

When Good Men Do Nothing

Someone once said, "All that is necessary for the triumph of evil is that good men do nothing.

In the endless battles between good and evil, the victory doesn't always go to the side that has the biggest numbers. There are many examples in the Bible and in history where the side that was fighting for God's way would win even though the odds were stacked against them. Many times the only reason evil wins is because good men are not willing to stand up and fight for what is right because when good men do nothing, nothing good gets done.

As Christians, we must realize that God created us to do good works as Paul said in,

Ephesians 2:10 For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.

So living the Christian life is more than just taking care of our needs, we must do good works for others and take a stand against the evil way. But when we do good works for others, we shouldn't have the attitude that we should get something in return for what we did. As Jesus said,

Luke 6:35 "But love your enemies, do good, and lend, hoping for nothing in return; and your reward will be great, and you will be sons of the Most High. For He is kind to the unthankful and evil. ³⁶ "Therefore be merciful, just as your Father also is merciful.

So, as Christians we must learn to be active for God and not just pew warmers. A great example of this comes from the Parable of the talents.

Matthew 25:14 " For the kingdom of heaven is like a man traveling to a far country, who called his own servants and delivered his goods to them. ¹⁵ "And to one he gave five talents, to another two, and to another one, to each according to his own ability; and immediately he went on a journey. ¹⁶ "Then he who had received the five talents went and traded with them, and made another five talents. ¹⁷ "And likewise he who *had received* two gained two more also. ¹⁸ "But he who had received one went and dug in the ground, and hid his lord's money. ¹⁹ "After a long time the lord of those servants came and settled accounts with them.

The first two servants took what the master gave them, and they got busy and they doubled what was given to them, but the one talent man decided to hide his talent and do nothing. He didn't lose the money by doing something sinful, but he didn't do any good either. When the master came back he was very pleased with the first two servants and the good they had accomplished, but notice what our text says about the one talent man.

Matthew 25:24 "Then he who had received the one talent came and said, 'Lord, I knew you to be a hard man, reaping where you have not sown, and gathering where you have not scattered seed. ²⁵ 'And I was afraid, and went and hid your talent in the ground. Look, *there* you have *what is yours*.'

²⁶ "But his lord answered and said to him, 'You wicked and lazy servant, you knew that I reap where I have not sown, and gather where I have not scattered seed. ²⁷ 'So you ought to have deposited my money with the bankers, and at my coming I would have received back my own with interest. ²⁸ 'Therefore take the talent from him, and give *it* to him who has ten talents. ²⁹ 'For to everyone who has, more will be given, and he will have abundance; but from him who does not have, even what he has will be taken away. ³⁰ 'And cast the unprofitable servant into the outer darkness. There will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.'

Some Christians are like this one talent man. They don't really do anything wrong per se, but then again they don't really do anything at all. They are mere spectators, sitting on the sidelines instead of actively participating in the work of the Lord. If good wins, they join in the celebration even though they did nothing to produce the victory.

However, if evil wins, they complain long and loud even though their own apathy produced the undesirable result. So, we have to be careful that we are not like this one talent man, because if we are not growing and do good works, when Jesus comes again, our excuses are not going to work, and He is going to tell us the same thing the master did to the one talent man, '**You wicked and lazy servant**. If we don't want this to happen to us then we must strive to be profitable servants.

In fact, entire congregations can find themselves in this boat. They may think they are spiritual alive when in fact, they are spiritual dead. This was said about the Sardis church in,

Revelation 3:1 "And to the angel of the church in Sardis write, ' These things says He who has the seven Spirits of God and the seven stars: "I know your works, that you have a name that you are alive, but you are dead. ² "Be watchful, and strengthen the things which remain, that are ready to die, for I have not found your works perfect before God. ³ "Remember therefore how you have received and heard; hold fast and repent. Therefore if you will not watch, I will come upon you as a thief, and you will not know what hour I will come upon you. ⁴ "You have a few names even in Sardis who have not defiled their garments; and they shall walk with Me in white, for they are worthy. ⁵ "He who overcomes shall be clothed in white garments, and I will not blot out his name from the Book of Life; but I will confess his name before My Father and before His angels.

This church had developed a name for itself in its community from their past works, and they thought their reputation was enough, but Jesus knew that they were spiritual dead and they needed to repent and get back to God's ways. Nothing good is said about this church as whole, but as it the case in many congregations, there were a few souls who were doing what they were supposed to be doing. These faithful few were the spiritual backbone of that congregation, and Jesus wanted the rest of these Christian to be like them and do good works and stop living off a reputation from past works.

