

## God's So Great Salvation

Paris Reidhead: Would you turn please to Hebrews, the first chapter. I want you to notice, then carefully the first two verses of Hebrews chapter 1 and without delay, without comment, we'll begin reading with the first verse of the second chapter. Now, there's a reason, and I'll explain that. The balance of the chapter from verse 3 on exalts the Lord Jesus above angels, sets him forth in his character and in his office above angels and we recognize this, and we receive it, but we're desirous tonight of knowing why God has, through the book of Hebrews, through the writer of the book of Hebrews, has made this emphasis that Christ is above angels, and we'll see that in the second chapter.

"God, who at sundry times and in diverse manners, spake in time past under the fathers by the prophets, hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son whom he has appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the world.

Therefore," and whenever you find a therefore in the scripture, don't leave it until you find out what it's there for, and it's extremely important right here.

"Therefore, because God has in times past spoken unto us by the prophets and now has spoken unto us by his son, therefore, we ought to give the more earnest heed to the things which we have heard from the Son; Lest at any time, we should let them slip. For, if the words 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 had heard Him."

Now the emphasis of this that I have read is as follows, "word of angels was steadfast". The commandments they brought, the message they gave, God respected. And, it declares that every transgression and every disobedience received a just recompense of reward. God honored the word of angels. God attested the word of angels. If this was true, and it was, how much more ought we expect him to honor, respect, and confirm the word of His Son? The word of His Son is infinitely above all angels. If His Son is infinitely above all angels, then God would put infinitely more concern to seeing that the word of His son was respected.

Notice this also, how shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation? Obviously, our temptation would be here to say, oh, salvation, that means pardon from sin. But, you know the word salvation is an immense word? Far greater than we generally associate with it. If you will take that word and trace it through the New Testament, you will find that there are actually four tenses of salvation. Tense, in this sense I use the word in the past perfect tense, the

past tense, the present tense, and the future tense. Let me explain the past perfect tense. I have been saved from the pleasure of sin. Repentance. Past tense; I was saved from the penalty of sin. Justification. I am being saved from the power of sin. Sanctification. I shall be saved from the presence of sin. Glorification.

Now, if somebody comes to you and says, "Are you saved, Brother, Sister?" You would be quite in order to say, "Well, how do you mean? I have been, I was, I am being, and I shall be. Now, let's talk about the one you're interested in." The word saved has been generally compressed by us to be equivalent to forgiveness, but the word in this use in the Bible is far larger, far more inclusive than just pardon. For instance, you'll find Paul saying something like this, "Now is our salvation nearer than when we believed." Sounds strange, doesn't it? If he has saved us by his death, how much more shall we be saved by his life? We find that the word "saved" is an immense word, just as the word sanctification is an immense word. In the mind of God, our sanctification was planned before the world began. It was accomplished at Calvary. It became ours potentially at the point of repentance. It became ours experientially as we saw ourselves in that union with Christ. It will be affected throughout the endless ages of eternity.

These are vast words, immense words. When we read in Hebrews 1:3, "How shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation?" No one can say, "Well, thank God, my sins are pardoned. I haven't neglected salvation." The word here used includes everything God in grace has done for His people, through the cross work of the Lord Jesus Christ. The warning given in this third verse is not respecting pardon from past sins, it is neglecting anything that the Lord Jesus provided for His people, and thus deals with that heart of indolence that says, "But, I'd like this from the Lord, but really I'm not the least interested in any more." Utterly cutting across this attitude that says, "Well, I'd like to take certain things from the sacrifice of Christ, but, you see, really I just don't want to go all the way. I'm not interested in some of these other things."

The word in the first verse is equally explicit. "We ought to give the more earnest heed to the things to which we have heard." Why? Because there is a tendency to allow precious things to slip through our hands. Things that are of tremendous value can be easily lost. I had given to my wife before we were married, an engagement ring. One day, I was in Africa, she was taking some weeds out of the zinnias, the ground was muddy. She was down there working when she came in, washed her hands, found the set and her ring was gone. She was concerned about it. Had she had any thought that the mud would have been sufficiently viscous to have drawn the stone out of the ring, she certainly wouldn't have worn it. So, in that little task, it was just in passing when she was going from one house to the station to another, stooped down, picked up some weeds, pulled them out, put them away, and when she came in something that meant a great deal to her was gone.

So, it could be, that this is implied in the text. Becoming concerned about other things and interested in tasks which are more appealing to us, truth, which was

in the eternal mind and heart of God, and purchased at the tremendous price of the blood of Christ just slips through our fingers and slides away with the common cares of the day. We have a warning here. We ought to give the more earnest heed to the things which we have heard; lest in our preoccupation with many things, this truth, just like sand in our hands, slips through, slides away, and we'd be left with nothing but regrets.

