

How shall we escape

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Preacher: Rev Hugh M.Ferrier

[0 : 0 0] Now this evening we might turn our thoughts to Hebrews chapter 2 and verse 3. Hebrews chapter 2 verse 3. 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? And so on. But it's especially these words. How shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation? Now the question that is posed here is a very solemn and it's a very searching question. It's a question that appeals to our reason and it's also a question that appeals to our conscience. But it's a question that cannot be answered. There is no one in the world tonight that can give us an answer to that question.

If we were to go about the world and speak to people here and there and say to them how can you escape if you neglect this great salvation? They would say to us there's no answer to that question there's no way of escape. You cannot escape. If you neglect this salvation then you cannot escape the consequences. That's the answer that would ultimately have to come from people up and down the world tonight. If it were even possible for us to have communication with the spirit world. If we were able to speak to the angels and ask these angels whether they be elect angels or fallen angels. Is there any answer to the question how can we escape if we neglect so great salvation? They would say no there is no answer. You cannot escape these angels would say. You cannot escape if you neglect this great salvation.

And if it were even possible to have an audience with God himself and ask God if it were possible to escape the consequences for neglecting this salvation. The answer is no.

You see the man who neglects this salvation is foolish indeed. He's being offered the greatest thing in the world and the greatest thing in the world is salvation. And for a man to neglect this it's folly indeed of the greatest kind.

Let us for a little while pause and think of this salvation. And think of why it is great. Because this is what the writer here tells us. It's great. It's a great salvation.

[3 : 1 0] It's not something that we are allowed to consider in any offhand way. Salvation is too great for that. And when you consider salvation and all that is implied in salvation, then do you realize what a great thing salvation is. Now why is salvation great? Well it's great because of its author. You see this is a salvation that has been planned and that has been executed by the triune God.

It was God almighty who devised this plan of salvation. This wasn't conjured up by the ingenuity of men. This salvation is something that has been conjured up or that has been formulated and planned by God himself.

The writer tells us that this is the salvation which first began to be spoken by the Lord. And you recall how in his great discourse with Nicodemus this is what Jesus said to Nicodemus.

God, he said, so loved the world. Before ever you were born, Nicodemus. Before ever any people were on the earth, Nicodemus.

God so loved the world that he planned salvation for it. He gave his only begotten Son that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but he gave his only begotten Son.

[5 : 01] That whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. Or again you recall how John in his epistle, his first epistle says this.

In this, he says, was manifested the love of God toward us because God sent his only begotten Son that we might live through him.

You see, in the eternal ages God thought of this salvation. He saw the fall of man and he intervened and formulated this great plan of saving men and women out of the wreckage of the human race.

And God did that and he formulated that plan because as Jesus tells us he so loved sinners that he did this for them.

And you see, this salvation has been effected by Jesus Christ, God's Son. Who is Jesus Christ?

[6 : 13] Jesus Christ is above all others. He is the co-equal and the co-eternal with his Father.

And yet Jesus came down to this planet of ours. Jesus left these realms of glory and he came into this world and humbled himself and became a man among men.

He clothed himself with our humanity. And he did that in order that he might suffer and in order that he might die. You see, he couldn't in his divine nature suffer nor could he in his divine nature die.

And it was necessary for someone to substitute himself in the place of the ungodly, in the place of sinners. And that someone had to be on equal terms with God the Father and who else but God the Son could do this.

And so in the fullness of time God's Son came forth. We can almost see it all happening as God's Son says to his Father, I'll go down to that planet.

[7 : 32] I'll clothe myself in the nature of these sinners. I'll allow myself to be bruised, to be chastised.

And I will allow myself to die in human nature in their place. And I will accept damnation for them. Christ tells us that he had come to lay down his life for his friends.

Greater love hath no man than this, said Jesus on one occasion, than that a man laid down his life for his friends. And ye are my friends. And that is why Christ came.

To lay down his life. And he laid it down lovingly. And he laid it down willingly for others. No wonder it's called Great Salvation.

And it's the Holy Spirit who applies this salvation. You see the three persons of the Godhead at work. Here is God the Father and he plans it all.

[8 : 49] Here is God the Son who leaves the realms of glory and who comes to effect the plan. And here is God the Holy Spirit and he comes and he works powerfully and miraculously.

