

Doing And Not Doing

Joe Slater

Little Johnny asked his teacher, "Can I be punished for something I didn't do?" The teacher answered, "No, of course not. That wouldn't be fair at all!" Johnny replied, "Oh, that's good, because I didn't do my homework."

All joking aside, we empathize with the teacher who assumed Johnny meant not doing something bad. And we certainly agree that punishing someone for a bad thing they didn't do is terribly unfair! Hardcore Calvinists teach that God holds babies accountable for Adam's sin. But God's own law under Moses forbade punishing children for their parents sins (Deut. 24:16). Fairness is part of God's nature!

In bygone days, actually committing sin (i.e. doing something God has forbidden, such as murder or stealing) was called a "sin of commission." Realize, though, that God can and does hold us accountable for not obeying what He has told us in His word. These were commonly called "sins of omission" (i.e. omitting, or leaving out, what God told us to do).

In Matthew 21, Jesus told the parable of the two sons. Their father commanded both, "*Go work today in my vineyard.*" The first son initially refused, but later "*regretted it and went.*" The second "*answered and said, 'I go, sir,' but he did not go*" (vv. 28-30). That second son committed a sin of omission. Jesus applied that parable to the chief priests and elders who claimed to be faithful to God, but rejected Jesus and had turned up their noses at John the Immerser.

We don't hear much nowadays about "sins of commission" and "sins of omission." But regardless of terminology, both are treacherous. Take heed, that you may not be ensnared by either!

Keep The Lamp Burning

"Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven" (Matthew 5:16).

Once during my childhood, a storm left our home without electricity for most of the day. As it began growing dark, my grandmother brought out a coal oil lamp and lit it. It was the first time I had ever seen one in use. I studied it for a long time, transfixed by the light. My grandmother, amused by my reaction, told how her family once used them in their home.

While telling her story, she explained the different parts of a lamp. The oil reservoir and chimney are most important, but the wick is of particular significance. A wick must be properly trimmed and shaped in order for the lamp to function properly. An improperly-trimmed wick will either lead to an irregular flame or excessive smoke, thereby diminishing the light.

Viktor Frankl once wrote, "What is to give light must endure burning." Jesus, in Matthew 5:14, described believers as "*the light of the world,*" all the while encouraging them to "*let your light shine before men.*" Situations will arise that may threaten the light, but the child of God must "trim the wick" and keep the fire burning.

How brightly is your light shining?

--Kenny Westmorland (Celina, TN)

Underestimated Channels of Blessing

"Now bands of raiders from Aram had gone out and had taken captive a young girl from Israel, and she served Naaman's wife. She said to her mistress, 'If only my master would see the prophet who is in Samaria! He would cure him of his leprosy!'" (2 Kings 5:2).

This nameless young Jewess suffered more than those who are but temporarily separated from their parents. Her parents, no doubt, were slaughtered during the Syrian attack. She may have been pulled away from the clutches of her father's cold fingers. Next, like Joseph, she was probably sold at a slave auction to the highest bidder, the Syrian army commander, the very man who probably authorized the raids. But instead of seeking revenge, or gloating in her master's misfortune, she actually was touched deeply by his leprosy, and gave him hope if he would go to see Elisha the prophet. Through this pitiful little girl's plight, Naaman was healed and converted to the true God.

Years ago I heard an account that took place in Oklahoma during the days of two-week gospel meetings. A church brought in a widely successful evangelist to hold a meeting. After two weeks of preaching, only one little girl responded to the gospel and was baptized. The leaders felt that the meeting was a complete failure. Years later, after this young girl reached adulthood, she married a Christian man and, if memory serves me correctly, they had four sons, every one of whom became a gospel preacher and went on to a very successful ministry saving the lost. That meeting was far from being a failure. As a result of that little girl's conversion, thousands of souls were saved and, no doubt, are still being saved.

We often minimize things that appear to be insignificant. The person who thinks one's life really doesn't matter needs to revisit this mindset, and realize that if God can take two little girls and accomplish wonders beyond our expectations, He can use us to accomplish His high and holy purposes.

--Rob Redden (Arroyo Grande, CA)