

The Shame of Neglect

Hebrews 2:1-4 “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 recompense of reward; How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation; which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them that heard him; God also bearing them witness, both with signs and wonders, and with divers miracles, and gifts of the Holy Ghost, according to his own will?”

There is something about **old decaying buildings that has always intrigued me**, so one day I stopped along the road side to explore the remains of an old abandoned farm house. I tried to reconstruct in my mind the past of this aging home. I thought to myself, this old house was probably once the home of a happy family! But now the building was in disrepair, the windows were all broken, the doors were off the hinges, the floors sagged! Outside I saw the weedy patch of what was likely the remnants of a family garden. I wondered to myself, what was the tragedy that befell the once happy occupants who lived here? **I will never know!** But one thing I do know, the place is now in shambles because of neglect!

As I stood there I was reminded of that great Bible verse found in **Hebrews 2:3**, which asks a very soul searching question. The questions of the Bible can be very penetrating, so listen to the question asked by the Hebrew writer in Hebrews 2:3. “How shall we escape, if we **neglect** so great salvation?” How can we ever risk neglecting such magnificent salvation?

As I thought about that verse, the word **neglect** stood out to me in a fresh & new way! It does **not** say ‘**reject**’! It says, ‘**neglect**’! To **reject** the great salvation that God has provided for us through His Son, Jesus Christ, is a **grievous** sin indeed. But the word here is ‘**neglect**’! And it occurs to me that this verse applies to the Christian. To neglect means to give little or no care, to ignore, to pay no attention, to disregard, to overlook.

How fearful is the peril of allowing **negligence** to enter into our lives **in any form**. **There are many causes for human failure, but few of those causes rank higher than negligence**. Negligence appears completely **innocent of any evil intent**, & yet it has eternal consequences! You neglect your **garden**, & it grows up in weeds. You neglect your **studies**, & you will fail the course. You neglect your **business**, & it goes down the tubes. You neglect your **house**, & it soon begins to fall apart.

In any language, **negligence** is dangerous. It is poor farming, poor business, poor housekeeping, but especially, **it is poor religion!** There is an interesting passage found in **Proverbs 24:30-34**. It says: “I walked by the field of a lazy person, the vineyard of one lacking sense. I saw that it was overgrown with thorns. It was covered with weeds, & its walls were broken down. Then, as I looked & thought about it, I learned this lesson: **a little extra sleep, a little more slumber, a little folding of the hands to rest, & poverty will pounce on you like a bandit!**”

Some years ago, there was a play centered around the story of a man forgetting to mail a letter. It staged an Irish peasant farmer who was about to have the mortgage foreclosed on his little homestead. His single hope lay in the assurance that his prosperous brother who lived in Canada would send him the money which he needed. The brother had every intention of helping, **but forgot to mail the letter in time**. Consequently, the family in Ireland was broken up, & tragedy resulted in their lives, due to **negligence!** It is not necessary to intend ill will in order to do harm; **just simple negligence often creates great danger & harm!**

I would like to sound out a warning to you today in the form of the question: **How shall we escape if we NEGLECT ...?** The Bible is always turning our attention to the important questions of life! They are eternal questions! Let’s focus on that thought today; the thought of **negligence**. **How shall we escape if we NEGLECT**

...? With our minds focused on this thought of **negligence**, allow me to sound three important warnings.

1. First -- **DO NOT NEGLECT YOUR SELF!**

My friends, you are **somebody!** You are a person of great value & worth! Just read Genesis 1: 26-27 & you will discover that **you are 'somebody'** because you have been made in the very image of God Himself! "God said, 'Let us make man in our own image, in our likeness' ... So God created man in his own image, in the image of God He created him; male & female He created them" (Gen. 1:26-27).

I'm not talking about **sinful pride!** I'm talking about **self esteem**, self worth! **There is a world of difference between pride & self-esteem!** Many Christians think that humility means "feeling bad about themselves." In effect, they believe they are supposed to have a poor self-image. But a **positive Self-Esteem is not a bloated ego.** It is an appreciation for the life & the gifts which God has given to each one of us individually & personally.

Many of us suffer from low self-esteem, self doubt, & negative mental attitudes toward ourselves. Secular psychologists are convinced that low self esteem is one of humanity's greatest problems; many of our problems in life arise because we think poorly about ourselves!

