

A QUESTION THAT HAS NO ANSWER

"How shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation?" Hebrews 2:3.

What is the salvation to which the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews thus refers? It is the salvation that Jesus Christ purchased on Calvary's cross for all who would accept Him as a personal Saviour. It means deliverance from the guilt, the penalty, the power, the love, the dominion, and eventually the presence of sin.

I. God's Salvation Is Great.

The writer is not exaggerating in the least when he describes the salvation which God wrought out for lost sinners as being "great" in every respect. Why does he call it "so great salvation," and why does it deserve so to be described?

1. It is great in its conception.

Salvation was planned in the councils of eternity, is the product of infinite wisdom and comes from the loving heart of God. None but the great and holy God could conceive such a plan. It was His tremendous love for fallen humanity that induced Him to send His only begotten Son into the world to be buffeted and subjected to indignities, and then to suffer and die for us. "But God commendeth His love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." Romans 5:8. "For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish but have everlasting life." John 3:16.

2. It is great in its cost.

The value of any object is usually estimated by the source from whence it comes. Our salvation has its source in the heart of our heavenly Father. In infinite condescension He sent His only begotten Son to earth to redeem us from sin. This was the greatest price He could have paid; it cost Him the very best that He had -- His blessed Son. The Son wrought out our salvation by His heroic self-sacrifice on the cross and then said, "It is finished." He could not have paid a higher price for He gave His life for us.

3. It is great in its content.

In this salvation God gives us all that we need to take care of the past, to provide for the present, and to supply the future. It delivers from sin and its consequences and brings us into right relationship with God. Eternal life becomes the possession of every believer. "And this is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in His Son. He that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life." I John 5:11-12. Salvation marks the beginning of a new life. With it we get new desires, new motives, and new aspirations. It is noteworthy that many, who were formerly steeped in every kind of sin and vice and were a curse to society, are now devoted, efficient, and successful workers for God among the very classes to which they once belonged. That which brings about such marvelous results deserves to be described as a great salvation.

This great salvation encompasses all the trials, temptations, and ills to which we are heirs. It guarantees help in every time of need. Being a Christian does not mean that no burden shall ever fall on the shoulders, no tears shall ever moisten the eyes or no sorrows shall ever break our hearts, but it means that in the midst of all life's vicissitudes and trials our Lord will sustain us and carry us through. His promise, "Lo! I am with you all the days," includes the dark and trying days as well as the good ones. He said, "I will never leave thee." "He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?" Christ would save your life to all that is highest and truest and noblest and best.

This great salvation delivers the soul from all that is evil; from darkness to light, from death to life, from sin to righteousness, from selfishness to magnanimity, from defeat to triumph, from the lowest depths to the highest heights, from everlasting torment to everlasting joy and glory. It is a deliverance from eternal ruin due to our sins, from the dominion of Satan on earth, from the doom of Satan after death, from present terror and eternal remorse. Salvation culminates in everlasting happiness, fulness of joy and pleasures forevermore in the presence of the infinite Father, the society of angels, and just men made perfect.

II. God's Salvation May Be Neglected.

1. Neglect is common.

More are lost because of neglect than for any other reason. I do not believe that anybody really and deliberately intends to remain lost and go to hell. I don't think any human being deliberately and definitely plans to ignore the upward way and miss heaven. Yet many are actually doing it and all because of habitual negligence. Salvation has been provided and offered to you and some of you are neglecting it. You do not intend to destroy yourself. You will admit that salvation is a matter of great importance and you intend to give it your attention sometime in the future.

Some neglect because they are too self-righteous and self-sufficient to admit their need or it. They have led such excellent lives and been so respectable that they cannot believe that they are in any danger. It is no wonder that you neglect if you do not feel any need of salvation.

With many it is the result of mere senseless procrastination. They do not give the matter a thought. There are so many other things to occupy their attention they have no time for it. They intend to give attention to it by and by when a convenient season comes, but meanwhile life itself rushes away.

