

The Wrong Way To Do Right

—Chronicles 25:2

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THE WRONG WAY TO DO RIGHT

"And he did what was right in the eyes of the Lord, yet not with a blameless heart." II Chronicles 25:2 (RSV)

- I. The story of Amashiah — I met a man this week!
- A. I was reading the Second Book of Chronicles
1. Here is told all the troubles of Israel and Judah.
 2. It starts with the story of the building and dedication of the temple
 3. From the glory of Solomon we descend to civil war and strife and evil and defeat.
- B. In many ways it is a depressing story
1. It is the story of wicked kings
 2. It is the eternal story of bungling statesmen
 3. All the greed and sinfulness of humanity as portrayed in this book
 4. Sometimes I am amused when people say to me, as a minister, Of course you might not understand that, a minister is so far removed from the evil of life
 - a. In the first place, there is no one who has more opportunity to see the sordidness of life than a minister. And that just from his pastoral contacts.
 - b. In the second place if a minister studies the book he is supposed to study—he will be well acquainted with evil. The Bible may be "the good book" from the point of view of its good news about redemption but never forget that this redemption is proclaimed against a backdrop of evil.
- C. But to get back to my new acquaintance
1. I read "Amashiah was twenty-five years old when he began to reign, and he reigned twenty-nine years in Jerusalem.... AND HE DID WHAT WAS RIGHT IN THE EYES OF THE LORD...."
 2. And I said, "Oh, Amashiah, I am glad to, at last meet a king who did what was right in the eyes of the Lord."
 3. But I read further: YET NOT WITH A BLAMELESS HEART. "And he did what was right in the eyes of the Lord, yet not with a blameless heart."
 4. It was then I discovered that there is a wrong way to do right.

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- D. The whole story of Amashiah is too long to tell here -- but it is a fascinating story
1. You can read about it either in the 25th chapter of II Chronicles or in the 14th chapter of 2nd Kings
 2. As soon as the royal power was firmly in his hands he killed the servants who had slain the king, his father, but he did not put their children to death. An action far in advance of his time.
 3. He went to war against Edom
 - a. He hesitated to trust the Lord
 - b. So he hired mercenaries from Israel.
 - c. The prophet berated him so he sent them home
 - d. But he was worried about the 100 talents he had paid them!
 - e. Incidentally they plundered his cities.
 4. He was victorious over Edom and in the plunder which he brought home he brought that which destroyed him -- he brought the idols of Edom. He worshipped them.
 - a. His heart was not blameless
 - b. One translation says -- his heart was divided
 5. Then in the flush of his victory he tried to conquer Israel
 - a. The king of Israel, Jehoash, treated him with a sort of amused contempt
 - b. And then he destroyed him -- this man whose heart was not blameless -- whose heart was divided -- who did right, the wrong way!

II. What are some of the wrong ways we try to do right?

- A. Are you ever tempted to say: Oh well, the end justifies the means
1. There has been a tendency in the last few years to center our thinking on certain goals or ends which we think are desirable
 2. It is dangerous for me to even mention these because someone will think I am opposed to them!
 3. But Christianity says that we must not achieve the best, by using the worst
 4. This is one of the characteristics of Communism
 - a. Every crime in the book is committed by the Communist and is justified because the result is good.

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- b. One of the great challenges to Christianity today is given by Communism. The world wants bread and Communism offers bread. The world wants equality and Communism offers equality.
- c. We must not underestimate the appeal
- d. But we must see and we must examine what happens when the methods of Communism are used. When we do this we see that there is a wrong way to do right.
5. Communism deliberately rejects God. But it has gathered to itself age-long yearnings for a better economic life
- a. We must take these yearnings and fulfill them
 - b. But we must do this on the basis of our Christian faith and we must use the Christian way to achieve these things.
 - c. The sad and the tragic thing is that too many of us have concerned ourselves with neither the way nor the means!
6. The end never justifies the means -- read your New Testament -- particularly the gospels

- B. In the second place Jesus indicated that the essence of every moral act is the inner motive
1. He is a foe of all "externalism."
 2. As Christians the New Testament doctrine of "agape" or "love" is most important
 3. Change the inside of the cup said Jesus
 4. In failing to follow Jesus at this point we find the reason for much of the trouble of the church
 - a. We are trying to do right the wrong way!
 - b. I read about a young woman, shopping in a department store, who asked a clerk where she could get a compass. He replied: Do you want the kind that goes places or the kind that goes round in circles?
 - c. Obedient love for Christ goes places
 - d. Doing things just because it is our duty, or to keep an institution running goes round in circles.
 5. This inner motive comes from God. You see we keep coming back all the time to this-- Amashiah failed even though he did right because he substituted something else for God

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- C. The third way we fail is by using so-called "enlightened self-interest as the basis for our actions."
1. "What's in it for me?"
 2. The assumption is that if we use this approach we shall do good and benefit ourselves at the same time
 3. W. H. Hudson thinks this is one glaring shortcoming of much contemporary religion.
 - a. This attitude reverses the authentic religious experience of "my life for God"
 - b. It says: "God for my life!"
 - c. This centers man's attention on himself and insulates him from the realities of sin and evil
 4. You see, again we are back at the place of putting ourselves rather than God central.
 5. This follows the American ideal that the good will prosper
 - a. Of course this is older than America
 - b. We find this idea in the Old Testament as well
 6. Do you hear an echo-- Whosoever shall seek to save his life shall lose it and whosoever loses his life for my sake shall save it?

