

The Bulletin

Meeks St. Church of Christ

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“Neglect— A Way of Life”

By Bill Humble

The church has always faced a host of formidable enemies, and the present generation of Christians is no exception. There is Catholicism, un-American as well as un-Christian in its basic teachings. There is modernism, whose demoralizing and deadening influences have already engulfed a large segment of the Protestant world, and which has now begun to gnaw at the vitals of the church of the Lord. Yet, there is another danger which must certainly be included in any list.

It is less spectacular and more insidious; it undermines the church from within rather than attacking it from without. It attacks Christians gradually, later it will begin to underlie their basic attitude toward the church, and finally its hold becomes so strong that it becomes a way of life. This enemy is neglect!

If neglect can become a way of life, what kind of way is it? Where will it lead?

Neglect – A Christ-Denying Way

The basic character of neglect is indicated by Christ's statement that "*he that is not with Me is against Me; and he that gathereth not with Me scattereth*" (Matthew 12:30). There are some responsibilities in life which are so important that they cannot be regarded carelessly or ignored with indifference. To neglect one's family is to mistreat them, and to neglect Christ is to deny Him.

Those Jews who lived in Palestine contemporary with Christ were confronted with a personality Who could not be ignored. His claims were too lofty, and His works too marvelous to admit such treatment. Yet, many adopted this illogical attitude of "facing" the problem of Christ by ignoring Him.

While Nazareth took a more positive stand by openly rejecting Christ, even planning to throw Him headlong over the brow of a hill to His death, Capernaum took no such attitude. Capernaum, located on the sea of Galilee, was Christ's home during part of His ministry. It had seen His works and heard His sermons, but its people neither accepted the Lord nor rejected Him like Nazareth. Ignoring all the logical implications of His Words and deeds, they were indifferent to the Savior.

That such indifference is equivalent to an open rejection is indicated by Christ's rebuke to Capernaum, "*And thou, Capernaum, shalt thou be exalted unto heaven? thou shalt go down unto Hades: for if the mighty works had been done in Sodom which were done in thee, it would have remained until this day. But I say unto you that it shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom in the day of judgment, than for thee*" (Matthew 11:23,24).

Capernaum's superior opportunities demanded positive treatment, and because they chose to treat Christ with neglect, their neglect will be less tolerable in judgment than the open vice of wicked Sodom!

Hundreds of years before Christ lived in Capernaum, another city learned that neglect is sometimes tantamount to open opposition. This was the city of Meroz, probably a Palestinian village, but whose location is now unknown.



When Deborah and Barak saved Israel from the oppression of Jabin, King of Hazor, they mobilized an army of ten thousand men and encamped on Mount Tabor. When the battle was fought in the Plain of Esdraelon, Israel was victorious; and to commemorate their victory, Deborah and Barak sang a son of triumph.

Much of the song lauds the cooperation of the various tribes of Israel, and the only discordant note comes when they sang, "*Curse ye Meroz, said the angel of Jehovah, curse ye bitterly the inhabitants thereof, because they came not to the help of Jehovah, to the help of Jehovah against the mighty*" (Judges 5:23).

Israel was fighting for its very life, the Canaanites under Jabin were a formidable oppressor, and men from various tribes were risking their lives in a supreme effort to free Israel.

Under such circumstances, indifference became impossible; and when the village of Meroz failed to "come to the help of Jehovah," they were cursed by God's angel. Indifference then was to deny God; indifference now (whether on the part of the alien sinner or negligent church member) is to deny Christ.

Neglect -- An Easy Way

One reason why neglect is such a deadly enemy of the church today is because of the ease with which a Christian may become a victim. There are a number of reasons why neglect is a particularly easy way of life in this generation:

- (1) Our American way of life demands fast living, and few have enough time or everything. Nearly everyone finds it necessary to leave off something he would like to do, and often religion goes first. This does not mean that the too-busy Christian openly denies the Lord.

Usually he treats the church indifferently, attending services only when it is convenient to do so. As he drifts further along the way of neglect, his indifference becomes more pronounced until, finally, religion means no more to him than to a modernistic Methodist.

- (2) There is a prevailing indifference to religious responsibilities among the denominations which sometimes sets an example for weak members of the church. "When my Methodist and Baptist friends go to church only occasionally and feel satisfied with their religion, why can't I?" Some inquire, seeking to justify what he wants to do.

Modernism has so blighted Protestant denominationalism that indifference is nearly universal among them, and some members of the church of the Lord would like to regard their neglect as a better standard than the precepts of the New Testament

- (3) Too often, Christians have not been properly instructed in the responsibilities of Christian living. They don't realize that indifference is deadly. Neglecting services of the church, they hear less teaching and become more indifferent. A vicious circle is dragging them relentlessly down this easy road!

Neglect is, of course, reflected in many ways. It is responsible for Christians' failing to attend services of the church, particularly those other than Sunday morning. Why shouldn't they come on Sunday morning? They must preserve a "front" of respectability, mustn't they? Indifference is responsible for the idea that the days of gospel meetings are over, for purposeless giving, and for the dust covered Bible.

Still, it must be remembered that all of these are only symptoms of an attitude, and it is this attitude which is so deadly to a spiritual life.

Neglect -- A Disastrous Way

The sheer stark tragedy of neglect for the Christian lies in the fact that so easy a way of life could lead to so disastrous a destiny. Yet, the Bible clearly indicates that the indifferent Christian has no hope of the glorious immortality which awaits the faithful in Christ Jesus.

This conclusion is a necessary corollary to the proposition that neglect is a Christ-denying way, for how could any man hope to go to heaven when his life, even though he is a nominal Christian, actually denies Christ?

The Old Law was ordained by angels in the hands of a mediator and was therefore great, but the New Law is far greater. And if that Old Law, "*proved steadfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just recompense of reward; how shall we escape, if we neglect so great a salvation*" (Hebrews 2:2-3)?

We shall not escape! There is perhaps no greater enemy facing the church today, than neglect. It is a disastrous way of life.

News and Notes: Sick and recovering: Tim Harris Sr, Tim Harris Jr, Chad Harris, Martha Norvell (Mississippi Care), June Lawson (Lisa Busby's Mom), Clois Wright, Debbie Keplinger, Gaddy Hall, Janis Johnson, Daniel Holloway, Tammy Kilgore (Jerry's niece), Betty Hurst, Peggy Harville (cancer), Linda Harris, Karey Trimble.
Katie Ward Coburn, Kathryn's grandmother.

The Ladies Class will start back in June (Check with Kathryn Callahan for details).

Those Who Serve:

Sunday Morning 9:00 A.M. Service:

Opening Prayer: Tim Harris Sr.
Preaching: Austin Lewis
Sermon #1: "Matthew 4 Part 1"

Auditorium Bible Class: 9:35am:

Preaching: Austin Lewis
Sermon #2: "Matthew 4 Part 2"

Sunday Morning 10:30 A.M. Service:

Announcements: Paul Busby
Opening Prayer & Scripture Reading: Adam Harris (fill in needed)
Hebrews 4:14-16
Song Leader: Lee Busby
Lord's Supper: Paul Johnson (fill in needed)
Assisting: Lee Busby & Dan Cottrell
Singing Service: *Men of the Congregation Lead in Singing*
Invitation: Jerry Kennemur
Closing Prayer: Austin Lewis

Wednesday Evening: 7:00 P.M.

May 29th:

Auditorium Bible Class: Russell Briggs
Ezra, Nehemiah, & Esther (Mike Willis)
Page 44, Question #15
Invitation: Dan Cottrell
Song Leader: Adam Harris
Closing Prayer: Doug George