Jesus also teaches this idea in the following parable,

Luke 13:6 He also spoke this parable: "A certain *man* had a fig tree planted in his vineyard, and he came seeking fruit on it and found none. ⁷ "Then he said to the keeper of his vineyard, 'Look, for three years I have come seeking fruit on this fig tree and find none. Cut it down; why does it use up the ground?' ⁸ "But he answered and said to him, 'Sir, let it alone this year also, until I dig around it and fertilize *it*. ⁹ 'And if it bears fruit, *well*. But if not, after that you can cut it down.'

Again notice what He said in,

John 15:1 "I am the true vine, and My Father is the vinedresser. ² "Every branch in Me that does not bear fruit He takes away; and every *branch* that bears fruit He prunes, that it may bear more fruit.

Jesus is teaching us that if we are not producing fruit and we just sit around and do nothing for the Lord, then we will be cut down from the true vine, which is Jesus. Knowing this should motivate you to do good works in the name of God every opportunity you have.

Another thing we learn is when good men do nothing, evil prevails.

The evil way and sinful men must be opposed. God commands us to avoid evil, but He also commands us to actively oppose it.

Ephesians 5:11 And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather expose *them*.

The word expose has several definitions and they are as follows:

- to scrutinize or examine carefully, bring to light, expose, set forth
- used of the exposure and confutation of false teachers of Christianity

Also Paul said,

2 Thessalonians 3:14 And if anyone does not obey our word in this epistle, note that person and do not keep company with him, that he may be ashamed. ¹⁵ Yet do not count *him* as an enemy, but admonish *him* as a brother.

The word note in this verse means: take special note of, mark (out), publicly identify (Friberg Lexicon).

In [Eph. 5:11](#), we are told to expose the works of darkness, which would include all works of darkness, no matter who the person is. However, in [2 Thes 3:14](#), he is dealing specifically with those who have obeyed the gospel and who have fallen away from God's truth. They are to be exposed, and marked as well, but we are not to count them as an enemy. Instead, we are to admonish them, that is warn them, as a brother or sister in Christ. When it comes to one of our own and we are expose their sin or false teaching, we do it because we love them and we want them to be right with God. If we don't warn them, then we are failing to do our duty as Christians. This idea is taught in the OT as well,

[Ezekiel 3:18](#) "When I say to the wicked, 'You shall surely die,' and you give him no warning, nor speak to warn the wicked from his wicked way, to save his life, that same wicked *man* shall die in his iniquity; but his blood I will require at your hand.

Paul understood this concept, and that is why he was so diligent to deal with the problems that came up in the different churches, and he did not fail to proclaim the whole counsel of God. This is why he told the Ephesian elders,

[Acts 20:26](#) "Therefore I testify to you this day that I *am* innocent of the blood of all *men*.²⁷ "For I have not shunned to declare to you the whole counsel of God.

As Christians, we have to decide, are we going to be on the Lord's side or on the side of evil. We cannot be like the people during Elijah's day.

[1 Kings 18:21](#) And Elijah came to all the people, and said, "How long will you falter between two opinions? If the LORD *is* God, follow Him; but if Baal, follow him." But the people answered him not a word.

Elijah wanted them to pick a side, but the people were silent, they wanted to take the middle road, but we cannot do this because the middle road is the idle road, so you must choose a side because the middle road will not get you to heaven.

In the parable of the good Samaritan, wicked men had robbed and beaten a man leaving him half dead. The men who did this were evil. The priest and the Levite, who passed on the other side ([Luke 10:31-32](#)) were willing to let evil triumph by not doing anything for this poor man. Only the Samaritan stood up for what was right. We must be like this Samaritan because when we fight against the evil way, there is no middle ground as Jesus said,

[Matthew 12:30](#) "He who is not with Me is against Me, and he who does not gather with Me scatters abroad.

A modern day example of someone taking a stand for the God against the evil way is one state law makers named Sally Kern. She spoke publicly about the dangers of the radical homosexual agenda. Notice the following quote about her:

During a recent speech at a Republican club meeting, Sooner State Representative Sally Kern said she was concerned that the homosexual agenda would destroy the nation and that the threat the movement poses is as big a threat to the nation as terrorism. She also told how young public school children are being indoctrinated to believe that the homosexual lifestyle is normal.

Now I do not know if she is a Christian, but her actions show that she is getting her principle from the Word of God, and she is taking a stand against the sin of homosexuality. She has received over 27,000 emails from the gay community protesting and threatening to sue her. This lady knew that she would get a reaction to her speech, but she was willing to put herself on the line against this sin. That is what you and I should be willing to do for God's way as well, even if the world doesn't understand it or agree with it.

Another thing we learn is when good men do nothing, they are no longer good.

