

HOW SHALL WE ESCAPE IF WE NEGLECT SO GREAT SALVATION?

Hebrews 2:1-4

Need: to receive God's great salvation.

Proposition: The very nature of God's great work in salvation demands that we receive it.

Objective: To urge the lost to receive God's salvation.

Introduction:

The question is a rhetorical question. It is designed to grab your attention. Since there is an eternal issue involved, you need to give attention to the matter at hand. The issue is the eternal salvation of your soul.

The writer of this letter was a wise doctor of the soul. He was fully aware that we are capable of giving too little attention to matters that are of supreme importance. We have seen it often in the physical realm. We have all known someone who neglected her health only to lose it and die at an early death. We have observed it in the business world. We have watched a man ignore the financial health of his company only to lose it. We have watched the same thing happen in the relational realm. A man ignores his family and their needs only to lose them. While all of these are obviously matters of great importance, they are not of supreme importance. Each of them deals only with the temporal realm, but your salvation deals with the eternal. To suffer loss in this area is to lose forever.

Neglect! The newer version translates it "ignore". Why would someone make such a blunder? Why would they neglect something of this magnitude? "Neglect" may indicate that they intend to deal with it sometime, but something else seems to be more important at this moment. They have not made a decision to reject God's salvation, rather they have chosen to ignore it for the moment, to put it on a back burner, to just put it off for a while,

to neglect it. I have been thinking about this. It may be that I have come up with the reason that you are neglecting your salvation. Let us think together and see if I have found your reason.

I. THEY MISJUDGE THEIR NEED OF THIS GREAT SALVATION.

1. They make this misjudgment because they do not realize that you do not have to do anything to be lost.

Man's natural state is that of lostness. Every human being is naturally in need of God's salvation. Because they have not committed some gross crime, or been guilty of some terrible deed of injustice, they mistakenly believe that they do not need God's salvation. They have failed to hear the solemn judgment of the Holy Scriptures when it declares, "There is none righteous, no not one". They have never realized that God was speaking of them when He said, "For all have sinned and come short of the glory of God." Our misguided views of sin have lulled us into a false sense of security, and we have convinced ourselves that we really do not need God's salvation. This is rather obvious when a recent survey of the American public found that only four percent of our population consider themselves in danger of going to Hell when they die. The great majority of the American public assumes that they will go to heaven when they die. Unless you have done something about your eternal salvation, you are lost.

2. They put more value on their good deeds and morality than God does.

Did you know that God has declared, "There is none that does good, no not one." What looks perfectly acceptable when you compare yourself with others around you will appear utterly repulsive when it is presented in the presence of Holy God. God looks beneath the outward appearance of a deed to check the heart of the deed to see if the motive behind

the deed is acceptable. If the motive for the deed is not pure then the deed itself is not acceptable. We feel good about ourselves because we keep comparing ourselves to others selectively. We compare ourselves with some notable hypocrite in the church, or some reprobate that we know. It is easy to feel good about yourself if you chose such a standard of measurement. You must realize that God uses His own perfect holiness as the standard by which to measure our morality and goodness. He has declared that “without holiness no man shall see God.” He has commanded, “be ye perfect as your Father in heaven is perfect”.

When you begin to use the proper standard of measurement, you soon begin to realize that your need of God’s salvation is greater than you thought. It is obvious that one reason we neglect God’s salvation is that we have misjudged our need of it. We have a higher estimate of ourselves than the Judge of the universe has. In the end His estimate will be the one that prevails.

II. THEY MISUNDERSTAND THE REQUIREMENT TO RECEIVE GOD’S SALVATION.

Could it be that they have not understood the true nature of God’s saving work? Have they not understood that it does require a response from them? It is true that salvation is fully the work of the Lord. It is true that we do not save ourselves, but it is also true that God does not save us until we make a response to His saving work. We must receive the gift before it will ever be ours.

1. We must receive the gift of salvation through repentance.

Jesus spoke a word that we must never forget. He said, “Except you repent, you shall all likewise perish” (Luke 13:3). Repentance is the response that we make to an awareness of

our sinfulness. When we begin to see our sinfulness as God sees it, it becomes such a matter of grief to us that we turn from the sin to God for mercy. Even the God of mercy cannot save someone who has not turned to Him from their sin. Have you understood that this must happen before the work of Christ on your behalf becomes effective toward you?

