



# HOW GREAT OUR SALVATION

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*By the Book™* A Chapter by Chapter Bible Study Series from Jerry Vines Ministries  
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## Let's Begin

*The Apostle Peter opens his first letter with a powerful statement about the greatness of our salvation, the greatness of which he insisted "the prophets have enquired and searched diligently" and which the "angels desire to look into" (1 Pet. 1:10, 12). The author of Hebrews is no less certain concerning the greatness of our redemption in Jesus Christ.*

*Far too many Christians today take their redemption for granted. Excitement about sharing Christ is low, and the thrill of anticipating the second coming of the Lord Jesus remains dim in many Christians. All the more reason we have to study Hebrews!*

*Chapter two explains just how great our salvation is in Jesus Christ. As we study this chapter together, let's follow the outline below:*

- I. The Greatness of Our Salvation (vv. 1-4)**
- II. The Glory of Our Salvation (vv. 5-13)**
- III. The Goal of Our Salvation (vv. 14-18)**

## I. The Greatness of Our Salvation (vv. 1-4)

The author begins his treatise on the *greatness* of salvation with these words, "Therefore we ought to give the more earnest heed to the things which we have heard, lest at any time we should let *them* slip. 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*; God also bearing *them* witness, both with signs and wonders, and with divers miracles, and gifts of the Holy Ghost, according to his own will?" (vv. 1-4). We are initially exhorted to give "earnest heed" to the message which we have all heard and received. To what else could the author refer unless it is the Gospel on which each believer has placed his or her entire trust? In addition, we are encouraged lest we "slip" from the words we have received.

*First, the message we received is great in its method. The message was "confirmed" to us. The Greek term translated "confirmed" was a legal term used to validate matters in a court of law. It bore the idea of*

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certainty. How was the Gospel confirmed? Initially, the Gospel was confirmed by Christ as it, "first began to be spoken by the Lord." Next, the Apostles substantiated the message, being the first-hand witnesses they were, or in the author's words, the message was "confirmed unto us by them that heard *him*" (cp. 1 John 1:1-2). Furthermore, the Father approved the message through giving "signs and wonders, and with divers miracles, and gifts of the Holy Ghost, according to his own will."

*Second, the message was also great in its meaning. The author describes the Gospel as "so" great a salvation. The plan was sovereignly designed by God Himself. No human being could possibly have created the idea of the Gospel. Additionally, the cost of the plan was the blood*



of Jesus Christ (cp. Rev. 1:5). Consequently, its scope was sweeping, including the entire world (cp. John 3:16), and its power breath-taking (cp. Rom. 1:16).

Not only is our salvation *great*, our salvation is also *serious* (vv. 2-3a). The author asks a stirring rhetorical question, which has profound Gospel implications, “How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation”? At no juncture is both the seriousness of sin and the supremacy of the Gospel more in view than in this text. The author’s obvious answer to his own question is, no escape exists apart from Jesus Christ.

The *first* word spoken was *steadfast*, the word given by angels to Moses on Mt. Sinai. Moses’ word was firm, reliable, and stable. Moses word was God’s law. God’s law was “ordained” by Him in the hands of a “mediator” (cp. Acts 7:38; Gal. 3:19). Every law of the Old Testament had specific punishments which the law-breaker reaped. If one broke the law, the law would break him or her. The rule was, “be sure your sin will find you out” (Num. 32:23). As sure as the law of gravity, God’s law reigned supreme (cp. Rom. 1:26-27).

*Not only is our salvation great, our salvation is also serious.*

However, there is a *final* word spoken, a *superior* word God gave. As the author noted in chapter one, the *final* word was “being made so much better than the angels” (v. 4). And, since Jesus is supreme over the angels, His word brings better redemption built on better promises. The author’s question haunts us: how shall any escape if he or she *neglects* so great a salvation as found in Jesus Christ? The Greek term translated “neglect” means “to be careless,” “unconcerned,” or “indifferent.” The Apostle Paul exhorted Timothy to “Neglect not the gift that is in thee...” (1 Tim. 4:14). Some people have the grossly mistaken idea that as long as one is “saved” it makes no difference how one lives. Nothing could skew the author’s words more. Just because one is saved, it does not follow that one may lead any kind of moral (immoral) life. Sin is no less serious after a person is saved than before. Indeed those who insist on living in known sin after they make a profession of faith may be doing nothing more or less than demonstrating they made a false profession (cp. 1 John 2:28). We must not neglect the final word we have in Jesus Christ.

