

What Kind of Salvation?

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[0 : 00] Well, it's a great privilege to be here with you again this morning, and a joy for me, a delight to bring the Word of God to us here at Beklue.

Would you turn with me, if you have a Bible, to Hebrews, the letter to the Hebrews, chapter 2, and we'll read the whole chapter.

Hebrews, chapter 2. Let us hear God's own Word. We must pay more careful attention, therefore, to what we have heard, so that we do not drift away.

For if the message spoken by angels was binding, and every violation and disobedience received its just punishment, how shall we escape if we ignore such a great salvation?

This salvation, which was first announced by the Lord, was confirmed to us by those who heard him. God also testified to it by signs, wonders, and various miracles, and by gifts of the Holy Spirit distributed according to his will.

[1 : 16] It is not to angels that he has subjected the world to come, about which we are speaking, but there is a place where someone has testified, what is man that you are mindful of him, the son of man that you care for him?

You made him a little lower than the angels. You crowned him with glory and honor and put everything under his feet. In putting everything under him, God left nothing that is not subject to him.

Yet at present, we do not see everything subject to him. But we do see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels, now crowned with glory and honor because he suffered death, so that by the grace of God he might taste death for everyone.

In bringing many sons to glory, it was fitting that God, for whom and through whom everything exists, should make the author of their salvation perfect through suffering.

Both the one who makes men holy and those who are made holy are of the same family. So Jesus is not ashamed to call them brothers. He says, I will declare your name to my brothers in the presence of the congregation.

[2 : 27] I will sing your praises. And again, I will put my trust in him. And again, he says, here am I in the children God has given me. Since the children have flesh and blood, he too shared in their humanity so that by his death he might destroy him who holds the power of death, that is, the devil, and free those who all their lives were held in slavery by their fear of death.

For surely it is not angels he helps, but Abraham's descendants. For this reason, he had to be made like his brothers in every way in order that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in service to God and that he might make atonement for the sins of the people.

Because he himself suffered when he was tempted, he is able to help those who are being tempted. So far the reading of God's word.

Our text this morning, the second chapter of Hebrews, comes to us with a question. It's a simple question, but nevertheless a profound one. One that is clearly on the mind of the author of the letter to the Hebrews.

And that question is this. Are you satisfied with God? Are you fulfilled? Are you content, satisfied with God?

[3 : 58] Are you satisfied as you gather here this morning? Well, this seems to be in many ways a kind of ongoing problem for the Christian community. It was amongst those Hebrew Christians to whom this letter was written and sent.

Verse 3 of chapter 2 says, how shall we escape if we ignore, perhaps a little better translation, if we neglect such a great salvation?

You see, this letter was written to those who were being tempted. Not so much to ignore, but to neglect. To be a little careless. To be a little indifferent in their approach to God. Not to be fully satisfied. We might feel that way sometimes when we get up on a Sunday morning. That reaction that can creep up on us.

Yeah, yeah, all that is true and fine. But you know, I have other things to do. Other things to think about. Other things to focus on. But if we could look at the whole book of Hebrews, which we won't do.

[5 : 07] But the whole book is really a sermon. It is a long extended word of exhortation. In which the author addresses neglect.

The problem of neglect in a variety of ways. We find that the author is concerned about unbelief amongst the people of God. A very serious kind of neglect.

He is concerned with immorality amongst the people of God. Again, a very serious kind of neglect. But he is also concerned about drift.

As he puts it here in chapter 2. He is concerned about sluggishness. As he puts it in another place. In chapter 12 of Hebrews.

Verse 12. He exhorts this people about whom he is concerned. A people who seem somewhat neglectful. He says to them. Lift your drooping hands.

[6 : 05] And strengthen your weak knees. And make straight paths for your feet. So that what is lame may not be put out of joint. But rather be healed. And I think this suggests that Christian individuals.

That Christian families. Sometimes Christian congregations. Sometimes denominations. Can have droopy periods.

Can get a little weak kneed. A little lame in their walk. So this letter comes to us. It is an exhortation. Not to let that kind of inattention.

Not to let that kind of sloppiness. Not to let that kind of neglect characterize us. Now I know this would have no real relevance to any of us here.