2. We must receive the gift of salvation through faith.

Faith is the other side of repentance. Repentance is turning from the sin, but faith is turning to God. Repentance is your acknowledgment of your need of mercy, but faith is your acceptance of the gift of mercy. Faith is your transferring of your faith from yourself and from anything else to the faithful God.

Listen to another word from the Lord Jesus. "Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe stands condemned already because he has not believed in the name of God's one and only Son" (John 3:18). Actually if you have not put your trust in the Lord Jesus for salvation you have been guilty of rejecting the Son of God.

"Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life, but whoever rejects the Son will not see life, for God's wrath remains on him" (John 3:36).

Could it be that you have been neglecting this great salvation because you have not considered what you must do in order to receive it? Have you been presuming on the goodness and the mercy of God? It would be a terrible thing for you to be finally lost because you neglected to receive God's great salvation after He has sent His Son and caused Him to be offered as an atoning sacrifice for your sins. You must stop the neglect this very day.

III. THEY MISJUDGE THE CONSEQUENCES OF NEGLECTING THIS GREAT SALVATION.

The serious consequences of neglecting the salvation are implied in the question. In the context we are reminded of the consequences of failing to heed the word of God under the old covenant. “For if the message spoken by an angel was binding, and every violation received its just punishment, how shall we escape if we ignore such a great salvation?” The message that came by angels was the Old Testament law. Failure to heed that law or violation of that law caused one to perish, to die. This word of salvation that has come to us came through the eternal Son of God. Will not the punishment for neglecting a word delivered by the Son of God Himself be worse than the neglect of an angelic word? The answer is obvious.

1. There are temporal consequences.

God’s great salvation is meant to impact life in this world positively, but if you neglect to receive this salvation, you will miss all of these temporal blessings. No matter how good your life may be, it will never be what it might have been if you had received God’s great salvation. Jesus said, “The thief comes only to steal, kill, and to destroy, but I am come that they may have life and have it to the full” (John 10:10). If you continue to neglect this salvation, you will never know this fullness that Jesus came to bring.

Will this not be one of the great sorrows at the end of life, one of the great regrets, to stand at the end of life and realize what you have missed by neglecting God’s salvation? In that moment you will bear the weight of what might have been in the Lord Jesus.

2. There are eternal consequences.

Jesus spoke a frightening word to the people of His day. It was directed to those who had refused to accept Him as the Son of God. Since to neglect God’s salvation is the same as rejecting God’s salvation, it could be directed to you if you are neglecting God’s

salvation. He said the same thing twice in the same context, “Once Jesus said to them, I am going away, and you will look for me, and you will die in your sin. Where I go, you cannot come.” (John 8:21) And then the same day He said to the same group of rejecters, “I told you that you would die in your sins; if you do not believe that I am the one I claim to be, you will indeed die in your sins.” (John 8:24).

Can you imagine it! Christ Jesus came into the world to take away the sins of the world. Because you neglect this great salvation, you die without your sins being taken away. The wages of sin is eternal death, even separation from God into the night of eternal doom, Hell! You will have to receive the just recompense for your sins even though Christ came to die for them. In that moment you are not only responsible for the sins you have committed, you are also responsible for not giving proper heed to God’s saving offer in His Son. You will be condemned for not believing in the only begotten Son of God. This will be more serious than any other sin you may have committed in the course of your life.

Have you really considered the temporal and the eternal consequences of rejecting God’s great salvation?

IV. THEY UNDERVALUE THE BENEFITS OF GOD’S GREAT SALVATION.

Why have you neglected God’s great salvation? Is it because you have considered something else to be of more importance?

Jesus told a story about some persons who neglected because there were other things that they considered more important. He used a parable about a great man who prepared a great banquet and sent his servants to invite people to be his guests and his dinner. Jesus

is likening the salvation of the Lord to a great banquet; it is something loaded down with benefits.

Some who received the invitation sent their regrets. One fellow did not come because he had bought a field and he must go to prove it. Another could not come because he had bought a yoke of oxen and he must go try them out. Yet another declined because he had just gotten married. If you understand that the banquet represents God's eternal salvation and all of its benefits, it is obvious that these three have made a terrible blunder.

