Hebrews - Commentaries by Andrew Miller

Meditations on the Grace and Glory of the Blessed God, God's Salvation and Man's Condition

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There is no subject of such importance to a sinner as that of salvation-the salvation of his own soul. Compared with this, all others dwindle into utter insignificance. Indeed, were he truly alive to his condition as such, he could think of no other, feel interested in no other, occupy himself with no other, until he knew that this all important one was really settled on a solid basis. He would seek first to have this secure, whatever else was left in uncertainty.

The unsaved sinner is like a person on the brink of an awful precipice, up to the very edge of which an enemy has decoyed him, and then, with fiendish subtlety, watching his opportunity to give him the fatal push, that would plunge him headlong down the fearful abyss. Now, what should we think of a person, in such a condition, who could remain unconcerned, if he knew his danger? who, though faithfully warned of his position, and of the enemy who was seeking his destruction, nevertheless, gave no heed to the warning, manifested no desire to flee from the danger, or to escape from the hands of his crafty, cruel foe? We should justly conclude that he was an insane person, one who was alike insensible to the dangers of his situation, the kindness of his friend, and the treachery of his enemy.

Well, such, and worse than such, is the condition, and the conduct, of every unpardoned sinner, who neglects God's " great salvation"-who despises, or trifles with the faithful warnings, and the affectionate invitations of the gospel. He is on the very brink of the slippery precipice of the lake of fire. He is every moment exposed to the yawning gulf beneath. Another step, and his doom may be sealed forever-for who can tell what a moment may bring forth? Yet, strange to say, he professes to know his danger, and dares to make light of it. Awful delusion! but he believes the lie of Satan rather than the truth of God, and shuts his eyes to the danger he is in. Such, indeed, is the awful condition, the imminent danger, of every one who neglects the " great salvation." He may be kind, loving, gentle, moral, amiable. He may not openly despise or avowedly reject salvation, but in heart he neglects it-treats it with carelessness-and the only termination of such a course, if persisted in, is eternal condemnation. " How shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation?" And oh, what immense numbers there are of this class! Many of the most moral and well conducted amongst men, are living in the utter "neglect" of God's "great salvation." Oh, fearful condition! fatal delusion! And the great enemy of souls and salvation is doing his very utmost to hide from the view of his poor deluded victims, the reality of their position, until it be too late. Moreover, while the sinner's ear continues shut to the voice of God, and his heart closed to the love of God, he is in the hands of Satan, "the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience." He is led on by him as his prince, and energized by his spirit. He may think he has an independent will of his own, and may boast that he can think and judge for himself, yet all the while he is the merest dupe of Satan, and led " captive by him at his will." 2 Tim. 2:26.

Some he leads on very gently, getting them to believe that God's time for their conversion is not yet come, and that they must wait His time, He only can change the heart; but, in the meantime, they may take their enjoyment, such as the world offers, in a rational way, honestly confessing they are not Christians yet, so that they are quite consistent. Such, alas! are as surely, though quietly and orderly, on the broad road, as those who are rudely opposed. This is a subtle, but most successful snare of the enemy. It well suits those who have a measure of light, but at the same time a real love for the world. Some who have less light, and less conscience, he pushes along more roughly; while others he drives furiously, and their race is soon run. But at whatever speed, and in whatever character they go, his only terminus is the burning lake, where there is weeping, and gnashing of teeth. But, blessed be the God of all grace, so long as the soul is on this side of the lake it is in the place of hope. God is above Satan; He is above all. He keeps the door of mercy wide open, night and day, for the chief of sinners. " And let him that is athirst come: and whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely." (Rev. 22:17.) The first look of faith to Jesus is immediate deliverance. " Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth; for I am God, and there is none else." (Isa. 45:22.) Many have been rescued by the Savior-God, when on the very brink of hell, and plucked as a brand out of the fire. He only can do it, and we must look to Him. We have many examples recorded in scripture, and set up as finger-posts, pointing out to us the way of escape, and the way of eternal life. Such are the dying thief on the cross, Saul of Tarsus, and the Philippian gaoler. Let us look for a moment at the latter. When, by Satan, driven to the very point of despair, " He drew out his sword and would have killed himself." But the voice of love from " the inner prison," that cried aloud,

