

What is So Great

When we read in the book of Hebrews, we often find ourselves in the 11th chapter considering faith and those tremendous examples of faith who are cataloged in that chapter. By limiting our reading to only one chapter, we fail to see the passionate plea for Christianity. There are arguments for and against this book being written by Paul. Those opposed to Pauline authorship point to the well-structured Greek text speaks of a person well studied in the language. Also, the focus of the book is on the superior high priest (Jesus) rather than Paul's usual theme of the resurrection of Jesus. Those who credit Hebrews to Paul have early church history on their side. Early records dating back to the 2nd century place Hebrews just after the letter to the Romans. Some also point the Hebrews 13:23 in the closing salutations specifically mentions Timothy, as Paul frequently included a mention of Timothy in his letters. In the end, we may be forced to agree with the 3rd century theologian Origen who wrote: "Who it was that really wrote the Epistle, God only knows."

From even a cursory reading of Hebrews, it becomes clear that some Jews who had embraced Jesus and become Christians were slipping back into familiar trappings of Mosaic laws and customs. The writer is appealing to those Jews to return to Jesus as their savior and reject the former things that could never bring the salvation that is found in Jesus. In our scripture for today, we will read the first four verses in the 2nd chapter of Hebrews. It is a reminder that we should never turn aside from our source of salvation.

For this reason, we must pay much closer attention to what we have heard, so that we do not drift away *from it*. For if the word spoken through angels proved unalterable (Or *steadfast*), and every transgression and disobedience received a just penalty, how will we escape if we neglect so great a salvation? After it was at the first spoken through the Lord, it was confirmed to us by those who heard, God also testifying with them, both by signs and wonders and by various miracles and by gifts of the Holy Spirit according to His own will. (Hebrews 2:1-4 NASB)

Within this passage, in the third verse, there is a question: How will we escape if we neglect so great a salvation? Focus on the phrase: **so great a salvation**. Quite frankly, my observations tell me that many of us Christians would be hard pressed to explain what is so great about our salvation. This morning we will dissect this question and will look for the answer in terms that will help us appreciate why our salvation is great.

First, our salvation is SO GREAT because of the price that was paid to obtain that salvation. In the 6th chapter of 1 Corinthians, Paul cautions against sins that damage our body. He reminds us that our body is the temple of the Holy Spirit whom God has given to us (1 Corinthians 6:19).

Then in verse 20, we are told:

For you have been bought with a price: therefore, glorify God in your body. (1 Corinthians 6:20 NASB)

Peter uses the same idea when he tells us to live in reverential fear or awe because we have been redeemed by something more precious than silver or gold.

If you address as Father the One who impartially judges according to each one's work, conduct yourselves in fear during the time of your stay *on earth*; knowing that you were not redeemed with perishable things like silver or gold from your futile way of life inherited from your forefathers, but with precious blood, as of a lamb unblemished and spotless, *the blood of Christ*. (1 Peter 1:17-19 NASB)

Our salvation cost the blood of Christ. That makes it great.

Second, our salvation is SO GREAT because of the plan and design that is accomplished. In his letter to the Romans, Paul tells us: **But thanks be to God that though you were slaves of sin, you became obedient from the heart to that form of teaching to which you were committed, and having been freed from sin, you became slaves of righteousness. (Romans 6:17-18 NASB)**

Within this passage, we see the word form. The Greek word used is **τύπος** typos (tu' pos) and is translated as form or pattern. The definition found in Vine's Complete Expository Dictionary will give us a mental image to better picture and understand its usage in this passage. *As a form or mold into which molten material is poured so that it takes the shape. The Gospel is the mold; those who are obedient to its teaching become conformed to Christ*

The nature of our salvation is pre-planned to free us from our sins and to help us conform to being like Christ. Our salvation is so great because it is as God planned it to be-a mold to shape us into Christlikeness.

