

# Neglecting the Gospel

by T. S. B. Reade

This declaration of the apostle, "How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation?" is both a solemn question, and an awful conclusion. Those who hold infidel principles, who live in a total disregard of religious ordinances, and who persecute the followers of Jesus, despise the salvation of God.

But there are other marks equally legible to the discerning eye, though often unseen by the persons who bear them, on account of the blinding nature of sin, which point out the neglecters of salvation.

The three following points should excite alarm and call forth the important exercise of strict self-examination.

1. If we are living in the allowed indulgence of one known sin, whether that sin be internal or external, whether it be cherished in the secret recesses of the heart, or whether it ripen into overt acts, we are neglecting the salvation of the Gospel. We may have knowledge and zeal and gifts of various kinds; we may do much in active exertion to promote the general cause of religion; we may associate with pious characters and be ourselves esteemed pious; we may be regular at church; maintain family worship; and like Herod, do "many things"; yet if after all, we are living in the allowed indulgence of one known sin, we are neglecting this great salvation and dying in this state must inevitably perish. Should we knock and say, "Lord open unto us," Jesus would profess unto us, "I never knew you, depart from Me, ye workers of iniquity." How awful is this consideration and yet how just. We may destroy all the refuse of the Amalekites; yet, if we preserve Agag and the rest of the flock alive; if we retain some beloved lust in the heart, we manifest a spirit in direct opposition to the will and command of God.

2. If we are building upon any other foundation, in whole or part, than Jesus Christ and Him crucified, we are neglecting His great salvation. To be saved from the dreadful consequences of sin, we must build simply and entirely on that foundation which God hath laid in Zion without daring to bring any of the materials of corrupt nature to mix with it. On this foundation we must pray for grace to build gold, silver, and precious stones. This must be done by adding to faith virtue; and to virtue knowledge; and to knowledge temperance; and to temperance patience; and to patience godliness; and to godliness brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness charity (2 Pet 1:5-7).

3. If we are preferring an earthly object, of whatever kind, to Jesus Christ, if our affections are placed on any other being in opposition to Him; or if we are seeking our delight in any created things as distinct from Him and independent of Him, we are neglecting His great salvation; yea, setting up idols in our hearts. We must love the adorable Savior with supreme affection and must love other objects only for His sake.

Our temporal blessing must be enjoyed as flowing from Him; our friends and domestic comforts must be received as gifts coming to us through His redeeming grace. All we possess must be held at His disposal and with a view to that account which we must one day give.

Thus Christ must be the Alpha and Omega, the beginning and ending of all our desires and affections.

Oh! how strait the gate and narrow is the way, that leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it.

May I never forget this unchangeable truth; that Jesus is the only way of escape from hell and the only way of access to heaven. "Lord, let Thy good Spirit guide me into this consecrated way. Hold Thou me up and I shall be safe." It is truly awakening to reflect how far a person may go in the circumstantialities of religion and yet be entirely destitute of life of God in the soul.

The holy Scriptures abound with declaration to this affect, which prove the deceitfulness of the human heart and the danger of resting in mere outward forms and orthodox opinions. Thus, Job describes the character of the hypocrite: "What is the hope of the hypocrite, though he hath

gained, when God taketh away his soul? Will he delight himself in the Almighty? Will he always call upon God?" This evidently implies that not having the root of the matter in him, though he gained the applause of men for his seeming piety, he would soon grow weary of the service of God.

David also shows, in awful colors, the wickedness of false teachers: "Unto the wicked, God saith, What hast thou to do to declare my statutes, or that thou shouldest take my covenant in thy mouth? Seeing thou hatest instruction and castest My words behind thee?" (Psa 50:16-17)

Thus, wicked men may enter into the priestly office, preach the Gospel and talk about that covenant, in the blessings of which they have no personal interest whatever.

The prophet Isaiah, by the Spirit of God, sets forth the extreme hypocrisy of the Jews: "Cry aloud, spare not, lift up thy voice like a trumpet, and shew My people their transgression, and the house of Jacob their sins" (Isa 58:1).

"Yet they seek Me daily, and delight to know My ways, as a nation that did righteousness, and forsook not the ordinance of their God: they ask of Me the ordinances of justice; they take delight in approaching to God" (Isa 58:2). Thus, their conduct was a strange mixture of apparent devotion and positive rebellion.

The prophet Ezekiel was shown the true character of those who waited upon him. "They come unto thee as the people cometh, and they sit before thee as my people, and they hear thy words, but they will not do them: for with their mouth they show much love, but their heart goeth after their covetousness" (Eze 33:31).

Our divine Redeemer has painted the hypocrite in his true colors: "Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye make clean the outside of the cup and of the platter, but within they are full of extortion and excess.

"Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye are like unto whited sepulchres, which indeed appear beautiful outward, but are within full of dead men's bones, and of all uncleanness. "Ye serpents, ye generation of vipers, how can ye escape the damnation of hell?" (Mat 23:25,27,33)

When we consider that these men were held in the highest esteem and veneration amongst the Jews for their outward sanctity and devotion, we see how far persons may go in the externals of religion and yet be in the very gall of bitterness and in the bond of iniquity. It was on this account that the apostle Paul so constantly warned the churches to whom he wrote, against false profession and receiving the grace of God in vain. He speaks to those who hold the truth, but who hold it in unrighteousness. The Epistles of St. Peter, St. John and St. Jude are full of warnings against false teachers, antichrists and deceivers. The charges to the seven churches in the book of Revelation, most awfully show the danger of declension, of leaving our first love, of becoming lukewarm, and consequently loathsome to an infinitely holy God.

Many, it is to be feared, have the reputation of being spiritually alive, whose souls, in the sight of God, are dead to all the vital influences of the Holy Spirit. Oh, my soul, let not these solemn portions of God's sacred word be lost upon thee. Pray without ceasing for that grace which can alone preserve thee from falling and through the merits of Jesus, present thee faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy.

"Almighty Savior! awaken my drowsy senses, and make me alive to my real condition. Suffer me not to neglect Thy blessed gospel; but draw me to Thyself continually, for Thy grace is sufficient for me. Wash me in the cleansing fountain of Thy blood. Place me upon that foundation which can never be moved. Arm me for the spiritual combat and at last make me more than conqueror, through the power of Thy might and the riches of Thy grace."

Why should I linger here below,  
When Jesus calls my heart above?  
Why, oh, my soul the bliss forego,  
The joy of everlasting love?

I feel the weight of nature's guilt,  
Beneath its pondrous load I groan;  
Oh! may the blood on Calvary spilt  
For all my crimson sins atone!

Blest Jesus! speak the pardoning word;  
Salvation to my spirit bring!  
Then will Thy grace those joys afford,  
Which from Thy cross to sinners spring.

Redeem'd from guilt and slavish fear,  
My soul shall wing its way to Thee!  
While faith behold her title clear  
To blissful immortality.

"For if the word spoken by angels was stedfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just recompense of reward; how shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation?"  
(Heb 2:2,3)