quite sad to go through that list, seriously. To see the many names we had, but the few names in comparison, who are still believing, worshiping together. Now some of them might have migrated, some of them might have gone on to another good Bible believing church, we praise God for that. But I suspect many of them might have just left church altogether or may not even be worshiping God anymore. They sort of just drifted away. I mean I don't recall a big disaster or tragedy or catastrophe in their lives but maybe one day they just decided, 'I'm not going to church today', and that day became a week or month, and the month became a year, and the year became a decade. And my friends who I grew up with in church who are now no more in church and they will not want to talk anything about Christ.

Something happened, not that I recall, but they just drifted away. And maybe you know of friends today who are drifting, and maybe yourself. The reality of faith is drifting, or is ebbing away from you. Doubts have crept into your heart, questions arise and the reality and the relevance of faith for you is just slipping off. This is what is being addressed in Hebrews 2 and verse one where the author says, "Therefore we must pay much closer attention to what we have heard, lest (just in case, in the event that) we drift away from it."- (Hebrews 2:1 ESV) Today we're going to look at the subject of spiritual drifters. This is something all of us are vulnerable to. None of us is immune to this possibility that we might one day drift and drift and drift and eventually fall away from the living God. So this is a message that I pray you will

take heed, because it is absolutely relevant for us. You're happily worshiping, serving God today, but who knows what's going to happen in 10 years' time. See the author here, says we must pay much closer attention. He's not writing to people who've never been to church, he's not writing to people who have never heard the Bible or the message of salvation, the gospel of Jesus Christ.

He's talking to people who are part of this outward body of believers. He's writing to people who've heard, who've been to church, sat in preaching. These are people who are familiar, probably at least intellectually with the basic teachings of the Bible. In fact, he calls them, holy brothers in chapter 3 verse one [Therefore, holy brothers, you who share in a heavenly calling, consider Jesus,-?? (Hebrews 3:1 ESV)] and then in verse 12, "Take care, brothers, lest there be in any of you an evil, unbelieving heart, leading you to fall away from the living God."-(Hebrews 3:12 ESV). So this is a very solemn message.

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In fact after the first service, one of them said, "Pastor, why are you so fierce today?", I said- I thought, I didn't know I was fierce. Now I'm not trying to be fierce, but I feel the gravity of these words upon my life and upon your lives- that if you don't take this seriously, you are in real, clear and present danger of falling away from the living God. Having this evil unbelieving heart, that we would hate to have. But it's a very real threat and possibility. That's why this letter is written, therefore we must pay close attention, lest we drift drift from God. Churchgoers, church attendees you who sing, and you who listen to the preaching of God's Word, there is a danger, you may drift. You say, 'Pastor, are you sure that a Christian can drift to such an extent- he denies the faith and leaves the faith and falls away from God? Would he lose his salvation. Is it even possible?' Its a very good question and answer- affirmative from the Bible, is that if you are truly God's child, you will never lose that salvation.

You won't. You're forever his child. So, then why, does the author say there's a possibility that these holy brothers would drift away from it. Ah, you see the author here is, writing to the church at large and he thinks- he's persuaded that they all are believers, but he is also aware that there are people within the church that look like Christians, seem like Christians, flip the Bible like Christians, but they really are not born again or changed on the inside. So he is warning the Christians, he's warning the church that there can be a possibility of someone being church and eventually falling away. Not that he loses salvation but he was never saved in the first place. See, John tells us they went out from us, O, they left the church, they left the faith. Why, because they were not of us. Not that they lost it. But they were not of us, because if they had been of us they would have continued with us but they went out, that it might become plain that they are- they all are not of us. See, the author here is dealing with the reality.

A reality, I'm deeply aware of, in a congregation like this, here if I were to ask you, how many of you are believers of Jesus Christ? Many hands would shoot up, but this is the possibility: that every hand that shoots up may not represent a heart that has repented and believed and converted and changed by Jesus Christ. May not.

