

# VIGIL



*“Be sober, be vigilant, because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour.”*

*~ I Peter 5:8*

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**Neglect of Duty**

## **HOW CAN CHRISTIANS OVERCOME NEGLECT OF DUTY?**

**John B. Daniels**

There has never been a time in the history of the church that it hasn't faced dangers. Whether it is legalism, liberalism, false doctrine, emotionalism, materialism, worldliness, or just plain neglect.

There are many and varied reasons as to this condition. Though we mentioned early that emotionalism, (emotions out of control) are a danger, a total lack of emotions is just as dangerous. In other words, no joy, no love, and no hope.

What is the cause of neglect? Allow me to suggest the following: (1) A lack of fear and respect for God, Matthew 10:28; Deuteronomy 28:58; 1 Kings 18:21; (2) a lack of faith and trust, Jude 1:5; Hebrews 3:16 – 4:2. (3) a lack of love and concern, Jeremiah 3:10; John 14:21; (4) a lack of security and hope, Acts 7:39; Exodus 14:11; (5) a lack of growth and success, Eccl. 10:10, Philippians 4:10-13; (6) a lack of vision and purpose, 1 John 2:15-17.

The spiritual illness of neglect is symptomatic. It begins with irregular

attendance regarding worship, Bible study, gospel meetings and so on and develops gradually into a lack of Bible study, personal evangelism, involvement in the work of the church, lack of interaction with other Christians, no desire for prayer, all of which will lead to a decline in the development of the “Christians’ Graces” that Peter talks about in 2 Peter 1:5-10.

How do we cure the spiritual disease of neglect? Let's look at Revelation 3:15-16. “I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot: I would that thou wert cold or hot. So then because thou art lukewarm and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of my mouth.” Verse 21 of that same narrative says, “To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in thy throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne.” From this verse it is evident that we can overcome anything, but especially the neglect of duty. This can be accomplished only when we are

willing to develop a fear and respect for both God and His Word! “. . .fear God and keep his commandments: for this is the whole duty of man.” (Ecclesiastes 12:13). Secondly, we must develop faith in God's Word and promises, “Let your conversation be without covetousness; and be content with such things as you have; for he hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee.” (Hebrews 13:5). Thirdly, there must be a genuine love and concern for serving God and others, (cf. 1 Corinthians 13). Fourthly, to avoid neglect of duty spiritual development must prevail (cf. 2 Peter 3:18). Finally, what Solomon, in all his wisdom, said in Ecclesiastes 9:10, “Whatsoever thy hands findeth to do, do it with thy might . . .” is telling us that we, i.e., Christians, must develop a hard work ethic. In doing these things our vision and purpose, Hebrews 11:13-16, will become very clear.

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## EDITORIAL

### AS A CHRISTIAN IT IS MY DUTY TO...

Ronnie Hayes

Webster's defines duty as "a moral or legal obligation; obligatory tasks, conduct, service, or functions that arise from one's position" (355). Vine's defines duty as "to owe, to be indebted" (344). As a Christian servant, we don't serve out of duty alone. Christ warned against this attitude when he said, "So likewise ye, when ye shall have done all those things which are commanded you, say, We are unprofitable servants: we have done that which was our duty to do" (Luke 17:10). This passage doesn't negate our duties. Some will take comfort in doing nothing, as long as they can appease their conscience with a passage that they feel teaches no personal responsibilities. But Paul boldly states, "I am debtor both to the Greeks, and to the Barbarians; both to the wise, and to the unwise" (Romans 1:14). Paul felt the obligation to pay back what had been given to him. Do we ever feel the need to pay back what has been done for us? Doesn't it make us question, "What are our duties?"

As Christians it is our duty to love others. God gave us the example we need. "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life" (John 3:16). Do we truly love the lost? How concerned are we about a brother or sister who has gone back into the ways of the world? Will we be like the shepherd who will leave the ninety and nine to seek the one (Luke 15:4)? Our love should be visible to those around us. One way that God is glorified is through

the love we show. Christ states, "A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another. By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another" (John 13:34,35). Are we taking into consideration the effect our love has on others? When we demand things done our way and no other, what effect does it have on those around us? The true genuine love that we owe to others is a selfless, caring, and considerate love. Paul wrote, "Be kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love; in honour preferring one another" (Romans 12:10). Our love cannot be based on hypocrisy (cf. Romans 12:9) and it be the kind of love that will pay the debt we owe.

