

So Great Salvation

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Chapter Twenty

HOW SHALL WE ESCAPE IF WE NEGLECT

In the foregoing chapters the greatness of salvation has been pointed out. It culminates in nothing less than an eternity, not only in the presence of GOD, but in the very image and likeness of His Own SON and in perfect unity with GOD the SON and with GOD the FATHER. It has also been shown that this salvation is available to all. It has been completely accomplished on behalf of man by GOD through JESUS CHRIST. It is offered as a free gift to everyone who will so accept it. The only condition imposed upon man is to acknowledge his own individual need thereof and accept it. Finally, the awfulness of the judgment, even everlasting separation from GOD and His provision for man both as CREATOR and as SAVIOUR has been described. There is but one point left to consider. That is the terrible possibility of completely losing the benefits of salvation and suffering the awful judgments of GOD.

"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" (Hebrews 2: 2-3).

The first thought here is that apart from salvation there is no escape from the judgment of GOD. Man must accept GOD's salvation or he must face GOD as his judge. Having neglected that, he shall have nothing to offer as a valid reason to escape punishment.

The second thought, already mentioned, is the terrible possibility of neglecting GOD's great salvation. The word used in the Bible passage is "neglect." It is not reject. More people are lost by neglecting than by rejecting salvation. Probably only relatively few really face the issue and then willfully reject. Most people procrastinate.

When Paul stood before Felix and "**reasoned of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come, Felix trembled, and answered, Go thy way for this time; when I have a more convenient season, I will call for thee**" (Acts 24:25). There is no record of a more convenient season for Felix.

One of the great inventors of the past generation is reported to have said that he would give the last five years of his life to the study of religion. Without having received notice as to when those five years would begin, he died and that, as far as is known, without having given thought to the all-important matter of salvation.

The world is rushing headlong toward eternity without giving a thought to Calvary and the CHRIST Who there died that they might live. They are going to an endless death -- a separation of both body and spirit from GOD and His love with all its benefits, all because they neglect to accept His great salvation.

With such great issues at stake, why do so many men, women and children neglect to consider and accept GOD's free salvation? Why do some even go so far as to willfully reject it?

It seems safe to say that whatever the individual reason may be, it comes under one of two groups. The first of these is that "**men love darkness**" (John 3:19). Darkness as GOD recognizes it, is not confined to the things that are done by the underworld. JESUS came into the world to shine as a light in darkness (John 1:5). Apart from Him man is in darkness. This does not, as has previously been said, mean intellectual darkness, for there is much intellectual light in the world. It means spiritual darkness. There are many things in the way of culture, refinement, adventure, human progress and accomplishment which according to GOD's estimate are works of darkness.

These things are not wrong in themselves but men love these things to the extent that they will not set them aside and consider the one all important thing; namely, salvation. Men love the pleasures of this world so that they neglect to consider their eternal welfare. This world does have pleasures to offer: preferment, honor, popularity, accomplishment, amusements and

sports to mention only a few. But when this world shall pass away all these pleasures will have disappeared. They will have passed away even long before that time for each individual, whose days on earth have numbered. There is nothing left. And what is worse, GOD's great salvation has been neglected until it is too late to accept it.

The other reason why many neglect GOD's great salvation is the belief that man can be saved through his own efforts. Many try to earn their salvation by their own goodness. They are often willing to suffer great sacrifices and deny themselves all worldly pleasures to earn GOD's favor and His salvation. In this effort on their part, they neglect GOD's salvation. As long as man fails to see the utter uselessness of even the finest human effort as a means to salvation so long will he neglect or reject GOD's salvation.

As has previously been mentioned, the Pharisees were not saved; they rejected GOD's salvation, because they went about trying to establish their own righteousness. There has probably never been any group of religious people more zealous for the true GOD than they, but they depended upon their own goodness and had no need for a freely given salvation from GOD.

The desire to obtain salvation by one's own meritorious works has its roots in man's unwillingness to acknowledge his lost and utterly hopeless state. Man dislikes more than anything else to admit that because of sin he is undone. He is unwilling to confess, as Paul did, that in himself "**dwelleth no good thing**" (Romans 7:18). Men do not want to declare a voluntary bankruptcy in the court of the eternal JUDGE and list their assets at absolutely nothing and liabilities so great that they far exceed the possibility of human payment. They are not willing to write down "no value" against all of their own good works and accomplishments. They want to offer GOD something in the way of a settlement even if it be but a fraction of one percent.

Whatever the cause may be, whether preoccupation because of a love for the things of the world, or an effort to earn salvation, the result is the same. Salvation is neglected and GOD's judgment is certain to fall.

That which follows has already been said and emphasized but it is of such infinite importance that it is fitting to repeat it here in different words as the closing thought of this book.

Men are lost because, and only because, they do not accept JESUS CHRIST Who is the way to GOD the FATHER, and apart from whom there can be no salvation.

Men are not lost because they are not good enough for heaven. They are not lost because they belong to Adam's sinful race. They are not lost because of the sins which they have committed, however heinous they may be. They are not lost because they are born sinners. The condemnation that rested upon man because of all of these conditions was taken away when the SON of GOD bore that condemnation on the Cross that was raised on Calvary's hill. He there, as the LAMB of GOD, took away the sin of the world. In fact He came to earth for that very purpose. Now, because sin was judged on the Cross, GOD offers eternal life to everyone who will receive His SON as the One Who met all the demands of His justice. Those who will not so receive Him shall be judged and punished with an everlasting separation **"from the presence of God and the glory of His power"** (II Thessalonians 1:9). ". . . **he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the Son of God"** (John 3:18). ". . . **He that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him"** (John 3:36). **"For there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved"** (Acts 4:12).

One day nearly two thousand years ago Pilate said, **"What shall I do then with Jesus?"** That question every man must answer. Man cannot escape it. He must accept Him, or he will neglect and thereby reject Him. There is no middle ground.

Some say, How can a loving GOD send men to hell? The question is rather, How can GOD, who in love has given His own SON to save men from hell, do otherwise than cast them therein when they reject His provision to save them therefrom?

How shall you escape if you reject so great salvation?

To anyone who has not yet accepted JESUS CHRIST and GOD's salvation through Him, there still comes the Bible's last invitation to mankind.

"And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely" (Revelation 22:17).

~ end of book ~