### Reflection Connection

*We are told over and over again in Scripture as believers we have eternal life in Him. What does the author of Hebrews imply when he speaks of “slipping away”? Explain*

Finally, our salvation is not only *great* and *serious*, it is also *complete* in Him. Recalling the words of the author, believers should give “the more earnest heed to the things which we have heard,” lest we allow them to “slip” (v. 1). The term translated “slip” carries the idea of “drifting away” as one might picture a log in a river drifting down stream. Or, another image might be a precious ring slipping off one’s finger. The point the author is making concerns the danger we all face. Like the precious wedding band a husband or wife wears, we cannot passively remain idle while the ring slips off and is lost. The full potential we have in Christ points to a fundamental maturity after which all believers must strive. Each of us has the spiritual potential to be a giant for Jesus Christ. Our lives in Christ cannot—indeed must not—be wasted.



In addition, not only does the author point to the *danger* we all face, he also points to the *duty* we all must embrace. We must give “earnest heed to the things which we have heard.” Believers must pay close attention to God’s voice as He speaks. Primarily, He speaks to us through the Bible, His infallible Word. Hence, we must take advantage of every opportunity to learn what the Bible teaches concerning every sphere of life. Our duty demands we heed those things we hear from Scripture.

## II. The Glory of Our Salvation (vv. 5-13)

One of the key words the author uses in Hebrews concerns the glory of God. He writes, “For unto the angels hath he not put in subjection the world to come, whereof we speak. But one in a certain place testified, saying, What is man, that thou art mindful of him? or the son of man, that thou visitest him? Thou madest him a little lower than the angels; thou crownedst him with glory and honour, and didst set him over the works of thy hands; Thou hast put all things in subjection under his feet. For in that he put all in subjection under him, he left nothing *that is* not put under him. But now we see not yet all things put under him” (vv. 5-8).

*First, we are reminded of the glory removed.* The author speaks of what man will *ultimately* be (v. 5). Our destiny includes the world being placed “in subjection” to us. With Jesus Christ as King of kings and Lord of lords, we will reign with Him on this earth for a full thousand years (Rev. 20:1-6; Isa. 2:2-4). On the other hand, God never promised the angels would reign in the “world to come.”

Additionally, the author speaks of what humans *potentially* were. He quotes from the Psalms, “What is man, that thou art mindful of him? and the son of man, that thou visitest him? For thou hast made him a little lower than the angels, and hast crowned him with glory and honour. Thou madest him to have dominion over the works of thy hands; thou hast put all *things* under his feet” (8:4-6). The Psalm deals with man’s *privilege* of being “visited” by God in human flesh. We could not ascend to Him but He could descend to us. The incarnation of Jesus Christ is the wonder of the eternal ages! The Psalm also deals with man’s *prominence* (v. 7). We were “little lower” than the angels but God clothed us with the glory and honor of being made in His image (Gen. 1:26). Finally, the Psalm teaches us the *power* at our disposal being honored by God (v. 8). We gained dominion over the world (Gen. 1:26-31).

Reflecting on what we were supposed to be, the author turns to what we *actually* are. He writes, “But now we see not yet all things put under him” (v. 8c). The most tragic event has taken place: God’s potential for human beings has been thwarted—“not yet.” Sin entered the world and robbed humanity of the glorious will the Father had designed. Hence, no longer can it be said we are experiencing dominion. We actually live in a hostile world filled with hostile people. Sin is so deeply rooted within us, no hope exists for us to deliver ourselves. No wonder the author asks, “how can we escape...?”

*Secondly, we are reminded of the glory revealed.* He writes, “But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with

### Reflection Connection

*When you reflect on the “glory” of humanity, what do you think about? How is possessing glory and remaining sinful compatible? Explain.*



glory and honour; that he by the grace of God should taste death for every man. For it became him, for whom *are* all things, and by whom *are* all things, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings” (vv. 9-10). The author transitions from the failure of the first Adam to the fruit of the second Adam, Jesus Christ—“But we see Jesus”! While we are not what we ought to be, Jesus is everything the Father envisioned and more. He came to restore the lost glory we forfeited through our willful sin. The author speaks of Christ’s incarnation when He was made a “little lower” than the angels through His suffering, but was nonetheless crowned with glory and honor through His obedience. Moreover, the author reveals Christ’s substitutionary sacrifice for us by “tasting death” for us all. No one could pay for our sin unless it would be a lamb without spot or blemish. Jesus was the pure, Lamb of God! And, not only was He pure, He was perfect, becoming the “captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings.” Jesus was fully qualified to be our Mediator.