Again we see here, how shall we escape if we neglect? It isn't refusal. It isn't rejection. It isn't a matter of taking one's stand against. It's just the little matter of saying, "Well, another day, another time. There are other things more important. Other things more challenging. Other things more demanding of my time and thought." The question isn't whether or not we will neglect, the question is this. What are we going to do? How are we going to explain it? How are we going to face Him who purchased these priceless privileges with His precious blood, included them in His word, had them expounded to our hearts, and then we, in our indolence and in our carelessness, were prepared to just neglect the things which God purchased with the poured out blood of His only begotten Son? How are we going to escape it? How are we going to escape? This is the question.

What are the consequences? You understand, of course, that if a person neglects repentance and neglects faith in Jesus Christ that they'll be forever in hell. I'm confident that in hell tonight, there are multitudes of people that intended some day to repent. I can't for the world believe that everyone there made up his mind at some point of crisis, that he was determined to be lost.

Years ago, down in Richmond, VA, I was talking to a young man who said, "Well, religion is alright for the old. Christianity and salvation is good for people when they're on their last legs, but anybody as young as I am doesn't want to be saddled with a lot of do's and dont's and a lot of religion. When I get old enough to take my social security, I'll also take my heaven security and I'll get along with it then. But, right now, sir, don't bother me." So, I said, "What else? What about that?" He said, "Well, frankly, I don't even know if then I'm too interested."

I said, "Alright, I'm going to draw up a contract, you sign it." I took a piece of paper that his mother handed me and I drew up such a contract as this. "Because I do not know that I will live to be old enough to take my social security, and because I have no certainty of tomorrow, and because I've made up my mind that I'm not going to do anything with Jesus Christ until I get to be at least 65, I hereby relinquish, now and forever, all interest in the death of Christ. I declare, to one and sundry, to whom this paper may come, that I refuse hereafter to consider myself a candidate for salvation. I am determined, therefore, to go to hell. I have made up my mind that I shall be lost, if lostness there is as a consequence of my actions because I am simply not interested in Jesus Christ." I said, "Would you sign that?" He read it over, his face blanched, his blood drained from it, he said, "No, I wouldn't sign that. Do you think I'm a fool?"

I said, "Yes, I do. I actually do. Because you have essentially signed it by telling us, your mother, your wife, all of us here, that it is your intention to do nothing with Jesus Christ until some point in the indefinite future. And, there is no reason to suppose that when you reach 65, you won't postpone it again." So, I said, "You might as well get the thing off your mind so that when people trouble you in the future, you can say, 'No, I've settled that. One Sunday afternoon in my mother-in-law's house, I just made up my mind that I wasn't going to be bothered about it anymore.'" I said, "I think that would be the wiser course, rather than just somehow going to do it in the meanwhile, case hardening your heart against any work of the Spirit of God." He said, "Mister, you've put it to me in a hard way. I don't know what I'm going to do about it, but I assure you this, I'm going to think more than I have in the past."

I don't know what happened to him. I wasn't able to follow it up, but it's my conviction that hell is filled with people that have said, "Well, someday, someday, someday." We know that it's fatal to neglect repentance and faith. We have every reason to believe that when we find that word in Thessalonians saying that the Lord Jesus Christ shall come in flaming fire, taking vengeance on them that know not God and who obey not our Lord Jesus Christ, that it will include that company of people that have just neglected to repent. Neglected to deal with the issue that was exposed by the gracious love work of the Spirit of God.

So, to sinners we say, "You have an option. You must face Jesus Christ. You have to face Him. God has promised that every knee shall bow to His Son." When the Lord Jesus Christ left heaven and took upon himself the form of a man, the Father said to him, "Every knee of man shall bow to you." Then, he gave to man the option as to when they bow. You can either bow now in time, entreated by the Spirit of God, warned by the Word of God, wooed by the love of God. Bow now in repentance of faith and live, or refuse to bow now. Go out of life with your head unbowed and your back unbent and then to meet Jesus Christ, not at the mercy seat as He is now beckoning and waiting, but to meet him at the great white throne where he shall be seated in judgment. And, where it will then be that the books are open and the Lamb's Book of Life in which the individual's name will not be written. And, then calling for the rocks and the mountains to fall upon him, he will be forced to bow before the Lord Jesus.

Listen, God promised that every knee would bow to his Son. They're either going to bow willingly in repentance and faith and live, or they're going to bow forced and coerced by the majesty of God and the promise He made to His Son. And then, they'll go out into eternal darkness, having acknowledged under pressure what they refused to acknowledge under grace. This is the tragedy of neglect. This is the crime of neglect, in respect to the matter of past sins and the matter of the pardon and justifying love of our Lord Jesus Christ. We recognize that this is fatal in its consequence, and I'm sure there are few here who would challenge that tonight.

