

How shall we escape

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[0 : 00] Let us turn now to consider words you will find in the passage read in the epistle to the Hebrews chapter 2.

We might read at the beginning of the chapter, Hebrews chapter 2, Therefore we are to give the more earnest heed to the things which we have heard, lest at any time we should let them slip. For if the word spoken by angels was steadfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just recompense of reward, how shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation, which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them that heard him? Especially these words, how shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation? In the first few chapters of this letter, the writer is showing the superiority of Jesus over Moses and Aaron, over the Levitical priesthood, and over the angels.

And he infers from what he has said, that since Jesus Christ is essentially and officially inconceivably superior to these heavenly messengers, the angels, that therefore this message which speaks about him and his claims, that that message has paramount claim on our attention, on our belief, and on our obedience.

[2 : 08] We ought, therefore he says, to attend to what is said about him and by him. And he sort of clinches his argument there by making reference to what happened in the Old Testament with reference to people's disobedience to and neglect of the law of God which was mediated by the angels.

If the law, he says, which was given by the angels, was inviolable, and every breach of it was justifiably punished, how can we expect to escape if we neglect this great salvation?

And it is round about the neglect of this salvation that the question that is posed here is put, if we neglect salvation which is so great, how can we expect to escape?

And for a little here this evening I would like to look with you at salvation and its greatness, secondly at salvation and its neglect, and thirdly at the question that is here asked in connection with that neglect, how can we escape?

First of all then, salvation and its greatness. Now I'm sure that we all know what the apostle here means when he uses the term salvation.

[4 : 09] salvation. This is what the gospel is all about. What the word of God majors on. It focuses attention for each one of us on this great issue.

This is what the revelation of the mind and the will of God is all about. It is about salvation.

But how do we understand salvation? How do we explain it? What does it exactly mean? Well, there are two ways in which we tend generally to speak about salvation.

Two ways in which the Bible presents it to us. It is, first of all, salvation from something, but it is also, and just as importantly, salvation unto something.

Or to put it another way, we are delivered from one state, that we may be delivered into another.

[5 : 28] And it's important to remember that the Bible emphasizes these two aspects of salvation.

First of all, salvation is deliverance from sin, from its guilt, from its power.

salvation from its defiling and depraving influence. Deliverance from the defiling and the depraving influence of sin in our life.

And it is also deliverance by the power of God into the freedom that we have in Christ through faith in him.

Deliverance into a full and a free pardon of all our sins. Deliverance into the favor and the fellowship and the presence and the blessing and the peace and the power of God.

It is deliverance from one state and deliverance into another state. Paul, for example, writing to Colossians, puts it something like this.

[6 : 56] We ought, he says, to give thanks to God for his deliverance of us from the power of darkness and his deliverance of us into the kingdom of his own dear son.

That is salvation. Take an illustration of this. Take this now a person who's saved from drowning. He has been saved from something.

And the act by which he has been saved has brought him into a continuance of the life that he had. And so it is when God saves us. We are saved by his power from sin's influence and from sin's power and from sin's guilt.

We are saved from the state in which sin reigns. And we are brought as a result of that saving act of God's power into a state in which we enjoy the life and the favor and the blessing and the privileges that flow from the life and the favor of God into the human heart.

[8 : 16] Now, Paul here says, If we neglect so great salvation, how shall we escape?

And the question I would like to look at with you here is, what does he mean? When he prefixes this word salvation with this adjective great?

What does he mean by it? When he says that salvation is so great? Well, there are various things that the Bible leads us to understand about that.

First and foremost this. It is great because all this originated in the mind, if you want to use the word, we have to use it so that we can understand this, in the mind and the will of God.

You see, no human being ever thought of devising this plan. There are many plans in the world tonight, many schemes, schemes which are tremendously beneficial to mankind, schemes which are great in themselves and of great benefit and great blessing to many people.

[9 : 37] And there are many people in the world tonight who owe a great debt of gratitude to men whose minds devised these schemes.

But this plan of salvation never originated in the mind of any man. It was God who planned it.