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*Thirdly, we are reminded of the glory restored* (vv. 11-13). Christ has brought many “children” to the Father’s bosom. He restored us through His obedience unto death (cp. Phil. 2: 5-10). He names us “all of one”; that is, we are the family of God. He is our Source. And, He also claims us, since He is “not ashamed” to call us “brethren.” The glory to which Jesus restores us human words can hardly describe. Elsewhere, the Apostle Paul writes, “For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us” (Rom. 8:18).

### III. The Goal of Our Salvation (vv. 14-18)

One of the most astounding affirmations of the Bible is the revelation that God became a man. In the words of one theologian, Jesus was God with skin. When we think about the Incarnation extensively, our minds teeter-totter and almost shut down. It is virtually incomprehensible. But it is a fact recorded over and over in Scripture. Hence, we are faced with the obvious question—why? Why did God become a man? The author of Hebrews offers perhaps the clearest, most powerful answer to that question.

*First, God became man to release us.* Hear the inspired author’s words, “Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same; that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil; And deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage. For verily he took not on *him* the nature of angels; but he took on *him* the seed of Abraham” (vv. 14-16). He came to die—a child born in Bethlehem only to die in Jerusalem. And, why did He need to die?

Christ needed to die to *disarm* the devil (v. 14). The author affirms Jesus’ death would “destroy” the devil. The term “destroy” does not mean annihilate as if the



devil no longer exists. Rather it means “put out of commission.” Christ’s death rendered the devil inoperative. He completely lost his power over those who come to faith in Jesus Christ (cp. Rom. 6:23; Luke 11:21; Rev. 1:17-18). Also, Christ’s death *delivered* slaves (v. 15). We were set free in the same sense a slave is set free when his ransom has been paid. Being cursed with the “fear of death” before salvation, we now know, as believers in Christ, the tyranny death once had over us can no longer bind us. We are delivered from the devil’s enemy (1 Cor. 15:26). We are released from the bondage to which we were once chained. Believers do not need to fear death.

*Second, God became man to reconcile us.* The author continues, “Wherefore in all things it behooved him to be made like unto *his* brethren, that he might be a merciful and faithful high priest in things *pertaining* to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people” (v. 17). We are a kingdom of priests (Rev. 1:6). Jesus is our High Priest. Christ’s priesthood significantly reveals to us His role as Mediator to God. Paul writes to Timothy, “For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus” (1 Tim. 2:5). His mercy is shown as well as His faithfulness. Furthermore, as High Priest, He offers “reconciliation for the sins of the people.” He satisfies the demands of God’s holy and just law. Sin broke the fellowship we had with God. Christ restores the fellowship we lost.

*Third, God became man to rescue us.* Again, hear the author’s closing words, “For in that he himself hath suffered being tempted, he is able to succour them that are tempted” (v. 18). We are rescued from drowning in sin. How? He was tempted just as we are. Understand: it was *real* temptation, not an imaginary one. Hence, He “suffered” being tempted. Not everyone suffers under temptation. In fact, so many times, temptation possesses pleasure in itself. It was not a pleasure to Jesus, however. Also, note the *results* of Christ’s temptation. Proving He was the Son of God by resisting temptation, Christ was “able” to “succour” others who are tempted (cp. 7:25). We are all tempted. We know this from Scripture (1 Cor. 10:13) as well as experience. But Christ empowers us to resist temptation (cp. James 4:7).

### Golden Greek Nugget

The author writes that because our Great High Priest, the Lord Jesus, was tempted, He is able to “succour” those who are also tempted (v. 18). The Greek term translated “succour,” is *boetheo*, and literally means “to come to anyone’s aid.” When the Apostle Paul had a dream, he heard a man from Macedonia call to him to come and “help” them, the very word used in our text (Acts 16:9. Many times it implies responding to an alarming cry. Hence, the author means Jesus hears our desperate need and comes to our aid when we face tempting circumstances.

### Wrap Up

*Hebrews reminds us of the greatness of the salvation we have in Jesus Christ. Never may we take “so great salvation” for granted. God restores the glory we lost in our willful sin and rebellion against Him. Indeed Christ’s ultimate goal for us is to have dominion once again, experienced in a new and more profound way in the future than in the past (Gen. 1:26-31; Rev. 20:1-6).*