2. Neglect is easy.

A man in business has but to neglect it for it to be ruined. He need not gamble to go bankrupt. All he needs to do is to neglect his business. A sick man may neglect the means of recovery, but he will die. A man above Niagara Falls may neglect the use of his oars, but he will plunge over the cataract. Each one is guilty of neglect in some sphere of life. Each has left undone some duty; refused to recognize some obligation. Each has turned aside from something that seemed to be an imperative in life.

3. Neglect is unfair.

(1) It is unfair to your own soul.

To know the plan of salvation and then neglect to embrace it is spiritual suicide. It is unfair to send your soul to hell.

(2) It is unfair to others.

"No man liveth unto himself."

Your conduct affects others. Our lives are bound up with one another. We are helping or hurting one another every day we live.

4. Neglect is foolish.

This great salvation is the only salvation that is available. As Peter puts it in Acts 4:12, "Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved." It is salvation in Christ, or it is no salvation at all. There is no escape apart from Christ. It is by Christ or not at all. Therefore, it is absurd to neglect, disregard, or reject the only possible salvation. Whoever lives without Christ is where He is not, and whoever dies without Him will go where He is not. How can you expect to end with Him if you do not begin with Him? Surely you are

not silly enough to suppose that you can create some other way of salvation as a substitute for this. You are even more foolish if you admit that this unique provision is made, in this salvation lies your only hope of eternal life, that there is no other escape from hell, and yet you neglect it.

5. Neglect is wrong.

(1) It is not right to yourself.

You owe it to yourself to make the most and best of yourself. It is not right to neglect your spiritual welfare. It is wrong for you to ignore your future and fail to make provision for it. It is wrong for you to destroy your soul and send it to hell.

(2) It is not right toward anybody.

(3) It is not right toward God.

Neglect is a high affront offered to the wisdom of God, and to His goodness and grace in Christ. Neglect is a mark of ingratitude to God. It is not right for a creature to ignore and neglect the Creator, when your very life is contingent on His will. Some obligations to Him are inexorable and inescapable. Gratitude -- what a praiseworthy quality that is in human life -- should spur every person to turn to God and accept His Son Jesus Christ.

6. Neglect is perilous.

You cannot live as you should if you neglect salvation. To neglect it is to choose hell as your future abode. To neglect this great salvation means that you will miss heaven. Neglect is all that is necessary to bring your soul to perdition. To miss salvation all that is necessary is to neglect it. Neglect is not safe. Neglect will shut the door of mercy in your face and exclude you from the presence of God and heaven. Have you accepted Christ and received salvation? If not, then you have rejected it.

Our text is a question that even God Himself cannot answer, for He has revealed this very salvation as the one way of escape, and what can remain for us if we neglect it? Certainly no other way of escape has been revealed.

Many years ago, in the state of Pennsylvania, George Wilson was sentenced to be hanged by the United States Court. He had robbed the mails and committed murder. Andrew Jackson, then President of the United States, pardoned him. But Wilson refused the pardon, and insisted that it was not a pardon unless he accepted it. That was a point in law never before raised in the United States. The President called upon the United States Supreme Court to decide the matter as the sheriff must know whether or not to hang Wilson. Chief Justice John Marshall, one of the ablest known lawyers, gave the following decision:

"A pardon is a paper, the value of which depends upon its acceptance by the person implicated. It is hardly to be supposed that one under the sentence of death would refuse to accept a pardon. But if it IS refused it is no pardon. George Wilson must be hanged." And he was.

Likewise, the gospel of Christ, which is the power of God unto salvation, is a pardon and a sure way of escape from hell for everyone, irrespective of who he is or what he has done. But it must be accepted in order to be effective. Otherwise there remains no answer to the question of the soul's salvation.

There is no escape for God if you neglect His salvation. His law is unchangeable and He must see to it that you are punished. He can play no favorites; He can make no exceptions. As you live, so shall you die; so shall you face the judgment.

There is no escape for you. You cannot put off the death angel; deny your sins; hide from the judgment. No argument or excuse will obviate the fact that you have rejected God's Son. There is no escape for you if you reject Christ. Neglect is rejection, destruction, hell.