

## **NEGLIGENCE DOES NOT PRECLUDE OBEDIENCE**

By Roelf L. Ruffner

“He that turneth away his ear from hearing the law, even his prayer shall be abomination” (Pro. 28:9).

The Holy Spirit and the wise king Solomon reminds us that not all prayer is acknowledged by God. We must be a doer as well as a hearer of the God’s word (James 1:22). This season of the year many a sinner’s hardened heart runs to find solace in the Nativity scene. They light a candle or mutter a prayer before a semi-idolatrous image. In their minds their religious duty is done and now they may turn to “reveling” or drinking, gluttony and immorality (Gal. 5:19-21). God does not hear their prayers, however pious sounding. Why not?

### **They Know the Law**

Many people know something about God and the Bible. If not, they are only a “click” away from it. In the Day of Judgment no accountable person may claim, “I never knew there was a God or such a thing as sin!” “For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness; Because that which may be known of God is manifest in them; for God hath shewed it unto them” (Rom.1:18,19). Many in our world have a more than a passing acquaintance with the word of God and the Gospel. They choose to ignore it.

### **They Continue to Turn Away From the Law**

In their wisdom the translators of the King James Version of the Holy Bible put “eth” at the end of some verbs indicating continuous action. “...turneth away his ear from hearing the law” indicates that one’s prayer is rejected by God because he continues to turn away from hearing and obeying the word of God (cf. Zech. 7:11-13). Theirs is a pattern of neglect. The sinner who has turned from his evil ways (or repented) and obeyed the gospel becomes a saint or Christian and may pray to God anytime. “Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace,

that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need” (Heb. 4:16). Yet if they go back to their sinful ways and do not repent their prayers are an abomination to God. “What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound? God forbid. How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein?” (Rom.6:1,2).

### Ignorance is Not Bliss

Others reason that since they do not know God’s word, they don’t have to obey it. This fallacy of willful ignorance does not even apply in the material world or the spiritual world. If I am driving 75 mph in a 55 mph zone I may feign ignorance to the judge, but I am still in violation of the traffic laws. In my law breaking I knew that traffic laws did exist and I should be aware of them. Likewise the sinner may reason that if he does not know God’s word (“the law”) he is “off the hook.”

### Foxhole Praying

In times of danger even atheists are known to seek God in prayer. Others seek God because they have a past of religiosity, long neglected. And some folk are downright superstitious. They all are grasping at straws when they attempt to pray. The Bible indicates that God is repulsed by such appeals to Him. He wants that mind which turns to Him in faith, seeking to do His will. “And why call ye me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?” (Luke 6:46).

The faithful child of God can pray to God at any time saying “Abba, Father” (Rom. 8:15). “Now we know that God heareth not sinners: but if any man be a worshipper of God, and doeth his will, him he heareth” (John 9:31). But we must not expect our merciful, longsuffering Father to accept our prayer if we are continuing in sin. “The way of the wicked is an abomination unto the LORD: but he loveth him that followeth after righteousness” (Prov. 15:9).