He speaks to the heart, he speaks to the conscience. He comes to a dead soul and he quickens that dead soul into life. And what is the Holy Spirit doing?

He is just doing this. Making you aware of your need and making you flee to Christ. And sometimes when the Holy Spirit comes he disturbs us.

Is the Holy Spirit dealing with someone here in this congregation? You say to me, how well I know if the Holy Spirit is dealing with me. Well is the Holy Spirit making you feel uncomfortable?

Has the Holy Spirit so disturbed you that you are asking what must I do to be saved?

[10 : 00] That's the Holy Spirit at work. And when you are asking what must I do to be saved? The Holy Spirit is saying to you there, go to Christ.

He is your only hope. You must take him as your Savior. And not only does the Holy Spirit tell you to do that, but he persuades you.

And he enables you to do it. No wonder it's a great salvation. So great salvation.

The three persons in the Godhead involved in this salvation. And it's a great salvation too because of the benefits that this salvation confers.

John 1 in his epistle to the Hebrews describes it as great because he says it is a deliverance from Satan, from sin, and from eternal death.

[11 : 10] And that is precisely what this salvation does. It delivers us from Satan. It delivers us from sin, and it delivers us from eternal death.

Let's just think of that for a little while. This salvation delivers us from sin's guilt. We've all been born in sin.

We've all been shaped in iniquity. And we are all guilty of sinning. Day by day we are sinning.

There is none righteous in the world tonight. No, not one. You remember what James says in his epistle.

He says, whosoever shall keep the whole law, and he's speaking of a person who tries to keep the whole law of God. Whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point is guilty of all.

[12 : 17] In other words, if you've failed in one point, you've failed totally and completely. And in his epistle to the Galatians, Paul reminds us that the scripture hath concluded all under sin.

So then before this holy God, we are all guilty.

But you see, Christ Jesus has borne the penalty of sin. Doesn't it say in 2 Corinthians, Paul telling us this.

He speaks about God and he says, for he hath made him sin for us. God the Father made him his son sin for us.

He who knew no sin that we might be made the righteousness of God in him. Do you want to be free from sin's guilt?

[13 : 25] Look at your life tonight. Look at all the sins that you've committed. Supposing you were to die.

You say, God forbid that I should die tonight. I'm not ready to die. Why are you not ready to die? Oh well, you might say to me, just because I'm still a sinner and I still have sin lying on me.

Isn't it time you then got rid of that sin because we can't guarantee whether you'll have another day in this world or not? We are not assured of another day in this life.

And that is why the Bible emphasizes that this is the accepted hour. This is the time of salvation. Not tomorrow, not next week.

So you need to get rid of your sin. How can you get rid of your sin? By coming to Christ. Handing it all over to him.

[14 : 32] Saying to Christ more or less what Francis Ridley Havergal once said, Take my life. Take it with all its sins.

With all its guilt. But not only does this salvation deliver us from sin's guilt. But this salvation also delivers us from sin's power.

You see, sin is not something that we can throw off easily when we would like to. You know this, that sin has a grip upon us.

A deadly grip. It's like a vice. And sin holds us there. And it won't yield, it won't let us go.

And isn't it true too that sin is like a magnet and we feel its deadly attraction. You've seen the magnet at work.

[15 : 36] There it is. And it sets up its force field. And as it sets up its force field it begins to draw to it pieces of metal.

And these pieces of metal stick. And it takes a degree of force to separate the two. Well, sin has a fatal magnetism for us because we are sinners.

And when we are within its range we feel ourselves attracted to it. And we cling to it. And only Christ can break the force.

Only Christ can come between us and the magnetism of sin. And intervene. Well, salvation secures for us release from sin's power.

You see, you might say, I wish I could be rid of sin's power. I wish I could be a free man. Well, here is salvation and it promises to make you a free man, a free woman from the power of sin.

[16 : 54] You see, I feel strongly addicted to this and I feel strongly addicted to that and it's sinful. And I wish to God I could break from that habit that is drawing me down the road to hell.

But you don't have power in yourself to break the habit. But Christ can give you the power. No wonder it's great salvation.