Well maybe. Maybe one or two. And I suppose the rest of us should just tuck this away for a rainy day. But you know there are those times.

[7 : 07] When we need an encouragement. To be renewed. That we not neglect. What? So great a salvation. You see this is the surprising point of the text.

What the author says in verse 3 of Hebrews 2 is. A people who have been visited with such a great salvation. How could we become neglectful?

How could we become indifferent? How could we become a little sluggish? Well it's because we're not thinking clearly. Because we're forgetful.

Because we're not being renewed in the character of that great salvation. And so in chapter 1 of the letter. The author lays out for us something of the greatness of that salvation.

As we see it in the glory of Christ. You know when you study history. You see all sorts of people who raise themselves up as if they were glorious.

[8 : 12] But what do we find in this text? None of them. None of them can hold a candle to the glory of our Christ. He is the eternal image of God. Very God.

The object of worship. He is the creator of all that we see. The sustainer of all that there is. He is the heir of all. Crowned with glory and honor. What a remarkable Christ.

Christ. And this Christ is alive today. And the power of his life flows forth to enliven us. How could we neglect such a salvation?

How could we neglect such a Christ? What a glory. And that may bring us to the struggle of the people to whom this letter was written in its first century context.

These people seem to have been troubled by the thought that in a variety of ways the old religion was better than the new. The old religion, in fact, seemed more glorious than the new religion.

[9 : 20] The old religion had a temple covered with gold. It had priests in glorious vestments. It had golden vessels to catch the blood of sacrifices.

And you could go with a throng to that temple and experience the splendor and the wonder and the thrill of that worship. And who are we now?

Why? Well, we're this little irrelevant group whose Messiah was crucified. And we gather in little unimpressive places to worship semi in secret so as not to be persecuted.

Wasn't the glory of the old religion better than the new? You know, sometimes we can look back and think, well, didn't the church in the past seem more glorious than it did in the present, than it does in the present?

Wasn't it then more successful? Wasn't it then more important, more significant in the world? Even as Reformed people, I think sometimes we too are tempted to look around and say, you know, there seem to be forms of Christianity that are more glorious and more glamorous, more glitzy, more exciting, more attractive, more apparently fulfilling.

[10:47] But Hebrews 2 would say to us, you know, wait a minute. As you're thinking about that, as you're potentially going that way, you need to remember the great salvation that has come to you by the death of Jesus Christ.

By the way of suffering that he entered. So that you won't be surprised about the struggles, the difficulties, the smallness and drabness, the powerlessness, the unimpressiveness of your religion. Which, when you reflect on it, is so great. So Hebrews 2 turns to us then to the death of Christ. The Christ who died.

The Christ who tasted death for every one of us. For his brothers and sisters. For the children of Abraham. For the many.

When we read in verse 9 here that he tasted death for every one. This is not a denial of our Reformed doctrine of limited atonement. Particular redemption.

[11:58] In the context, the author goes on to say that Jesus brings many sons and daughters to glory. Verse 16. The author talks about how Jesus suffered for the children of Abraham.

Chapter 9, verses 27 and 8. The author expands on this saying, Christ having been once offered to bear the sins of many. You see, Christ had a specific mission.

To suffer. To die. To be raised. To accomplish redemption. He didn't simply make salvation possible in general.

He didn't die for the opportunity for you to give him a chance. No, he didn't do that. He didn't come on a maybe mission. That's not what the scripture says.

Rather, he came to achieve redemption for his people. The people given to him by the Father. Not the whole seed of Adam, we read. But the spiritual seed of Abraham.

[13:02] For those who are in our text called God's children. God's children. We read that often in scripture, don't we? It's a common metaphor.

The children of God. Paul in Ephesians 2 calls the church the household of God. In Galatians 6, he calls the church the household of faith.

You see, the Christian has received the spirit of adoption as sons and daughters. Romans 8. And the Holy Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit that we are the children of God.

Or 1 John 3. See what kind of love the Father has given to us that we should be called children of God. Over and over we are reminded that though by nature we are children of wrath.

By the work of Christ, by the death of Christ, we receive adoption. And we become children of God. So in chapter 2, the author of Hebrews wants to make the point that Jesus tasted death for everyone who belongs to him.

