

# If We Neglect

*By James McConkey*

**Book Messages by James H. McConkey**

Prayer

The Surrendered Life

The Three-Fold Secret of the Holy Spirit

The Way of Victory

The Book of Revelation

The End of the Age

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## "IF WE NEGLECT"

*"How shall we escape if we neglect  
so great a salvation?" (Heb. 2:3)*

One winter day a carcass was floating down the Niagara River upon a cake of ice. An eagle soaring above the river spied it and dropped down upon it. He sat there leisurely devouring his easy prey. The swift current began bearing him rapidly downward to the fall. But was he not safe? Could he not leap in a moment into mid-air from his dangerous post? Could he not stretch his great pinions and float off into safety at the very brink of the awful cataract? Had he not done that a thousand times before in his bird experience? So he floated on. But by and by came the thundering roar of the the great cataract. The cloud of white mist that marked the fatal brink of the fall was towering almost above him. It was time to leave. So he stretched out his great wings for flight. But he could not rise. Unnoted by him his talons, sunken in the ice, and the flesh of his prey, had frozen hard and fast in the bitter winter day, and his fate was sealed. He flapped his great wings. He struggled with all the power of muscle and sinew. But all in vain. In a few moments he was swept over

into the abyss to his death. He had delayed too long.

Suppose you are on top of a burning building. The flames have cut off every avenue of descent. A ladder is hastily run up by the firemen. It is your last and only hope of rescue from an awful death. How will you escape — if you neglect it? Suppose you have fallen overboard from a ship in a raging tempest. A rope is snatched and quickly thrown by a nearby friend. It falls within easy reach of your despairing clutch. It is your only hope of salvation. How will you escape — if you neglect? Suppose your rise at midnight sore athirst. You seize a nearby goblet and drink. But confused from sleep you make a mistake and swallow a deadly poison. A friendly hand swiftly puts to your lip a sure antidote. It is your only hope. It must be taken quickly, for every second means life or death. How will you escape— if you neglect?

So it is with the salvation of your immortal soul. It is in instant and unceasing jeopardy of eternal death. God offers His Son Jesus Christ as your escape. It is a great salvation wrought out from the great heart of God Himself with tears, love and agony unspeakable. It is your ladder in the burn-

ing building; it is the rope in an awful storm; it is the antidote to the deadly poison of sin. How will you escape—if you neglect?

Let us note some of the perils of this neglect, First —

*You are trampling upon  
golden opportunities.*

A Scotch botanist sallied forth to the hills one bright day to study his favorite flowers. Presently he plucked a heather bell and put it upon the glass of his microscope. He stretched himself at length upon the ground and began to scrutinize it through the microscope. Moment after moment passes and still he lay there gazing, entranced by the beauty of the little flower. Suddenly a shadow fell upon the ground where he lay. Looking up he saw a tall, weather-beaten shepherd gazing down with a smile of half-concealed amusement at a man spending his time looking through a glass at so common a thing as a heather bell. Without a word, the botanist reached up and handed the shepherd the microscope. He placed it to his eye and began to gaze. For him too, moment after moment sped by while he gazed in enraptured silence. When he handed back the glass the botanist noticed that the tears were streaming down his bronzed cheeks and falling on the ground at his feet. "What's the matter?" said the bota-

nist. "Isn't it beautiful?" "Beautiful?" said the shepherd, "It is beautiful beyond all words. But I am thinking of how many *thousand of them I have trodden under foot!*"

Have you ever thought how many opportunities to accept Christ you have trodden under foot in your lifetime? God's opportunity is *now*. "Now is the accepted time." He has no other. It only takes one short minute of time to make one of God's "Nows" of opportunity. So you have sixty *nows* every hour of your life. That means a thousand for the waking hours of each day. That means hundreds of thousands for every year of your life, and many millions ere your span of earthly existence is ended. Opportunity, with her millions of *nows*, will be against you in that last great assize! I fancy I hear her voice on the witness stand. "A thousand times a day I came to him. I was with him in the tender hours and influences of youth. I came to him in the pleadings of his sainted mother. I drew near him in the hours of bereavement and sorrow. I spoke to him in the tender solicitations of devoted friends. I touched him in the prayers and pleadings of his dearest ones. I sounded the warning hundreds of times from the pulpit. I whispered to him in the night watches as he lay in the silence of his own thoughts and

the convictions of his own accusing conscience. Yet, for all these years , he has unceasingly trodden me under foot."