As Christians it is our duty to live a life that represents the gospel of Christ. I owe it to God, to others, and to myself to let my light shine in a world of darkness. Christ said, "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven" (Matthew 5:16). The way we live our life is not about bringing glory to ourselves but to God. The way we live demonstrates who is in charge of our lives. Paul states that we were raised from the dead "...so we also should walk in newness of life" (Romans 6:4). That is why Paul told the Christians at Colossae to "put off" the old man of sin and sorrow and to "put on the new man" (cf. Colossians 3:5-15). Sin is no longer in control of our lives but Christ! Paul encouraged, "Only let your conversation be as it becometh the gospel of Christ: that whether I come and see you, or else be absent, I may hear of your affairs, that ye stand fast in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith

of the gospel" (Philippians 1:27). Christianity is not a "talk about" religion. We must be doers, not hearers only. "But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves" (James 1:22). What should our lives look like? Paul said, "But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance: against such there is no law" (Galatians 5:22,23). There is one question we all should ask and answer. When the world sees us, do they see Christ? Can we say as the children's song says, "I've got the joy, joy, joy down deep in my soul?" If we can't, there is something desperately wrong.

As Christians it is our duty to preach the gospel of Christ. Paul stated, "I am debtor both to the Greeks, and to the Barbarians; both to the wise, and to the unwise. So, as much as in me is, I am ready to preach the gospel to you that are at Rome also" (Romans 1:14,15). It is my obligation, duty, and responsibility to share the good news about Jesus Christ. Christ paid a price for me that I could not pay (cf. Hebrews 9:27,28). What will I do for Him? We shouldn't proclaim the wonderful message of Savior just out of debt, but it should tug on our heartstrings. We should want to shout the saving message from the rooftops. We should want to tell our friends, neighbors, and loved ones.

I saw a bumper sticker that said, "I owe, I owe, it's off to work I go!" As Christians we can see what has been done for us and know where we were, a state of hopelessness and helplessness. Thank God for His love, mercy, and grace. Now do we feel the debt?

## MEMBERS: DON'T NEGLECT THE ASSEMBLY OF THE SAINTS

Billy Hayes

God's word has given unto all instructions for living in harmony with God and man (2 Peter 1:3). The subject of the neglect of the assembly of the saint is no different. In this article, our attempt is to study God's word and apply His standard to our lives. It is the hope of every faithful member of the church to do the will of God and to do that will to the best of our ability. Notice the Law of God: "Let us hold fast the profession of *our* faith without wavering; (for he *is* faithful that promised;) And let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works: Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some *is*; but exhorting *one another*: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching. For if we sin wilfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins..."(Hebrews 10:23-26). Our duty to this text is to dissect and understand God's will for us. Certain unfortunate things happen when we fail to assemble with the saints. Let us notice a few of these things.

When we neglect the assembly, we deny the profession of our faith and we deny the faith in the promises given by the Almighty (v.26). We never have to say a word, but our actions speak volumes about our trust in God and His promises. When we find no importance in the assembly of God's children, we, in fact, find no importance in God. How many people, who consider themselves to be faithful, would ever say aloud that there is no importance in God? No one would say that. How many say that exact statement by the action of neglect. What has more importance than God and His church? Paul wrote for us to "set our affections

on things above"(Colossians 3:1). Are our affections set correctly or are we more interested on the temporal? We MUST have a proper trust in the Faithful Father in order to have our affections set correctly.

When we neglect the assembly, we fail to consider our brothers and sisters in Christ (v.24). The ideas of the word "consider" are to give attention toward or to fix our minds on something. God's command is to consider each other. When our minds are fixed on others, we will have a burning desire to be with God's people. What does that say about us when we neglect the opportunity to assemble? This particular verse continues to state as we consider each other, we will "...provoke each other unto love and good works." When we provoke each other, we urge or incite others to do good works and to love. Our actions on this old world are only to give glory and honor to the Great God of Heaven and Earth. What better place to glorify God than in the assembly? We MUST have a proper attitude toward or brothers and sisters in Christ in order to glorify God correctly.

