

DON'T NEGLECT SO GREAT A SALVATION

SUNDAY 20th APRIL 2025 | SIM FORDER

Don't neglect so great a salvation: Easter Sunday evening (2025)

Taught by Simeon Forder on Sunday evening, 20th April 2025 @ Deal Christian Fellowship

Reading: Hebrews 2:1-4

This morning we considered the good news of the gospel, and how very good that is. And the reason it is such very good news, is because of the very bad state we were in. For we had sinned against a just, holy, and perfect God.

In fact, even looking at God's 10 commandments alone, we see how they reveal how we have put made up gods before the one true God, how we have worshipped things other than Him, how we've taken Christ's name in vain, and how we have not given priority to the things of God. And they reveal to us the extent to which we've disobeyed God in our actions toward other people; disobeying our parents, hating others in our heart, lusting after people as they walk by or we spend time online — or even being unfaithful in marriage, and then stealing from others, lying to them, and coveting what others have.

And so we find, that God's law shines light on the dire situation we are in. Like the early morning sunlight pouring into your living room doesn't create dust, but rather reveals the dust in the air (and on your coffee table), so too the law doesn't create sin, but reveals it.

But God in His mercy, though He would have been justified to leave us in our condemned state, was not willing to leave us in that state — and so, we read in John's gospel account, *God gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.*

So then, what God did was to send Jesus into this world, born as a baby boy, that He might live as a perfect man, not needing to pay for any sin of His own, because He lived a perfect, sinless life. As such, being both sinless and being fully man he was fully qualified to pay for our sin in our place, but being fully God was fully capable of paying for the sin of the whole world, as we read that He has in 1 John 2:2.

But the salvation that comes from that is not automatic, for we already *read* in John 3:16 how it would be whoever *believes* in Him that would not perish. But lest we take *that* verse out of context of the whole Bible, it doesn't mean we are simply to believe that Jesus exists (for as we read in James, even the demons do that), but rather we are to come to God in repentance and faith. Repentance meaning to turn from our sin, and faith because we are not to trust in our own efforts to save us, but in the completed work of Jesus on the cross.

You see we could never have been saved by our good works, for helping an old lady across the street with her shopping (as kind as that might be) will never *undo* the lies we have told, the lust we have had, or the coveting we have done. Like when squeezing toothpaste out of a tube, once it is out, there is nothing you can do to get it back in, so too, once we have sinned (and we all have), there is nothing we can do to restore our relationship with God. Only Jesus can do that, through His great and marvellous kindness of paying for our sin in our place.

So then, we are to repent, as we read in Acts 17, which we *read* a few times this morning:

Acts 17:30-31

Truly, these times of ignorance God overlooked, but now commands all men everywhere to repent, because He has appointed a day on which He will judge the world in righteousness by the Man whom He has ordained. He has given assurance of this to all by raising Him from the dead."

And turning from our sin, we are to put our faith in Jesus, who *alone* can save us. That is the *only* way in which we can be saved, as Peter made crystal clear when speaking of Jesus in Acts chapter four, saying:

Acts 4:12

Nor is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved."

And how are we saved? By faith. We read in Ephesians chapter two:

Ephesians 2:4-9

But God, who is rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in trespasses, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), and raised us up together, and made us sit together in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, that in the ages to come He might show the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast.

That doesn't mean we are not to have good works — indeed, Paul goes on in the next verse to say "*For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.*" — but these good works are in *response* to what God has done for us, not a *requirement* in order that He might save us.

What a *wonderful* salvation we have then — that though we were utterly helpless, condemned under the weight of God's law which we had broken — we are now forgiven and free, so long as we have indeed come to Jesus in repentance and faith as God instructs us to.

So have you? Have those around you? This is too great a matter to be unsure! This is too urgent a matter to ignore! Indeed *nothing* is more important than this, which is surely why the writer of the book of Hebrews opened with these words in chapter 2:

Hebrews 2:1

Therefore we must give the more earnest heed to the things we have heard, lest we drift away.

That is, we must pay attention to what we've heard, lest the crucial matter of salvation slip our mind. For aren't we easily distracted? Isn't it easy to think that we can think this through another time? But truly none of us know the day we will die. None of us know the day on which Jesus will rapture His church to be with Him. Either of those things could happen *today*. And for around 1700 people in the UK alone, they will indeed die today — that'll be around 12,000 this week. And if that were to happen to you, how would you stand before God? Guilty (without a Saviour)? Or forgiven (having put your faith and trust in Jesus to save you from your sin)? Those are the only two options, and we *must* act on this urgently.