And if you read the first two chapters, even the first chapter of the first letter that Paul wrote to the Corinthian church, you will find that this was something which really gripped the mind of the apostle. the greatness of the plan which God thought of, which originated in the mind of God.

The plan of salvation. It is God, it is great, first of all, because God himself planned it.

[10 : 39] And it is great because of the way in which God determined to bring this to pass. there are some people in the world tonight who object to one of the great doctrines of the heart of the Christian church.

And it is this, that Jesus Christ was sinless, that Jesus Christ was holy, and that Jesus Christ was made sin for sinners.

In other words, they object to the doctrine of what we call substitutionary atonement. And they say it isn't right for an innocent person to suffer in the room instead of the guilty.

And that's right. it isn't right. There is something unfair about an innocent person suffering in the place of a guilty person.

I'm sure that there are times, there are times, in our own land when, for example, cases in which someone was sentenced to life imprisonment, life imprisonment for murder.

[12 : 01] Some of these cases have been reopened on the basis of new evidence produced, and it has been discovered that these people were wrongly imprisoned.

They were the innocent party, and they were placed behind bars in place of someone else who was innocent. There was a miscarriage of justice.

It was very unfair. And there are human outcry when this thing comes to light. unrightly so. And there are some people who object, as I said, to the great teaching that we proclaim, that the Bible emphasises, that Jesus died for us.

It isn't right that the innocent should stand in the place of the guilty. But you have to remember two things. First of all, it was God himself who determined that this should be.

And secondly, it was God himself who came into the place of the guilty party. He stood in our place.

[13 : 12] He determined that this was how it should be and he determined that he himself would come into that place. Whoever thought of such a scheme as that?

The scheme of redemption or salvation. It is so good. It is beyond the mind of a human being to think of that. It was beyond the mind and the power of a human being to do that.

It was great because of that. And then it was great as we saw this morning because of the person as I just indicated, the person who himself effected the salvation.

Who became the saviour of the world? God did. How did he become the saviour of the world? By doing something that no human being could ever do.

And this is one of the great arguments of the apostles in the epistle of the Hebrews. He's writing to Jewish Christians and they were being taunted by their contemporary Jewish friends because they had renounced Judaism and embraced Christianity.

[14:22] And he's saying to them, you see what you've done? You've turned your back on the greatest system of religion that the world knows and you've gone and embraced a system that determines, that asks you to follow a person and to give yourself in faith to someone who came into this world and died.

Look what you've done. You've turned from something superior to something inferior. No, no, says the apostles, write them, you haven't done that at all. we have a great high priest.

That Judaistic system could never speak of a saviour of this nature. Oh yes, it speaks of Moses, speaks of Aaron, speaks of the angels, speaks of Levi, Melchizedek, all these great people I know. But none of them is as great as the Son of God. And none of them ever did what the Son of God did. None of them ever came to be what he never was.

Moses always remained Moses. Asked at Aaron, asked at the angels, asked at Melchizedek. But look at Jesus, he says. Jesus became one of us.

[15:36] This is one of the great teachings of chapter 2. He took our nature to himself. He was born into this world. what mind could think of that?

What mind could devise that scheme? What person could do that? No one. It has never entered into the heart of man. What God has prepared for them that love him.

God taking that step by which he became man. I can't understand that, can you?

But I believe it with all my heart. the greatness of this salvation. What God did that he might become a saviour.

And this is Paul's argument here in 2. He became obedient. He entered into a realm, into a condition in which he could learn obedience.

[16:34] And though he were a son, and though he was a son of God, he learned obedience in our nature. and he became obedient unto death.

At the very heart of this great salvation, it's the fulcum round which everything else revolves, is the death death of the son of God on Calvary in our nature.

death. No one ever heard of that death. It is said that the tubular bridge that spans the Menai Straits has a column erected beside it.

And it doesn't tell of the length and the breadth of the bridge at all. It doesn't tell of the weight of it or the time it took to build it.