When we neglect the assembly, we fail to show respect to the Shepards of the Flock of God (Hebrews 13:7-17). The office of an elder is not an easy task. It is the most important duty a man can accept on this earth. The bishops in a local congregation cannot change doctrine. They do, however, have the job to feed God's flock of sheep with the proper diet and in regular intervals (1 Peter 5:1-2). In many cases, elderships have chosen to

"We must be vigilant to ward off the temptation of the devil"

have a mid-week Bible study. Is this proper? It certainly is and this is to supplement our own daily Bible study. When we neglect the assembly we say to those men, "I do not respect your God given authority." We also say we have neither respect for God's authority nor His qualifications for the eldership of His church. We MUST have a proper respect for God's elders in order to stop the neglect of the assembly.

When we neglect the assembly, we sin WILLFULLY (v.26). Is this a sin of temptation? Yes. There is a great temptation in our world to not return on Sunday night, Wednesday night, VBS, gospel meeting or even for an evening of fellowship. But why do we think this way? We see it as very simple. "I just have too much to do." That is the most disturbing excuse that can be given. When we sin willfully, we state that Christ's blood cannot cleanse us the way it is supposed to. We forfeit Jesus' sacrifice and all that is left for us is a Judgment reserved for the devil and his angels (Matthew 25:41). We MUST refuse to sin willfully in order be pleasing unto God.

The problem of the neglect of the assembly of God's people is truly only a symptom of a greater problem that exists and that is a problem of the heart of Christians. We must be vigilant to ward off the temptation of the devil and focus more on the standard of God's word. After all, we will stand in judgment on that Great Day (John 12:48).

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## ELDERS: DON'T NEGLECT YOUR WORK

Kerry Richardson

The story is told of a lighthouse keeper along a bleak coast who was given enough oil for one month and told to keep the light burning each night. A week after having been entrusted with the responsibility, a woman visited the lighthouse and asked for a portion of oil in order to provide heat in the house she and her children occupied. Seeing it as a worthy request, the lighthouse keeper granted her request. A day later, a farmer visited the lighthouse and asked for oil that could be used to provide fuel for a lamp. Since the lamp would enable the man's son to read his schoolwork at night, the lighthouse keeper kindly gave him a portion of oil. The very next day the same scenario was repeated, this time for a man who came requesting a portion of the oil in order to lubricate moving parts on his sawmill, which he used to make a living.

Near the end of the month, the oil tank in the lighthouse ran dry. The same night, with a dark beacon, three ships crashed on the rocks and more than 100 people lost their lives. When a government official investigated, the lighthouse keeper was asked why he didn't have fuel enough to light the beacon that tragic evening. After receiving the explanation of the keeper, the official responded with the following statement: "You were given only one task - to keep the light burning. Everything else was secondary. Using oil for ANY other reason than keeping the beacon lit is totally inexcusable."

All too often, this illustration becomes reality for elders within the body of Christ. In respect to their responsibilities within a local congregation, time and resources God gives to elders are used for "lesser things" – things that are important to an extent, but not "the most important things." What are these "most important things?" Opening the pages of the New Testament, we realize God reveals the answers in a simple (*yet profound*) way – through the use of

names describing those who serve as "elders" in a congregation.

In the New Testament, there are three Greek words utilized to identify men who serve as leaders of a congregation. The first term, *presbuteroi*, is the most common name used to describe these men. *Presbuteroi* denotes "advancement in age" and is rendered "elder" in passages such as 1 Timothy 5:17 – "let the *elders (presbuteroi)* that rule well be counted worthy of double honour." A historical perspective of "elders" is observed in the Old Testament when men were selected to serve as leaders of God's people because of wisdom and intelligence that was produced over time (Numbers 11:16f, Joshua 20:4). As we consider the application of this word usage, Yeakley is likely correct when he writes it primarily refers to "decision-making" and an elder's "executive function" (p.18).

The second term, *episcopoi*, literally means "a superintendent" or "guardian." Most often, the KJV renders the term as "bishop" (i.e. Titus 1:7), though in Acts 20:28 it is translated as "overseer." Obviously, this term is more specific than *presbuteroi* in the fact a clear responsibility is denoted – the oversight of a local congregation. Yeakley, observes the term implies "an administrative function" as well as the proper delegation of authority (p.18-19).