Indeed, this passage goes on to say:

Hebrews 2:2-4

For if the word spoken through angels proved steadfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just reward, how shall we escape if we neglect so great a salvation, which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed to us by those who heard Him, God also bearing witness both with signs and wonders, with various miracles, and gifts of the Holy Spirit, according to His own will?

That is, if the words spoken by angels were trustworthy (such as the 2 angels who visited Sodom and said it would be destroyed, and it was) then how much *more* trustworthy and wonderful is this *incredible* Salvation that *Jesus* spoke of, that He *Himself* has provided to us, and that His disciples — who were eyewitnesses of His sacrifice — have relayed to us, accompanied by miracles and the gifts of the Holy Spirit? We must not neglect such an incredible offer of such incredible salvation.

But many do. Perhaps you do. Or some people you know do. You see, neglect is doing nothing about something you have in your ability to do. Let me put it another way — what do you need to do to miss out on God's gift of salvation? *Nothing*. That is, by default you are already condemned, you are already guilty before a just and holy God, and you are already destined for hell — because you have sinned, and God cannot let that go unpunished, for He is good, He is just, He is holy, He is perfect.

If you are counting on God's goodness to spare you, then you are gravely mistaken, for His goodness will actually see that you are held to *account* for your sin. Indeed, God couldn't spare you the consequences of your sin unless *justice* was still somehow done. That is why Jesus died for you, that He might die in your place to pay for your sin. But unless you turn to Him and put your faith in Him to save you, then you are on your own. That is exactly what will happen if you neglect to take up this offer of His to save you. That is what inaction will result in.

Let me give you two examples that may help this sink in. First, a story is told of a man who went to sleep in his boat one night on the Niagara river, and tragically by the time he woke up his boat had drifted down stream until it was too late, and he went over the top of the Niagara Falls, and he was killed. That is what most people are doing with regard to their salvation. They are moving ever closer to the edge of eternity, and at some point it will be too late — it will no longer be possible for them to be saved. If that's you, if you're drifting along doing nothing about your salvation, then the end result of your inaction is getting ever closer. And unless you turn to Christ who alone can save you, you will likewise perish.

The second example I'll give you is that of a serious disease, such as cancer. If you have it, and you do nothing about it, then it is certain what will happen — and that is it will kill you. Only action on your part will change the course of your life. Yet how much can *you* really do? Nothing. At least, nothing, but accept the help that is on offer to you. What a tragedy for someone with such an illness to know full well the diagnosis, but put off treatment for another day, thinking "ah, I'll get round to it at some point". And there are those that will do that, thinking how inconvenient it would be to have the treatment, thinking of all the change it might mean to their life, when the reality is that without it, their life is going to be dramatically shortened. People have died because they left it too late to accept the help on offer.

And that is what we are reading about here as Paul asks "how shall we escape if we neglect so great a salvation?" It's a rhetorical question, for there is only one way of escape, and Paul is saying that we ignore it at our peril. Indeed we procrastinate at our peril.

In the book of Acts, we read the sad story of a man called Felix, who was the Roman governor that Paul was sent before, after he had been arrested in Jerusalem, and a plot had been formed by his enemies to kill him. And in trying to ascertain the truth of what had led to Paul's arrest, Felix had Paul brought before him so that he could question him, and as a result learned more about what Paul believed. And wanting to have *others* hear Paul's case further too, he had him brought before him once more a few days later, and Paul preached the gospel to him. We read in chapter 24:

Acts 24:25-27

Now as he reasoned about righteousness, self-control, and the judgment to come, Felix was afraid and answered, "Go away for now; when I have a convenient time I will call for you." Meanwhile he also hoped that money would be given him by Paul, that he might release him. Therefore he sent for him more often and conversed with him. But after two years Porcius Festus succeeded Felix; and Felix, wanting to do the Jews a favour, left Paul bound.

And so he heard the good news of the gospel, he heard the gospel in its entirety, but he delayed making a decision. And though he heard Paul often after that, he ultimately got moved to another position, and heard Paul no more. That is what far too many still do today, thinking they'll do something about the gospel at a more convenient time. But in the end, that time never comes, and they neglect the great offer of salvation that is before them.