" Do thyself no harm, for we are all here," stayed his hand, and rescued him from the snare of the enemy. He was just about to strike the fatal blow, and rush headlong into the gulf of hell. For a moment, he stood quivering on its slippery edge, and Satan eager to push him in; when, lo, the sweet accents of love and mercy from the heart of God, fell upon his ear, arrested his attention, and turned his thoughts to the voice that spake. Those kind words, " Do thyself no harm," broke the poor gaoler's heart, and he fell captive, not to the malice of Satan, blessed be God, but to the victorious love of Jesus. The prey was taken from the mighty, and the lawful captive was delivered from the terrible one. (Isa. 49:24.) ""Then he called for a light, and sprang in, and came trembling, and fell down before Paul and Silas, and brought them out, and said, Sirs, what must I do to be saved? And they said, Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house.... And he rejoiced, believing in God with all his house." (Acts 16:29, 34.) Oh! that my dear reader may be led to pause, and listen to the voice of love. It is Jesus that speaks, and words of perfect grace fall from His lips. I am come, He says " to seek and to save that which was lost." Oh, then, turn to Him, ere you take another step. As a lost one turn to Him " Blessed are all they that put their trust in him " (Psa. 2:12.) Reader, think of this. All who are not in the arms of Jesus, are in the grasp of Satan. There is no middle place.

That which may, alas, be treated with neglect, thought little of, and cared little for, is, nevertheless, God's "great salvation." Hence the solemn warning, appeal, and exhortation in the word before us. " 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 recompence of reward; HOW SHALL WE ESCAPE, IF WE NEGLECT SO GREAT SALVATION?" These truly solemn words were first

spoken to the Hebrews, who had made a profession of Christianity, but were in danger of slipping back into Judaism. Still, they are equally true and applicable to us, and to all who, at any time, or on any ground, are found neglecting this salvation. The subject is one of universal and individual importance, and cannot be overlooked or disregarded by any without incurring God's sore displeasure. " Salvation is of the Lord." (Jonah 2:9) It is of His providing and preparing. " Behold, I have prepared my dinner; my oxen and my fatlings are killed, and all things are ready: come unto the marriage." (Matt. 22:4) It is divinely suited to man's condition. It is ready now, ready for the acceptance of all who will receive it. It is full and free-free to the most unworthy. " He, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money: come ye, buy and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk, without money, and without price." Isa. 55:1.

It is emphatically called the " great salvation." And that for several reasons. We will notice some of them.

Because of the greatness, and authority of Him by whom it was published. " Which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord." " God.... hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son." (Heb. 1) The law was spoken by angels. The Jews "received the law by the disposition of angels." (Acts 7) But God hath spoken to us, by His own beloved Son, who is essentially and officially above angels. " For unto which of the angels said he at any time, Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee?" What a messenger! Oh, what importance must be attached to the message which He brings! " Therefore we ought to give the more earnest heed to the things which we have heard."

Because of the greatness and glory of Him by whom it was accomplished. When Christ, " by himself," had " purged our sins," He " sat down on the right hand of the majesty on high." He who, in perfect grace to us, when working out our salvation, went down to " the lowest parts of the earth," is now in the highest place in heaven. The cross has been exchanged for the throne, and the reed of mockery for the Royal Scepter of universal dominion. " But unto the Son he saith, Thy throne, 0 God, is forever and ever: a scepter of righteousness is the scepter of thy kingdom." Oh! what a workman! What must His work be!

Because of the greatness of the guilt and ruin from which it saves. How few know their real condition in the sight of God, though it is written on every page of scripture. Vain man's thoughts of himself, and God's true statement of his condition, are widely different. By nature, he is a child of wrath; because of unbelief, "condemned already." Yet out of all this sad, sad condition, God's " great salvation," effectually and immediately, delivers. " Giving thanks unto the Father, which hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light. Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son: in whom we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins." Rev. 3:17; Col. 1:12-14.

Because of the greatness of the blessedness into which it introduces. " For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God." We can never get higher or better than this. To be brought to God, is to be brought to the knowledge of God-into fellowship with God-full conformity to God-and the eternal enjoyment of God. This is perfect blessedness. " We also joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ." " To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God." Oh! what a place to be brought into! "The midst of the paradise of God." This is rest-God's own rest; a higher, a holier, a happier, can never be found. And to feed on Christ there, as "the tree of life." No " tree of the knowledge of good and evil" there. How different from man's paradise! " Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ." 1 Peter 3:18; Rom. 5:11; Rev. 2:7.