You see in the church, there is always this mixture of professors and possessers. I guess this is one easy way for me to help you understand, Professor here is not trough- the intellectuals, no. Professors here are people who profess they believe in Jesus, 'Oh, ten years ago, I prayed, I believed. I'm a professor'. But then we do read in the Bible that not everyone that says, 'Lord, Lord, is mine' isn't it? Jesus said, "Depart from me. I never knew you" Woah. But pastor, but Christ- I've been in church for 50 years, Gospel light for 27 years. You know all these years, I've been here. "I never knew you." "I pray." "I never knew you." "I put money and often, but-" "I never knew you." So there are people who profess, but they don't possess new life.

They thought they had. Or they've been so busy, that they think they have, but they have not, as contrast to possessers: These people who have received new life. These are the people who according to the words of Jesus- They are born again, there's a reality of God in them. Now, how you tell the two apart. When I shook your hands, I wish God would give me a- infrared eyes or something like that, to see possessor, professor, possessor, professor. It'd be so much better. But the reality is you don't really know. Its very hard to tell. When I shake your hand, I do not know whether you're a possessor or professor. Just like that I can't.

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One reliable test, which we- the Scriptures give us with regards to professors and possesses is this: Professors are people who profess Jesus, but they eventually drift. Possessers are people who profess Christ and they- and you know. Time is the test. This will stop believing. This will keep believing. How do you know if you are a possessor or professor? Well the only way you know is ask yourself, 'Are you still believing in Jesus?', because if you said you believed twenty years ago, and now you say "I don't believe in Jesus, I believe in Taoism. I believe in Buddhism. I believe in any other God" Then I know that you'll end up from us, because you're not of us. You are a professor, but you are not a possessor. Now, this is what the author to the Hebrews is writing about. Don't drift. Don't drift. Because no matter what you say about your faith, if you drift, you're in clear and present danger that you will fall away entirely from the living God. Don't sit on your presumption that your faith and your belief, and your profession years ago account.

If you stop believing, you may easily just fall away from God. That's why he urges them- in Hebrews 10, he urges them, Please "(Therefore) do not throw away your confidence, which has a great reward. [Because] (For) you have need of endurance, [keep believing], so that when you have done the will of God you may receive what is promised. For, ?Yet a little while, and the coming one will come and will not delay; but my righteous one shall live by faith, and if he shrinks back [if he drifts, if he falls away], my soul has no pleasure in him.? But we are not of those [unpersuaded of \*\*\*\*(0:12:14.9) things, he says, unpersuaded are not guys who will] who shrink back and are destroyed, but of those who have faith, [who keep believing] and preserve their souls.

-(Hebrews 10:35-39 ESV)

See, 'Once saved; always saved' can be a dangerous presumption for a professor who once truly saved- always saved: true, but you must be truly saved. How do you know if you're truly saved? If you keep believing. The perseverance of God in a Saint is not apart from the perseverance of his truth. Its true- the keeping of his faith, that he is kept in salvation. So if someone drifts and stops believing, he has shown himself to be never born again. So this is a solemn, grave warning: When you drift away from this great salvation. This great salvation- Salvation from sin, from the fires of hell, to God and heaven and a great eternal hope. This great salvation can be something you drift away from. Anyway, you say, I don't think it's so serious right? It's Okay. No it's not okay because you can be sure, this is certain, and will be done.

The point here is, since the message declared by angels proved to be reliable and every transgression or disobedience received a just retribution, how shall we escape if we neglect such a great salvation. The point is this: chapter 1, tells us the 10 Commandments were given via the Angels. And every commandment you break, you can be sure it would be punished. Your sin will find you out. It's a great reminder for us if we're tempted to sin. Now if what God said through or via the angels is so sure and steadfast, how do you think you can escape if you neglect Jesus and the good news of salvation? There is no escape, this is a question we can not answer, "How shall we escape?". Furthermore, he says this message is declared at first by the Lord Jesus and it was attested to us by those who heard while God also bore witness by signs and wonders and miracles, and so on and so forth. But the point of the author is, yes, very simple. If the 10 commandments given by the Angels are so certain, then, this gospel given by Jesus is even more certain, and knowing that it is so certain how shall you escape, if you ignore, if you neglect the gospel of Jesus and drift away from it.

