

# THE GREAT SALVATION

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**Therefore we ought to give the more earnest heed to the things that were heard, lest haply we drift away from them. For if the word spoken through angels proved steadfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just recompense of reward; how shall we escape, if we neglect so great a salvation? which having at the first been spoken through the Lord, was confirmed unto us by them that heard; God also bearing witness with them, both by signs and wonders, and by manifold powers, and by gifts of the Holy Spirit, according to his own will (Heb. 2:1-4; ASV).**

The "therefore" in this passage shows that it is connected closely with what went before. In the first part of the preceding chapter, we are informed that, while God spoke in olden times to the fathers by the prophets, he has in these last days spoken to us through his Son. Through the great prophet, Moses, the law was originally revealed; additional revelations were made by God through other prophets. From the language of the first chapter, it appears that through the agency of angels, God made known His will to the prophets, who, in turn, spoke to the people. The greater part of the first chapter is taken up in showing the superiority of the Son over the angels. Because of this superiority of the Son through whom He now speaks to us, the writer draws the conclusion that we ought to give the more earnest heed to the things spoken to us by the Son.

*LEST WE DRIFT.* There was great danger that the Jewish Christians might drift away from the Lord. No faithful Christian ever, in the hour of faithfulness, made up his mind suddenly to quit serving the Lord, but may have gradually drifted away. The drifting may have been so imperceptible that they could not tell when it first began, but in the course of time it is discovered that they are not as devoted to the Lord as they once were. The remedy against this drifting is to give earnest heed to what God speaks to us through His Son.

*DISOBEDIENCE THEN AND NOW.* Some people think, that, because we live under grace, the Lord will not hold us to strict account now, as He held the people under the law. But this is an erroneous and hurtful idea. The view seems to be that grace means license; but grace to forgive our sins and to help us overcome them is not license giving us liberty to indulge in them. On this matter, God has spoken plainly: **"For if the word spoken through angels proved steadfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just recompense of reward; how shall we escape, if we neglect so great a salvation?"** (Heb. 2:2-3). Again:

**A man that hath set at nought Moses' law dieth without compassion on the word of two or three witnesses: of how much sorer punishment, think ye, shall he be judged worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the**

**covenant wherewith he was sanctified an unholy thing and hath done despite unto the Spirit of grace? (Heb. 10:28, 29).**

Sin is sin now as well as then. Again, **“For if they escaped not when they refused him that warned them on earth, much more shall not we escape who turn away from him that warneth from heaven”** (Heb. 12:25). Sin is sin, and if not forgiven, the sinner will be punished. Repentance must precede forgiveness. There is certainly no repentance in the heart of one who sins and then relies for immunity from punishment, on the idea that God will not be exacting with the sinner.

### **THE GREAT SALVATION**

The language of our text clearly shows that this great salvation was first made known by Christ Himself. It is different from anything in the old law, for in our text it is contrasted with former salvations. The deliverance of the Hebrews from Egyptian bondage, though great, is not the salvation of our present study.

*WHY GREAT?* It is great because, (1). It was planned and prepared by the Godhead. **“For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on him should not perish, but have eternal life. For God sent not the Son into the world to judge the world; but that the world should be saved through him”** (John 3:16, 17). (2). It cost the blood of Christ. **“But God commendeth his own love towards us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us”** (Rom. 5:8). (3). This great salvation releases from sin and condemnation. **“Much more then, being now justified by his blood, shall we be saved from the wrath of God through him”** (Rom. 5:9). (4). In it we become children of God, and joint-heirs with Christ. **“The Spirit himself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are children of God: and if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ”** (Rom. 8:16, 17). (5) It is offered to all men. The “whosoever” of John 3:15,16; 11:26 is as broad as the human family. Peter said: **“Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons: but in every nation he that feareth him and worketh righteousness, is acceptable to him”** (Acts 10:34,35). This great salvation is not restricted to a small group of people supposed by some to have been elected before the world began. **“Him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out”** (John 6:37).

In this life we will never know the fullness of this great salvation. For one reason, we can never know the enormity of sin from which we are delivered, nor the awfulness of the punishment from which the saved man escapes.