Then there's another thing that comes along. We somehow have gotten the idea, you know, whereas it is of tremendous importance that we should acknowledge Jesus Christ as savior; and, we should accept the salvation that He died to provide. It isn't nearly as important to take the other things that were included in His death. So, we find that there is a matter of option there. I think it grows out of our misuse of the word "save." I think we have failed to understand that word was never intended to be used as we customarily use it. First, I'll call your attention that no one in the Bible claimed he was saved. No one ever said that word, of himself, in personal testimony. Paul said, "Who has saved us and called us." But because the word is such an immense word, there would be no point in the pilgrimage that all that the word implied could be completed by a man living and walking in time. So, no one used it, being consistent with the book itself. The Spirit of God just didn't record such a testimony.

Paul said, "When it pleased God to reveal His son in me." There were others who testified in one way or another to the grace of God in their life, but they didn't use that word, saved. I think, because we have misused it, we've misled a lot of people into thinking that the only thing God is interested in is getting them signed up for to occupy a room in the mansion He's building in eternity. As though God were afraid He wouldn't have enough people to fill up the house, and so He's just terribly concerned with getting people fixed up with a hell insurance policy and as soon as they have that, that's all He's really concerned about.

Some of them, He realizes, according to this misconception, may be a little more enthusiastic and a little more eager, and so He puts some challenges for them. And, if they'll scale the hill, he's got a little reward at the top for them. They may be first class citizens and the others second class. After all, if the important thing is to get people quote saved unquote, and then if some want to go on to the deeper life, or the higher life, or the fuller life, or the sanctified life, that's up to them. Brethren, I believe this is an utter misconception. I believe this is not defensible from the Word of God. I believe that every one of us ought to do our very best to stamp out.

For instance, when John the Baptist was preaching, he never taught in such a way at all. He said, "Repent! For there is one coming after me who is preferred before me, the latches of whose shoes I'm unworthy to loose. He, it is, that baptizeth you with the Holy Ghost and with fire." In other words, John said to his generation, repent because repentance is the means whereby the barrier between you and God is removed and the end of God's grace is to bring you into fellowship with God. Not simply to take you to heaven.

Now, here's the misconception that carries along with what we've been discussing. Too many people have felt that God's great purpose in grace was to take us to heaven when we die. Oh, how many things can grow out of the wrong emphasis. God's great purpose in grace is not just to take us to heaven when we die. It is to save us from sin. It is to make us like Jesus Christ. It is to bring us into

vital living, warm experiential fellowship with Him now during the days of our pilgrimage, and then because he's already brought heaven to us, it will be a simple matter for Him to take us to heaven. But heaven was to begin in our hearts.

Now, I'll say another thing I think you'll agree with. That is, if God were to take you to heaven, send you to heaven rather, and wouldn't come Himself, give you a mansion, give you a house right down the main street of glory, right next to the river of life, and even give you the franchise to take up the gold paving and sell it to the rest of the inhabitants. God still would have doomed you to hell if He didn't come there, because I assure you that heaven cannot consist in a mansion, it can't consist in any of the things that are generally associated with a heavenly abode. The thing that makes heaven heavenly is not the mansion, not the streets of gold, not the river of life, and not the harps of which the angels will play. The thing that makes heaven heavenly is the revelation of God without restriction or inhibition or anything to obscure Him.

If He were to send you to however blissful a situation you can imagine and not come Himself, He simply would have relocated hell and renamed it. For that with your heart demands is not a place and not things and not situations. Oh, I can understand how some of the slaves in other days would say when we get to heaven, we're going to put on our shoes and we're gonna walk all over God's heaven. They've never had shoes. And, it gets cold down there and they could imagine this is going to be a tremendous improvement on their state. I am sure God took care of that when they got there. If your concept of heaven is mansions and shoes and so on, then it is simply a kind of an idea of marrying Mr. Dayton and moving into the department store so you could change your furniture every month and everything else. Oh, this is the most sensual concept. This is a most materialistic concept.

What we are seeing is heaven is a place, but that which makes the place heavenly is the presence of the King of the place, the Lord of the place, the Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore, God's purpose in grace isn't just to give us a ticket to a place, but his purpose is to bring that atmosphere and the government and the blessing of that place to our hearts by bringing the person that will make that place heavenly to our hearts. If this is the case, then we'll understand that everything the Lord Jesus provided is important. Everything that was included in his cross work was important. And you can't sit back and say, "Well, I'm justified, I'm pardoned. I'm forgiven. That is salvation, and I have that and I have what he came to bring. And, I know he blessed a few little hikes for people to scale one way or another, but as far as I'm concerned, I have the important thing." What is important? Everything is important. Everything He intended. Everything He provided. Everything that was procured by the shedding of his blood. Therefore, how are we going to escape if we neglect anything that God intended to be ours?