Well may the grand theme of the gospel testimony be called the " great salvation." Oh, how great-how good-how glorious! It is salvation from the depths of hell to the heights of heaven; from " the wrath to come," to an " eternal weight of glory." And is this-is this really-what so many are neglecting? Is this what so many are despising and rejecting? Few will say, in plain terms, that they are doing the latter, but many will confess to the former. Many will acknowledge that they are neglecting the " one thing needful." Well, my dear reader, be assured that the former comes to the same thing as the latter in the end. " How shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation?" Escape from eternal woe is utterly impossible, if we persist in neglecting Christ, in whom alone salvation is to be found. " How shall we escape?" is the deeply solemn and unchangeable word of God.

May you be led, my dear reader, to realize its full weight on your heart and conscience now. May you be kept from trifling with a matter of such immediate, unspeakable, and eternal importance to your own soul. Can anything compensate for the loss of your precious soul? "For what shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?" No amount of pleasure, gain, or gratification, in this world, can ever make up for eternal misery in the world to come. Why, then, oh! why should you be so thoughtless, careless, and negligent about salvation, " which is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory"? Oh, receive Him by faith, as your Savior, and then you receive salvation " with eternal glory." Then you possess, as your present and everlasting portion, " the unsearchable riches of Christ." All is open and free to faith. "Only believe." Salvation is by faith alone-faith in Jesus. " He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life." But oh! believe on Him now. His word can never be truer, His salvation can never be freer, and you can never be more welcome. Why not come now? He is waiting for you. It will be joy to His loving heart to embrace you. It will be joy to all heaven to receive you. Can you delay? Surely not. Flee to the arms of His mercy-flee at once. To-morrow may be too late. " Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation." 2 Cor. 6:2.

Salvation! oh, thou bleeding Lamb,

To thee the praise belongs:

Salvation shall inspire our hearts,

And dwell upon our tongues.

Meditations on the Grace and Glory of the Blessed God, What Has the Blood of Christ Done for Us?

No pen can write, no tongue can tell, what the blood-shedding of Jesus has accomplished. The wondrous fruits of that one sacrifice, both God-ward and man-ward, are infinite in their variety. The intrinsic value of that blood has fully and fairly met all the claims of God, every demand of the law, and the whole need of man. It has laid a foundation, or rather, in itself forms the foundation for the full display, throughout eternity, of the glory of God, and the complete blessedness of His people. Its virtue is felt throughout the highest heights of heaven, and

appreciated there in a way that we can have no conception of here. But in due time its power shall be manifested throughout the whole universe. The vernal bloom of every leaf, and flower, and blade of grass; the playful lambkin, and the harmless lion; the reign of peace and plenty throughout the whole creation in the day of His millennial glory, shall alike proclaim the redemption-power of the blood of the cross. And on the other hand, the awful consequences of sinners despising that precious blood, shall be endured forever in the deepest depths of unutterable woe. Its power must be felt everywhere.

But to the believer, the truster in that precious blood, it has opened the pearly gates of heaven, and shut forever the gloomy gates of hell. It has quenched the flames of the burning lake, and opened up the everlasting springs of God's redeeming love. It has plucked him as a brand out of the fire, cleansed him from every stain of sin, and planted him in robes of unsullied brightness in the immediate presence of God. For none has the blood of Christ done so much as the hell-deserving sinner. And no order of beings in the bright world above, can ever know the value of that blood, or appreciate the heart that it flowed from, like the redeemed sinner It was an elder, not an angel, as one has sweetly said, that told the weeping prophet of the One who had prevailed to open the seven-sealed book: " And one of the elders said unto me, Weep not; behold, the lion of the tribe of Juda, the root of David, hath prevailed to open the book and to loose the seven seals thereof." (Rev. 5:5.) There are depths in that blessed word prevailed which only a saved sinner can know.

But of all the precious, happy fruits of the blood-shedding of Jesus for us, there is one peculiarly sweet to my heart. Perhaps it is wrong to speak of choosing, where all are divinely perfect, and flowing from the same source; but now, tell me, beloved friends, have you ever thought much of the wondrous blessedness of being brought back to God? I do not mean into heaven merely, but unto God, and that, too, in companionship with Jesus-as one with Him. Oh, is there not something that comes home to our hearts, in the knowledge that we are brought back from our wanderings in the far country, to the Father's house; the Father's home; the Father's heart; the fullness in blessing of the Father's presence? I have often thought that the prodigal would be so overcome with the Father's love that he would neither see, nor think about, anything else. Had his eye and his heart rested on the robe, the ring, and the feast, more than on his Father's love, would you not be ready to cry out, Unworthy, unworthy? Oh, what are jewels, however sparkling; robes, however fair; crowns, however bright; or feasts, however sumptuous, compared with the deep and changeless affections of the heart, yes! and of a Father's heart too? This will be our heaven, and the very consummation of heaven's blessedness. With Jesus, and like Jesus, at home in the Father's presence, and finding all our happiness there. The apostle has reached the climax when he says, "But we also joy in God, through our Lord Jesus Christ." (Rom. 5:11.) Higher than this he can never go, and better than this he can never find.