It just has inscribed on it the names of those who lost their lives in the building of it. The column beside the bridge focuses attention on what it cost some men to build.

[18:03] What the Bible focuses attention on for us is this. What it cost the Son of God to provide salvation for a lost world.

It cost him his life. He gave his life a ransom for men. And as you are hearing, I believe some of you at least two or three weeks ago here at our own communion two weeks ago, there are these two strands that the New Testament always emphasized.

God gave his Son that the Son might give himself a ransom for men.

And this is what the great burden of the New Testament is. The Son of God coming into this world suffering and dying for a lost world.

Salvation is great because of its purchase price. We are purchased, says Peter, with the precious blood of the Lamb of God without spot and without blood.

[19:24] And salvation was great because it was purchased not only at great cost, but in the face of tremendous opposition, as we saw here this morning.

The devil and all the angels of hell, and all the powers and the enmity, and the violence and the opposition of this evil world was opposed to Jesus Christ while he was in the world.

And the world hasn't changed, and the devil hasn't changed, and hell hasn't changed. All these forces are still in league against Christ and the church of Jesus Christ and the world.

Let us not remember that he is a fool. Who would ever subscribe to the view that this world in which you and I live is going to become a better world?

It is going to get worse and worse and worse until the Lord comes again. And even if revival were to break out in a worldwide scale throughout in the church of Jesus Christ, you remember this, that isn't going to change the nature of the world.

[20 : 42] nor the nature of the devil, nor the nature and the purpose of hell. They were here in the world right against the Lord Jesus Christ Christ.

And he opposed them as Paul tells us. He triumphed over them publicly, openly, in the cross and by his death.

It is great because of what he did. Great because of who did it. Great because of how he did it. Great because of why he did it. God did it.

Because God determined that he should commit the world to die. And that he should commit the world to die for sinners so that in the course of the world's history he would have a people in this world who were his own and would be his own purchased by his blood, saved by his grace, redeemed by his power and delivered by his power and kept by his power in the world.

And when those for whom Jesus died, when they consider the greatness of the work that he has done for them, they extol his mercy as that which is over all his works.

[22 : 11] And it's great because of the effect that it produces in their lives. As I said earlier, they are saved by his power brought from sin to grace.

And motivated by that power that operates in their lives to seek a better place than they have in this world. To seek a better environment and a better service than the best they can have in this world. And that of course is yet to be great because when the Holy Spirit makes a Christian, makes us lost sinner a Christian, that sinner who was an enemy has made a friend, who was far off has brought near, that sinner who was an heir of hell is now made an heir of heaven and an heir of God and a joint heir with Christ.

Great says the apostle, so great nothing in the world like it, no one could ever have thought of the wonder and the greatness of the salvation and rooted as I said in the mind and the grace and the love of God the Father from all eternity.

And do you know something I may leave it at this, when those who have been saved by the power of Jesus Christ, by the power of his grace, when these people enter heaven, bear this in mind, and if you're on the way to heaven tonight, let this encourage you, and if you're not, maybe it may appeal to you and attract you to that way, bear in mind that when the people who have been saved by the grace of God, enter heaven, heaven will be for them experiencing eternally in an unbroken fellowship with God, the love, the ocean and the depth and the greatness and the vastness of that land, out of which this whole scheme of salvation emanated.

[24 : 35] And they will eternally drink out of the ocean of the love of God and be filled to overflowing with the knowledge of that love.

So great salvation, embracing time and eternity, delivering men and women, boys and girls, in time from sin's power and guilt and influence until the day dawn when they will be ushered into the presence of God, where they will have left sin behind and where there will be nothing in their experience, but the wonder of the love of God that gave birth to this salvation in their experience. And that is why the book of Revelation closes, leaving us with that picture of the redeemed church in heaven, singing that song unto him who loved us and washed us from our sins in his own blood. Now then, of that salvation, the apostle says this, that salvation he says, was proclaimed by the Lord and was confirmed unto us by them that heard him.

What's he say? Just this, and I just deal with this very simply as I leave it and pass on to the second point. He's telling us that when Jesus was in the world, this is what he spoke about.