Unsaved friend, there are souls in the awful place of the lost who would give a million worlds for just one more of the precious *nows* you are treading under foot. And when you see these trampled *nows* in the light of eternity you too will weep with unspeakable agony in the realization that not one of them will ever return.

\* \* \* \*

*You are hardening your heart.*

I remember a man in my childhood who was the object of our boyish hero-worship. He was the finest shot in the community. A splendid specimen of physical manhood he towered head and shoulders above his fellows, and was known and admired in the entire neighborhood. But he was not a Christian. One night he sat in a meeting where the power of the Spirit of God was consciously and graciously present. He was approached by loving friends and importuned to make his decision for Christ. There was every evidence that he was deeply moved and convicted by the message and the atmos-

phere of the hour. But he steadfastly refused to make any decision and at last arose and left the meeting. Years afterward while walking the street he was stricken with dread apoplexy, staggered, fell on his knees and thence prone to the pavement in the agonies of sudden death, still an unsaved man. Back of the tragedy of it all was this sobering fact. Before his death he had told someone that never since the memorable night in the meeting when he had decided against Christ had he ever had the slightest inclination or conviction toward accepting Him as Savior of his soul. He had neglected too long, and he bore to the hour of his death a heart which had grown utterly hardened to all the appeals of the Spirit of God.

Continuous resistance to the gospel of Christ steadily hardens the heart against it. Whether the appeal is to the conscience, the emotions, or the judgment, the result is the same. The voice of appeal becomes like the voice of one that mocks. The heartstrings once responsive to every tender touch are now like loosened bow strings. The soul once soft and plastic as wax is now like case-hardened steel. The will, which moves promptly and decisively in the trivial affairs of life, is bound with fetters of iron to the rock of procrastination in this eternal



matter. Delay becomes a disease. Once it was only functional; now it is organize and malignant. There is only one remedy. It is to break the hardened heart-crust by a definite acceptance of Jesus Christ, whose blood alone can make atonement for the soul and bring peace to the heart, and whose resurrection life alone can fill your life with the precious fruitage of the Spirit, and with power to love, to suffer, and to serve.

\* \* \* \*

*You are drifting away from Christ.*

I sat one day by the faraway shores of the Great Lakes listening to a tragic story from the lips of a white-haired fisherman. Years before, he said, when the village was but a hamlet the mail was carried from the distant shore of the bay to the fishing village by an Indian and his son-in-law. One bitter day in mid-winter they set out from the south shore for the long trip across the great lake. All day they traveled on the ice, skirting the frozen shore of the bay. As night came on they pitched their tent and went ashore for firewood. Gathering what they needed they started back from the mainland toward camp. Just as they stepped upon the ice it broke loose from its moorings and

began to drift out from the shore. The boy, quick-witted and alert, immediately dropped his bundle of wood and leaped ashore across the crevice in the ice. The father-in-law hesitated for a moment and in that moment the gap widened too much to overleap. He paused in hesitation and uncertainty, for the waters were black and forbidding in their deadly chill. The boy shouted to the older man to leap in and swim to shore, as that was his only chance for life. But the man still delayed. Then the lad began to cry out in earnest entreaty for the father-in-law to leap, as it was his only chance to be saved from a certain death. But the older man seemed paralyzed with fear and indecision. He began to call out farewell messages for his wife and children across the watery waste now rapidly widening as the wind kept drifting the great ice-floe out into the darkness. The last the boy saw of him he was standing with outstretched hands drifting to death in the bitter cold and darkness of the night. He was never heard from again. He perished a *victim of deadly indecision.*

"Heaven lies above us in our infancy," says the poet. And it surely does. It seems as though we could pluck down its nearby stars with our childish hands; toy with its

silvery moon; play hide-and-seek in its fleecy clouds. But this is not true today for you have neglected. Now it has receded like a faraway land until you no longer hear its music, dream its dream, or see its angel faces in your childish visions. In those sweet days of childhood Christ seemed as close to you as the other side of the tiny pond in which you gathered the white and yellow lilies. Now He seems as distant as the unseen shore of a vast ocean so far and so steadily have you drifted from Him with the swift flight of passing years. Is your heart conscious of this awful sense of aloofness from Christ? Do you seem to yourself to have drifted out into a weary waste of distance, darkness, and death? Then remember the lonely figure drifting to his fate on the great ice-floe. Remember too that the one thing which would have saved him will save you. The one thing is *decision* to no longer neglect this so great salvation.

