

Great Salvation

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[0 : 00] Can we turn this morning again to this letter to the Hebrews and looking particularly at the second chapter and selecting from there some words that I think may be fairly well-known words.

The question at the beginning of verse 3, the question is, how shall we escape if we ignore such a great salvation?

How shall we escape if we ignore such a great salvation? Now in reading these words you will recognize that the beginning of chapter 2 indeed that follows also is a natural continuation of what we have in chapter 1.

Of what we were looking at last week of the person of Jesus of being superior. Superior to all other persons and all other beings.

Equal only to God himself because he is God. Therefore the argument is, we must listen to Jesus.

[1 : 18] We must listen to Jesus. So I want to press home that particular truth this morning because that is exactly how this letter is laid out.

It is taking that truth and it is pressing it home. I want us to look at three things that we have in this brief passage.

I want us to look first of all at what the writer describes as a greatness of our salvation. I want us to look then at the seriousness of ignoring that salvation.

And lastly I want us to look at the need to pay attention to that salvation. Now can I say just before we go any further that these words are addressed first of all, but not only, to professing Christians. Their first application is not as an evangelistic appeal to the unbelieving, to the unconverted. Their first application is to those who profess to be followers of the Lord Jesus Christ.

[2 : 33] And yet also, they are of necessity, make that appeal to every person. Because the question rings true for all.

How shall we escape if we ignore such a great salvation? What is this salvation?

What does the writer mean by the greatness of this salvation? Why does he state it like this at all? I think it is because we are in great danger of underestimating the salvation that has been given to us in Jesus Christ.

That is really the whole undercurrent, the whole background, the whole theme of this letter. That it is written simply to people, even professing Christian people, who are likely to underestimate the value of the salvation that has been given them through Jesus Christ.

How great our salvation is. Let us look at it. Let us think about it, even in outline, because that is all we can do this morning. I want us to think, first of all, of how great a preparation there was for our salvation.

[3 : 55] This was something that began before the world was ever made. God planned out his way of salvation. Before there was any atoms, molecules, or any lumps of clay or planets rolling around the universe.

This was a salvation that even the man that God had placed in his own image on planet earth, when he rebelled against him and sinned and fell, God still promised to this same man that he would carry out his salvation for his people.

We see it shortly afterwards, even when the whole world was an outward rebellion against God.

When God entered into a covenant with Noah to save the world and a seed if we have.

We see it when God entered into an even stronger and more specific covenant with Abraham to save a people to himself, through which all nations of the world would be blessed.

God gave through Moses the law, which were the exact stipulations of heaven for how God's people should live on earth.

[5 : 28] And God sent his prophets one after another through the stages of history to reinforce and to apply the law that he sent from above for our good.

Now all this was part of what I call the great preparation. It was not an end in itself, it was leading towards something. It was coming to a fulfillment. And that fulfillment was in the person of Jesus Christ.

What we have here specifically stated, what we want to catch a view of is this. It is the great saviour. Because that is all that the covenants and the law and the prophets are heading towards. It is the revealing of the Son of God in this world. It is Jesus Christ sent from God. A great saviour. God sent his own Son. Born of a woman. Born under the law. God sent his Son compelled by love.

[6 : 40] In order to die for sinners. God sent his Son. God sent his Son who though he died was raised again in the power of an endless life.

And this Son has ascended to the right hand of God's own presence in heaven. And this Son has been crowned. Yes, with many crowns already.

Because he is the King. He has been given a name that is above every other name. So that at the name of Jesus, every knee should bow. A great saviour.

As we saw last week, this letter shows us Jesus in all his glory, in all his work. He is a prophet. He is speaking to us.

A great prophet. Greater than any other. He is a priest who has entered into the very presence of God for us. A great priest. Greater than any other. And he is a king.

[7 : 40] He is ruling at the right hand of God. A great king. King over all other kings. The name of Jesus. He is a great saviour.

What we have specifically stated for us here, when you look at verses 1 to 4 of chapter 2, is this. It is the great announcement that is made.

Now, this is important. Because what a writer is saying is that we are to listen to a message. We are to listen to what God is saying. We are to listen simply because Jesus himself came and first of all preached the gospel.