III. Most of us live, more or less, in a day to day fashion. We assume that as long as things are going along all right we are successful. We boast, quietly, that we are doing all right. But we have no real philosophy of failure or theology of suffering. It does not seem to us to matter that we do the right thing in the wrong way until one day we no longer succeed, until one day we are faced with the realization that we have no resources for tomorrow. It is then that we need so desperately the God we have forsaken. It is then that our material alliances seem so weak. It is then that we find that the idols of Edom are not sufficient for the eve of evil.

*Good sermon
Playing Comm.*

Chronicles

The Expositor's Bible

"Amaziah ... was naturally distressed at the thought that he had spent a hundred talents for nothing. ... He did not realize that the divine deliverance limited his worth more to him than many hundred talents of silver; or perhaps he reflected that Samaria was free, not that he might have saved his money. ... he was evidently one of those sordid souls who like ... to get their religion for nothing. No wonder Amaziah's men were acting."

"Every anathema against an established abuse is met with the cry, 'What shall we do for the hundred talents?'"

The king's sin in hiring Israelite mercenaries was to suffer a severe punishment for the loss of money. (They plundered houses which he was saving.)

"Amaziah's victory over Edom was of small profit to him, for he was thereby reduced into idolatry. (He brought back - among his plunder - the gods of Edom.)"

"He set them up to be his gods and bowed down humbly before them."

2 Kings
14:1-22

Expositor's Bible

"However it is but Amaziah's should be so scrupulous as to observe the Deuteronomist's law by not slaying the sons of his father's murderers, while he does not seem to be aware, any more than the best of his predecessors, that while he obeys one precept he was violating the sacred and spirit of the entire law in which the precept came?"

Centralization of all worship - the rigid prohibition of any local place of sacrifice.

"So with Assyria having her troubles at home, and with Syria barely able to maintain herself as a state, Jehoash of Israel inherited the most favorable political situation in the entire history of the Northern Kingdom. His program of political expansion was challenged only by the kingdom of Judah, whose king, Amaziah, riding high on the wave of victory over Edom, insisted on trying to settle a score with the Jehu dynasty. It was a foolhardy move, as the fable about the thistle and the cedar shows (II Kings 14:8-10). The Israelite king soundly whipped the Judean state and reduced it to vassalage, thus preparing the way for the glorious era of Jeroboam II, the greatest king of the dynasty."

"Understanding the 'Old Testament'"
Anderson

- 1- I want justify the means
- 2- Externalism
- 3- What's in it for me?

The basic norm for Christians
is this is obedient love.

A New Mind For a New Age Walbridge

"From at least four distinctive great
powers are coming in upon
Christian faith and practice."

- ① Communism
- ② Scientific humanism
- ③ Western materialism
- ④ Rural world religion

Most of us live, more or less, in a
day to day fortress. We assume
that if we are successful we
are doing right.

We have no real philosophy
of failure - or suffering.

The result is that we sometimes
do the right thing in the wrong
way.

What Paul Doughty
and his Christian Center
W. H. Hudson

"Certainly one glaring shortcoming
of much of contemporary 'religion'
is its eudaemonism, its 'what's
in it for me?' approach, which
reverses the authentic religious
experience of 'my life for God' into
the corrupted form 'God for my
life'."

Eudaemonism - "That system
of ethics which defines and
enforces moral obligation by
reference to happiness or
personal well-being."

Centers man's attention on
himself and insulates him from
the realities of sin and evil in
life.

In contrast with the cardinal - 2 -
virtues of the Greeks the Christian
virtues have several distinctive
characteristics

- 1- Personal or civic virtues
- 2- Ethical is the narrower sense of
the term - assumed at
right angles not harmony or
symmetry.
- 3- Less intellectualistic -
demonstrated
- 4- Inward their norm is the
conscience. Transcen-
dental instead of a humanistic
ideal.

The Principle of Christian Ethics - Knudsen

Jesus indicated that the
essence of every moral act
is the inner motive. A foe of
"externalism."

"It is in his motives alone that Jesus
can be an unusual and authoritative
example, and here it is not so much
his specific motives that are
his normative force as it is the
quality or spirit of his life as a
whole."
"agape"

The Christian virtues

- 1- Love
- 2- Purity - i.e. sincerity and
truthfulness
- 3- Humility
- 4- Patience
- 5- Fidelity
- 6- Hope