The third term, *poimenas*, is rendered "shepherd" and "pastor" in the New Testament. In the original Greek, *poimenas* literally meant "shepherd" or "sheep-herder" and would be used to describe a function as well as a relationship. In 1<sup>st</sup> Century Palestine, flocks of sheep were scattered across the country with shepherds shouldering the responsibility of tending them. Whereas the former two names for leaders suggest age, maturity, and oversight, *poimenas* implies functions related to "teaching" and "counseling" (Edwards, p.56). *Note: For those*

*claiming these three terms identify three distinct groups of church leaders, a word study of Acts 20:17-28 and 1 Peter 5:1-4 clearly indicates there is only one "office"... but it can be described in three different ways.*

In the New Testament, at least six passages specifically identify responsibilities which should be fulfilled by "elders": Acts 20:28-31, 1 Timothy 5:17-19, Titus 1:9-11, Hebrews 13:17, James 5:14, and 1 Peter 5:1-4. In every instance where congregational leaders are being admonished, it is intriguing to realize the commands "fit" into one of these areas of work. For example, consider some of the ideas found in 1 Peter 5:1-4. "Feed the flock of God" (*verse 2*) touches upon their responsibility as a shepherd (*poimenas*). A refusal to be "lords over God's heritage" (*verse 3*) directly applies to their oversight (*episcopoi*).

As we consider the intent of this article, it is not simply to promote a better grasp of these responsibilities, it is to encourage elderships to *discharge* them. Today in many congregations of the Lord, church leaders function in an *unbalanced* manner – failing to appropriate a proper amount of time, resources, and energy to all three responsibilities. When an eldership focuses on "decision-making" and "adminis-tration" while neglecting the "shepherding" aspect, God's intent for leadership is not implemented – and health of the congregation is "at risk."

Elders, God has marvelously blessed you with "oil" - the development of your faith, wisdom, and ability. However, He has left you with a "charge" to *keep the fire burning* within your respective congregation through your decisions, oversight, and shepherding. Don't waste your oil.

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## PREACHERS: DON'T NEGLECT YOUR WORK

Ben Wright

Dictionary.com defines neglect as: "1. to pay no attention or too little attention to; disregard or slight; 2. to be remiss in the care or treatment of; 3. to omit, through indifference or carelessness; 4. to fail to carry out or perform (orders, duties, etc.)." As one looks at the various definitions of this word, it should be immediately realized that this should never be used in conjunction with a preacher and his work. However, we do need to realize just what the work of a preacher is. There seems to be much confusion about this in our brotherhood. I know of some preachers who are required to be nothing more than church secretaries. Others I know are required to do all of their work and the work of an elder as well. Some think that preachers are supposed to do the work that none of the members want to do.

There is no greater privilege than being a gospel preacher. Having the opportunity to study and teach God's word is a tremendous blessing. However, there are many leaving the pulpits of the Lord's church because they are being bombarded with work that has nothing to do with the work of a preacher. Then there are others who want to become preachers because they believe preachers only work on Sundays and Wednesdays. Preachers must never neglect the work that God has given them.

In Paul's final charge to Timothy he wrote, "...do the work of an evangelist..." (2 Timothy 4:5). What is the work of an evangelist? I believe Paul laid that out for Timothy in his first letter to his son in the faith when he wrote, "Till I come, give attendance to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine" (1 Timothy 4:13). Paul, very succinctly gives us the three main thrusts of the work of an evangelist.

Paul told Timothy to give attention to his reading. Paul wanted Timothy to study God's word for himself. Br. Dan Winkler spoke at a nearby congregation several years ago. My wife and I attended and I spoke to Br. Winkler afterwards. As we talked and I told him I was now in the pulpit full time and no longer a youth minister, Br. Winkler asked me, "Do you have an office or a

study?" I didn't know how to take his question and then he told me to make sure that I have a study because that is my main work as an evangelist. Preachers need to be students of God's word.

There is no way one can neglect his study and enter into the pulpit or classroom and be prepared to expound on God's word. The current state of the church, its being weakened from within, is, in many places, because of unprepared men standing before God's flock. Great men of yesteryear, Guy N. Woods, Gus Nichols, Foy Wallace, Jr., and others, were men who would study for hours a day. Why would they do this? They wanted to fulfill Paul's charge to Timothy to "...make full proof" of their ministry (2 Timothy 4:5). That phrase is from a Greek word that means, "to fill up." It is the word used by Jesus in the parable of the net in Matthew 13:48. It carries the idea of completely filling the thing under consideration. In Timothy's case, it was his ministry. The only thing one can properly fill up his ministry with is God's word. Nothing else saves (Romans 1:16).