A proper self esteem is crucial to your happiness & well being. Do not get caught up in the trap of a negative self-esteem. Come to recognize that you are **special & unique!** God has made you, & **God does not make junk!** God created you to be the unique individual that you are! So don't sell yourself short! **Don't neglect your self!** Don't belittle nor down-grade yourself. You are **somebody!**

If you have come to believe you are not valuable, you are wrong, for you are a person of great worth! If you think you are unlovable, think again! God says He loves you! If in your opinion you feel you can never do anything right, & will never amount to anything, look to Jesus, for He says you are somebody! **You are special!** Don't ever forget that!

According to legend, an Indian brave came upon an eagle's egg, which had somehow fallen out of the nest. When he could not find its nest, he took the egg back to his village & laid it alongside the other eggs in the nest of a mother hen, where it was soon hatched. The hatchling eagle, with his strong eyes, saw the world for the first time. Looking at the baby chicks which were in the nest with him, he naturally assumed that he was one of them, & started acting as they acted. He cackled, scratched the earth, pecked here & there for grain, & now & then would rise in a flutter a few feet above the earth, & then descend again. He accepted & imitated the daily routine of earthbound chickens, & never knew he was an eagle created to soar through the skies. He spent most of his life just like that.

Then, one day an eagle flew over the chickens. The now aged eagle, who still thought he was just a chicken, looked in awed admiration as the great bird soared in the heavens. He panted, "What is that?" One of the even older chickens replied, "I have seen one of those before; that is an eagle, one of the proudest, strongest & most magnificent of all birds. But, don't you ever dream you could be like that. You are like the rest of us, & we are just chickens." And so, shackled by his belief & the image he had come to accept, the eagle lived & died thinking he was a chicken. Now, there is nothing wrong with being a chicken, but there is something very desperately wrong with thinking you are a chicken if God has created you to be an eagle.

Who are you? How would you describe yourself? What do you see staring back at you when you look into a mirror? Do you see the 'you' that God sees & has created, or do you see the image of who or what you have come to believe you are?

Everyone has a self-image. Be it negative, positive, or somewhere in between, we all have a picture in our minds, a voice ringing in our ears, or a feeling in our hearts, showing, telling or defining to us who we are; or, who we think we are.

The real question is, "What did God design me to be?" What is my true identity? What is my true value? What is God's purpose for me? My dear friend, do not neglect that which God has designed you to be, & that which you can become in Jesus Christ!

2. Secondly, **DO NOT NEGLECT YOUR FAMILY!**

A lot of the problems we are experiencing in our world today is due to the breakdown of the family unit! The family is the very fabric of our society! The family unit is a sacred trust given us by God! God has entrusted you with a family, a spouse, or brothers & sisters, or precious children, or a mother & a dad. Don't neglect this sacred trust God in His love has given you.

A survey conducted by the **Institute of Life Insurance** revealed some interesting figures on what people want most. When asked to check their #1 goal, 3% said "make a lot of money"; 4% said "a fulfilling career"; & **80% chose "a happy family life."** But a happy family doesn't just happen! They are made! It is earned! It must be worked at! My friends, **Do not neglect your family!**

So many families are torn apart with strife & conflict! While we cannot control our family members, we can go on loving & caring, & praying for our family! **The world outside the family circle is dark enough!**

There's an old story of a shepherd in Wyoming who observed the behavior of wild animals. A pack of wolves would sweep into the valley & attack bands of wild horses. The horses would form a circle with their heads at the center of the circle, & kick out at the wolves, thus driving the wolves away. Then one time the shepherd saw a pack of wolves attack a band of wild mules. The mules also formed a circle, but they formed it with their heads out toward the wolves. When they began to kick, they ended up kicking the daylight out of each other. We have a choice: we can be wise as horses, & help each other in our families; or we can be as stupid as mules, & kick each other to death in our homes!

Don't neglect your spouse; don't neglect your children; don't neglect your relationships with one another within the family. Good homes & good families don't just happen! It takes work & effort! It takes a lot of love & patience & forgiveness & prayer! **There is nothing more beautiful in this world than a Christian family!**

A reporter came upon a fire one day where a house was steadily burning down to the ground. The reporter noticed a little lad standing next to his mother & dad. Realizing it was their home that was on fire, the reporter saw his opportunity to get a kid's reaction to what was happening. So the reporter walked over to the boy & said: "Son, it looks like you don't have a home any more." The little boy answered courageously: **"Oh, we have a home, Mister. We just don't have a house to put it in."**

What kind of family life do you have? Is it a war zone, or a haven of rest? Work on making your family a place where love is the rule; where prayers are offered; where encouragement is given. Do not neglect your family!

