

## Good Works Nehemiah 1 – 2

### Good Works Introduction

- Sometimes Christians have public relations problem.
- Sometimes that problem is not justified.
- But sometimes it is.
  - *I have a great respect for Christianity ...  
In fact, there is nothing wrong with Christianity, but the trouble is with you Christians.  
You do not begin to live up to your own teachings.*
    - *Ghandi, in conversation with James E. McEldowney*
- In the early 20<sup>th</sup> Century a separation took place among American churches.
- Some of them began to loosen up doctrinally to emphasize good works, calling this the “Social Gospel.”
- Others, “the Fundamentalists,” responded by tightening up on doctrine.
- Their concern was that the Christianity of the Social Gospel was becoming Christian in name only – which it was.
- Items like the inspiration of Scripture, the virgin birth and Christ’s atonement were at the center of this debate.
- Carl F. H. Henry was the founding editor of the magazine *Christianity Today*.
- An avowed Fundamentalist, he noticed an unfortunate side effect of this ever-widening division.
  - *Fundamentalism in revolting against the Social Gospel seemed also to revolt against the Christian social imperative.*
    - *Carl F. H. Henry, The Uneasy Conscience of Modern Fundamentalism (1947)*
  - *The evangelical task is primarily the preaching of the Gospel ... [but] ... The corporate testimony of believers ... should provide for the world an example of the divine dynamic to overcome evils in every realm.*
    - *Carl F. H. Henry, The Uneasy Conscience of Modern Fundamentalism (1947)*
- Nehemiah never had a “religious” position, but he was a faithful believer in the God of Israel.
- If the term existed, he would have been a Fundamentalist.
- Nehemiah had a wonderful secular job in the king’s court.
- He left it to become a secular governor.
- He made a difference by serving God in the secular arena.
- His was a life full of good works that benefitted others, regardless of where they stood doctrinally.
- In Nehemiah 1 – 2 we will see that for the faithful:
  - Knowledge leads to godly concern.
  - Concern leads to confession and prayer.

- Prayer leads to holy awareness.
  - Awareness makes us ready to act.
- The faithful care about issues beyond themselves.
  - The faithful address those issues in confession and prayer.
  - The faithful are willing to act to resolve those issues.
  - Good doctrine doesn't just stand there and lament the world's evils. Good doctrine leads to good works.

**Knowledge leads to godly concern. 1:1-4**

- Nehemiah had a respectable position personally serving the king in the very courts of power in the Persian Empire.
- He didn't have to care about Jerusalem.
- But he did.

**Concern leads to confession and prayer. 1:4-11**

- We don't know anything bad about Nehemiah.
- He is obviously a faithful believer in the God of the Bible.
- Still, his prayer is full of confession and admission of guilt.
- It's right to start there before moving on to how God might use us.

**Prayer leads to holy awareness. 2:1-5**

- 2:1 Nisan Four months have passed since Chislev in 1:1.
- 2:2 very much afraid The king's servants were not supposed to be unhappy while in the king's presence.
- 2:4 So I prayed to the God of heaven
- Nehemiah was an expert in speed-dial prayers.
- Many of his prayers are just one or two sentences.
- Don't forget that four months of fasting, prayer and serious thought led up to this moment.
- It took a good deal of prayerful preparation to get ready for this perfect moment.
- Nehemiah's everyday prayer life led to this moment of holy awareness.

**Awareness makes us ready to act. 2:6-20**

- Nehemiah was a man of deep faith who was ready to take on some huge challenges.
- While his work is secular work, his thoughts are permeated with the idea that God is with him and behind his plans.
  - 2:8
  - 2:12
  - 2:18
  - 2:20
- God may be giving you impressive ideas and they may not look very religious.
- Nonetheless, any number of people may benefit from whatever it is he wants you to do.
- Is your faith ready to accept those challenges?

- The faithful care about issues beyond themselves.
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- The faithful are willing to act to resolve those issues.
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#### **Good Works    New Testament Emphasis**

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|---------------------|-----------------|-----------------|
| • Matthew 5:14-16   | • Titus 2:7-8   | • Titus 3:8     |
| • Ephesians 2:10    | • Titus 2:9-10  | • Titus 3:14    |
| • 1 Timothy 6:17-19 | • Titus 2:11-14 | • Hebrews 10:24 |

#### **Good Works    Conclusions**

- Nehemiah had a respectable position serving the king in the very courts of power in the Persian Empire.
- He gave it up for a life of secular self-sacrifice that would benefit others.
- He didn't have to care about Jerusalem.
- But he did.
  - *The evangelicals have a conviction of absoluteness concerning their message, and not to proclaim it, in the assault on social evils, is sheer inconsistency.*
    - *Carl F. H. Henry, The Uneasy Conscience of Modern Fundamentalism (1947)*
  - *The evangelical task is primarily the preaching of the Gospel ... [but] ... The corporate testimony of believers ... should provide for the world an example of the divine dynamic to overcome evils in every realm.*
    - *Carl F. H. Henry, The Uneasy Conscience of Modern Fundamentalism (1947)*
- Questions to ask ourselves:
  - How might God want to use my natural gifts and abilities?
  - How might he use me in my day-to-day efforts?
  - What needs are out there that no one is meeting?
  - What people or situations do I need to pray about?
  - How are my prayers making me more aware or ready for action?
  - Good Works    Conclusions
- Faithful Christians living up to our own teachings:
  - Knowledge leads to godly concern.
  - Concern leads to confession and prayer.
  - Prayer leads to holy awareness.
  - Awareness makes us ready to act.
- The faithful care about issues beyond themselves.
- The faithful address those issues in confession and prayer.
- The faithful are willing to act to resolve those issues.
- Good doctrine doesn't just stand there and lament the world's evils. Good doctrine leads to good works.