

How shall we escape

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[0 : 0 0] passage that we read in the book of Hebrews and let us read again verse 3. Hebrews chapter 2 and verse 3. How shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation?

Now I'm not going to spend any time this morning on the context or the background to this. I want us just to concentrate on these words themselves as they stand. This is not, I suppose, the best way to preach, but I feel that this text is so sufficient in itself that we can just concentrate on and spend our time trying to understand what it really means. I want to just make a few points.

The first point is that there is a great salvation provided by God. A salvation which is real.

A salvation which can be experienced. And a salvation which is of the greatest importance to every human being. So let us then ask the question, what is it that makes this salvation so great? Why does it say in this text, so great salvation? We're going to now say four things about that salvation to explain why it is so great. First thing is that it is so great because of what it saves from. Salvation means save it. And it would have no sense except in the context of something which we needed to be saved from. It is great because of what it saves from. It is secondly great because of what it saves to.

It is thirdly great because of the amazing way that this salvation has been executed. And fourthly, it is great because it is that it is authored or originated entirely by God himself. Now we're going to look at these four things under our first heading.

[2 : 4 1] Well, there is this great salvation provided by God. What makes it so great? First of all then, because of what it saves from. Well, we begin, of course, with the assumption that man has a problem. That man has a problem between himself and God. That there is a breach in the relationship, a serious breach in the relationship between himself and God.

And that because of that man needs to be saved. So it says, first of all, from the guilt of sin. Now there is a lot of guilt in the world today.

And many of man's psychological and even psychiatric problems have their root in guilt. And we see today so much of a wrong dealing with guilt. A wrong way of dealing with it.

The psychologist says, well, there is no such thing as real guilt. It is only these guilt feelings that you have. And they are bad for you. And just convince yourself that they are simply guilt feelings.

And just put them away from you and you'll be all right. Of course, what they are doing really is they are trying to repress the guilt.

[4 : 1 3] And in doing so, of course, they are working against one of their own principles. Which is that repressions are bad for a human being. And that is, to some extent, true.

But here we have the people who would say that repressions are bad for you. They are saying that these feelings you have must be repressed.

You have to put them away from you. It is a wrong way of dealing with guilt. The way of dealing with guilt is to bring it right out into the open.

And then to apply the remedy for it. Because there is a remedy for it. A real remedy. This salvation saves from the guilt of sin.

From the guilt which is upon man. Before his God. That he is guilty because he has broken God's law.

[5 : 20] Because he has turned his back on God. Because he very often says in his heart, there is no God. I am the only God there is.

I reign in my own world. There is no greater power. No greater authority over me than my own reason. My own wisdom and my conscience. It saves from the guilt of sin.

It also saves from the power of sin. Now, what does that mean? I wonder if there is anybody who has no experience of this.

The tremendous power of, for example, habits. The overwhelming power of sinful habits.

We say to ourselves very often, as it gets to the beginning of our year, we say, well, I'm not going to do that anymore. I'm going to make a new year resolution.

[6 : 23] That's me finished with that bad habit. And we all know that it just doesn't last. Because sin is so powerful. The Bible says that we are slaves to sin.

That we are under the power and under the dominion of sin. But this great salvation, it saves not only from the guilt of sin, but it saves from the power of sin.

It sets you free from its power. It saves also from the damage caused by sin. What is that?

Well, the damage caused by sin is man's utter inability to do anything to improve himself inwardly.

His utter inability to heal his own heart, to improve his own heart, to make any real progress in the inner man.

[7 : 30] He just can't make a thing, really, of understanding himself. He cannot make a thing of putting himself in true context, in relation to the universe and in relation to the ultimate power.

He cannot make a thing of it. Because he is dead in his soul. He is dead in his heart. Sin has killed off man's spiritual faculties.

His spiritual ability. This great salvation saves from the damage of sin. It heals the souls.

The Old Testament says it heals the sin-sick soul. Then it saves from the punishment of sin.

God holds man responsible. And he tells us with the utmost clarity in his word that he is, in the end, going to hold every single person passionately responsible for their own behavior, for their own conduct, and for the pattern of their lives.

[8 : 46] And especially for their relationship to himself. And he is going to punish sin.

The Bible is utterly clear about that. That God will punish sin. The soul that sinneth, it shall die.

Not just die physically, but experience the unending eternal death of outer darkness. So this great salvation saves from all these things.

Then what does it save to? Does this great salvation, that is just repair the damage, put you in a neutral position and just leave you there.

Well, it would be a great salvation, even if it did only that. But it does so much more than that. It saves you to do something tremendous.

[9 : 50] It saves you, to just put it first of all, in terms of what we have already said. It saves us to justification before God.

Now, man wants to justify himself before God. He thinks of various ways he can do it. He thinks perhaps of doing so much good things that it will cancel out the bad.

He will think that if he leads a sufficiently good life, that it will counterbalance all the bad things in his life. That is man's legalistic approach to salvation.

And it is fearfully difficult to root that out of man. And yet, it is utterly clear from the teaching of scripture that, as it says and as we read some months ago, by the deeds of the law, shall no man be justified in the sight of God.