Paul also told Timothy to pay attention to his exhortation. Timothy was to pay heed to what he was preaching to the brethren. Elders have been charged with making sure the flock of God over which they have been placed is fed (Acts 20:28). They are to be fed the word of God in their classes and in the sermons offered to them by the evangelist of the congregation. Sermons should be full of God's word. Br. Johnny Ramsey would use well over 100 verses in sermons. He wanted to make sure that his sermons were full of scripture. If preachers have not been studying they will not have much Bible in their sermons. You don't have to have as many scripture references as Br. Ramsey, but the word does need to have a prominent place in sermons. As someone rightly said, "Make sure you have plenty of verses because at least you will know that part of the sermon is right." Brethren need to be fed a steady diet of the word of God. It has the power to strengthen us, which is the meaning of the phrase "effectually worketh" in 1 Thessalonians 2:13.

Sermons need to be based on the Bible, not today's hottest self-help book or the latest denominational best-selling work. Paul did not shun from proclaiming the whole counsel of God to the Ephesians (Acts 20:27). He held back nothing from them that would strengthen them in Christ (Acts 20:20). Preachers of today need to realize that we can preach truth, and nothing but truth, and still lose our souls because we failed to teach all truth. We can preach the truth on using our time wisely, being a good influence and needed topics such as these but fail to preach on the nature of the church, baptism, the sin of instrumental music, and other such topics, and we would be lost.

Paul also told Timothy to pay attention to the doctrine. This has to do with what is taught and also the authority of the one doing the teaching. Later, Paul would tell Titus to preach with all authority (Titus 2:15). As one who is preaching God's word, we have the authority of the scriptures backing us. When we preach the truth, we are to do so with the full authority of God's word. We are not to be spineless and cowardly. We are to be straightforward and immovable when it comes to the truth. Truth is not to be bent, molded or shaped to our preferences.

This is the work of an evangelist: to study, preach and authoritatively present the doctrine of Christ. It is not to visit the sick and be the only one doing so. That is the work of all Christians. It is not to answer phones or be over building projects. His responsibility is to prepare himself to the best of his abilities to present God's word to people who are lost and to strengthen the saved.

Why must preachers not neglect this work? The reason is found in 1 Timothy 4:16: "Take heed unto thyself, and unto the doctrine; continue in them: for in doing this thou shalt both save thyself, and them that hear thee." Every time we step in the pulpit, we are preaching for the salvation of others and the salvation of ourselves. May God help each of us realize the awesome task of being an evangelist!

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## MEMBERS: DON'T NEGLECT YOUR PERSONAL EVANGELISM

Tim Hayes

**Neglect** is defined as follows: To treat with no regard; to slight; to set at naught; to overlook. The definition of neglect demands responsibility concerning the item or matter being discussed and with responsibility is presented obligation. Therefore, for one to be neglectful is for one to fail in an obligation.

In the King James Version the word neglect is used four times: twice in Matthew 18:17; once in I Timothy 4:14 and once in Hebrews 2:3. In Matthew 18:17 the word is used to describe a situation where a person disobeys those things told him. In I Timothy 4:14 Paul commanded Timothy not to slight or make light of the gift that had been given him. In Hebrews 2:3 the Hebrew writer presented how much better Christ is than the angels of Heaven. In this presentation he asked the question, "*How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation...?*" This being a rhetorical question with the answer being there is no escape if one has no regard, slights, sets at naught or overlooks the salvation found only in Christ Jesus (Acts 4:12).

**Personal** is defined as follows: pertaining to a person; peculiar or proper to him or her; belonging to face and figure; denoting the person in a grammatical sense. This word relates to every person to whom the situation relates. Who then has the responsibility, obligation, to carry forward the gospel of Jesus Christ?

The responsibility of teaching the gospel of Christ does not fall to those of the world. Why? The world is not following Christ (John 14:15), the world is not submitting to Christ (Romans 10:3), the world is not a servant of Christ (Romans 6:16), therefore the world will not promote the gospel of Christ (Jeremiah 14:14).

The responsibility of teaching the gospel of Christ does not fall upon

those who are not being faithful to Christ. For "they that are such serve not our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly; and by good words and fair speeches deceive the hearts of the simple" (Romans 16:18). In speaking of those who have left the doctrine of Christ, Jesus declared that they no longer served Him but themselves. These may promote self but they will not promote the gospel of Jesus Christ.