He was the first gospel preacher in this world. Listen to him. Therefore, he is superior to all other prophets.

And there were great prophets who declared the inside story of God's will to men. But there was none greater than Jesus. He is superior to all the angelic hosts, say, the variety of God's angel messengers that surround his throne and serve him continuously.

[8 : 51] He is greater than Jesus. Therefore, listen to Jesus. Listen for this reason. Because Jesus is greater than Moses.

The gospel that is preached to us in these days is greater than a law that was given to Moses and through Moses to the God's people in the Old Testament. It is more crucial.

And this message, this announcement was confirmed by apostles. Many people will say, well, if only I had been around when Jesus was going about Galilee, preaching and doing miracles.

Oh, I would be convinced. I would believe. I would follow him with all my heart. But it is exactly the same gospel that we have, as Jesus preached in the Sermon on the Mount.

It was confirmed to all the world through the apostles. And then from then descended down in apostolic succession. We believe in apostolic succession in our church.

[9 : 54] Because it was the same gospel that has come down to us as the apostles received from Christ and passed on to us. Confirmed by the apostles.

Testified to by God himself. Now, if somebody tells you something and you wonder, well, is this really true or not? Maybe I want a second opinion on this. I want some backup.

I want to be convinced. Well, God convinced the world that the message that the apostles were preaching was the message of Christ. The message of God. Because it was testified to by God himself.

He sent signs and he sent wonders and he sent various miracles. And he demonstrated beyond necessary proof. And this was of God.

He gave gifts of the Holy Spirit according to his own will. He distributed them through the church. And he still does this. The Holy Spirit is active in this giving of salvation.

[10 : 56] To confirm that this is God's salvation. Now remember this. And this is really the point of the message. That the gospel that we have heard.

Not just today, but the gospel you have heard all your life. Wherever you have heard it. If it is the gospel of Christ. Is just as great. As the gospel.

As the gospel. That these Hebrew Christians received. It is just as great as the gospel that the apostles themselves preached or received. It is just as great as the gospel that Jesus himself declared.

Because it is the same gospel. Therefore we should pay attention to what Jesus is saying. Because we should hear the gospel.

As if it were from the very lips of Christ himself. It is easy I believe. To say that I didn't care much for that minister. And that preacher wasn't really up to sort of normal standards.

[11 : 58] Or to what I would hope for or expect. That may be. Because preachers are very fallible creatures. But remember this. If they preach the truth. If they preach the gospel.

It is the same gospel as Jesus ever had. There is only one. It is a great announcement. This message of the gospel. It is a great achievement.

This salvation that God has shown to us and has given to us. Is a great achievement. It does so much. What does it do? It saves us from great sins.

You know there is no person in the world. That can say that Jesus holds out no hope of rescue for them. Except the person who utterly and repeatedly refuses to have anything to do with Jesus.

I believe that that is a sin against the Holy Spirit. It is when we argue against the strivings of the Spirit itself. To such a degree. But otherwise apart from that.

[13 : 07] There is every kind of sin. There is a sin that may be cancelled. That may be forgiven. Through Jesus Christ. This salvation is a salvation.

That saves from a great and a terrible hell. Now let us remember that. I think often. As a church. Never mind us non-Christians.

But even as Christian people. We lose sight of the reality. Of a lost eternity. And what that in fact means. But God speaks very plainly.

In his word about these things. We do not have to conjecture. Vivid dramatic things. That are purely out of our own imagination. God has shown us sufficient. Of the horrors of a lost eternity.

To be aware of it. And the whole point of his salvation is this. That it delivers us. It saves us. From a great and a terrible hell. This salvation is so great.

[14 : 15] Because it saves us. Not only from something. But to. It saves us to a great life. And a great glory. You know that is the one thing that the Christian possesses.

That they have a life at all. But that their life is so great. Jesus says. I have come that you might have life. That you might have it more fully. More abundantly. And every Christian has.

If only they would realize it for themselves. And that we have before us. An even greater glory yet. It has not yet been revealed to us.

All that shall be ours. When we share the glory. That Christ has gone to prepare for us. Remember this.

Whenever we speak about this great salvation. It cost a great price. If there was a great love involved.