Now, for those of us that are Christians, what do we do about this? Well, we need to be bold as Paul was, that's for sure. And we must not give up preaching the gospel, even when we come across Felix's who procrastinate and never respond to it. But where we have open doors, let us do all we can to bring those we know and those we meet to their senses, that they might not neglect such a great offer of salvation.

What we mustn't do, is be timid. For consider this — if you knew someone that had cancer, and they just weren't getting round to accepting the treatment, you wouldn't sit by and think "oh, well - their choice!" — no, you would plead with them, right? So what do we do where there are those we know that are unbelievers. Well, we can't ignore the matter, right? Rather we should preach the gospel where we have chance, we should pray for them continually, and we should live in response to the gospel, that we might not disqualify ourselves from giving the good news to them. We want to lead them to Christ, not push them away from Him, right? We can pray for wisdom, we can pray for boldness. But what we mustn't do is give up. I've shared with you before, how people I know or know of have come to know the Lord years after someone started praying for them. Let us not get weary in praying for those unbelievers we know.

Now, in closing this evening, I want to speak specifically to those of you that *are* Christians, that *do* already know Jesus as your Saviour. For *you* know, that this is a matter of the heart, not of the intellect, right? Well, God wants *your* heart, and He wants it all, and He has gone to extraordinary lengths that He might not only forgive you, but that He might live in you, and through you. But perhaps — whether through familiarity, or distraction — we get almost desensitised to that wonderful reality.

And so I want to share a true story with you that I heard at a conference more than 20 years ago, for it has lived with me, and others that I know have heard this too. And as such, I'm pretty much going to repeat this exactly as it was told.

You see, a couple on the West Coast of the United States had a young son with a congenital heart problem. And when he was eight years old, he was dying. And they took him to the hospital. And the doctor said, without a heart transplant, your son's not going to live.

Well, at the same time, another little boy had been brought in who was in a car accident and was on life support. And the surgeons knew that little boy wasn't going to live. And so, they had that incredibly difficult conversation with his parents, to say your son is not going to survive. But there is a little boy down the hall. And we hate to ask you this. We hate even to bring this up. But if your son would donate his heart, this other little boy might live.

And of course the family whose boy had been in the accident were so distraught they just said we just need to be alone, we need to think. And the surgeons said, sure, we understand.

Hours later as the surgeons came back they said we'll do it if the other little boy will live, and our boy is not going to live. We'll do it but we have one request — and that is if the other parents will let us come and see their boy before he leaves the hospital. And, of course, the surgeons asked the other family, and they said, of course.

And the heart transplant took place, and it was successful.

And about four days later, the parents of the boy who had died came to visit that little boy. And the parents of the boy who had received the heart said, why is it really that you wanted to come? And the father said, because I want to bow down and put my ear on your son's chest and hear my son's heart beating one more time.

And that's what our Father in heaven has done. He's given his Son so he can stoop down and hear the very heart of Christ beating in our chest. Jesus living in our hearts. He's paid the unimaginable price with His own blood, that that might be possible.

So, we should never compromise, never apologise, and never be ashamed to tell people of the love of Jesus Christ and what the Father has done for us.

Yes there is blood involved, and there is death involved, and there's fire involved, and there's hell involved. But the terms are eternal.

Now some will say *isn't it closed-minded to say that there's only one way?* Well, no, it's miraculous that there is a way. If we told people we found a cure for AIDS or a cure for cancer, they wouldn't say, "*well, that's too narrow-minded — I want to be cured of cancer by drinking carrot juice.*" They would be lining up around the corner! Well, there is a cure we have for the greatest problem, which is our sin. There *is* an answer. There *is* forgiveness. There *is* life beyond the grave.

And that is the good news that God has entrusted us with.

As we go our separate ways this evening, may we leave this place with renewed vigour to share the gospel, but also to live the gospel — that God would hear His Son's heart beating in us. Let us consider what we read in Colossians chapter 2:

Colossians 2:6-7


As you therefore have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in Him, rooted and built up in Him and established in the faith, as you have been taught, abounding in it with thanksgiving.

And if you don't know Jesus as your Saviour, don't neglect the opportunity that is before you. Don't procrastinate. Don't be a Felix that puts it off for two years, and then drifts off into oblivion without ever having made the decision to turn to Jesus. The stakes are too high. Your eternal life is on the line, and if you do nothing, then you will have to account for your own sin, without any hope of defence. I beg you, do something today!

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