Romans chapter 3. So how then can man be justified before God? How can all this guilt be removed? Well, the tremendous thing about this salvation is that all the guilt in its entirety, past, present and future, is removed in a second, in one split second, that man is justified before God.

[11 : 14] How can God do that? How can God who holds man responsible justify a single? God is justified. Very simply. Very simply. On the basis of what Christ did on the cross.

Our sin is attributed to him. And he pays the penalty for it. And his righteousness is attributed to us.

we are in a moment justified before God that's a tremendous thing there is nothing greater in this salvation than justification justified by faith in Jesus Christ his righteousness given to us our sin given to him and he suffers in our place on that cross we are saved to justification before God we are saved also to victory over sin all this power all this helplessness all this failure there is the possibility that we can triumph over sin the bible puts it this way sin shall not have dominion over you no it doesn't mean that you're going to live a perfect life from then on but the power of sin is broken it shall not have dominion over you the way it had before and finally we know that we will be finally and completely and utterly separated from sin the chains of sin will just spring asunder they will fall down in pieces in the end because of the victory that this salvation gives us over sin it saves us also to an ordered life now what do I mean by that now there's no Christian here who will say well I've got

I've got a perfectly ordered life and I look at my own life and I just see disorder and chaos and yet and yet there is such a thing as an ordered life what does it mean does it mean tidiness does it mean that sort of kind of person has got everything in their lives absolutely organized there's nothing out of place no it doesn't mean that at all it means a life which is ordered by God a life which is governed by God's plan you say well surely there can be disorder and chaos in that yes there is because all these disorders all these difficulties in their lives they have a place in their lives perhaps we might have time to talk about that later on but the thing I want to emphasize just now is that that to have an ordered life means to have a life which is ordered by God do you know how the Bible puts it puts it like this they that are led by the Spirit of God they are the sons of God now there are lots of people in this room who are led by the Spirit of God they know they are led by the Spirit of God and yet they won't say well my life is not very good for us there is there is a lot of disorder there is a lot of failure there is a lot of loose ends there is a lot of things that I am always going to do but never do and yet there is order in their lives because God holds the reins he is guiding he is in charge and because of that they have order in their lives he wants that order of perfect human human order where everything is in so well kept and so tidy you know sometimes you come across people that there is nothing on their desk but a pad and a pencil and you wonder how can people be like that how can people be so well ordered my desk is just utter chaos but the thing is this it's not it's not that kind of order forget about that kind of order there is no there is no beauty in that before God

God wants to lead your life he wants to take the reins and he wants to be holding the reins of your life that's the kind of order God will lead you to an ordered life and God then this great salvation saves to glory do you have any yearning for final glory to have an eternity with God to know that beyond death there is for you glory unspeakable unspeakable and unspeakable and this salvation is great because of the amazing way that it was executed how was it executed simply that God laid our sins and their curse and their punishment in its entirety in its entirety on his son

[17 : 08] Jesus Christ says the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all that's what the body of Christians can say those who are true Christians they can say the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all that is not just their opinion but it is what the Bible teaches and that must be our ultimate authority in these things it was executed in a most amazing way what we could not do for ourselves God did it for us by sending his son to take our place he experienced the punishment he experienced the shame he experienced the giving account in our place it was executed in such a wonderful way and we might think that the wonder of it was that this passion who was the substitute who was made the saviour on him it was all laid was none other than the son of God now we believe in a triune

God we believe in three in one we believe in one God and yet that that God is in three persons father son and spirit that is the first doctrine of the Christian faith we are trinitarian in our beliefs not three gods but one God and yet three persons in that one God now don't ask me to explain that to you because I can't and neither can anybody else but it is what the bible teaches and we have to believe it the wonder of this salvation is that the second person the son God the son he came and he was made the substitute he was made the saviour he became the lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world it is amazing salvation in the way that it was executed further the amazingness of the execution of the salvation is that having laid on him the iniquity of his own having laid on him the punishment of sin and having seen his own son die on the cross he then raised him from the dead oh saviour is not a dead saviour he is a living saviour he raised him from the dead having paid the full price of sin he rose from the dead glorious and triumphant as the bible puts it over sin and hell and the devil and he now sits in glory at the right hand of the majesty on high he sits in indescribable glory and authority waiting for the day when he himself will come and will judge the world judgment has been given over into the hands of the son by the father and he will come and he will separate some to him he will say come unto me others to him he will say departs off this is a great salvation again because

God is the author of it all this isn't just what we might say an emergency rescue operation this is God's plan it is his way it is not man's way man's way is different man's way is to save himself we read in the book of Proverbs there is a way which seems right to a man but the end thereof are the ways of death this is true salvation God's way God's plan God's beloved son crucified you see this is God's salvation and if we reject this salvation we are rejecting God himself so there is this great salvation provided for us by God secondly it is possible to neglect this great salvation now rejecting is one thing some people absolutely reject