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Just a side note before we move back- who wrote the book of Hebrews? Well the answer is, the answer is? Nobody knows. Of course God wrote the book of Hebrews, but human

author- nobody knows. There are some people who say it's Paul or one of the apostles. Now this verse will probably mean that it is not Paul nor any of the apostles, because it is said here, it was declared at first by the Lord and it was attested to us by those who heard. In other words, this is a secondary reception. Now, Paul received the gospel directly from God. So this verse seems to tell us, it is unlikely to be Paul. Okay, so that's the side note for those who insist the letter must be written by apostle Paul. But, don't forget, this is the point of these two verses: how shall we escape? This question posed to the angels, posed to the devil posed to the demons, posed to you, posed to me. We'll have a hard time answering. How can we escape? There's no escape.

How can we escape this great salvation? Salvation is salvation from sin, from hell to a great God, made by a great Savior. That demands a great price. The salvation that is complete, and so undeserving.. How can you escape? Look at the verses that follow. Scary to fall away from God, to fall away from the living God. This is not just about chastisement, I think this is severe language that says if you drift away you'll be damned, I put it as that: If you drift away. You will be damned, you're facing hell. So I'm not talking to Christians and saying, O if you drift away from God, God will chastise you, but you'll still end up in heaven. This is serious stuff: You drift away from God- You'll fall away from him, with this evil unbelieving heart and you will be in hell. Because it has shown that you were not saved in the first place. He goes on to say, "For if we go on sinning deliberately after receiving the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins, [there's no more hope for you] but a fearful expectation of judgment, [not of chastisement, but judgement] and a fury of fire that will consume the adversaries."[,not the sons.]

-(Hebrews 10:26-27 ESV)

Strong. But that's what this letter is all about: the Christians, at least outwardly, they have left Judaism to follow Jesus, but because of pressures, persecutions, they are tempted to leave Christ and go back to their ways and the author says, if you leave, if you drift, "How shall you escape the great salvation?" This is what you may expect: a fearful expectation of judgment. Goes on- how much worse punishment do you think will be deserved by the one who trampled underfoot the Son of God? If you leave Christ, you're trampling on your feet, Jesus and the blood of the covenant- you've profaned it and you've outraged the spirit of grace. Those who know and those who drift are in a very, very, serious position but we are not of those who shrink back and are destroyed, but of those who have faith and preserve their souls. So how shall we escape?

So, spiritual drifters. Who are they? Church going people who have drifted away from the gospel, from the message of salvation. Their direction is drifting away from God, away from the hope of heaven to sin and to hell. That's the truth. That's the picture

given here. The question is 'Why drift?' Why would someone drift? Very simple. The word here is 'neglect', 'neglect'. Why would a church go away- drift from Christ? Does he have to do something spectacular, to drift? No, this is the amazing thing: If you're not aware of it, if you do nothing, you will drift. MacArthur, he says, "Hell is undoubtedly full of people who were not actively opposed to Jesus Christ but who simply drifted into damnation [I mean they're not saying Jesus is bad, they're not saying Jesus is evil, or they're not saying Jesus is fake. They say Jesus is real! Jesus is good, Jesus came to save, Jesus helps us. Jesus died for us. But if they do nothing, they do not] (by neglecting to) respond to the Gospel", they do not keep believing in Him. If you do nothing- you hear all this, you will simply drift into damnation. All you need to do to go to hell is, do nothing. What must I do to be saved? believe in Jesus. What must I do to be lost? Nothing. You're gonna be lost. See, if you come to church, you go through the motions but you're not responding to the gospel, you think you will remain status quo. No. But the point is that you will remain status quo. You say you believe today. But if you're not doing something, you're going to drift. Because the Christian life is not lived on a lake, you know lake just a tranquil, peaceful windless lake.