It secures you from sin's guilt. It secures you from sin's power. Sin deserves just punishment.

God is entitled to express his wrath and his indignation against sin and against the sinner.

And yet this is what salvation does. It redeems us from the curse of the law. And not only does this salvation secures us from sin's desert, but it also secures for us divine favor.

[18 : 13] You see, the man who is saved, the woman who is saved, becomes the favorite of heaven. Remember that. And once you become the favorite of heaven, then all belongs to you.

As Paul said on one occasion, all is yours. And ye are Christ's. And Christ is God's. And as he says in his epistle to the Romans, which we saw earlier on another evening, how it says there, God who spared not his own son, but delivered him up for us all.

How shall he not with him freely give us all things? What an inheritance God has placed at our disposal.

And this salvation assures us of eternal felicity. What does salvation mean? It means being saved.

And what does that mean? Well, that means being saved from God's wrath. Being saved from Satan's thralldom.

[19 : 30] Being saved from everlasting hell. Salvation means heaven and all that heaven implies.

It's a great salvation, isn't it? And it's a great salvation when you consider those to whom this salvation is applied.

To whom is this salvation applied? Well, it's applied to sinners. Men and women just like you and me, guilty of sin.

Men and women just like ourselves, under God's condemnation. It's also applied to sinners universally.

This salvation is not reserved for any one race of people. It's not reserved for any one class of people. This salvation is for sinners of every nation.

[20 : 36] Every kindred and every tongue. It's a salvation that is suitable for the Chinaman as it is suitable for the American.

Suitable for the Highlander as it is suitable for the Lowlander. And it's a salvation that is suited to meet the needs of even the chief of sinners.

Paul himself thought of himself as the chief of sinners. And he says, even as I found mercy, so can others find the same mercy as I found.

Well, it's a great salvation. But I want us to go on now to notice the folly of neglecting this salvation. The writer here says, how shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation?

Now the word neglect means here to be careless. Not to care. In other words, it means being quite unconcerned or having a disregard for this great salvation.

[21 : 50] And in our own land tonight, isn't this the sin that is so characteristic of the people of Britain? And it's the sin that is so characteristic of the people in the free church.

It's the sin of neglect. There's not much opposition to the gospel today by way of antagonism, by way of persecution.

But there is this against the gospel that people neglect it. They just don't bother at all about it. And what are the characteristic features of neglect?

Well, one of the characteristic features of neglect is being unaware of danger. You see, neglect can ruin a man so easily.

Take, for instance, a businessman. Now, a man who has a business, he doesn't need to rob.

[22 : 56] He doesn't need to be dishonest. He doesn't need to be guilty of forgery to ruin his business. All that that man needs to do is neglect his business and it fails.

It's the same with a person who is sick. If you neglect yourself in your sickness, that's the sure road to death. Here is a person and he has all the symptoms of some unwholesome disease in his body and he sees the symptoms.

And he knows how dangerous these symptoms are. And he knows that these symptoms are, to him, a revelation that something deep-seated and terribly wrong is going on in his body.

He neglects them. He doesn't bother to take any cognizance of the symptoms. He just neglects himself.

And what is happening? All the time you see the deterioration. And then there comes a day when it's too late and you say to yourself, what a foolish person. Why didn't he go in time?

[24 : 15] Why didn't he attend to himself? Why didn't he see to this business before it was too late? It's the same with neglect as far as education is concerned.

If you neglect your education, well it inevitably leads to ignorance, doesn't it? You see, if you want to succeed in business, if you want to be made well when you are sick, if you want to acquire knowledge, then you must cease this neglect.

And in the same way, if you want to be saved, if you want to make sure of getting to heaven, then you must stop neglecting your soul.

That must come to an end. You must stop neglecting yourself. Supposing there is a fault in the electrical system of your house.

Now you are asking for trouble if you neglect that electrical system. Because one day, sooner or later, if you continue to neglect the electrical system in your house, you're going to see a fire or you're going to have a fire on your hands.

[25 : 47] Or what may be even worse for you, you may find yourself being electrocuted. Simply because you failed to take the steps, the precautions that were necessary, you didn't attend to this matter that you ought to have attended to.

We had an architect in our church, a good friend to the Free Church, he's dead. His widow happens to be here in this congregation, I refer to the late Mr. Shulton.