There are three things which the blood of Christ has done to accomplish this deeply blessed end for us, namely, to bring us back to God.

1. The way into the presence of God was opened up for us by the blood of the cross (True, it was always open to the sinner by faith for salvation. Here, it is more a question of worship.) Up till that time the way into the holiest of all had not been made manifest, or laid open. (Ver. 8.) God dwelt behind the veil, and His people Israel worshipped Him outside. But the same stroke of judgment that slew the Lamb, and shed His blood, rent the veil from top to bottom, thus laying fully open the way into the immediate, unveiled presence of God. The blood of bulls and goats never could do this. We read in the 16th of Leviticus that' on the great day of atonement Aaron sprinkled the blood of the young bullock on the mercy seat, and before the mercy seat seven times, thereby maintaining God's relations with the people, and the ground of their approach to Him for twelve months to come. But there was no rending of the veil, or liberty to draw near to God, save by the high priest alone, and that only once a year, and never without the blood of atonement.

But the blood of the Lamb which flowed on Calvary has accomplished all for us. The veil is rent. The mercy seat above, and the way up to it, are, as it were, sprinkled seven times. The number seven signifies perfection. All has been perfectly accomplished by Jesus. From the cross to the throne we have a blood-sprinkled pathway. Oh, what a truth this is! Every step of the way is tracked with the Savior's love. Oh, how this should strengthen our faith, and bind our hearts to Him The way to God is now open at all times, for Jew and Gentile-for the chief of sinners. In the faith of this precious blood the guiltiest may come. Come! where to? Into the Holiest of all. He will find the blood there before him. God is satisfied. His character, as well as His claims, have been glorified in the work of His Son. He reposes with divine complacency on the blood-stained mercy seat. But how is the sinner met when he comes? In judgment for his sins? No; that was executed on the cross. Love alone remains to welcome the returning sinner. What! nothing about his sins? No; that question was settled on the cross. God will never raise it again with the poor sinner that trusts in Jesus. He both forgives and forgets. Did the father say anything about sin to the prodigal? Not a word. The prodigal confessed his sins, and that was a right thing for him to do. But God settled with Christ on the cross about his sins. Love, boundless love, flows out to meet the sinner and welcome him home. No barrier intercepts his way. It is perfectly clear. Christ Himself has laid it open. Oh! then, my fellow sinner, come. Come now. Return to the Father's house. Thy return will make Him glad, and His arms around thy neck will banish fear, and fill thy soul with a new and heavenly joy. Better far to dwell in heaven than in hell forever. Christ has opened the way. The blood of reconciliation is there. Fear not, only come. Come depending on that soul-saving, peace-speaking blood. Why delay? Only trust in the blood of Jesus and thou art safe forever. All who honor the blood of Jesus with the confidence of their hearts, reach the highest, and the best place in heaven.

2. The blood of Christ has fitted the believer to enter the open way, and to stand with a "perfect conscience" in the presence of God. (Vers. 8-14; chap. 10:1, 2.) Blessed truth! No sin is left on the conscience. There is no more conscience of sins; although, of course, we shall have the consciousness of sin in us while we are here. But the blood of Christ cleanseth us from all, not some sin. As a young convert so simply but truly answered me the other day, when I was saying to her, " What a blessed thing to know that our sins are all forgiven," " Oh, yes," she replied, " why, if there was one left we could not get into heaven." Sin is as far away from the worshipper in God's presence, as from Christ who bore it. We shall never need to be ashamed of our robes in heaven, or seek to hide ourselves behind a myriad of radiant ones. Our clothing is the righteousness of God. The highest angel will never have such a robe. Could envy enter the bosom of an angel, it would be because the saved sinner's robe is brighter than his. The blood-washed robes will be the whitest in heaven. They will be the same as Christ's, blessed be His name, and more than this we can never say.