[15 : 12] A love so wide. So deep. It is impossible to measure it. No matter how you try. It is beyond our comprehension. That Christ loved the way he loved so much.

Lost sinners and a lost world. But he did it. A great love. And with great self-denial. He turned his back on his home and glory and all that was his by right.

To come into this world of sin and shame. To identify with us. Not as respectable human beings. But to identify with us as sinners. And that is the greatness of his self-denial.

He took nothing here that he called his own. He didn't even have a house to stay in. That was his.

And a home address. He was of no fixed abode. He didn't have his own transport to run about.

And he had to borrow anything he ever used. He was a man who showed great self-denial. He was one who experienced great sufferings.

[16 : 16] That my friends is a subject all on its own. And one that would go beyond any single sermon. How much Christ has gone through in order to redeem his lost people to himself.

And it was a gospel in which he displayed great miracles. We have evidence before us that in the person of Jesus we have all the power that is there.

It was the power that was demonstrated. So that we may be convinced that Jesus is able to save us. And able to save to the uttermost all that come to God through him.

A great achievement. Now there is only one thing to say about this great salvation. It's this. That when you measure these achievements.

Against anything else that this world has ever accomplished. Or that is recorded in our history books. Or is even likely yet to be invented. You know these are the greatest things that have ever happened in this world.

[17 : 26] And they are of the greatest importance therefore. To the world. Though they do not consider them important. That they ought to. They are of the greatest importance.

To you and me personally. Because this is not only such a great salvation. People might wish to misread or misinterpret that verse.

And say well it's a great salvation. But maybe there is another way. Maybe we can come to God some other way. Maybe we can satisfy ourselves. Maybe we can find glory at last.

By some other root. Well there is no other salvation. That is the part. That's how great the salvation is. It is the only one. There is no other name given under heaven amongst men.

Through whom we can be saved. But the name of Jesus. No other name. And either you are saved by Christ. Or you are not saved at all.

[18 : 28] No. This is such a great salvation. Now let me ask this question.

Do you have it for yourself? Do you possess it? Is it your own? Are you saved? The greatness of our salvation.

Now that is really the basis on which this writer speaks. And addresses us. He turns then. To see this. The seriousness.

Of ignoring. This salvation. Now what does it mean to ignore. This salvation. What does it mean to ignore anything? It is simply to forget about it.

To treat it as if it didn't really matter too much. It is like the boat. That I was showing to the children. Or the broken toy. Or the escaped hamster. Or whatever it may be. Something we treat casually.

[19 : 29] And carelessly. And trivially. That we don't bother about. We simply ignore it. We don't give attention to it. But remember. That this word is addressed.

Firstly. To Christian people. To professing Christians. It is that they. The writer is saying. They may lose their interest.

In the gospel. You know we can become indifferent. As Christians. As people who say that we possess this great salvation.

We may become indifferent. To the gospel itself. Simply because it is so familiar to us. Sometimes when we open our Bibles.

Or perhaps we are along in the church. And we are listening to the chapter being read. Or a sermon starting up. It is. Oh well I have heard all this before. We are sort of saying to ourselves.

[20 : 27] Well we wouldn't say it perhaps to anyone else. I know all this. And you know there is that little voice. That speaks inside us. And tells us. We close our ears. We don't bother to. In gather anymore.

We don't become attentive to the word. And it is this familiarity. That breeds contempt. It is this contempt.

That hatches apathy. In the Christian life. And in the Christian community. And it is this apathy. That leads to total carelessness. About where we are as Christians.

What our profession amounts to. Are we really Christians at all. That we bother to stop and examine ourselves. You see it may be. That our ignoring of the gospel.

Comes simply as a result. Of the pressures of the world. In which we live. That we become so engrossed. In our day by day work. And the calls it makes to us.

[21 : 26] And the pressures it puts on us. That the gospel becomes something else. And something secondary. And something not so important. It may be.

As Christians I say. Or as professing Christians at least. That we become attracted. So much by life's pleasures. And there are plenty attractions in the world.

That we get so involved. With something very innocently. And things not wrong in themselves. But they become so much the preoccupation.