[26 : 10] So it was. God, he said, so loved the world that he gave his only begotten son, that whosoever believed in him should not perish but have everlasting life. Again, he said, I am the way, the truth and the life.

No man cometh unto the Father but by me. I am the light of the world. I am the Savior of the world. This is what he spoke of. And he says, it was confirmed unto us by them that heard him.

He's speaking of about the apostles, about the disciples who heard Jesus while he spoke in the world these things. And he says, they came and they told us exactly what he said to them.

and that's what happens tonight in the preaching of the gospel. Exactly the same thing. We speak what they speak and they spoke what he spoke and we trace all that is said tonight in preaching the gospel of Christ right back to Christ himself.

We are saying nothing that Jesus didn't say. And that is why we live in a day when this has to be emphasized. And that is why people oppose sects such as Jehovah Witnesses and Mormons and other people and why people oppose teachings such as the charismatic movement and so on. [27 : 38] This is why. Because we emphasize, as the New Testament church emphasized, that we didn't speak anything, that Jesus didn't speak.

What a fool I would be in this pulpit night if I were to come to you and to say to you that I had something to tell you that Jesus himself hasn't told me in the world.

What a fool you would be if you listened to me and believed me to the law and to the Testament. If they don't, if we don't speak according to the revelation that we have in the Bible, we have no right to say it.

And this is one of the great fears of the Christian preacher. Paul himself expressed his fear. I don't want, he said, to be a false witness of God.

What did he mean? Just that he didn't want to say anything about God that wasn't true. He didn't want to repeat anything, he didn't want to say anything that God said if God hadn't said it.

[28 : 41] And woe betide us if we say to people anything that Jesus didn't say and the apostles didn't say. And that is why the gospel comes to you tonight as a message of salvation and claims your faith in the Christ of the gospel.

Ah, you see, there's a difference because this verse tells us that when they preached, God bore witness to the fact that what they said was true because he accompanied their ministry with signs and with wonders and with miracles and with gifts of the Holy Ghost according to his own words. In other words, these people saw evidence which confirmed to them what was said was true. They saw miracles and they saw wonderful signs.

These people saw dumb people begin to speak. Blind people see. People who are lame beginning to walk. They saw all these things. We don't see them. Ah, yes, you do.

There are miracles sitting around you in church here tonight. Miracles of the grace of God. Men and women, boys and girls who have been saved by the power of his grace, delivered from a life of sin and who have been able to give their lives to Christ and no servant.

[30 : 03] That's a miracle and a miracle of grace. And that's the greatest evidence that you will have in your own home maybe, in your school, in your street, in your community, amongst your friends.

There are men and women, boys and girls, who have been touched by the power of his grace. Their lives have been transformed. They have been redirected, rechanneled, and they live to the glory of God.

Ah, yes, to this day, God confirms the truthfulness of this message of salvation. He confirms its relevance, its uniqueness in the history of men and women, boys and girls.

He confirms it by signs of his grace in the lives. You have it in front of you here tonight. You may choose to close your eyes to that, but that's your choice.

The fact of the matter is that God has given you ample evidence to confirm the reality and relevance of this message. Now the question, if that is so, how shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation?

[31 : 27] Now, I'm just very briefly going to deal with the meaning of this word neglect. What is it to neglect salvation? Well, there are two opposites here.

He's really using words to emphasize the point that he's making. He says in verse 1, we ought to give earnest heed to the things which we have heard, lest we let them slip.

He puts that another way in verse 3, we should not and we must not neglect this salvation. What is it to neglect salvation?

It's just not to apply ourselves to not to apply it to ourselves. It's to pay lip service to it. It means that we do not obey what the Lord has said letting it slip.

It's like the picture of a sieve and the liquid pours into the sieve and pours right through and you retain absolutely nothing. You've let it all go on.

[32 : 42] And there are many people like that. Many people in this church night like that. Sermon after sermon. Appeal after appeal. And they come in these doors and they listen to all that.