Consider----

1. Which is more important, earthly possessions or eternal salvation?

Evidently the man who had bought a field for the moment considered a field on earth to be more important than a place in heaven. He evidently placed more value on a field that will ultimately be consumed in the fire at the last than an inheritance in heaven that will never pass away. Earthly possessions have a way of causing us to neglect our salvation. Taking care of them takes so much of our time and attention that there is no time left to give attention to the salvation of our souls. We end up neglecting the eternal for the temporal.

2. Which is more important, our ability to make a living or to have eternal life.

The fellow who had bought the oxen was simply taking care of business. The oxen were an important element in his attempt to make a living and to provide for his family. He allowed the responsibility to make a living to crowd out giving attention to the eternal welfare of his soul. This still happens quite frequently. I hear men say, "Pastor, I am just so busy. After I work all week, I just do not have what it takes to get up and bring my family to church on Sunday. My life is so full that there is just no time or place for

reading the Bible and church attendance”. They are still taking care of their oxen, but neglecting their salvation. They have concluded wrongly that it is more important to take care of the needs of this life than it is the needs of eternity. They need to hear Jesus say, “What shall it profit a man if he gains the whole world and loses his own soul? What will a man give in exchange for his soul?” (Mark 8:36)

3. Which is more important, earthly relationships or our relationship with God?

The fellow who made excuse because he had married a wife was treating the relationship to his wife as being the most important relationship of life. Someone has quipped that if he had told his wife about the invitation she would surely have been ready to go. Your relationship to your family is the most important human relationship, but there is one that takes precedence over it---your relationship to God is the first relationship of life. The benefits of the family relationship are important, but they are temporal by nature. The benefits of a right relationship with God through the Lord Jesus Christ are all eternal. Actually accepting God’s invitation to His great salvation banquet will only enrich every other relationship of life. You will enjoy that wonderful relationship with your wife even more if you give attention to your salvation first.

Have you been guilty of overlooking the great benefits that come to you in God’s salvation for things that are really by nature of much lesser importance? How shall you escape if you continue to make this fatal mistake?

V. THEY MISREAD THE OPPORTUNITY TO RECEIVE GOD’S GREAT SALVATION.

We will consider this possibility only briefly, but we must consider it.

1. The opportunity to be saved is a privilege.

Do you realize how much God has done in order to extend to you the invitation to receive His salvation. He began to make plans for it before the foundation of the world. He set the stage for it in the calling of Abraham and preparing the nation of Israel to bring the Savior into the world. He actually sent His only begotten Son into the world through the womb of the Virgin Mary. He caused His Son to be offered as a sacrifice for your sins on the Cross. He raised His Son from the dead and exalted him at His right hands in the heavens. He sent the Holy Spirit into the world to form a church and to energize and direct this church to share the Gospel with the world. He has sustained His churches for almost two thousand years so that there would be someone here to deliver the invitation to you. He called me away from my family and friends in the mountains of Tennessee so I would be here to today to deliver this invitation one more time. God has done all of this and more so that the Gospel of His great salvation would be brought to you. Is this not some privilege?

2. The opportunity is limited.

Do you realize that the opportunity to be saved is a limited opportunity in time? It is limited because of the very nature of life. No one knows for sure how many days there will be in your life. We know that they are limited. They are certain to be ended either by death or the blessed return of the Lord Jesus to the earth. The only day we know about for sure is today. The Apostle Paul was on target when he wrote, "I tell you, now is the time of God's favor, now is the day of salvation" (II Cor. 6:2b). For years I misquoted that verse by saying "Today is the day of salvation". I was wrong! It is not today, but rather now. Some of us may not be around at the close of the day. Life is too uncertain to use that kind of language. Rather it is now, right this moment.

Have we touched on your reason for neglecting God's salvation? If we have not, then surely whatever it is, it must be like these in relative importance. There is really nothing than can justify your neglecting something that is so important, that has such eternal implications for your life. I am here this morning to urge you to end your neglect. It is time for you to give attention to the welfare of your soul. It is time for you to turn from your sin and to turn to the Saviour. It is time to receive God's salvation into your life. I want us to do it before we leave this room.