Of our minds and of our lives. And of our whole way of life. That the gospel itself loses its importance. Its sense of priority. Among us.

And the message of the gospel. Doesn't make its impact. It passes us by. You know I'm saying this about professing Christians.

[22 : 23] But this is also surely a word to non-Christians. It's a word to any person at all. Whoever hears the message of salvation.

I think. You ought not to be put off. By people. Well intentioned. Christian people. Perhaps will tell you. Ah but this letter was written to Christians.

Don't you worry about anything that says here. Because this is a word for you as well. Just as much. By necessary deduction. You see.

You may not be a person. Who openly rejects the gospel. You may not be like. The very few people. That we have met in this town. When we're going round door to door. And you knock on the door. And usually people are at least polite.

And pleasant. And perhaps very interested in who you are. And what you're doing. And they'll receive your. Whatever you have to offer. There are one or two people. You have no interest in the church. So much so. That they want to slam the door.

[23 : 19] Right in your face. As soon as they know. That you represent any church. Now they may have good reasons for it. But some people will reject Christ. Out of hand. Very openly. Very plainly.

But you may not be like that. At all. We're not suggesting you are. We're only suggesting. That when you hear the gospel. You simply switch off.

That come eleven o'clock. Or is it half past eleven. When the actual sermon starts. There's part of you that just switches off. You don't want to listen anymore. Now that's all that it takes.

To let the message of the gospel bypass. You give little attention to what Jesus Christ is saying.

Through the gospel preached. You ignore it.

Now what are the consequences of this? The consequences of ignoring the salvation. Are twofold really. First. First. That we drift away.

[24 : 20] From the gospel. You know. It's like that boat. That I was telling you about. In Margaret's hometown of Rock Kilpit. Setting it in the water. And the tide coming. And carrying it further out.

Than I could reach. Now in a sense. We are like that. With the gospel. That we drift away. From the gospel. Simply because.

We do not give attention to it. You know this letter here. Is called by John Owen. One of the greatest Puritan writers. He calls it. The letter of warnings.

Or the epistle of warnings. Because it is interspersed. Quite fully. With these various warnings. And chiefly. It is a warning against.

Back sliding. Of going away. From God. For that.

[25 : 15] To anyone who has ever seen. A Christian. Back sliding. Or to anyone who has ever been. A Christian. Back sliding.

That is the most. Terrible. Thing. And yet. It doesn't happen. Intentionally. It doesn't happen.

Because we work hard. At it. It happens so easily. It happens so. Quietly. And it happens amazingly quickly.

We go back from Christ. We drift away. We forget the things of the gospel. We lose their importance and their power. And our spiritual life may be destroyed within us.

Not by any great sin. Not by any great sin that we've gone undone. But simply because we have ignored it. What Jesus is saying to us. In the message of the gospel. The person.

[26 : 18] The person. Can I emphasize this. The person. Who professes Christ. They. May ignore the gospel. They may drift. They.

May back slide. What is the second thing that happens as a consequence. It is this. Plainly put by the writer here.

That we earn the just punishment of God. Now remember. That we are dealing here with a God. Who is the same God as in the Old Testament. And so he is revealed to us all.

But he is a God who is still a consuming fire. He is a God who is holy. And a God who is just. And a God who must deal with people on the basis of that justice.

Now the argument. If you read it through carefully again. When you go home. In verses 1 to 4 of chapter 2. Is this. But if our failure.

[27 : 16] If failure in the Old Testament. By the people there to attend to the law. Well given to Moses. If that earned punishment. And it did earn punishment.

How much more therefore. Not how much less. People think because we are living in the gospel age. And the New Testament age. That God's law is of no particular importance. And certainly that his.

His character of judgment is no longer there. But it is not less. It is more. How much more. For those who do not listen to the gospel. And do not follow the gospel. For what have they done? They have not simply turned their backs on Moses. Or created a golden calf. Because Moses and God have left them for 40 days. They have done far worse. They have turned their back on the Son of God. They have ignored the most superior person in the universe. They have ignored the own saviour. [28 : 16] They have forgotten about the only way of salvation there is. The consequences then. Must be worse. Than any law breaker.