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You put a boat there, the boat is just obviously going to float around, and is going to remain at probably the same place if there is no wind. We think life- the Christian life is like that: I'm right here, right now believing Jesus and I think I can do nothing about it, and 10 years later, I'll still find myself here. A lake kind of a life. But, no, the Christian life is not lived on the lake. The Christian life is lived on the river. You are right now, in this second- this river is going to sweep you downstream and if you do nothing, you will drift, with the floor- with the currents, downstream further and further and further away from God. What do you need to do to drift from God. Nothing. The river of life will sweep you there, just like a couple. You know a couple, they quarrel and they say, "I've had enough. I'm going to divorce." Why'd you divorce? Well, we just drifted apart. When did you drift apart? I don't know, we did nothing.

That's exactly the point, you drifted apart because you did nothing. Why do we drift from God? Because we neglect Him, we did nothing. See, the road to hell is paved with good intentions, cause you - you have good intentions coming to church today, probably. A good intention to be part of this congregation. You say, Jesus is God, I need to follow him, but maybe later. I've all the good intentions, but later because I'm so busy. Because there's so many things in my life, because I'll wait for my mum to come to Christ, I'll wait for this.. and you fail to respond, to repent and believe in Jesus, you fail to respond and you know what? Hell will be filled with people, probably with good intentions. Why, I thought I would believe one day, but you drift. People seldom lose their faith by a blowout, it is usually a slow leak.

You come to church and something just gets blurrer and blurrer for you. The reality of faith is not so vibrant and tangible. I guess if doubts creep into your heart, in the mind, and after a while you just leave it all, you leave church, I've seen that over and over again, even in our church. Not a major blowout, but a slow leak. So, what do you have to do? Well, we come to an end, and it says here- the end comes back to verse one, I do not want to be long on the problem and short on the remedy. The remedy is a very simple one. Therefore we must pay much closer attention. I like the word here that- the Greek word is a nautical word. It's a word used by sailors. It is a word that means to pull the ship to more- to anchor the ship. See the ship has been sailing, drifting, so the author says, it is time for it to be anchored, mow it down. Pay attention, to anchor your thoughts, your thinking, your contemplation down in Jesus and the message of the gospel. Don't drift away from it. But anchor it.

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Did you notice that this verse is the very first command in the book of Hebrews, first command, first call to action. I was in our CG, we were discussing sermons, and I found it so difficult to discuss the sermons because there's nothing to do. In chapter 1: nothing to talk about what I can do because the point of the author is not for you to do anything in chapter 1, he's laying out the fact, then in chapter 2, he says this is what you need to do, because Jesus is so much greater. There is no escape if you neglect this salvation. So all the more, therefore, you must pay attention to Jesus, pay attention to the message of the gospel, pay attention to the gospel of Christ. First call, first thing. What's the first thing for the Christian? I know, pastor, after he's saved, must let himself do this, do that- I think service is wonderful. It is necessary, it's a part of the Christian life.

When we love God, we fully would serve God. But I say the first call is to pay attention to Jesus every day of your life. Piper, he says, "The Christian life is first and foremost a life of contemplation, listening to Jesus, considering Jesus, fixing the eyes of the heart on Jesus. Everything else in the Christian life grows out of this. Without this the Christian life is unlivable, simply unlivable." And almost un-un-un-un-unbelievable. It's unlivable. Get that. The Christian life is not primarily working as much as it is watching, not so much laboring until you first listen, and you look, because I've seen so many Christians after their professed faith in Christ, there is no journey of walking and helping them grow and they are thrown into some ministry. They suffer, and after three months' labor, they say, I hate Christianity. God is so unreal to me. Christian people are so mean to me. It's not real. I want to quit. I'll leave.

