

Good Intentions Vs Good Actions

(Compiled by Paul R. Blake from multiple sources)

Introduction:

- A. Have you ever started out doing something you thought was good only to have it blow up in your face?
- B. How many times have you planned, and even begun, a project intending to complete it, and then never get around to finishing it?
 - 1. Matt. 21:28-31
- C. The outcomes of good intentions are not always good.
 - 1. Judges 8:22-27
 - 2. Perhaps Gideon made the ephod as a symbol of their decision to do God's will. But he made the mistake of acting without consulting God.
 - 3. Whatever he good he intended with the unauthorized ephod, the people turned it into an idol; and, when Gideon died, they had no problem going into full blown idolatry - Judges 8:33
 - 4. Though Gideon's intentions were good, the outcome was bad; and, everyone paid for it - Judges 8:34-35
- D. How can we match a good outcome with a good intention?

I. CONSULT GOD BEFORE ACTING

- A. Determining God's will is the first matter for the believer
 - 1. Sometimes we start with the good intention, then afterward try to find ways to justify it.
 - a. Later, if it goes bad, we say: "I know what I did was wrong, but I did it for the right reason."
 - 2. God's word, when read objectively, has a way of cutting through all things that cloud issues - Heb. 4:12-13

II. COUNT THE COST

- A. Our choices steer us between success and failure. Often, our determination, or lack of it, sets the decision one way or another.
- B. Jesus emphasized careful decision making - Luke 14:25-33
 - 1. Jesus is not discouraging discipleship, but warns against attempting a serious undertaking with a casual, non-committal attitude or lack of determined zeal.
 - 2. Real discipleship is about character building; you will be tested.
- C. Counting the cost also means realizing the sacrifices involved - 1Cor. 9:24-27
 - 2. Judges 11:29-40 - Jephthah's rash vow teaches that God will require the payment.

III. DON'T PLAY THE HYPOCRITE

- A. Hypocrite from a Greek word meaning actor, one who puts on a face.
 - 1. Pretends to be something he is not and has no intention of becoming.
 - 2. To change, really change, requires that one desire it so strongly that he eventually and inevitably becomes what he wants to become.

- B. The Bible warns against forgetting or neglecting our purpose - James 1:21-25
 - 2. Why would someone forget?
 - a. Because it is not comfortable to stay focused daily on the weaknesses one needs to change.
 - b. Because it is easy to procrastinate.
 - c. Because real change requires real effort.
 - 3. People with good intentions hear the word of God, but do not act on it.
 - a. Rom. 2:13; Luke 11:28
 - 4. Without changing the internals, the externals will never be right. You will always be merely acting.

IV. FINISH THE WORK

- A. Any job well worth doing is worth doing well.
 - 1. There's certainly some Bible truth to that.
- B. Solomon speaks of finishing well - Ecc. 7:1, 8
 - 1. What do we really have in the end? Our service to God and man
 - a. God will not care about the hours you spent fishing, or relaxing on your porch, or watching TV, or surfing the Internet.
 - b. At your death, the only question asked will be: "What did you do for God and your fellow man?"
 - 2. Our works (for God, the church, our communities) must be finished.
- C. Though a task may begin in difficulty, it will end in joy - Psalm 126:5-6

Conclusion:

- A. I know a number of good, honorable, un-baptized people who have the good intention of being baptized one of these days.
 - 1. I know of a number of good, honorable, baptized believers who have the good intention of one day doing good works for the Lord, who are just drifting along until one day comes.
 - 2. Who have the good intention of one day being faithful in their attendance and activity, hoping that circumstances will one day make it easy to do so.
- B. Good intentions alone are just that: good intentions.
- C. Good intentions depend on determination, sincerity, and action in order to become good outcomes.