The responsibility of teaching the gospel of Christ falls to those who are faithful to Christ. But the question still remains before us, who of the faithful are to teach?

Some of the last words of Jesus spoken on earth were dealing with the proclamation of the gospel. Matthew recorded, "Go ye therefore and teach all nations" (Matthew 28:18); Mark recorded, "Go ye into all the world" (Mark 16:15); Luke penned, "...repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations" (Luke 24:47); John wrote of the words of Jesus to Peter, "Feed my sheep" (John 21:17). But were the apostles the only ones expected by Christ to teach the gospel?

To the elders of Ephesus Paul stated, "Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood" (Acts 20:28). The word Paul used to describe the elders' responsibility to the congregation means to shepherd, to feed, to know and to see to their needs. Paul further describes the work of an elder, "Holding fast the faithful word as he hath been taught, that he may be able by sound doctrine both to exhort and to convince the gainsayers" (Titus 1:9). In speaking of the qualifications of an elder Paul wrote that the man

must be "apt to teach" (I Timothy 3:2). Are the elders the only ones upon whom the responsibility of preaching the gospel falls?

Paul said unto the preachers, "Preach the word" (II Timothy 4:2) and that they must be "apt to teach" (II Timothy 2:24). Are there others, other than the elders and preachers who have the responsibility to teach the gospel of Christ?

Notice the examples given unto us in the book of Acts. Beginning in Acts 2 it was apostles who were teaching, then in chapter 6 we are introduced to a preacher by the name of Stephen who taught the word of God. In Acts 8, because of the persecution brought upon the church in Jerusalem, it is recorded that the members "were scattered abroad" to the areas of Judea and Samaria (Acts 8:1). Those that "were scattered abroad" taught the word of God (Acts 8:4). The apostles had stayed in Jerusalem and while some that were scattered were preachers most were not but still taught the gospel of Jesus.

**Evangelism** is defined as follows: to preach the gospel and convert. The responsibility of the faithful child of God is to plant the seed, the word of God (Luke 8:11) and God will give the increase (I Corinthians 3:6).

The Hebrews writer asked, "How shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation?" Brethren, how shall the faithful escape if they neglect their responsibility to warn and to teach (Ezekiel 3:16-21)?

Therefore the word of God teaches that all who are faithful unto Christ have the responsibility of teaching the gospel of Christ.

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## MEMBERS: DON'T NEGLECT YOUR ABILITIES

Patrick Morrison

Our God is a benevolent, merciful, and giving God. He has blessed us with an innumerable host of blessings and benefits. The Almighty allows the rain to fall and the sun to shine upon us (Matthew 5:44-45). He is the provider of our daily bread (Matthew 6:11). The psalmist reminds us that it is “the Lord, who daily loadeth us with benefits” (Psalm 68:19). It is in Him that we live, move, and have our being (Acts 17:28). It may be that we are often guilty of confining God’s blessings and goodness to material possessions only. Oh what joy and happiness we miss out on when we fail to see all of the many ways in which God showers His goodness and love upon us. Consider yourself blessed indeed if you possess a good measure of health that allows you to work and earn a living for your family. If a loving family and a host of close friends surrounds you, then you are blessed. How often do we remember to offer thanksgiving and praise to God for the various talents and abilities that He has granted unto each of us? It is our responsibility to exercise faithful stewardship in regard to God’s manifold benefits that we are privileged to hold for a time (1 Corinthians 4:2). We must be careful that we not neglect the talents and abilities that God has entrusted to us. There are some serious consequences with which to deal if we fail to use what God has given us as He has directed us to do in His word. What results when we neglect our God-given abilities?

### God Is Not Glorified

All that we have and all that we are is for the purpose of bringing honor and glory to our heavenly Father. So many fail to realize the reason for our existence in this world, and, therefore, misuse and abuse all of God’s magnificent benevolence. Those with little or no understanding of man’s noble purpose exploit their talents to selfish ends. Perhaps you will recall that the second wisest man

the world has ever known, Solomon, attempted to find purpose and happiness in every endeavor known under the sun, only to find that all is vanity (Ecclesiastes 1:2, repeated some 12 times in this book). It was only when he realized the true reason for his existence that Solomon was able to know happiness and fulfillment: (Ecclesiastes 12:13). Paul summed life’s purpose in this manner: “According to my earnest expectation and my hope, that in nothing I shall be ashamed, but that with all boldness, as always, now also Christ shall be magnified in my body, whether it be by life, or by death. For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain” (Philippians 1:20-21). We exist in order to magnify God in all that we do. Ultimately, God receives glory only through the church (Ephesians 3:20), but that glory is brought about by members of the body of Christ using their abilities to point people to Him (Matthew 5:16). When man does not use his talents and abilities, he fails to honor Him Who created him and endowed him with his unique collection of aptitudes.