No, surely there's a better way for the church to encourage people and really, the only reason why people would serve faithfully is not because we are so nice, and so on and so forth only, but that they have a wonderful relationship with Jesus and they've spent

time listening, learning, fixing their eyes on Jesus. So many Marthas, so few Marys. And this is the culture we live in, a culture where everything is about productivity, how much you do and people may know you by how many ministries you're in, what ministry are you serving in, la? Wah, 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 -A good Christian. That's our assumption, the guy who prays all day, we say is a waste of time. The guy that reads the Bible all-time: waste of time. It's better to serve- No, it is good to serve, but it is vital to root yourself in Jesus Christ. That's why in the preaching ministry here in this church, I endeavor and I pray that our ministries will be preaching Jesus. You know what Paul said?

I determined to know nothing amongst you but Jesus and Him crucified. The cross. The message- the centrality of it all. It's not about five tips on how you can get rich, or three ways you can overcome your worries, now that has its proper place and time, but the focus and what the soul needs is that we must never neglect, so great a salvation. Let your ships that have been drifting come to shore, mow it, anchor it in Christ, love Him, value Him treasure Him, and your soul will be refreshed and out of that abiding there will be the abundance. Out of that Mary's heart will come Martha's hands. That's why I say as our church would pray, we will preach Christ every week. Go straight for our Savior, and you will see the wonders of our Lord. Everything else dims as we see the brightness of his glory. We'll see His love, His sacrifice, His greatness, His splendor. We'll see the amazing price He has to pay, the blood that was shed, the forgiveness we've received, the adoption or sonship, the redemption from sin, the justification, all we want to see, and our souls and our hearts will be thrilled. Christian life will never be the same, if this is what we are doing.

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But friends it's not just Sunday. It's also every day, fixing your eyes on Jesus. I say to those who are even busy in ministry, now if you are busy at work, you feel guilty about it, but those who are busy in ministry, you can also be guilty. If you're so busy doing things for God, but you have left your first love, in not spending time with God: listening and learning of Him. I say that's why you need to be in care groups, because in care groups you allow yourself to pay attention together, to encourage one another. My friends, as I say this is such a severe warning: Because we all can be guilty, one day of taking salvation like, taking the message of the gospel flippantly. It may describe you, it may describe you. Pay attention to God and his word, Jesus and the gospel. Would you? You know, I can see people drift in church, you know that. First I see it in your head and then I see it in your hands, as the preaching goes on, you do this. And then, I see, sometimes nods of approval, even when I'm saying something that you don't understand.



And then I see people drift their legs, they were here, front row, then third row, I'm not saying those at the back are drifting. But I'm saying that if you started here and over the course of months, you drift to the back and eventually outside the hall; I know you're drifting. And I-though I say it in jest, in a sense, funny way, but it is real. I've seen our church members who were active, serving, worshipping, they might now be outside there. Those watching video- it's okay and mothers' corner, that's fine, and then some would then move beyond that to the refreshment corner, and then I don't get to see them anymore. What happened? Nothing. I don't recall them arguing, I don't recall them having some disaster. But absolutely, they did nothing. The preaching goes on, but they're neglecting something and they drift.

My friends, how your heart listens, is so important. I tell you, a worship service is work- You know that? 'Ah of course Pastor you're working, you're preaching.' No I say, worship service is work for you. You have to work at paying attention because sometimes the preacher can be very boring and- 'But, I still must work in the \*\*\*(0:33:59.7)' So it's work! A worship service, is working to listen attentively. It's your responsibility, don't blame it on the preacher all the time. It's your part to play in order to anchor the ship of your soul to Jesus. My friends, are you too busy today as well? It's just sad. We're so overwhelmed by what we think we're doing right, we think, 'I'm such a productive person. I engage in so many things, including ministry and ah! God must pleased!' Hey, be careful. Be careful, because if you're surrounded by noise and distractions, you don't have the ability to pay attention to Jesus and His word. This might describe some of us today and I pray it will send a word of grace into your soul to turn back to God.