Thus, there are to come into every heart an avid hunger to have all that the Lord Jesus died to make ours. To be all that he intended us to be, and to experience

everything that was ours. Let me give you an illustration. Suppose your heart you could be justified and born again and have an attitude of complete indifference to the things of God and you get home to heaven. The first thing the Lord tells us is come with me, child. And he takes you out to the warehouse of his grace and he throws back the big double doors and there are the deep shelves lined with things that he purchased with His blood. Signed, sealed, packaged and addressed to you in the various stages of your pilgrimage. Here, here was health when you were sick. Here was victory when you were tempted. Here was the power of the Holy Spirit when you were entrusted with tasks. As He begins to just point these things out and take the promises He put in his book, he says, "Why didn't you take this? Why didn't you claim this? Here, I've made provision for you."

Then, he gives you a flashback of your life and you see how that you went along broken. Went along defeated. Went along creeping when you could have run, when you could have mount up with wings as eagles you crawled as a worm in the dust. He says, "See what your life was?" He gives you a preview of what your life could have been and there is the cupboard filled with the blessings he provided with his own blood, purchased for you and you were too indifferent and careless to claim. How are you going to escape the heartache and the grief that comes from realizing that you have robbed the Lord Jesus of the glory He could have gotten out of your life if you'd cared about the provisions of His love? Stubborn? Hard-hearted? Indifferent? Preoccupied? Satisfied with a crumb when you could have had a loaf? All the time you've been dishonoring Him because you've been less than He provided, less than He expected.

Suppose I were to send my children to school. And they go with their clothes in tatters. Now, I mind you they have some overalls that have been well patched that they use when they're climbing trees and we insist that they put them on. We've also managed along the way to scrape up a pair of shoes now and then so that they don't need to go with their soles flapping and their feet letting blood on the snow in the wintertime. But suppose my children should have forgot completely about the box up on the shelf, which is a new pair of shoes, or the ones in the back of the closet which they use for school, and they simply wear these bedraggled old things to school and they wear them all the time, and there they go in nothing but rags and tatters. Neglect the food that's put on the table, refuse to eat the provisions that are there? Refuse to take all that's given for them? And they go out in the community thus caricaturing their father? Because it isn't them that's being dishonored, it's their father that's being dishonored. It's their father that's responsible to provide for his children.

So it is that when the children of God spurn the provisions of God's grace and neglect that which He has given, they are actually shaming their heavenly Father. They are dishonoring Him because here were provisions of love in His infinite wisdom he knew his people needed. In order that being strengthened, and helped, and encouraged, and delivered, they could walk in the presence in a skeptical world, and by their walk and their attitude and demeanor and expression and their victory and their joy and their peace, they could honor

their Father, but they were unwilling to dress in the clothes that he provided, to wear the shoes that he gave, unwilling to eat the food he provided. And they skimmed along on what they had and all the while they dishonored him. What are you going to do about it, dear child of God, if and when you get home to heaven, you discover though you've made it by the skin of your teeth, yet every step of the way, you've dishonored the Father that loved you and whom you profess to love. By simply neglecting the provisions of his love and provisions of his grace.

Can you see the tremendous importance that's attached to the text? Well, you say if God wanted me to have these things wouldn't he force them on me? I think not. God has given us promises and by these exceeding great and precious promises, made partakers of the divine nature. You see, He has told us that we ought to give the earnest heed to the things which we have heard, lest that anytime we should let them slip. The god of this world is trying to make these things seem unimportant. The pressure of occupation is trying to make us seem too busy with other things to give our time here. We seem to get along too well without some of the things which are set forth in the Word. Then we meet someone who claims to have had these things and they don't seem any different than we are, so then what's the use? What's the value? The net result of it is, before we know what's happened, we just let them slide through our hands, just let it slip away. Consequently, we have robbed the Lord Jesus Christ of what he had a right to expect from us.

What is this great salvation? What does it include? What did our Lord have to say? It is this that is of tremendous concern to all of us tonight. I think we will see it if we take the word now, now another visit I've given you this message, but I give it just in review because I want you to see it. I'd like to have you remember now and review with me what the Spirit of God has recorded for us of the ministry of our Lord. It says here, "Which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord." What did the Lord have to say about this so great salvation?

Well, if turn to Matthew 5, verse 20, we will have the beginning statement and if you would like to record these, it might be helpful to you in the future. And we'll add this word that will be the key, you'll hear it, for our Lord is speaking to a company of people on the most important subject in the world, and this is what he said, "I say unto you that except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees, you shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven." What was their righteousness? It was the righteousness that a dedicated mind and consecrated intellect could produce without the Holy Spirit. They fasted, they tithed, they prayed, they abstained from eating meat, they observed holy days, they memorized scripture, they were enthusiastic in talking about their religion and all these things can be done without the Holy Ghost. All of this can be done. You can be orthodox in your theology and you can be evangelistic in your zeal. You can be missionary in your fervor. You can be devout in your practice. You can fast, you can tithe, you can pray. You can do all of these things and do it with the natural energy which previously you served the devil.