On one occasion in my last congregation, we had to get this architect along to see about our building. And I always remember the advice he gave. Never neglect your building, he said.

See that whenever a sled comes off, it's put back on right away. If your gutters are choked or if the downpipes are choked, get them cleaned.

It's better to spend a few pounds on doing that than to spend a huge sum of money when it's too late, when the damage has been done.

[27 : 03] The man who neglects this salvation has failed to apprehend the danger that he is in.

And again, too, we might say that with another characteristic feature of neglect is this lack of realization of our need. That logically follows from no apprehension of our danger.

You see, if we fail to realize our danger, then inevitably we will never realize our need. Do you remember in the parable of the wedding of the king's son?

Jesus speaks there about two different reactions to the invitation that was made. Here was a king, you see, and his son was getting married, and so he sent out invitations. Come to this banquet.

Now there were two different reactions to the invitation. Some violently opposed the invitation. They said, we'll have nothing at all to do with it.

[28 : 12] And they wouldn't hear of going. But the majority reacted in another way. How did they react? They reacted indifferently.

It says this, they made light of it. They went their ways, one to his farm, another to his merchandise. They made light of the king's invitation.

And this is the tragedy that is being enacted in the church and in our own church in these days. Here is the invitation that is given to men and women to come to Christ and remain indifferent.

Now there are some of you here and you've been listening to the gospel over a good number of years in this church.

And tonight you're no nearer the kingdom of God than when you first heard. Indeed, if the truth were told, you are further away from God's kingdom than then. Because you know, the more you neglect this salvation, the harder you become.

[29 : 26] Why have you not responded to the invitation? How shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation?

And isn't it true that in this matter of neglecting salvation we give no attention to the business? The sad thing is that so many of our people, and they are here tonight, and they will give attention to everything else but their soul salvation.

You can be sure of this, that they won't miss their favorite television program. They'll be in the house on the dot, they'll have the set switched on in order to see this program that they love to watch.

Oh, there, yes, they'll not miss the screen. They'll be there. Then there are others, you see, and they are interested in their pleasures.

I don't know what it may be, but you can be sure of this, that this form of pleasure, this form of entertainment that may be on week by week, they'll be there.

[30 : 41] They won't miss it for anything. You can be sure if you want to find them, you'll find them there in that place where they always go to enjoy themselves.

If it's a matter of politics, you can be sure that they'll be studying the political systems or the different ideologies. They know them from A to Z.

I've often watched some of these leading politicians, be it a Mrs. Thatcher or be it a Michael Foote or be it anyone else that you care to think of. They know all the answers.

And you can tell that they are very intelligent people because it's not only that they know all the answers, but they have studied the philosophy and the ideology of Toryism or socialism or liberalism.

And how much they've read of the past, they know the history of it. And you'll see them coming towards the end of their days and they are as enthusiastic for it as ever they were, passionate for it.

[31 : 52] I'm not saying that that is wrong in itself. But isn't it a tragedy that they're not as passionate for the gospel?

And here they are trying to make a bright new world for people who are only going to live 60, 70, 80 years. And they haven't made any preparation for the world where you never die.

It's tragic. How shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation? But just let us consider this as we come to a close.

The folly of neglecting this salvation. How shall we escape if we neglect this salvation? It's a question that cannot be answered because you see there is no escape if we neglect this salvation.

And what does that mean? Well, it means this, that there can be no escape from sin if we neglect this salvation.

[33 : 07] You know, you cannot shake off sin when you like. If you neglect this salvation or if I neglect it, it means that sin will always remain with us.

Every step we take through life, we will be sinners. Sin will be with us. When we come to the last day of all, the day of death, sin will be there with us too.

When we take our journey from here into the presence of Almighty God, sin will still be with us. And when suddenly after death we are face to face with God at his judgment throne, sin will still be with us.

And how can we face God with our sins? What a terrifying thing it is to think of facing God with our sins unforgiven.

That's why the writer here says, how shall we escape? If we neglect so great so, we cannot escape from sin for one thing.

[34 : 28] And for another thing we cannot escape from the justice of God. You see, in this world of ours, an offender of the law may escape the law's penalty.