At least you think that they listen. And then they go away. What are they taking with them? Not a thing. Not a thing. All the words that have been said have slipped through their mind.

And it's gone. That's the picture that the apostle has here. But you know this pointed out that the figure in the original is very different.

It is borrowed we are told from water. And perhaps it ought to run like this lest we should run out like a leaking vessel.

Lest we miss the harbour into which it is the purpose of the gospel of Christ to bring us. And the harbour of course the harbour of the grace of God and the favour of God and ultimately the presence of God in heaven.

[33 : 57] But you know other people as they listen this is what the gospel wants to do for you. Or rather this is what God in the gospel wants to do. He wants to save you.

He wants to bless you. And he wants to enrich your life. But the gospel comes to you and it slips through and you miss out on it. And you miss the mark.

And ultimately you miss the harbour. You are carried away past it. What by? By the other influences which are working and operating on your mind. Temptations, the spirit of the age, the custom of the age, the depravity of the age, the many incarnations to which your heart and your mind, the inclination to which they are exposed, you miss out because you don't study the word, you don't stop to think about the word is what the word is saying to you.

How many of you for example, after a sermon have gone home and thought about your spiritual state?

How many of you have lain awake at night wondering about the lostness of your soul and sin and the reality of the power of the grace of God changing your life?

[35 : 30] How many of you think about these things? You know what happened when Lydia was converted? This is the word that the Bible uses. When Paul spoke to Lydia, she attended to the things that were spoken.

She thought about them and she began to apply them to herself. And the vast majority of people don't do that. They let these things slip away.

Other things are far too important. They come short of God's word and God's standard and God's objective and they miss out.

They drift along. Someone said that the word that drifting is one of the most dangerous exercise a person can be engaged in.

You drift into the old habits and into the old associations. You drift into the avenues that one's evil nature always wants to take you into and bear you away.

[36 : 40] From the presence and the power of God. You drift because of the pressure of temptation. You drift when you relax your efforts. You drift when you yield on small things that were once important.

You know that a minister and I hope that this won't be a means of keeping any of you from church but there are times you heard the story of the minister who was speaking to his congregation and he said I saw a wonderful thing the other day.

I saw a congregation move to tears. He replied I'll tell you something more wonderful. Perhaps something more interesting. I can tell you about a congregation that used to be moved to tears. There are tears no longer. There are people like that. They are moved by the gospel influenced by the gospel. They come under the sound of it and the power of it.

and you are almost waiting to see the commitment of their life to Christ. Then what happens? You see them drifting away.

[37 : 49] There are people here like that. They drift away. Other people begin to influence them. The pull of the old way becomes too strong and they relax their efforts.

The moments they usually lie awake at night thinking about the spiritual things have come to an end now. They don't lie awake thinking about these things. Things that began to convict them and not convict them any longer and they yield on these small things.

Now they are caught in that tide that is drifting them away from the coastline of these spiritual influences and these heavenly influences and the coastlines receding further and further and further into the distance and maybe you are here tonight.

And the things of the Spirit of God now hardly touch your mind and your conscience. You can sit through a service and it becomes meaningless as a matter of fact.

Not so long ago you may have longed and looked forward to the time coming when you could come up to the house of God but that's gone. You know what's happened?

[39 : 14] You've let these things slip and you've neglected the salvation of God. Someone said speaking even of the Christian the professing Christian who now scarcely pretends to open the Bible or pray came to so terrible a position not at a single leap but by yielding to the pressure of the constant waywardness of the old nature and thus drifted into an Arctic region where he is likely to perish benumbed and frozen unless rescued and launched on the warm Gulf stream of the love of God.

Oh my friend it's easy to drift. It's easy just to lie back and let the effort go. Just let go. May I ask you this question tonight.

Are you drifting? Are you drifting? Do the things of God now move you in vain? Have you stopped reading your Bible and pray?

Have you stopped longing for salvation? Don't let these things slip. Or as he goes on to say, don't neglect these things.

Don't neglect them by despising the truth. By trusting in your own efforts. and your own goodness and your own honesty.