Third, our salvation is SO GREAT because it produces peace. Since sin entered the world with Adam in the Garden of Eden, mankind has tried to satisfy hungers with earthly things. This constant seeking of satisfaction in this world feeds quarrels and disputes.

In his letter, James lays out the lack of peace that comes about through our seeking to find happiness in this world.

What is the source of quarrels and conflicts among you? Is not the source your pleasures that wage war in your members? You lust and do not have; so, you commit murder. You are envious and cannot obtain; so, you fight and quarrel. You do not have because you do not ask. You ask and do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, so that you may spend it on your pleasures. You adulteresses, do you not know that friendship with the world is hostility toward God? Therefore, whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God. (James 4:1-4 NASB)

Our salvation is a result of Jesus paying the price for our sins and becoming our peace. He (Jesus) is path through whom we may be reconciled to God.

But now in Christ Jesus you who formerly were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ. For He Himself is our peace, who made both groups into one and broke down the barrier of the dividing wall, by abolishing in His flesh the enmity, which is the Law of commandments contained in ordinances, so that in Himself He might make the two into one new man, thus establishing peace, and might reconcile them both in one body to God through the cross, by it having put to death the enmity. AND HE CAME AND PREACHED PEACE TO YOU WHO WERE FAR AWAY, AND PEACE TO THOSE WHO WERE NEAR; for through Him we both have our access in one Spirit to the Father. (Ephesians 2:13-18 NASB)

As our salvation is found only in Jesus the Christ, that is where we find peace.

Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, (Romans 5:1 NASB)

We become one with Christ when we are baptized into Christ.

For all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free man, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus. (Galatians 3:27-28 NASB)

Our salvation is SO GREAT because we find peace that is not available outside of Christ. Christ is our salvation.

Fourth, our salvation is SO GREAT because it connects us with God and is the culmination of His master plan. Not only does it connect us to His plan, it also perpetuates a relationship with God at a celestial level. Paul writes to us in Ephesians speaking of those blessings.

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ. (Ephesians 1:3 NASB)

James, the brother of Jesus, uses similar language in his letter as he speaks of the source of our blessings and the fact that our salvation allows us to become the first fruits of new creation God has planned.

Every good thing given and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shifting shadow. In the exercise of His will He brought us forth by the word of truth, so that we would be a kind of first fruits among His creatures. (James 1:17-18 NASB)

Our salvation is SO GREAT because it connects us with God and all the blessings that are available to those who are blessed by God.

Fifth, our salvation is SO GREAT because of the future it provides. The promise of our heavenly home exceeds anything we could imagine while here on earth. Paul tells us in Romans, that the suffering we may endure here will pale when we see the revealed reward in God's plan.

For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that is to be revealed to us. (Romans 8:18 NASB)

In Philippians, Paul speaks of his dilemma-his desire to continue to reach out to help others and his desire to be at home with Christ.

But I am hard-pressed from both directions, having the desire to depart and be with Christ, for that is very much better (Philippians 1:23 NASB)

Peter points us to the blessings we have in our salvation when he writes: **Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His great mercy has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to obtain an inheritance which is imperishable and undefiled and will not fade away, reserved in heaven for you, (1 Peter 1:3-4 NASB)**

Add to the above writers the words of Jesus found in the book of Revelation: **To him who overcomes, I will grant to eat of the tree of life which is in the Paradise of God.' (Revelation 2:7 NASB)**

Our salvation is SO GREAT because we see the ultimate reward is our home in heaven.

It has been my goal, this morning, to help everyone better understand why our salvation is so great. It is so great that we should never take our eyes off of the wonderful God who made it possible. It is so great that we should never, even for a moment, look away and **neglect so great a salvation.**

In the 9th chapter of 2 Corinthians, Paul is listing the various blessings and in the last verse, he sums it up with one final thanks: **Thanks be to God for His indescribable gift! (2 Corinthians 9:15 NASB)**

Our salvation is so great we too should be forever thankful.