3. Finally, **DO NOT NEGLECT YOUR SALVATION!**

God has provided for each of us here a **great salvation**; a magnificent salvation; a glorious salvation. Salvation from sin, & all of its consequences, is the greatest thing that can happen to you & to me! **Oh, do not neglect the Lord Jesus Christ!** for in Him alone we can find salvation.

Negligence does not mean denial! Negligence does not say Jesus Christ IS NOT THE SON OF GOD! Negligence does not say that the Bible is untrue. Negligence simply **puts off** our acceptance of the **Lord** until some more convenient tomorrow; a tomorrow that may never come!

We neglect the reading of God's Holy Word, while we read the "book of the month" or some current magazine. We neglect taking time out for meditation & prayer in order that we may watch that suspense story on television. We simply neglect the things of eternity for the things of the fleeting present. The purpose of prayer is not so we can get what we want; but rather the real purpose of prayer is that we may become what God wants.

An award winning pianist was asked one day how often she practiced playing the piano. She said that she made a daily habit of practicing on the piano, & then she added: "If I miss a single day, I know it; If I miss two days in a row, my closest critics know it; If I miss three days in a row, everyone knows it."

I have often thought about that in regard to my personal devotional & prayer time; my quiet time before God, reading His Holy Word. If I miss a single day without reading the Bible, I know it personally. If I go two days without personal devotions, those closest to me begin to notice it. If I should go three days without my devotional time, everyone begins to notice a harshness in my spirit.

It is not necessary to clench your fist & attempt to strike a blow in the face of God to be lost; **just neglect, just go down with the tide**, floating, drifting, neglecting, & **finally you are lost. Neglect in the literal meaning, means a 'drifting away.'** You need not blaspheme God to be lost; all you need to do is to drift -- drift -- DRIFT! **When it comes to your spiritual life, you are either moving forward or you are moving backwards!** There is no such a thing as standing still!

My friends, the Lord Jesus loves you! He gave His life that you might be saved! He provides for you the greatest thing this world has ever heard of "**so great salvation!**" **Oh, do not waste it away by simply neglecting it!**

One of the greatest dangers to the Christian is precisely that of being **at ease**, thus allowing the soul to be removed by degrees, from prayerfulness, from meditation, from spiritual communion, & from the clear consciousness of the presence of God!

What if an Israelite had simply neglected to getting around to applying the blood to the door posts at that first Passover recorded in the Old Testament book of Exodus? **You can lose your fellowship with God simply by: --** Neglecting to have the atoning blood of Christ applied to the heart! Neglecting to take the time to talk to God in prayer. Neglecting to fully trust the Lord to care for the concerns of your life. Neglecting to give God His full measure of your devotion. **It is these things that not only make escape impossible, but intensify the severity of the punishment that come to those who NEGLECT!**

Conclusion: -- "How shall we escape, if we **neglect** so great salvation?" That outstanding Bible scholar F.B. Meyer, calls this "The Unanswerable Question." There is no possibility of escape! You wouldn't neglect your car very long & expect to keep it running. You wouldn't neglect your house, & expect it to remain standing. You wouldn't neglect your job, & expect not to get fired. To neglect our **education** is to go through life with limitations. But to neglect the **salvation** of your soul is to go into eternity a lost soul!

By negligence, we grieve the Holy Spirit right out of our lives.

Oh, please do not let us come to the Final Judgment facing those capital letters that spell the word: **NEGLECT!** Negligence is harmful in any form; **but most harmful is the peril of neglecting that which is spiritual!** Heed

the warnings I give you today, my friends: Don't neglect yourself; don't neglect your family; & especially, don't neglect your salvation! **This great salvation is the most important thing that can engage the attention of any soul!**

The blind hymn writer, Fanny Crosby wrote the words: --
Thou, my everlasting portion, More than friend or life to me, All along my pilgrim journey, Savior, let me walk with Thee.
Close to Thee, close to Thee, -- Close to Thee, close to Thee; All along my pilgrim journey, Savior, let me walk with Thee.

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