[14:13] There's a richness. There's a fullness in what he did in his death. There are none left out. He brings all those who are given to him by the Father into the family of God.

And we dare not neglect that because it's an essential part, a foundational part of that great salvation. And so in these latter verses of Hebrews 2, verses 14 through 18, the author holds up for us in particular the benefits that come to us by the death of Christ.

Oh, it's wonderful to have a glorious Savior, a powerful Savior, a magnificent Savior, who now sits and rules and reigns on high at the right hand of the majesty in heaven, superior to all.

But the author says to us, you know, the conquering Lord is also, and first of all, the suffering servant. And that glory as we enjoy it, the benefits of Christ as we receive them, the blessings of God as we partake of them come only through the path of suffering that Christ trod for every one of us who know him.

So Hebrews 2 says to us, know his death. Know his suffering. Why? Because in the first place, by his death, he destroys the power of the devil.

[15:49] We're sometimes tempted to think, well, who believes in the devil anymore? Who cares about the devil? What difference does it matter to me whether he's destroyed or not?

Shouldn't I focus my energy on things that I can see in front of me? But you know, the scripture makes clear over and over that the devil is the ruler of this world, the prince of the air, the lion that rages about seeking whom he may devour.

He is a murderer and a liar from the beginning, the one who epitomizes all of the rebellion and wickedness in this world against our God. And to be told so seemingly simply that Christ in his death destroyed him.

That's what the text says. Destroyed him. Destroyed his power to kill. Destroyed his power to accuse and deceive before the Father. What a great salvation.

How amazing that the prince of the world has been cast down. That the ancient serpent has been bound. So that he cannot accuse, he cannot deceive anymore.

[17:11] For those in Christ Jesus, this passage says to us, the devil has no power to kill, to destroy, to deceive, to accuse before God.

We are a liberated people in the death of Jesus Christ. What a salvation. What a glory. You remember Jesus as it's recorded for us in the 12th chapter of John's Gospel.

As he's looking forward to his crucifixion, he declares, Now is the judgment of this world. Now will the ruler of this world be cast out. And I, when I am lifted up, will draw all men to myself.

And then John adds, sort of parenthetically for us, He said this to show what kind of death he was going to die. It's why one of the great commentators here, John Calvin, was right when he said, You know, there is no tribunal so magnificent.

No kingly throne so stately. No show of triumph so distinguished. No chariot so lofty as what? As the gibbet on which Christ hung and subdued death and the devil.

[18:29] Enthroned on a cross. You see, it was in the death of Christ that the ruler of this world was cast out. Because in his death, Christ bore our sin.

And in his death, he took away all claim that the devil may have had upon us to accuse us, to threaten us before the Father. And in his death, he brought life.

What a great salvation. What a glory. What a foolishness to think that we would neglect it. Well, these verses towards the end of chapter 2 tell us not only about the benefits of the destruction of the evil one for God's people and of our deliverance in Christ, but also the author speaks of how in the death of Christ, the bondage, the slavery, the fear of death is taken away.

This is a world that in so many ways is ruled by death. We know that death comes for us all. You cannot escape it.

You cannot find a remedy for it. One of the great truths of this world is that people have often lived and continue to live in a great fear of death.

[19:50] Fear of the unknown. Fear of damnation. Fear of nothingness, they think.

A pervasive fear that has held many in bondage. A fear so terrible that many live their lives simply in denial that there is anything to fear. Our society, of course, is filled with so many contradictions here.

On one hand, we have many who say, you know, death is just a part of life. We live and then we die. We live. We live out our days. We die. Death is just a part of life.

Why should we worry about that? And on the other hand, many are so gripped with an overpowering anxiety and fear of death that they would marshal every power of technology, of medicine, to try to overcome that fear.

We can spend all of our time, our energy, our lives to do that through false religion, through politics, through amassing possessions for ourselves, through all kinds of abuses, through many avenues.

[21:07] But here we are told that in the death of Christ, that bondage to the fear of death is taken away. And now that doesn't mean, of course, that as we face death, as we contemplate death, our hearts are not troubled, that we don't have our own anxieties and our struggles.

But Hebrews 2 says that when we contemplate the death of Christ and we remember that he died for us, then in fact death need hold no fear for us.