There many Christians today that are under the false assumption that being good only requires the absence of doing wrong. But I want you to understand that a person is not good just because they are not involved with evil things because that is only part of what makes a person good, because a person must also be actively working for what is good as Peter said,

1 Peter 3:11 Let him turn away from evil and do good; Let him seek peace and pursue it. ¹² For the eyes of the LORD are on the righteous, And His ears are open to their prayers; But the face of the LORD is against those who do evil."

Paul taught this same idea to the Christians everywhere he went. He told them that they should:

Acts 26:20 ... that they should repent, turn to God, and do works befitting repentance.

James teaches us that if we fail do what is good, then we have sinned.

James 4:17 Therefore, to him who knows to do good and does not do it, to him it is sin.

This teaches us that we cannot just avoid the evil way, we must also actively do good works for the Lord. If we know something that needs to be done, we need to do it and not delay because if we put off doing something to long, we may find ourselves caught up in a sin because good intension don't get anything done.

A great example of this comes from the plot that Joseph's brothers came up with to kill him. Ruben, who was the oldest brother, knew that it would be wrong for his brothers to kill Joseph, so he came up with a rescue plan. Instead of shedding his blood, he told them to just throw him in a deep pit and leave him there.

Of course Ruben was going to sneak back and get him out the pit later, but slave traders came along and the brothers decided to sell Joseph into slavery without Ruben knowing. What happened next is found in,

Genesis 37:29 Then Reuben returned to the pit, and indeed Joseph *was not in the pit; and he tore his clothes.* ³⁰ And he returned to his brothers and said, "The lad *is no more*; and I, where shall I go?" ³¹ So they took Joseph's tunic, killed a kid of the goats, and dipped the tunic in the blood. ³² Then they sent the tunic of *many* colors, and they brought *it* to their father and said, "We have found this. Do you know whether it *is* your son's tunic or not?" ³³ And he recognized it and said, "*It is my son's tunic. A wild beast has devoured him. Without doubt Joseph is torn to pieces.*" ³⁴ Then Jacob tore his clothes, put sackcloth on his waist, and mourned for his son many days. ³⁵ And all his sons and all his daughters arose to comfort him; but he refused to be comforted, and he said, "For I shall go down into the grave to my son in mourning." Thus his father wept for him.

Ruben had good intentions, but his slow reaction led to Joseph being sold into slavery. Instead of telling the truth or trying to correct the wrong, he joined in the lie of his brothers that Joseph was dead. Now he was not there when Joseph was sold into slavery, but he was just as guilty of sin because he joined in this lie. The guilt of doing this haunted him for the rest of his life as we read in,

Genesis 42:21 Then they said to one another, "*We are truly guilty concerning our brother, for we saw the anguish of his soul when he pleaded with us, and we would not hear; therefore this distress has come upon us.*" ²² And Reuben answered them, saying, "*Did I not speak to you, saying, 'Do not sin against the boy'; and you would not listen? Therefore behold, his blood is now required of us.*"

This example shows what happens when we fail to do what is right at the right time because it can cause us to be partakers of an evil deed.

So, when we know the evil way is being taught or practiced, we must be bold and courageous and take stand for Gods' truth. When we hear about a brother or sister that is falling away from God, we need to take action and pray for them and reach out to them so that might be encouraged to come back. If they are unwilling to, then we must love them enough to withdraw from them and expose their sin. How this is to be done is outlined in [Mat. 18:15ff](#). When their sin is put on the table for all to see, it should make them feel ashamed of that they doing and cause them to come to their senses and return back to God. This is the idea Paul gives us in,

1 Corinthians 5:4 In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, when you are gathered together, along with my spirit, with the power of our Lord Jesus Christ, ⁵ deliver such a one to Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus.

This is what Paul did to Hymenaeus and Alexander.

1 Timothy 1:20 of whom are Hymenaeus and Alexander, whom I delivered to Satan that they may learn not to blaspheme.

When Paul heard that a church was moving away from God, he would write them a letter and he would send men he trusted to go to those churches to help them get back on track and sometimes he would visit them himself because Paul wanted these churches to serve God with their whole being and he wanted them to worship God in spirit and in truth.

This is the same stand that we must take today. When we see a church that is moving away from the truth, we need to pray for them and reach out to them. If they will not listen, then we need admonish them and rebuke them out of love for their souls so they might return back to God.

Sometimes we start developing the attitude that we are too busy with own problems in our own church or in our community to be concerned about what other churches are doing, but that should not be the way we think. While our primary focus should be on our congregation and our community, it shouldn't be all that we focus on, because sometimes there is need for us to reach out to our brothers and sisters in Christ that are different areas especial when we hear that they are struggling with following the right path.

