

“All That is Necessary for the Triumph of Evil”

(Compiled by Paul R. Blake from multiple sources)

Introduction:

- A. Edmund Burke: “All that is necessary for the triumph of evil is that good men do nothing.” Irish political philosopher wrote in *Thoughts on the Cause of the Present Discontents* (1770)
- B. In the endless battle between good and evil, it is seldom the numbers that determine the outcome of each skirmish.
 - 1. Many times, the side for good and right has beaten overwhelming odds
 - 2. More often, evil wins simply because good men are not willing to stand up and fight for what they know is right.

I. WHEN GOOD MEN DO NOTHING, THEY GET NOTHING GOOD DONE

- A. To be good, one must do good
 - 1. Luke 6:35 - Do good, expecting nothing in return
 - 2. Eph. 2:10 - We were created to do good works
 - 3. Titus 2:14 - Christ gave himself to gain a people zealous of good works
- B. The parable of the one talent man
 - 1. He took what the Lord gave and hid it - Matt. 25:18
 - 2. He was condemned for returning only what his Lord gave - Matt. 25:26
 - 3. He did not do any outright evil. He did not steal the money. He also did not do anything good with the money. He did nothing - Matt. 25:29-30
- C. The church at Sardis seemed to be alive, but it was dead - Rev. 3:1
- D. Some churches and Christians do nothing.
 - 1. They are standing idly by. They are mere spectators, sitting on the sidelines instead of actively participating in the good work.
 - a. It has been said that 10% of the members of a local church do 90% of the work.
 - 2. If good wins, they join in the celebration, though they did nothing to produce the victory.
 - 3. If evil wins, they complain long and loud, though their own apathy may have contributed the undesirable result.
- E. The parable of the fig tree - Matt. 21:19
 - 1. What will the great Judge do with those who claim to be good and yet do nothing?
 - 2. Heed the warning of John, the baptizer - Matt. 3:10
 - 3. Jesus too, gives the same warning - John 15:1-2

II. WHEN GOOD MEN DO NOTHING, EVIL WINS

- A. Evil, sin, and wicked men must be opposed. God commands that the good are not to just avoid evil, but are to actively oppose it.
 - 1. Eph. 5:11 - Have no fellowship is only half of the instruction; also must reprove them.
 - 2. Those that do nothing about sin and evil help sin and evil to grow.
 - 3. Ez. 3:18 - When one is silent about evil, he becomes a partaker in it.

- B. Elijah challenged the people to decide between God's goodness and the evil of Ahab and Jezebel, but the people remained silent - 1Kings 18:21
- C. 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 very evil.
 - 1. The priest and the Levite, who passed on the other side were willing to let evil triumph by not doing anything - Luke 10:31-32
 - 2. Only the Samaritan stood up for what was right; but, he had to do something to validate his condition as a good man
- D. In the fight against evil, there is no middle ground, no gray area, and no neutral zone - Matt. 12:30

III. WHEN GOOD MEN DO NOTHING, THEY CEASE TO BE GOOD MEN

- A. Too many mistakenly believe that good is merely the absence of evil.
 - 1. A person is not good because he has done no evil.
 - 2. A good person is one actively working for what is good - 1Peter 3:11
 - 3. When we do not do good, we sin - James 4:17
- B. Reuben, eldest of the sons of Israel, knew his brothers' plot to murder Joseph was wrong.
 - 1. He began to rescue Joseph, but while he delayed, his brothers sold him into slavery.
 - 2. When Reuben found out what had happened, he realized his inaction facilitated it. Instead of correcting his error, he covered his guilt by agreeing with his brothers to lie about Joseph - Gen. 37:29-33
 - 3. Reuben had good intentions. He was not there when Joseph was sold into slavery, but his inaction and absence made him just as guilty as the others. His guilt haunted him for the rest of his life - Gen. 42:21-22
- C. Obadiah condemned the Edomites for doing nothing when evil befell their relatives, the Jews - Obadiah 11
- D. There are Christians who fail to face error, worldliness, materialism, and actively fight these enemies.
 - 1. Instead, they turn inwardly on their own brethren who are active in the war against sin and error
 - 2. Apostle Paul warned about this - Gal. 5:15
 - 3. Some in envy provoke active Christians, taunting them to misstep so they may feel justified - Gal. 5:26
 - 4. Some think they are above conflict; others find conflict socially or politically incorrect
 - 5. While these actions are shameful, what about those who just stand by and do nothing, letting others do most of the work?
- E. Those who fail to do good are sowing dangerous seeds
 - 1. Gal 6:7 - Do not allow evil to triumph by inaction
 - 2. Stand up and be counted. Speak up against evil, rebuke evil and take authorized action to combat it.
 - 3. John Stuart Mill, in an address at the University of St. Andrew (February 1867): "Bad men need nothing more to accomplish their ends, than that good men should look on and do nothing." - Matt. 12:30