So, the Lord Jesus Christ said, "So, the righteousness which prepares you for heaven is not that which you'll produce by your energy. But it is that which is produced in you by another source entirely." It is that righteousness from above. It is the work of God in you. This is something he has to say about salvation.

The second thing we find he is saying, is in Luke the 13th chapter, verses 3 and 5. Here, He speaks of this wonderful subject again, our great salvation. He tells us twice in these two verses that except you repent you will all likewise perish. Have you repented? Or, have you neglected it? How are you going to escape when he has declared that unless you repent you'll perish. We've defined repentance as a change of mind, of intention and purpose from pleasing self to pleasing God. For in it is the seed of all righteousness and all holiness. As a sinner, your purpose was to please yourself and your direction was aimed that way. Then you came to the place of repentance. You made a right about face and a complete turn and from that moment on your intention was to please God, and your purpose was to glorify God, and the end of your being was His satisfaction. Not your being satisfied with Him, but Him being satisfied with you. Have you repented? Except you repent you shall perish, you see the fatality of neglect here. You can see how important it is that you shouldn't neglect this.

Come with me to Matthew chapter 18 and verse three. For here we find our Lord speaking about something else. He's been out walking with His disciples and they've been arguing as to which one of them would be the greatest in the kingdom of heaven. Our Lord called a little child, set the child on his knee, turned to his disciples and said, "Except you be converted and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven." The word converted means turned again. Our Lord is saying that though they've repented, though they've received Him, the evidence of the genuineness of His work in their hearts is that every time their mind is in conflict with His mind, His mind prevails.

Thus, you'll find it stated in Romans 12, one and two, verse two especially. "We are transformed by the renewing of our minds." There it is that many of the things you carried into this life of forgiveness and pardon were not ordained of Him nor were they according to His will. So at every step of the pilgrimage you're going to find that some attitude is in conflict with what he prescribes. Evidence of the genuineness of His work is that every time you find that your way is in conflict with His way, His way prevails and you're turned again. Perhaps you're going this way, He's allowed you to go this way. All of a sudden, the Spirit of God stops you and says you can't go that way. The evidence that you're a child of His is that you follow Him. That you turn again and go His way. A constant attitude of rectification.

It's like driving. You have to decide which town you're going to. Suppose you were leaving today for my town, east, in New York City. First thing you've gotta head right. Don't go west, it's such a long way around. Even after you've decided to go east, don't just lock your wheels and step on the gas, you'll be in trouble.

Because after you've decided to go to New York and you've headed east, you've got to make many minute corrections. As your car is driving along the road, there is a slant on the road and you have to correct against this slant. So there's a bent in your disposition and a bent in your nature, and your purpose is to please God. The evidence of the genuineness of His work is that whenever the car begins to drift away from His will, you bring it back again. You keep bringing it back again. Because your purpose is to please Him. And you're not going to allow the drift to pull you in to the ditch. You see?

Except you be converted and become as a little child. The attitude of constant correction to the will of God and continuous concern if you please Him. Not simply that some place in the past and made a transaction and signed a decision card, but today the attitude of your heart is I want to please God. If he shows you that some action, some attitude, something you're doing doesn't please Him, you don't rest in the past. You aren't simply resting there. You're saying, "Lord, I want to please you today as much as that day back there when I first met You." You have a continuous attitude toward His will. We've come to something else.

If we turn, please, to John the 6th chapter, we'll find the statement. Let's turn first to John the 3rd chapter and we'll see there that our Lord has something to say about this great salvation. Well, here, three times in as many verses, he says something about it. In verse 3, says, "Except a man be born again, he cannot seek the kingdom of God." In verse 5, he says, "Except a man be born of water in the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of heaven." And in verse 7, he says, "You must be born again."

So our Lord Jesus has made it expressly clear that that which prepares us for salvation is not something that we've done toward God, but something God has done toward us. Oh, there is something you must do toward God, you must repent. And you must believe. But the evidence of the genuineness of your repentance and your faith isn't that you can remember when you repented and when you believed, but the evidence of the genuineness of your repentance and your faith is that when you repented and believed, God regenerated you by the Holy Ghost and gave you the witness of the Spirit that you'd passed from death to life and you knew that you'd been born again. This is a point of tremendous significance. How are we going to escape if we neglect it? You can't get by except a man be born again except the man be born of the Spirit. You must be born again You can see how fatal it is to neglect at this point. It's tremendous importance that you make absolutely sure that you've repented, that your righteousness is not the righteousness produced by men, by efforts, but it's the righteousness produced by God through the sovereign and the supernatural work of the Holy Spirit. It's a tremendous thing, this salvation.

We've come onto something else. If you'll go to John the sixth chapter and the 53rd verse. Here he's talking to a company of people and we're going to make him king. And they were going to be his disciples, and we find that they have asked him however for a certification to do a miracle, predict it and have it

come to pass to prove that He was who they thought he was, who he said he was. Our Lord Jesus said, "No, I can't do that. You see, I am the bread of life. I am the living bread which came down from heaven. If any man eat of this bread, he shall live forever. And the bread that I will give is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world."