Under the old covenant. The question that the writer puts here is this. Only. How shall we escape? No he doesn't answer that question.

He doesn't go on to explain. The details of what we deserve. He doesn't say that at all. The very opposite. He leaves it to ourselves. It is one of these questions that answers itself. How shall we escape? If we ignore such a great salvation. Well the answer is this. That we don't. We cannot. It is impossible.

But that is how vital this whole matter is. That we ignore it. We not only drift away and backslide. [29 : 13] But we earn the just punishment. Of a holy God. Therefore I want to say this as I finish. The need to pay attention.

That is the real call of this part of the scripture. The need to pay attention. That is to listen to Jesus. Are you listening to Jesus?

Do you take Jesus seriously? When he is speaking? You see it is not only to hear the gospel. That is one thing. But it is to do what it says.

That the children of Israel. They heard the law through Moses. They knew what it was. But their whole problem. Right down the succeeding centuries was this. They didn't keep it. They didn't put it into practice.

And it is easy enough to listen to the gospel. To listen to what Jesus is saying. But it is actually to do it. It is to respond positively to what Jesus is saying. And what he is saying is good.

[30 : 15] It is always good. But remember this. The gospel will only do us good if it is applied to ourselves. If we stick it on to our own lives as it fits.

And this is true of me as a preacher of any minister of the gospel. It is no use if I preach the gospel. I may preach the gospel and at the end myself be a cuss the way. Unless I apply it to my own life. And live it out in my own life. It is so for the elders and the leaders of the church. Unless they take the gospel and say, well that was a good word for so and so in the flock. They have to take it to themselves and apply it to themselves.

So does every Christian. Unless we apply it. It would do us no good at all. Indeed it may do us a lot of harm. Now remember what he says.

Pay attention. But we need to pay more careful attention. Or the most careful attention is really the meaning of the word.

[31 : 20] You see what he is saying here. Is that this whole matter of listening to Jesus. Is a matter of the utmost priority. And of urgent discipline.

We encourage you. As we were saying in the intimation this morning. We encourage you to be regular in the hearing of the word. In the services. Both on Sunday.

And midweek. And wherever you get the chance. We encourage you to be attentive in the hearing of the word privately. In reading your own scriptures. And any helpful devotional aids that you can find.

Because hearing the gospel is of tremendous importance. Not as an end in itself. And let's remember that. It's of great importance in order to stop us from drifting.

And in order to develop our Christian lives. So that we may go on with Jesus. And grow with Jesus. You know.

[32 : 25] Many people. Reject this gospel. Almost out of hand. Almost before they get. Give it a chance to have a hearing. They may reject this salvation.

But others are lost. Not because they're rejected in that way. Simply because they neglect it. Can I ask you this question as I finish?

It's really two questions. One of. The first one doesn't come from the Bible. But it's really important. As if important as if it did.

What must I do to be lost? The answer.

Is nothing at all. Simply. Ignore Christ. And ignore the gospel. Do nothing. The other question is this.

[33 : 27] What must I do to be saved? And the answer is with the question in the Bible. In Acts. Chapter 16. Believe.

In the Lord Jesus Christ. And you. Will be saved. So that's Jesus word. To you. It comes perhaps through the apostle.

It comes very second hand perhaps to you. But it's Jesus only word. Of how you can. And must be saved. Pay attention to him. Pay attention to his gospel.

Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ. Have this great salvation. It's yours for asking. It's yours for trusting. Have it.

And hold on to it. Because if we don't have it. And if we don't hold on to it. The other question is this. How shall you escape?

[34 : 25] Not anybody else. But personally. What's your answer? How shall you escape? If you neglect. If you ignore. Such.

A great salvation. May God bless his truth to us. Shall we bow our heads. In a word of prayer. Lord. Lord. For such. A great salvation. And for such a great gospel. For such a great savior.

We praise your name. We ask. We ask. We ask. We ask. We ask. Oh Lord. That by your own great power. And your working in us. That you would not allow us.

To forget. To ignore. What you're saying to us. But Lord. May we give it all our attention. So that we would have your salvation.

[35 : 21] That we would rejoice in it. And that we would live by it. Now and always. For Jesus sake. Amen.