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I end with this story of a man named Robert. Robert came to hear the gospel when he was just 20 years old, under the preaching of a great preacher called George Whitefield, hundreds of years ago. Robert got saved. He eventually became a pastor and he wrote hymns. But soon he neglected his spiritual life. Now, a pastor, can neglect his spiritual life, all of us can, if we're not paying attention. So Robert neglected his spiritual life and he drifted from God. He drifted to such an extent, he quit his pastoral ministry. He stopped writing hymns. He was miserable on the inside and he went to travel around the world, so that he could find some peace within his soul. One day he was in a wagon and there was a lady beside him, and the lady was singing a hymn and the lady was so excited about the hymn, was showing people around, and showed him, and asked him, 'What do you think about this hymn? Come, thou fount of every blessing, Tune my heart to sing thy grace.' Robert Robinson immediately recognized- it was the hymn that he had written years ago.

He said to her, 'Ma'am, I'm the unhappy man who wrote this hymn, and I will give a 1000 worlds, to get back what I had then; but I'm afraid it is all too late. I've drifted too far from God' The lady then said to him, 'But sir, look at these words you wrote: Streams of mercy never ceasing.' My friends, today, there is always a way back to our God. Today. The author was saying in Hebrews chapter 3, today, today- right now, you're not too late, today if you will hear his voice, and harden not your heart. Your father's streams of mercy never ceases. He's calling out to you today. Would you come back to the great God, who loved you and gave His Son for you. Let's bow for a word of prayer together.

Spiritual drifters: Prone to wander, Lord, I feel it. Prone to leave the God I love, Here's my heart, O, take and seal it. Seal it for thy courts above. We are such wanderers, we are such drifters, and if there's nothing done in our lives, we're going to drift further and further and further from God. If you're not going to do anything about what you hear today, you're going to neglect your salvation. Don't sit on that false presumption that 'you believed 10 years ago- You are definitely a child of God, even if you fall away'. My friends true possessers are those who endure until the end. True possessers are those who keep believing. True believers are those who will not shrink back. True believers will not neglect their salvation.

So, this morning God is calling out to you, your father, your Lord, your King, your Savior who paid the price that all your sins deserve. He's calling out to you. Do not be ashamed to come back to me. I've paid it all in My Son. You can come back because the streams of mercy are still flowing. It's flowing to many hearts, and may flow also into yours. You are drifting, you have been so distracted by the cares and affairs and the noises of this world. Would you this morning, be still and know that He is God?

Would you today pay much closer attention? Anchor your soul in Christ. What joy you used to have, what peace and what assurance, what communion with God. It is all possible because He's a God of mercy today. My brothers I'm persuaded of better things for you. I pray every hand I shake, will not be a professor but a possessor. And you can make sure of that today coming back to Jesus. If you're here today for the first time, the message of the Bible, though it includes the 10 Commandments, it is not primarily about the 10 Commandments. The 10 commandments are added to show us our sinfulness and hopelessness. But the crown jewel of the Christian message is Jesus and Him crucified.

That we who are hopeless and helpless can find our all in Jesus, God's own Son. This is the great salvation, the Bible talks about. That before the foundations of the world, Jesus is determined to be slain for your sins, and my sins, that Jesus would take all your

sin, past, present, future. Jesus would pay all, and we would live in joy with Him for ever and ever. What a great salvation: away from sin, away from hell, to know God.

Don't neglect this; we've heard it today, you can respond by repenting and believing in Jesus. Believe that He is God's Son, believe that He has come as man. Believe that He is our Savior, our sacrifice. Believe that he is your substitute. Believe that He rose again. Believe that if you confess with your heart and with your mouth that He is the Lord and God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. When you believe that, genuine. God gives you new birth, new life.

And how do you know if you have this new life? this new birth? You will keep working. You will work out your salvation with fear and trembling. You will not take this message lightly. Jesus will be your treasure. He will be your treasure, He'll be your friend, you will love Him. So, come, come to the foot of the Cross, it all starts there.

Father, thank You this morning, speak to our hearts. Grant Your people grace to respond to the gospel, and again we say those words in the song: Prone to wander, Lord, I feel it. Prone to leave the God I love. Here's my heart, O, take and seal it. Seal it for thy courts above. We ask in Jesus' Name.