### The Church Is Not Strengthened

A residual benefit of Christians exercising their abilities to glorify God is that brethren are encouraged, and the church is strengthened as a result. Each Christian is vital to the functioning of the body: “Now ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular” (1 Corinthians 12:27). No one comes to the kingdom of God with the same combination of talents that you possess, nor does anyone possess those talents in the same measure as you do. None can claim that he or she is unimportant in the cause of our Lord (1 Corinthians 12:15-16). God has placed each obedient believer in the body for a purpose: “But now hath God set the members every one of them in the body, as it hath pleased him” (1 Corinthians 1:18). When we fail to utilize our abilities for the glory of God, we also fail to fulfill our

responsibilities in the body of Christ. Notice the emphasis on the proper working of every part of the body in Ephesians 4:16: “From whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by **that which every joint supplieth**, according to the effectual working in the measure of **every part**, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love” (emphasis mine, PM). When every member puts to use his talents in service to God, then the church is built up and strengthened.

### Souls Will Be Lost

Neglecting our abilities ultimately will cost us our soul. In the parable of the ten virgins (Matthew 25:1-13), the five foolish virgins were condemned for what they failed to do, not for some gross immorality or overt wickedness on their part. In the parable of the talents (Matthew 25:14-30), the one talent man was condemned for failing to put to use that which his master had entrusted into his care. As Jesus paints a picture of the Judgment Day (Matthew 25:31-46), notice that those who are banished to eternal torment find themselves there for what they failed to do (vv.41-45). To be certain, many will be eternally lost because of the sins they have committed for which they have not received forgiveness (Revelation 21:8; 1 Corinthians 6:9-10). But the Bible also teaches us that many will be lost for what they have failed to do: “Therefore to him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin” (James 4:17). What a tragedy it will be to be forever banished from the presence of Almighty God because of a failure to do that which was easily within our power to do! Let us resolve to bring glory and honor to God, and in so doing draw the lost to Him, by using the talents and abilities that He has so graciously bestowed upon us. To God be the glory!

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**How Can Christians Overcome Neglect of Duty? ----- By John B. Daniels continued from page 17**

The over all problem is simply a lack of the knowledge of scripture, (cf. Hoshiah 4:6.) When we fall out of love with a SELF and in love with the WORD OF GOD, many of our spiritual heartaches will diminish. Again the inspired record has this warning: "For I say, through the grace given unto me, to every man that is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think. . ." (Romans 12:3). We are individually responsible for our attitude toward the Bible, God's Word. Many ignore it, never study it, and act as though it does not exist. Others read it occasionally, superficially, without any real understanding. God has given us His will through the writings of inspired men, and it is given as our roadmap through this life (2 Timothy

3:16-17, 1 Timothy 2:15; Ephesians 5:17).

In every age God has had a law for those who would follow Him. In the Garden of Eden God gave the parents of the human race a very simple set of instructions. If they obeyed, they could have eternal life and intimate fellowship with God. If they disobeyed (neglected their duty) they would have to suffer. Well, we all know that outcome – they sinned, violating Gods single prohibition, and thereby introduced sin to the whole human family.

Later in that same age, God called Noah to deliver those desiring to be righteous. He gave Noah a simple set of instructions. Noah preached God's righteousness, followed God's instructions in every detail, and all who fit themselves into

God's plan were delivered from the doom of the great flood. The same was true when God raised Moses up as the first great leader of Israel.

In all of the history of God's dealing with man, there emerges a uniform set of principles. Today, you and I live under a "better covenant," the will and testament of Jesus Christ. Overcoming our neglect to this covenant relationship can be summed up in six words, FEAR, TRUST, LOVE, GROW, WORK, and HOPE! God does not force the will of His Son on any of us. In mercy, He pleads, in love, He implores, and through the gospel He calls. May we not neglect our duty!

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