One of the greatest examples I can give you that will summarize everything I have talked about in this lesson comes from the book of Nehemiah. Usually when you study this period of time you will study Ezra, Nehemiah, and Esther and the minor prophets Haggai, Zechariah and Malachi. These books cover about 100 years of time after the children of Israel had returned from their 70 years of captivity. The first group of Jews returned back with Zerubbabel and the second with Ezra and then the 3rd trip to Jerusalem was when Nehemiah went with a full military force.

Nehemiah is a great example for us to follow today because he was not a man that did nothing. Instead, he was a man that rose to the occasion to get things done for God.

In chapters 1 and 2, we learn that Nehemiah was a cupbearer for the king. This was an honorable position and Nehemiah had a very comfortable life, but when he found out that his fellow Jews were being oppressed by their enemies, and that the walls in Jerusalem lay in ruin because of that, it caused Nehemiah to weep bitterly, and he prayed to God that he might be able to do something about it.

After 4 months, he came before the king with a sad face and this was a dangerous thing to do because no one was supposed show sadness before the king. But Nehemiah had been a faithful servant to the king so the king wanted to know what was troubling him. Nehemiah explained to him about what was happening to his people in Jerusalem and how he wanted to go and help them rebuild their city, and by the providence of God, the king let him go, and he even sent him with a military escort.

When Nehemiah arrived at Jerusalem he surveyed the work that needed to be done in secret. After he saw what needed to be done, he stood up and spoke to his fellow Jews, and he encouraged them to rise up and build because God was on their side and so was the king.

This was enough to cause the people to be recharged and united to serve God, and the Bible says the people had a mind to work.

Now think about this. Obviously, Nehemiah was a good man, but he could have just stayed with the Persian king and doing nothing. He could have had the attitude that some have today and said, Oh, I feel sorrow for my fellow Jews in Jerusalem, but I just don't have enough time to mess with them because I have plenty of problems to deal with right here. But, thankfully Nehemiah didn't have that attitude and his desire to help his fellow Jews caused him to leave the comforts of his home and to reach out and inspire his fellow Jews to get back on track with God and the work at hand.

Chapters 4, 5 and 6 give us more information about how the people rebuilt the walls in 52 days and the difficulties they faced. As they were rebuilding these walls, Sanballat and the other enemies of the Jews tried to discourage them by mocking them. This tactic had worked before, but it would not work this time because Nehemiah was willing to fight for the Lord and encourage his people.

When their mocking stopped working, they planned to attack them, but Nehemiah found out about their plans. So, he prepared for it, and the Bible says that he had the people working with one hand, and in the other hand, they were carrying a sword so they could defend themselves. They were willing to take care of the work at hand, and they were willing to defend the work they were doing.

I believe this gives us a great example to follow. On one hand, we should be working for the Lord at our congregation and in our community, but on other hand we should be ready to defend God's truth and deal with false teachers. Both of these things are important and neither one of them should be neglected. We should never get so busy with our local work that we don't have time to defend God's truth.

Since Nehemiah stood his ground and encouraged the people to do the same, they accomplished this great task of rebuilding the walls in 52 days. Under Nehemiah's leadership, not only did the Jews rebuild the walls, they also made a covenant with God that they would remain faithful to the Law of Moses, and they made a lot of changes to make that happen, but unfortunately many in the priesthood were corrupt and some of them had married foreign women and they had become friends with the world, which was against the Law of Moses.

At some point, Nehemiah left Jerusalem for about year to go back to the king of Persia, and while he gone that short period of time, the Jews started turning back to their old ways and they were not keeping the Law of Moses. The high priest even cleared out one of the storage rooms that were supposed to hold the offerings for the Lord, and he set it up for Tobiah, who was one of the enemies of the Jews. This shows how fast things can go down hill when good men do nothing.

When Nehemiah got back and found out the condition of his people, it made him sad and he took action. He did say oh well I tried. No, he got busy once again and rose to the occasion and had Tobiah's things thrown out and the room was for the Lord. He got the people giving tithes again and made them stop working on Sabbath, and he got the priest back on track, and he forced them to get rid of their foreign wives. In fact, the bible says that he physical pulled their hair out and even beat on them until they would agree to stop marrying these foreign women. Nehemiah was dedicated to serving God and living by His Word.

So, as you can see, Nehemiah is a great example for us to follow today. Now I am suggesting that we go around and beat on people or pull their hair until they agree to be faithful Christians, but we should have the same zeal that Nehemiah did. He didn't worry about what the world thought about his actions because his number one concern was being pleasing to God and restoring His way. You and I must not allow our society to dictate how we do things. Instead, our number one priority should be putting God's way first because as Jesus said,

[Matthew 10:28](#) "And do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. But rather fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell.

Well, that brings us to the end of our lesson, and I hope it has shown you how important it that we have an active faith so that we can be profitable servants for the Lord because when good men do nothing, nothing good gets done.