But there is another thing, beloved friends, that I would notice about our being fitted to enter heaven, and that is, we enter by the same title as Christ Himself He entered by His own blood. (Ver. 12.) In virtue of His own blood. So do we. He would enter, not now on the ground of His own intrinsic righteousness merely, but by the same title as His people. Blessed Jesus! what grace! Having been "numbered with transgressors," He enters heaven by the title which equally serves for them. Hence clearly, the same welcome, the same place of nearness to the throne, as Christ Himself, await all who come in the faith of that blood. The gates were lifted up, and the doors wide open flung, when the victorious Jesus returned. We have the same title, the same right of entrance, the same joyous welcome as Christ Himself. But where, beloved

friends, does this precious blood set the believer? Not within the threshold of heaven merely, but in the Holiest of all-near as Christ is near. I was speaking the other day about the place of nearness, and dearness into which we are brought in Christ, when a christian friend replied, "Oh, I do not aspire to that, I shall be satisfied if I be only a doorkeeper." But would Christ be satisfied? was my reply. What! a loving bridegroom allow his bride to be a doorkeeper! What would you think of such a thing? The bridegroom to keep his seat at the joyous table, and allow the loved one of his heart to stand behind the door to open it to every one that knocks! This is a false humility; such thoughts are not honoring to Christ. True, in this world, it would be better far to be a doorkeeper in the house of God, than to have the highest place in the tents of wickedness. But the bride of the Lamb must be where He is, and as He is, and that forever.

How did the saved thief enter heaven? With Christ, and in all His perfectness. "To-day shalt thou be with me in paradise." He was not merely to be within the door, but with Christ, wherever that might be. Oh! these blessed words " with me!" they settle and define everything as to our heaven. " With me," " with Christ," " with the Lamb whithersoever he goeth." Oh, what a heaven ours will be! always with Christ, and as Christ. Heaven would be a dreary blank to us without Christ, and it would be a dreary blank to Him without us. We can never be separated throughout eternity. The members must be where the Head is, and the bride must be where the bridegroom is. But, oh! the assurance of His love makes our hearts long to be with Him.

" Thy love, most gracious Lord,My joy and strength shall be;Till Thou shalt speak the gladdening word That bids me rise to Thee."

Are all here ready to meet Jesus, were He to come to-night? Oh! make friends with the Lamb now. His love is sweet, His blood is precious, His home is dear. With arms extended wide, He waits to embrace and welcome to His heart every soul that will trust Him. It seems to me a small thing merely to trust Him I want you all to love Him-to love Him for His own sake. Happy, happy they who love the blessed Lord Jesus.

3. The blood of Christ has obtained for us " eternal redemption." (Ver. 12.) Oh! beloved friends, what a word this is to an immortal soul! And, oh! to find it written in God's book. There it is, read it for yourselves. "Eternal redemption." It is enough! Jesus has obtained it. All the blessedness we have been speaking of is to be eternal. Not only has the blood of Christ opened up the way into heaven for us-fitted us to be there, and given us a right and title to all its blessedness; but it has engravers that divine word, " eternal" on all that it has made us, and on all that it has brought us into. Not only

is all perfect, but all is permanent. Oh! this just suits immortal souls-does it suit yours? It sweetly suits mine "Eternal redemption." That will do. It overflows the heart. My soul, as to the future, is eternal, God's glory is eternal, heaven's joys are eternal, the love of Jesus is eternal; yes, the sweet love of Jesus shall endure forever, shall shine in my soul, and in yours who believe, throughout the countless ages of eternity. No wonder the redeemed in heaven sing so much about the blood of Christ. It seems to be the principal note in their song. " Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood." This is a note which no angelic voice can ever reach. It is too far above the line for angel choirs. They will have a song, and a sweet song too, for they do love Jesus. But they must all sing a note below the ransomed hosts. Oh, how loud, and long, and rapturous will be our note of praise to Him who drained the cup of wrath for us, who washed all our sins away, who lifted us out of our low estate and set us in the highest place in heaven, who has chosen us to be the companions of His ways, and the sharers of His eternal glory.

Oh! now, my fellow sinners, tell me, is there a soul present that can yet refuse the Savior's love -that can slight this precious blood, despise all this coming glory, and neglect so great salvation? God forbid! His love is ready to receive you; His blood is ready to cleanse you; His salvation is ready to bless you. All things are ready on God's part. Are you ready? ready now-ready to-night? Ready to embrace the Savior-ready to give Him your hearts? Does it require time to consider whether Jesus and His love and glory, or the world and sin, and hell are to be your choice? You must make a choice. And you have only to choose between the way to hell and the way to heaven. Can you hesitate! Oh! love the Lord Jesus, trust in the Lord Jesus, and choose the new and, living way, which leads to glory, honor, immortality, eternal life.

This being done, a fourth thing will surely follow, " The conscience purged from dead works to serve the living God." This will be your happy service. The Lord grant in His mercy that it may be so, and to His name be all the praise and the glory.

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