The Jews therefore strolled among themselves saying how can this man give us his flesh to eat? Then, Jesus answered and said unto them, "Verily, verily I say unto you except you eat the flesh of the son of man and drink his blood, you have no life in you. Whosoever eateth my flesh and drinketh my blood has eternal life. I will raise him up at the last day." Salvation is not in a plan. Salvation is not in scripture verses. Salvation is not in ordinances nor the scheme of theology. Salvation is not in decision. Salvation is not in the pronouncement of an evangelist or a pastor or teacher. Salvation is a person. This is the cardinal truth of our faith. Salvation isn't from a person only, it is, but salvation is the person.

David saw this in Psalm 27, "Jehovah is my life and my salvation." Again, we have it. "He that hath the Son hath life. Life is in the Son. He that not hath the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abideth upon him." You understand, therefore, that salvation is Christ. He is our life, he is our salvation. He didn't die to send it, he died to become it. And he isn't just our savior because he's in heaven, it has to be in you.

Paul wrote to the church in Corinth in the 2nd letter, the thirteenth chapter, fifth verse, and said, "Examine yourselves, whether you be in the faith. Prove your own selves, know you not your own self how that Christ be in you, except that you be reprobate." So it isn't just Christ on the cross or Christ in the tomb, Christ raised from the dead on the throne, but it is Christ in us, in you, the hope of glory. So he said, to have life was to have him become so united with you that it was as though you'd eaten his flesh and drunk his blood. He has become the life of your life, bone of your bone, He's joined himself to you, and you've received Him. Salvation isn't just from Him, salvation is in Him. When He is in you, then He is your life.

This is the testimony of the Word and how important it is, therefore, that you shouldn't miss heaven by 18 inches. Multitudes of people are going to do that. Our evangelical churches are filled with people who are going to miss heaven by 18 inches because all their salvation is up here [in their head] and it never got down here [their heart] where Christ became their lives. They have the verse, but they don't have Him.

Years ago, down in Tennessee, in the service of a Sunday morning, invitation was given and a man came forward. A personal worker with a card and a snap board went to see him and said, "What did you come for?" He said, "I came to be saved." He said, "What do you want to be saved from?" He said, "I didn't know there was a choice. Sin and hell I guess." He said, "Alright. Are you a sinner?" He said, "Yes, or I wouldn't be here." The personal worker opened his Bible and

said, "Read that." The man read that he that hath the son hath life, he that hath not the son shall not see life. Do you believe it? Yes, I believe it.

So he said, "What's your name? What's your address? Telephone number? Now you want to be baptized?" He said, "Well, I don't know. I guess so. I suppose." He said, "Any questions?" He said, "Yes, there is a question. I just read that verse that he that hath the son has life, and I believed it. It's true, but I just have one question. How do you get the son?" He said, "Don't worry about that, that isn't important. We'll take care of that in Sunday School classes. The important thing for you to know now is that you believe it." So they signed his name to the card and ten minutes later he was being baptized. The personal worker came to a pastor friend of mine and said you know I've been a little bit troubled about that. That fellow believed that verse alright. But, I've been thinking maybe we ought to do a little bit more than we do because it isn't just to have the verse that says he that hath the son hath life, because life isn't in the verse, it's in the son. Have I been wrong about that? My pastor friend said, "Oh, my dear brother, you've been so wrong. You've been so wrong. You've been so wrong."

And multitudes of people on that day are going to hear him say, "Away with you, I never knew you." Because they said, "Lord, lord", but they never came to the place where they truly repented and truly received him and he had become the flesh of their flesh, the bone of their bone and life of their life. All they had was the word, the verse. Salvation isn't a verse, salvation is a person. And that person in vital relationship with you. Can you see how important it is that we don't neglect? That we shouldn't be among the number on that day that will hear him say, "Away with you. I never knew you." They knew him, they knew the right things to say, the right places to go, the right things to do, but he'd never come in. Salvation is in a person. You're agreed to this, and we can understand that.

We don't stop there, turn to John chapter 12, verse 24. Our Lord Jesus Christ is continuing to minister to us, and so through this particular occasion, in verse 23 a group of Greeks had come and said, "Sir, we would see Jesus." And Jesus answered them saying, "The hour that has come that the son of man should be glorified. Verily, verily, I say unto you except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone. But if it die, it bringing forth much fruit. He that loveth his life shall lose it, but he that hateth his life in this world shall keep it under life eternal. If any man serve me let him follow me. Where I am, there shall also my servant be. If any man serve me, him will my father honor."