*FIRST SPOKEN BY THE LORD IN PERSON.* There was a definite time when the Lord first spoke this great salvation; and there were certain persons who were present and heard Him, and later confirmed to others what Jesus said. The importance of this great salvation justifies us in making a diligent effort to learn when this great salvation was first spoken by Christ. Compare carefully the passage we are studying with Mark 16:15-20:

**And he said unto them, Go ye unto all the world, and preach the gospel to the whole creation. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that disbelieveth shall be condemned. And these signs shall accompany them that believe: in my name shall they cast out demons; they shall speak with new tongues; they shall take up serpents, and if they drink any deadly thing, it shall in no wise hurt them; they shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover. So then the Lord Jesus, after he had spoken unto them, was received up into heaven, and sat down at the right hand of God. And they went forth, and preached everywhere, the Lord working with them, and confirming the word by signs that followed. Amen.**

From this passage we learn that Jesus announced a salvation; some heard Him and went forth preaching it; and their word was confirmed by signs. In our text, Hebrews 2:1-4, we learn that the Lord spoke the great salvation; some heard Him, and God confirmed their word by signs wrought through them. It is plain to any thoughtful reader that both writers have reference to the same event, and that this great salvation was first spoken by the Lord when He gave the Great Commission.

#### **WHEN THE APOSTLES BEGAN TO CONFIRM THE GREAT SALVATION**

As there was a time when, and a place where the Lord first spoke this great salvation, so there is a time when and place where the apostles began to preach and confirm it to others. In Luke's record of the Great Commission, in which Jesus first spoke the great salvation, Jesus charged the apostles to begin in Jerusalem, but not to begin until they were clothed with power from on high (Luke 24:46-49). Also in Acts 1:8 we read: **"But ye shall receive power, when the Holy Spirit is come upon you: and ye shall be my witness both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and unto the uttermost parts of the earth."** In Acts 2:1-4, we read:

**And when the day of Pentecost was now come, they were all together in one place. And suddenly there came from heaven a sound as of the rushing of a mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting. And there appeared unto them tongues parting asunder, like as of fire; and it sat upon each one of the. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance.**

In Peter's sermon which followed, he referred to these miraculous demonstrations as a confirmation of the truth of the sermon. **"Being therefore by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, he hath poured forth this, which ye see and hear"** (Acts 2:33). At the conclusion of Peter's sermon, the people inquired: **"Brethren, what shall we do?"** (v. 37) Peter gave answer: **"Repent ye, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ unto the remission of your sins; and ye shall receive**

**the gift of the Holy Spirit”** (Acts 2:38). The remission of sins herein promised, with all the attendant blessings is certainly the great salvation first spoken of by the Lord in the Great Commission, and herein announced and confirmed by those who heard Him.

*CONFIRMED BY SIGNS.* The miracles attending the preaching of the inspired men were for the purpose of confirming the messages. If a person claimed that God had sent him out with a message for the people, it was the duty and right of the people to demand that he prove God had sent him. If a man were to come to us with a certain demand, claiming that he had been sent on official business, we would demand that he show us his credentials. Miracles were the credentials of inspired men, proving that God had sent them, and that, therefore, their preaching was true. God endorsed the preaching of the apostles enabling them to work miracles. They however were not sent solely to work miracles. If a man had no message to deliver, he worked no miracles. As preachers today cannot bring us messages, there is no need for miracles. Messages are delivered by messengers, and messages from God were confirmed by miracles. Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob were never sent out to other people with messages. For these reasons they were not messengers; nor did they work miracles, yet they were good men, and believers.

It was Moses' task divinely appointed to return to Egypt and redeem his people from bondage. **“And Jehovah said, I have surely seen the affliction of my people that are in Egypt, and have heard their cry by reason of their taskmasters; for I know their sorrow”** (Exo. 3:7). **“Come now therefore, and I will send thee unto Pharaoh, that they mayest bring forth my people the children of Israel out of Egypt”** (v. 10). Moses objected, saying: **“But, behold, they will not believe me, nor hearken unto my voice; for they will say, Jehovah hath not appeared unto thee”** (Exo. 4:1). Moses here stated a real difficulty. He knew that he had no way of proving to them that God had sent him; there was not even one witness upon whom he could call or depend for proof. Jehovah met the difficulty with confirmatory signs, stating the purpose of the signs, namely: **“That they may believe that Jehovah, the God of their fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, hath appeared unto thee”** (Exo. 4:5). **“And Moses and Aaron went and gathered together all the elders of the children of Israel; and Aaron spake all the words which Jehovah had spoken to Moses, and did the signs in the sight of the people. And the people believed”** (Exo. 4:29-31).