God and Christ and salvation and they just reject the whole thing out and out for them there is no God there is no salvation there is no judgment to come there is no sort of summation of all that is here there is just nothing there's all chance they reject it all that's one thing but neglecting is an altogether different thing you see rejecting is an active opposition to God whereas neglecting is simply doing nothing about it it is rather than a rejection it is like a detachment you know it is there you do deep don't believe there is something there but you just don't want to get involved you want to just keep separate from it there is a detachment in you you cut off the fibers that attach you to it and you just try and go along and just leave the thing in neglect now in these parts of the world where we live in here

I think it's true to say that neglect is always looked on with seriousness I see so much so much care given to looking after animals in particular and I really do think it's tremendous the way that animals are looked after in this part of the world there is a tremendous care and really it is important that it should be so and neglect is always looked down upon if animals are neglected if fences are neglected if animals are not fed I know that it is really severely looked down upon in this part of the world and yet these same people who look on neglect as something that is absolutely awful they neglect the most important thing of all and their lack of neglect of all their other things becomes a snare to them it becomes a matter of pride they see themselves as better than others because of the fact that they don't neglect yet they neglect the most important thing of all they just let salvation pass they leave it neglected without interest without any cultivation without any care without any study without any thought it's just neglected it is a detachment this refers to those who have heard the gospel those who know that there is ultimate truth those who know that this universe must be going somewhere those who have perhaps put utterly clearly before them those who have perhaps glimpsed a little bit of the blessing and the glory somewhere or other they have glimpsed it at some time it refers to those whose lives are perhaps so full that they've got to neglect something and this is the first thing to be neglected sometimes people keep their lives so full that they deliberately keep it full so that there is going to be necessarily a neglect of spiritual things a deliberate ploy as it were refers to those who are insufficiently concerned to do anything about it there is a sort of a numbing almost like an anestheticizing of oneself an anesthetizing of the sensitive parts of one's heart and mind and soul to these spiritual things if there is any sensitivity for it there is an anesthetizing a numbing of it refers to those who think that there is plenty

[27 : 58] of time I'm sure you know the story about the senior devil talking to a junior devil but that's really all right because there is only one devil there is one devil but he has many demons many fallen angels who work for it and he was counseling one of his demons one day and he was asking do I put you in charge of such and such a passion how are you getting on with that well the demon started telling him he was obviously inexperienced and he was telling him you know I have tried to get him to do this bad thing I tried to get involved in this evil habit tried to destroy his family life tried to undermine all the good that he does and all this he was trying to impress the devil as to how he was getting on how good he was doing you are all wrong that's not the way taught you got to be far more subtle than that you don't need to do anything like that if you can do just one thing you've got what's that the junior devil says just convince him that there's plenty of time that's all the result will be neglect you think there's plenty of time that will be the result neglect how many people does the devil successfully convince but there is plenty of time that's all he needs to do he does need to make you into an evil passion at all he might do the very opposite might make you into a good passion good and a worldly sense doing so much good filled up with your own pride and your own self righteousness and your own self justification send yourself plenty of time and thirdly there will be no escape questions putting a question forward how shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation well the inference obviously is quite simply that there will be no escape now let's ask escape from what or perhaps we might immediately think well it is escape escape from hell escape from that lake burning with fire whatever it is escape from what Jesus calls outer darkness where the flame the fire is not quenched and where the worm dieth not these are the ways that Jesus himself describes it you know we can very easily think of this as some impersonal sort of punishment machine impersonal punishment factory or torture apparatus which

God has made and he just puts people in there and that's it he leaves them to this impersonal force you see that's wrong that's a big mistake because it's far worse than that you see but how can it be worse because of this because it's not just that you will not escape from the punishment machine but that you will not escape from God that's the thing you know we think of these these things eternal retribution and all these things that God is just going to separate us from himself you know it's far more serious than that than that is that that God himself is going to supervise the whole thing it's not that we shall not escape from hell but that we shall not escape from

God but you say to me but God is not vengeful is he not the Bible makes it absolutely and utterly clear that God will take vengeance that he will require an answer and that he will punish sin you see this is a great salvation which God has provided it is a salvation which was costly to himself he gave his only begotten son to be made a curse and a shame the Bible describes it that he was put to an open shame on the cross in order that he might work this great salvation you see you think about it this salvation was costly for God if we reject or if we neglect if we don't set any value on this salvation isn't it obvious that God is not going to be placed but God is going to require an answer the Bible puts it like this it is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living

God he will take vengeance he will take vengeance passionately not on mass but passionately that is the awful aspect of eternal punishment not the things physical things that we think the awful thing about it is that it is God who is going to require an answer that it is into his hands that we are going to fall Paul this burden comes to him so heavily that he says knowing therefore the terror of the Lord we persuade men we persuade men

God is a God to be feared the answer to the question how shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation the answer is quite simply not at all there will be no possibility of escape let us pray show us thy way lead us into thy truth apply the truth to us by thy spirit give us the conviction of faith enable us to believe enable us Lord to attend to the most important things in this life enable us to have the right priorities we ask all these things with the forgiveness of our sins in the name of our

[36 : 27] Lord Jesus Christ and for his sake amen