We have been liberated. We do not have to be bound there anymore. Again, the words of Jesus, I am the resurrection and the life.

Whoever believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live. And everyone who lives and believes in me shall never die. And that's why death does not have to be terror for us.

Because Christ has tasted it for us and taken it from us and assured us that death does not mean nothingness. Death does not mean eternal damnation.

[22 : 19] Death for those in Christ means glory eternally, crowned with glory and honor, with the Savior. We become the inheritor of all things. What a salvation!

What a glory! How could we neglect it? So Christ in his death destroys the power of the devil for his people.

He liberates us from the fear of death. And in verse 17 we're told, he makes atonement for the sins of his people. Now that's maybe not the most happy translation.

What the text says is he makes propitiation for his people. That is, he takes the sins of his people on himself so as to turn away the wrath of God from them.

The scripture tells us that God is holy and just. That he does not tolerate sin before him. That he is angry with sin.

[23 : 26] And as one who is perfect in righteousness and goodness and love, he must exercise wrath against sin. And the righteousness that he reveals to us in the law brings us in our sinful condition only condemnation.

The reality of our sin. The reality of our sin as those who have not offered perfect obedience to God. As those who have failed to keep the law.

Means that God is alienated from us. That the just condemnation that we deserve for our sin needs to be turned away by a substitute.

And that's what the Savior does. That's what Christ does for us. As one who is faithful and merciful. He is not only priest but sacrifice.

He bears our sin and takes it away. So that God is not our enemy. He does not look upon us as a just and angry judge. But as a friend.

[24 : 27] And as a loving father. And the truth of the scripture is that unless Jesus has borne the wrath of God against our sin. We do stand condemned.

We have with Adam broken the covenant. We've brought its curses. Its sanction of death upon ourselves. And that penalty needs to be satisfied.

Needs to be turned away. And it is Jesus who does that. In the mystery of redemption. The father. The son. With the spirit. Have agreed that Christ shall be given a people.

To save. To redeem. By his obedience. By his suffering. By his death. What a great salvation. What a salvation.

And then also we read in the last verse of Hebrews 2. Verse 18. Because he. Jesus himself. Suffered when he was tempted.

[25 : 29] He is able to help those who are being tempted. Because Christ suffered and died. He understands the temptations that we face.

He was tempted in the wilderness by the evil one. When he was weak and hungry. He was tempted in the garden. As he contemplated the tear and judgment of the cross.

He was tempted on the cross. As he makes that great cry. My God. My God. Why have you forsaken me? And as he faced those temptations.

He came to understand what you and I experience in this world. Our struggles. And by his death and his suffering. We are told in the scripture that he understands temptation.

And he is able and willing to help those who are being tempted. We don't have a savior who is so great and glorious and high and lifted up.

[26 : 32] And removed from us. And indifferent to us. But no. We have a savior who is a faithful high priest. Who is accessible to us. To whom we can draw near in our weakness.

Who in his character is faithful and merciful. And who cares for us. And who will help. Who will help in the face of temptation. And you see this is what those Hebrew Christians.

To whom this letter was written. Needed to hear. Because they were being tempted. They were being tempted. To neglect this great salvation.

They were being tempted to think that. The old religion was better than the new. They were being tempted to think. That a religion of greatness.

And glamour and glory was more attractive. Was more fulfilling. Than their now rather pedestrian. And ordinary. And sober.

[27 : 33] Christianity. And we have to ask ourselves. Is that a temptation to which we are subject? It's certainly a temptation to which the church of Jesus Christ.

Has been subjected through the ages. Because you know there are those forms of Christianity. That want to say. Well. We are the forms of Christianity.

That would build glorious cathedrals. And we are the forms of Christianity. That would have altars of gold. And priests dressed in glorious vestments.

Who would approach God. With all the splendor of our creativity. With all the richness of our imagination. Who would manifest his power. Who would achieve a little respectability.

Who would have a little status. Who would have a seat at the table of our society. And isn't this form of Christianity. More in line with the glory of our Christ.

[28 : 35] And doesn't it show forth his triumph. And his success. But our answer has to be no. No.