Nicodemus had the correct idea about miracles as a sign. Anyone who heard Jesus knew that he was a teacher, but some claimed that he was a false teacher: but Nicodemus knew that he was a teacher from God, and stated that he knew it, saying: **“Rabbi, we know that thou art a teacher come from God; for no one can do these signs that thou doest, except God be with him”** (John 3:1, 2). Jesus Himself demanded belief in Him and His mission and claims on the ground of His works: **“If I do not the works of my Father, believe me not. But if I do**

them, though ye believe not me, believe the works; that ye may know and understand the Father is in me, and I in the Father” (John 10:37, 38). To the Jews on Pentecost Peter said, “**Jesus of Nazareth, a man approved of God unto you by mighty works and wonders and signs which God did by him in the midst of you, even as ye yourselves know**” (Acts 2:22). From all of this we conclude that the primary purpose of miracles by Jesus was to show God’s approval of him, and that he was therefore what he claimed to be. Even the writing of these signs was done that we “**may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God**” (John 20:30, 31). Also in the passage we are studying Paul says the Great Salvation was confirmed unto us by them who heard the Lord, God bearing witness with them by signs, wonders, and gifts of the Holy Spirit (Heb. 2:1-5).

Some claim these miraculous gifts are yet present with believers. The various gifts conferred upon some of the early Christians are mentioned by Paul in 1 Corinthians 12:4-11. So far as we can discover, none but the apostles possessed all these spiritual gifts. In the church at Corinth, these gifts were distributed, the Holy Spirit “**dividing to each one severally even as he will.**” Among the many religious orders claiming to possess any of these gifts, we know of none, save the Mormons, that claim to possess all of them. Some branches of the “Holiness” people, make great claims, declaring they can cure the sick, speak with tongues, and interpret tongues. The Mormons, seemingly, are the more consistent, for if some of these gifts are now possessed, they all are. Those who claim any of these gifts, or all of these spiritual gifts base their claim on the following passage:

(1). “**He that believeth on me, the works that I do shall he do also; and greater works than these shall he do; because I go unto the Father**” (John 14:12). But so far as is known, no religious order claims that all its members are spiritually gifted. None of them claim that all believers can do these works. They themselves limit the promises. The only question is to how far was the promise limited? That will unfold as we proceed.

(2). “**And these signs shall accompany them that believe: in my name shall they cast out demons; they shall speak with new tongues; they shall take up serpents, and if they drink any deadly thing, it shall in no wise hurt them; they shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover**” (Mark 16:17, 18). Present day pretenders lay great stress on healing and speaking in tongues; but those who have tried handling poisonous snakes and drinking deadly poison have suffered just as do others or unbelievers. Another peculiar thing about these pretended healers, each religious body claiming these powers denies that any other sect or group possess these powers. The so-called Holiness group deny that the Mormons have the powers so claimed. Every group insists that the pretended miracles of the other groups are frauds, yet they all claim to defend their deeds, actions, by the same Scriptures. None of them contend that the promise applies to all believers. They insist the promise is limited. The question is: To whom is it limited? If we know the purpose of these gifts, we can easily determine their limitations. The signs promised in Mark 16:17,18, are the same mentioned in verse

20. **“And they went forth, and preached everywhere, the Lord working with them, and confirming the word by signs that followed.”** This shows definitely the purpose of these signs. We insist the following propositions are self-evident:

(1). When the New Testament was fully revealed there was no further need for miraculously inspired men.

(2). When the revelation was confirmed by signs there was no further need for signs.

If these propositions are admitted, or proved, then it follows:

(1). Inspiration ceased when the gospel was fully revealed.

(2). Signs ceased at the same time, for there was nothing further to be confirmed.

Signs were merely adjuncts to revelation, and not a permanent part of Christianity.

The apostles could cure the sick only when such cures furthered their proving, confirming the word. Paul left Trophimus at Meletus sick (2 Tim. 4:20). Timothy had stomach trouble and other infirmities. (1 Tim. 5:23). These were dear friends of Paul, and his companion on many occasions of travel. Thinkest thou he would have left them sick if he could have cured them? Miracles were performed by the apostles to confirm the word. If all the apostles were now living among us, not a cure would they perform, because it is no longer necessary, since the word (gospel) has been confirmed, nor would they speak in tongues.

### **NEGLECTING THIS GREAT SALVATION**

**“How shall we escape if we neglect this great salvation?”** Most of us realize that there is no escape for those who rebel against the authority of Jehovah, deliberately refusing to obey Him, or indulge in revolting crimes. Such characters are not “neglecting” salvation, they are deliberately refusing it. The writer in the passage is speaking to those who had accepted the Great Salvation but were liable to drift away from it. Neglect is a very common sin among people. Yet we need to realize that as much harm may come from neglect as through an effort to injure or oppose. The wounded, or sick may die through neglect. In the judgment scene, (Mat. 25:31-46), the point emphasized in the guilt of those condemned, is, they neglected to attend to the needs of those who were needy and in distress. In the parable of the Ten Virgins, and the Talents, (Mat. 25:1-30), diligence and neglect were set forth, and to these, emphasis were given. The five foolish virgins had neglected taking extra oil; the one talent man had neglected his master’s business.

“How shall we escape if we neglect?” Can you? Can I?~

Deceased