An offender may be able to flee and to succeed in outwitting the law. Take for instance Adolf Hitler.

Here was a man who caused untold misery to millions of people. Just by saying a word, by signing his name across a paper, he could consign millions of people to death.

As he did. You know what happened to Adolf Hitler at the end?

He escaped the justice of the Nuremberg trials. By committing suicide.

[35 : 43] And requesting that after his death, his body and that of the woman that he married be burnt to ashes. In the Berlin bunker. And to this day there has never been foolproof evidence that the remains of Hitler have ever been discovered.

Does that mean to say that this man escaped? It must have been terrifying when he met his God.

And when he had to answer for the crimes that he had committed. It may be that a man like the Yorkshire Ripper goes about and he does his nefarious work.

And until now he has escaped the law. We don't know whether he ever will be caught. He might, he might not. But supposing he never is.

Supposing as they did think he had committed suicide. Does that mean to say that he did his work and now he has escaped it all and there's nothing else for him to answer for?

[37 : 01] What will it be like when he finally comes face to face with God? You see there is no escape from the justice of God.

As the psalmist puts it, If I ascend up into heaven, thou art there. If I make my bed in hell, behold thou art there.

If I take the wings of the morning and flee to the uttermost parts of the sea, even there shall thy hand lead me and thy right hand shall hold me. If I say, surely the darkness shall cover me, even the night shall be light about me.

Yea, the darkness hideth not from thee, but the night shineth as the day. The darkness and the light are both alike unto thee. In his letter to the Corinthians, Paul says, we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ.

And in that last book of the Bible, we read there how at the end of time, John says that he saw a great white throne and him that sat on it.

[38 : 16] And listen, it goes on to say this about that white throne. When I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God and the books were opened.

The sea gave up the dead. Death and hell delivered up the dead. There is no escaping, you see, from this judgment throne.

We all stand before it. Those who are in Christ are acquitted. Come ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you.

Those who are not acquitted, depart from me ye cursed, into everlasting torment. And that leads us to notice this.

That there is no escape from hell. Sin, you see, inevitably leads to that place.

[39 : 18] And you cannot escape from that awful place. You remember how Jesus and it's our Lord himself who speaks mostly about this.

He tells us of the rich man who lifted up his eyes in hell, being in torment towards Abraham who was in the bosom, Lazarus who was in the bosom of Abraham.

And he asked that Lazarus might be sent with a drop of water to cool his tongue because he was tormented in the flame.

And this is what our Lord said about that incident. Abram said, Abram said, Between us and you there is a great gulf fixed, so that they which would pass from thence to you cannot, neither can they pass to us that would come from thence.

Abram said, How shall we escape? How shall we escape? There is no escape. I must close.

[40 : 35] There can be only one truth. Not many. Always remember that.

There are no two truths in the world tonight. That's impossible. There is only one truth.

And that is the truth of God. That's the only truth that you and I can rely on. We cannot rely on anything else. And we take this truth of God in his word.

Now this is either true, it's either false. The Bible is either saying what is honest and true or else it is describing what is a deliberate falsehood and lie.

My friend, God's word is true. Let God be true and every man a liar. Well here is God and he has given to us his truth.

[41 : 45] He says to us there, that's my salvation and isn't it a great salvation? Now says God, how will you escape if you neglect this salvation?

Neglect whatever else you like. But make sure that you don't neglect your salvation. I speak to you once more this evening and I say this to you.

The most important thing for you is to be saved, isn't it? It's not really terribly important whether you live long or not.

It's not terribly important whether you're rich or poor. It's not terribly important whether you've got a successful family or not. But what is important is that you are saved.

And what is important for your family is that they be saved. Now don't neglect that. Neglect anything else that you like. But don't neglect your soul.

[42 : 59] Let us pray. O Lord, we come to thee this night and we pray that we might not be guilty of this sin of neglect, of treating with appalling indifference this matter of salvation.

But may we come to see that it's indeed a great salvation. There's nothing like it. And may we come to know Christ through whom that salvation is obtained and by whom it is realised.

And may we be able to say of Christ that he is our Saviour and he is our Lord and our Master. Be with us now. Take us to our homes in safety.

And forgive all our sins. For Jesus' sake, Amen.