*There will come a time when  
it will be too late.*

A lady who was one of the survivors of the Titanic disaster drew a graphic picture of the end of that awful tragedy. As the great ship reared herself in the air, about to take her last plunge into the deep, scores of dark

figures could be seen falling from her decks into the icy waters. For a few terrible moments after she had taken her plunge a wall of despair rose from the lips of these drowning men and women. One by one the cries ceased until at last there was but one voice heard calling in the night over the watery waste. It was the voice of a man. In unspeakable agony of soul he was crying out "My God; my God!" Fainter and fainter grew this last wailing cry of a departing soul, and then too that ceased, and all was still as death. Often have I tried to picture what must have gone through the mind of that last man struggling in the darkness against a certain doom. Perhaps the sweet sound of the village church bell floated to him in the darkness, and he realized the many moments he had let the gospel call pass by unheeded. Perhaps the tremulous voice of a mother's prayer, as he bowed a thoughtless boy at her knees, now rose up from the depths of memory and he saw what God had meant him to be in all his wasted life. Perhaps in the blackness of that awful night he felt again the loving touch of his boyhood's dearest friend upon his shoulder, as a voice said "My boy why don't you decide for Christ?" Perhaps some old scripture text he had scoffed at and spurned seemed blazoned across the starlit sky above

him — “How shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation.” But now it was too late. The icy waters were claiming their awful toll. In a moment, the end had come.

Every man is drifting swiftly toward that inevitable moment when the curtain of life drops; when the drama ends; when the scene shifts from the follies of time to the tremendous realities of eternity. When that last crisis-moment comes, it may be too late to get right with the God with whom you have trifled all these passing years. When the wild crash comes in the railroad collision, and you are pinned fast under the grinding, crushing wreckage—it is too late. When the great ship is staggering and reeling from the deadly wound in her side, and is settling down in the sea for her last awful plunge into the abyss of an ocean grave—it is too late. When the last agonizing pang is shooting like a knife through your heart, and you catch your breath, throw up your hands, gasp, and fall—it is too late. When the steel fetters of paralysis bind you hand and foot, and all your dazed, beclouded brain can grasp is the low sobs of loved ones who gather about your bed in the agony of parting—it is too late.

Then some white-faced mother will bow in the silent chamber of death over your motionless form and moan “O God, is my

boy safe?" Or a broken-hearted wife will steal in, and stand alone by your side, and looking down into your face will cry out in agony, "O God, is it well with my husband?" Or a silver-haired father will sob out his agony of doubt as he cries aloud like one of the old, "My son, my son; would God I had died for thee, O my son!" And your dearest friends who would give their right hand if you had only decided, will walk by your bier with bowed head, and go forth to whisper to themselves in bitter suffering "There is no repentance beyond the grave." The golden bowl is broken; the silver thread is loosed; the mourners go about the streets; and once more has been enacted the solemn tragedy of a human soul lost through all eternity because it would not *break the fatal spell of indecision.*

*"How shall we escape —  
if we neglect?"*

## Booklet Messages by James H. McConkey

The Abundant Life	If We Neglect
Beauty for Ashes	In and Out
Believing is Seeing	Jacob's Struggle
The Blessed Hope	Lame Feet
The Blessing of Doing	Law and Grace
The Blood Covenant	A Message of Comfort
Chastening	The Ministry of Suffering
Committal	The New Commandment
The Dedicated Life	The Nutshell of Prophecy
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The Father's House	Resurrection Victory
The Fifth Sparrow	Safety
Give God a Chance	The Spirit-Filled Life
God-Given Men	The Sure Shepherd
God's Jewel Case	The Way of Cleansing
The God-Planned Life	The Word
Guidance	
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Holy Ground	

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