[40 : 52] In your own high principled life. Even in your own religion. And even in convictions that you may have or may have had. Don't neglect by putting things off tonight till tomorrow.

Don't neglect salvation by giving place to temptation and to unbelief. To sin and to world. many people have done that. Don't neglect by coming but not listening.

And by listening but not doing. By hearing but not studying. Don't neglect by undervaluing and under estimating the things of God.

That's how you neglect these things. It's easy enough to neglect. And many people neglect the things of God bring sorrow if not shame into their own lives because they have ceased to be earnest about the things of God.

A neglected God said someone is a neglected salvation. And a neglected salvation means that our defenses our Lord.

[42 : 10] Perhaps you've heard of the great Christian of China Pastor C. And Pastor C. together with being a great man of God and a preacher was also a farmer.

One severe winter some of his sheep died and the heathens around him taunted him because of what had happened by saying why did your God not protect your sheep?

And as he thought about the taunts he was rather distressed and disturbed and his condition drove him to prayer and then he remembered and those of you who know something about sheep will know this then he remembered that the sheep which had died were the thin ones the sheep that had not eaten enough when the going was good and had not fattened themselves against the cold of winter and his next sermon to his people was preached on this text that we neglect so great salvation how shall we escape and he told his people how the sheep naturally must not neglect feeding in their own season and how sheep need excess fat to protect them from the cold and he said to his congregation have not my sheep paid the price of their own neglect and he applied it spiritually and he told that they should use every single opportunity to think and to meditate and study the word of

God use every opportunity to grow in faith as they study that word and that is the message of this passage to us here tonight we should become a diligent in the matter of salvation and as you've heard often enough and it goes I'm certain without any contradiction whatsoever that the Christians of this age are miles behind Christians of bygone ages in their knowledge of the things of God just because they do not study the word of God and I know that the enemy of the church of Jesus Christ and the enemy of the free church of

Scotland and the enemy of the congregation of Stornham is lurking behind the shadows all he wants is to see in years to come a congregation growing up weak in the faith weak in the knowledge of the things of God and then he will move in and that's when he gets people into his clutches and all these people and I'm not afraid to say this publicly all these people who follow sects and any newfound fad that cares to encroach upon the borders of this island or any other place any person who follows these things is a person who is weak in the faith defective in his or her knowledge and who is ignorant of the great doctrines of the word of God don't neglect them don't let them slip feed your mind no wonder in days gone by and I wish there was more of that here and you people who have homes of your own

[46 : 13] Christian homes you should throw your doors open and get as many people in as possible to study the word think about the word discuss the word so that we will grow up to be

strong in the faith because of the apostles if we neglect the salvation how shall we escape what's he meaning escape what he's telling us escape the punishment of God that's what he means the people in the old testament days he said under the law perished they were punished because of the disobedience this is exactly the same question that Peter asks in his first letter when he says these Christians he says they've got troubles to go through in the world these

Christians it's difficult for them to be saved they've got great problems as they live lives of obedience to the will of God and he puts a question if that's the case with them what of you who are disobedient to the gospel of Christ and this is the same question that Paul puts here to the Hebrews if you don't apply yourself to the salvation of God if you don't believe if you don't obey if you don't love if you don't trust if you don't fill your mind with this and if your salvation with which God saves from sin and brings into grace and glory how do you expect to escape the punishment the wrath the curse the displeasure the abandonment the alienation from the presence and the favour and the love of

God ah my friend this is a retarded question you know the answer to this question may I then in closing here tonight bid you listen to what God has said and bid you receive it to yourself bid you accept it and bid you in the name of God while you have the opportunity to commit your way to have you not been neglecting it long enough and while you have the little opportunity you have and the little life spared to you left in your possession will you not by his grace receive what he offered commit your way to him from now on step out in the light of his favor and of his fellowship let us pray have mercy upon us bless us here this evening undertake for us and guide us with thy counsel and forgive our sins for

Jesus sake Amen Amen God let us Please sit Do okay pert let