The Slow Drift

When you have eaten and are satisfied, praise the Lord your God for the good land He has given you. Be careful that you do not forget the Lord your God. (Deuteronomy 8:10–11)

I was reading a Wall Street Journal article about the increase in stock issuances and insider selling.

Experienced investors know that periods of widespread optimism often encourage companies to raise capital while valuations are high. Seasoned investors pay attention to those kinds of tea leaves because they remind us that no bull market lasts forever.

It also reminded me of a famous Wall Street story.

There's an old anecdote that Joseph P. Kennedy Sr. knew it was time to sell his stocks when the man who shined his shoes began enthusiastically giving him investment advice.

Whether the story happened exactly that way isn't really the point. The lesson is timeless. When everyone believes they're an expert, it's often a sign that confidence has begun replacing wisdom.

Around that same time, I overheard someone confidently explaining how they were managing

other people's investments. Knowing their lack of financial background, I couldn't help but think how a prolonged bull market can make almost anyone feel like an investing genius.

When nearly every dart you throw hits the board, it's easy to mistake favorable conditions for exceptional ability. Bull markets have a subtle way of distancing us from the basics. Then my mind drifted to another scene I'll never forget.

Jordan Spieth stood on the 12th tee at Augusta National during the final round of the 2016 Masters with what appeared to be a comfortable lead. He looked composed. The tournament seemed all but over. Then, within minutes, two golf balls found Rae's Creek.

Everything changed. Golf has a way of exposing us when we drift from the fundamentals. A sound grip, proper alignment, good tempo, and complete focus never stop mattering. Success can make us think we've outgrown the basics, but pressure has a way of reminding us that we never do.

The stock market and the game of golf have something in common. They both have a way of humbling us the moment we begin believing today's conditions are guaranteed to continue tomorrow.

As I reflected on those stories, I realized they weren't about investing or golf. They were about me.

How often have I mistaken God's present blessings for my own competence? How often have I quietly assumed that because life is going well today, it will naturally go well tomorrow?

Prosperity has a subtle way of distancing us from the very basics that keep us close to God. Prayer becomes less urgent. Time in His Word becomes less consistent. Humility quietly gives way to self-reliance. We don't usually abandon the basics. We simply drift from them.

Moses understood this long before Wall Street and Amen Corner existed. As Israel prepared to enter the Promised Land, he didn't warn them primarily about hardship. He warned them about abundance. "When you have eaten and are satisfied, praise the Lord your God for the good land He has given you. Be careful that you do not forget the Lord your God…" - Deuteronomy 8:10–11.

The greatest danger wasn't that Israel would stop believing in God. It was that they would slowly stop depending on Him.

That's the slow drift!

It rarely begins with rebellion. It begins with success. It begins when we slowly trade dependence for confidence, the Giver for His gifts, and the basics that anchored us for the illusion that we've somehow outgrown them.

Amazingly, the real danger was never losing what I had. It was forgetting Who gave it to me.

Prayer: Father, please remind me that every good and perfect gift comes from You. Whether life is flourishing or difficult, keep my heart anchored in You alone. Amen

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The Links Daily Devotional appears Monday-Friday at linksplayers.com.