This great salvation doesn't only include salvation from the penalty of sin. It doesn't only include Christ our life, that he has delivered us from death by becoming our life. He said that if any many serve me, let him follow me. Where I am, there also shall my servant be. Where did the Lord Jesus go for us? He went to the cross. He went there in our place and in our stead. He went there and was crucified for us. As a corn of wheat, he was prepared to fall into the ground and die, knowing that if he did not, he would abide alone, but were He to die as the father had sent him into the world for that hour and that purpose, he would

bring forth much fruit. But he said it isn't just a cross for me, four times in the ministry of our Lord, he mentioned the word cross.

Matthew 10, he said take up your cross and follow me. In Mark 10, he said to the rich young ruler, go sell all you have, give it to the poor, take up your cross and come follow me. And in Matthew 16, he said, if any man would follow me, let him take up his cross and come follow me. And in Luke 14, he said if any man take up not his cross and come follow me, he cannot be my disciple. Only four times the Lord Jesus mentioned the word cross as such, was in reference to his disciples.

At the very outset, he said this is the condition for coming to me. It is as though you were to say here at Bethany Fellowship, the only possible way that anyone that could become a member of Bethany Fellowship is to go to the gallows, have the rope put around your neck and the trap door sprung and your life utterly taken away from you. And when they've taken you down from the gallows, slip the rope off your neck and you're cold and dead, you're a candidate for Bethany Fellowship. It was as though he was to say in the Gospel Tabernacle in New York City that no one can become a member of that church until they've gone up to Sing Sing [a prison]. They've gone to that little room that's set aside for criminals under capital punishment. They've had the electrodes put around the forehead, around the hands and feet. And the power has been turned on and they've been electrocuted. Then it is when they've been taken out of that room and stretched out are they a candidate for membership.

It was just this shocking when the Lord Jesus Christ used these words, in this context. His people couldn't understand it. Did you know what he said? If any man take not up his cross and come follow me, he cannot be my disciple. So, we find that this great salvation not only includes salvation from sin, salvation from hell, but it also includes salvation from the world in which we've lived, that's governed us and controlled us, whose attitudes, whose maxims, whose rewards we sought and whose interests we served. It not only includes salvation from the world, but it includes salvation from the flesh. From our own personality, nature, traits, and interest.

It includes salvation from those habits and attitudes we've developed and acquired. It not only includes salvation from the world, and the flesh, but it also includes salvation from the devil. We were his bond slaves, we'd given him control of our life as it had been done for us by the father of the race [Adam], but it had been confirmed by us by our own choice at the age of accountability. We were then made children of the devil. He was our father, we were his children. His nature we exhibited. His acts we performed and his government we accepted. We come to Jesus Christ and his purpose is not only to save us from hell and save us from sin, but it's to save us from the world and its government, and its interests, and its control. It's to save us from the flesh with its pull and its hold, ensnaring and meshing pulls around us. And it's to save us from the devil, with all of his power and all of his cunning and all of his craftiness. Lord Jesus died, therefore, to set his people free for whom the son

makes free is free indeed. Free from the fear of death, free from the fear of hell, but free from the power of the world, free from the power of the flesh and free from the power of the devil. This was all part of his great salvation.

Now can you see the folly of a person saying well I don't want to go to hell when I die, but I'm quite content to be in bondage to the world? To its aims, to its goals, to its interests, to its rewards and to engage in its service. Can you see how silly, how foolish, how ridiculous it is for a person to say I don't want to go to hell, I want to go to heaven, but I'm quite content to go on being in bondage to my own personality. I've got a mean, ugly disposition, or I lose my temper, I get terribly mad, but I'm quite content to go on shaming Christ and caricaturing Christ because really all I wanted out of Christ was to escape from hell.

Can't you see what a total contradiction this is? Can't you see how foolish it is for a person to say well I was quite willing to go on doing the business of the devil. I'm willing to be a fifth columnist for hell because I've already been secured against its burning. I won't have to go to hell when I die, so I don't care if I do serve the devil a little bit, it's alright. Can't you see what a total contradiction of terms this is? How unthinkable it is, and no wonder the writer of Hebrews says, "How can we escape if we neglect the great salvation?" When God's salvation intended deliverance not only from the penalty of our sin and from the certainty of hell, but it included deliverance from the power of the world. It's grip and hold upon us. It included deliverance from the power of the flesh, the personality, and nature, the traits of the individual. It included deliverance from the power and control of Satan himself and the demons of darkness. For a person to say well I'm all, all I really want from Christ is to just to go to heaven anyway. It's unthinkable. It's inconceivable. It just can't be that anyone can spurn the grace of God and the mercy of God and the love of God manifested in the death of his Son to set his people free, to go on in bondage when he's already paid the price of their deliverance.

They tell about a man in the western part of Mississippi in a rural town way back up the river that had a large plantation and many, many slaves. Somebody came around to the slaves and said the Emancipation Proclamation's been signed. They went to the owner and said, "What does that mean?" He said, "That means I can't sell you to anybody else. That means from now on, I just can't sell you. It's utterly impossible for me to sell you, the government said I can't sell you." What does that mean? That means you go right ahead and work here and don't be the least bit afraid. You just work for me and go right on working for me, and I'll never sell you, I'll never sell you, you just stay right here.