It doesn't show forth the way of suffering. To which we are called. It doesn't follow the biblical pattern. Of first suffering. And then glory. And in many forms of our religion.

We can find a kind of glory. Presented to us. That would tempt us. Not always perhaps in glorious architecture. Or investments. But in inventiveness.

In the appeal of distinction. In power. In a kind of spectacle. That is offered to us. Too often of gimmicks and glitz. That constant bustle.

To be more active. To be more exceptional. To be a little spectacular. To have the right kind of influence. To have a measure of power. To fill our lives with more programs.

[29 : 37] To have an easy path to holiness. But the book of Hebrews says to us. There was no easy path.

To holiness for our Savior. And there is no easy path. To holiness for us. No we need to be a disciplined people.

Is what the author tells us. Hebrews takes up this theme again. Towards the end of the letter.

Chapter 13. Where again the author of the book of Hebrews.

Wants to come back precisely to this theme. About not neglecting the struggles. The difficulty. The importance and centrality. Of the death of Christ.

For our salvation. And for our living out of faith. And obedience. Hebrews. Hebrews. 13. We read at verse 11. The high priest carries.

[30 : 35] The blood of animals. Into the most holy place. As a sin offering. But the bodies. Are burnt. Outside the camp. This is a reference to Exodus 29.

Verse 14. Where we're told about. The consecration of Aaron. As high priest. And a bull was brought. Before the altar. And the bull was slaughtered there.

Before the Lord. His blood was captured. And then used. In the consecration ceremony. Of Aaron. But that text. In Exodus 29.

Tells us. The skin. The flesh. And the dung. Of the bull. Were taken. Outside the camp. And burnt. They weren't. In the tabernacle.

They weren't. Part of that. Glorious ceremony. Of the consecration. Of Aaron. And then. What does the text. Go on to say. So.

[31 : 33] Jesus. Also. Suffered. Outside. The city. His sacrifice. Was not a sacrifice. Made. On an altar. Of marble.

His blood. Was not caught. In vessels. Of gold. He was not. Attended. By priests. In glorious. Luxury. He was out there. With the used up. Worthless. Carcasses.

With the skin. And the flesh. And the dung. To be burnt. And cast off. That's where our Lord. Made our salvation. Not in glory. But on the dung heap.

If you will. So. Jesus. Also. Suffered. Outside. The city gate. To make the people. Holy. Through his own blood. Let us.

Then. Go to him. Outside. The camp. Bearing. The disgrace. He bore. For here. We do not have. An enduring city. But we are looking. For the city.

[32 : 29] That is to come. Are you satisfied. With that kind of religion? Are you satisfied. With that kind of salvation?

A religion. That today. Is outside. The camp. In the place. Of death. So that we might. Find life. A religion. That follows.

Jesus. In his suffering. So that we might. Receive. Those truly. Glorious. Benefits. Of his death. The destruction. Of the evil one.

The liberation. From the fear. Of death. The propitiation. For our sins. And help. Help. When we are being tempted. By every temptation. Of glamour.

Of influence. Of power. That we might say. No. Here. We have. No. Continuing city. We are looking.

[33 : 27] For the city. That is to come. The heavenly. Jerusalem. In which righteousness. Dwells. And where our high priest.

Has been crowned. With glory. And honor. He has inherited. All things. And we shall be like him. God. What a Christ.

What a savior. Let us know him. In his suffering. And his death. Not neglecting. All that he has done. For us. So that we might know.

That salvation. Amen. Let us pray. Our Lord.

Our father. Of all mercies. We thank you. That we do have access. To you. Through the son. That he has. Paved the way. For us. To enter into the most. Holy of places.

[34 : 26] That we can come. Into your presence. No longer with fear. But with joy. We pray. That you would fill. Our hearts. With joy. And peace. Before you. That we would be glad.

To hear the words. That you give to us. That we would rely. Not on our own strength. But only by the power. Of the Holy Spirit. Would we live our lives. Every day. Before you. May all these things.

Be true of us. We pray. In Christ's name. Amen. Would you please. Stand then. For our final.

Item of praise. We'll sing. Together. The favorite hymn. A mighty fortress. Is our god. I'm good.

Thank you. I'm good.

That is our god. Thank you.