One year went on, two years went on, they kept living in the slave quarters, going to the field, eating the food and taking the lash of the overseer. Just going right on and said isn't it wonderful being emancipated. We don't have to be so in fear about being sold. Our families won't be broken up, our children can live right here with your daddy and mommy all your life. We go right on working for the master here. And so they go out into the field and grovel and serve and they

would talk about being emancipated because they couldn't be sold to anybody else.

Then someone came along and said what are you doing here? They said we're emancipated, we don't have to be afraid about being sold anymore. You don't understand what emancipation is. You don't need to serve that man anymore. He doesn't own you. He not only can't sell you, but he can't work you. You don't have to do his dirty bidding anymore. You can leave here, pack your things and go down the road and go anywhere you want to go. He never told us that's what it meant to be emancipated. So we've spent four years working here when we didn't have to.

I know children of God, that have spent been four years of doing the bidding of the world and longer than that doing the bidding of the flesh and longer than that being hounded and whipped by the devil, and they never heard that Jesus Christ died to set them free. Oh, to think that when they've heard, they'll go right on in bondage. That's unthinkable. That's unthinkable. So if I speak to you and you've had bondage to the world that's been gripping and pulling you, the Lord Jesus died to set you free. He carried you with him to the cross so that as you went down in death, the world would have to relinquish its hold, it couldn't follow you into death. He carried you with him to the cross as you went with him into death, the flesh couldn't hold you and govern you anymore. He carried you with him so the devil couldn't hold you anymore. Then he brought you up on the other side of the grave with him in newness of life so you could walk in free. For he that is dead is free from sin.

Can you go on neglecting so great salvation? You can't. You've got to admit your bondage, admit your need, admit you've been serving when you didn't have to serve and come and throw yourself at his feet and gladly take from his nail-pierced hand the deliverance that he purchased with his blood because you heard about it. You heard about it. And you know that he died to set you free. Set you free.

Years ago an Englishman had went out to California and made his fortune in the gold fields. He wanted to go back and live with his own people, so he sent his money by check back to England and he came overland on the Santa Fe Trail to Kansas City and down in Missouri, and then the Mississippi and then to New Orleans where he was going to take ship to New York and from there to England. As a tourist in New Orleans, he did as most tourists do, he went down to the slave market, only then in the early 1850's, there were still slaves being sold. As he went into the market, he saw a lot of men gathered there.

One body was put on, a young Negress, very beautiful for her race. And he heard the men as they were speaking about her. He saw two evil looking men bidding for her quite heatedly, and then he heard them say what he would do with her. And his heart just revolted against the whole swinish thing. And finally when they were bidding and the biddings were, prices were getting very high, he just couldn't stand it, so he beckoned to the auctioneer a figure that was

exactly twice the last bid. Utterly beyond anything that had ever been paid for a slave in that market before. He said have you got the money? He came up and said yeah you've got the money. And so the bill of sale was made out, he went over the block to take the woman he'd purchased. As she came down one step and stood just about level with his eyes, she made a mouth full of spittle and she spat right full in his face and said through clenched teeth, "I hate you."

He said nothing, with the back of his hand he wiped the spittle away. Took her by the hand, walked down the street across this intersection through the mud down that street until he came to a little office building. She couldn't read, didn't know what it was, he went to the desk, began to speak, the man behind the desk began to protest. He said I insist, it's the law, I insist. Finally, he came back, paid some money and got a paper. He walked over to the woman who was like a beast ready to spring on him. He handed the paper out, here, here, are your manumission papers, you're free. She still hissed I hate you, he said didn't you understand, I said here are your manumission papers, you are free. She said, no, you paid twice as much for me as they've ever paid for anybody on that block and you're giving me, I don't believe this. He said, yes, these are your manumission papers and he put them in her hand.

She said, "Mister, do you mean to say that you bought me to set me free?" He said, "Yes. That's why I bought you, to set you free." Tears came up into her eyes that hadn't known tears for a long time. They spilled over. Her face softened and then she slipped down on her hands and knees and she reached down and put her hands around those rough miners boots and then laid her cheek on the toe of one of them. Through her tears, she sobbed, "Oh, you bought me to set me free. You bought me to set me free. You paid more than has ever been paid before just to set me free."

Then, through her tears, she said, "Oh, sir, all I want in life is to be your slave. You bought me to set me free." Listen, the Lord Jesus Christ bought you to set you free. When you understand that, then it's the joy of your life to come and stand against the door of grace and let him blow through the ear of your heart that you can be his bond slave forever. He bought you, he bought you to set you free. Not only from hell, but from the world, from the flesh, and the devil. He bought you to set you free. Oh, come to him, kiss his nail pierced feet and take from his hand that great salvation that he purchased with his blood. And remember, he bought you to set you free.

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