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A WILLING SERVANT

In the dark days following September 11, 2001, I remember President Bush say the above when referring to the hijackers who overtook the airplanes and destroyed the World Trade Center towers, a portion of the Pentagon, and the fourth plane that crash-landed in Shanksville, PA. I thought that the phrase, "Evil was seeking a willing servant" was interesting because it not only applied on that day, but it applies aptly to the spiritual struggle we have faced since the days of Genesis. "Evil" is defined as: "*morally wrong; immoral ... harmful, injurious*" (Webster's). When it comes to evil in this world, we need to realize that evil in and of itself can do nothing. Though evil exists, evil still needs a willing servant that those things that are morally wrong, injurious, or harmful might come to fruition and be felt in the lives of others. Satan then uses those "willing servants" to accomplish his will on this earth. We need to understand that evil is accomplished by those who are willing to take part in evil. Why is this so? It is because every man is a

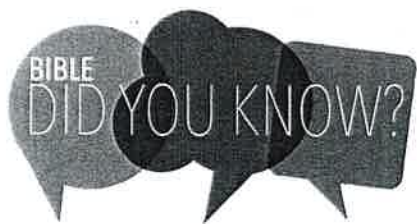
free moral agent. He makes his decisions as to whether or not he will do righteous or evil deeds. This truth is taught throughout Scripture. God said, "*the soul that sinneth, it shall die*" (Ezek. 18:4). James wrote, "*every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed. Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin: and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death*" (Jas. 1:14-15). Paul said, "*He that doeth wrong shall receive for the wrong which he hath done: and there is no respect of persons*" (Col. 3:25). Many other passages like these show us that man has a choice as to what he will and will not do. As crafty and sly as Satan is, he cannot force a man do anything against his will. In like manner, God forces no one to obey but allows man the choice as to whom he will serve. This has always been true (ex: Josh. 24:15). Are we going to be a willing servant for righteousness or evil? This is the choice we must make daily. We see several occasions in the Scriptures where evil found a willing servant. The evil of idolatry found a willing

servant in the nation of Israel when they demanded Aaron make them a god (Ex. 32:1). It found another willing servant when Jeroboam had two golden calves erected at Dan and Bethel because he and his counselors decided that if the ten tribes worshipped God at Jerusalem, they would reunite with the southern tribes (I Kings 12:27-30). The evil of lying has found many willing servants over the years. Remember that Laban lied and deceived Jacob ten times over twenty years (Gen. 31:7, 41). We also know that, unfortunately, Abraham and Isaac were willing servants of lies as well (Gen. 12:11-20; 20:2-11; 26:7-11). Though it was a fact that Abraham and Isaac, were related to their wives anyway, they did not tell the complete truth when they refused to inform the leaders of Egypt and Philistia that they were married (Gen. 12:10-20, 26:1-11). As a result, those nations suffered, and Abraham and Isaac suffered the consequences as well. Evil found a willing servant when David lusted and committed fornication with Bathsheba. He was a further willing servant when he deceived Uriah and plotted his death on the front lines of war (II Sam. 11:1-25). We could discuss others in the Old and New Testaments which were willing servants of evil. They chose to follow the path of wickedness, and on many occasions, they brought others down as well. Study about Hymenaeus and Philetus (II Tim. 2:16-18), Alexander the Coppersmith (II Tim. 4:14), Demas (II Tim. 4:10), the Judaizing teachers (Gal.; Col.; etc.), and others who left the Lord and then tried to lead

precious souls away from the truth. There are many occasions in Bible times (and today) where evil found a willing servant! "Good" is defined as "*morally excellent; virtuous; righteous; pious*" (Webster's). Goodness is "*the state or quality of being good*" (ibid.). Just as evil needs willing servants for evil to be accomplished, so also goodness needs willing servants to accomplish that which is good. If we will, we can be servants of God for good works (Matt. 5:16; Titus 2:7, 14, 3:8, 14; I Pet. 1:12). Again, this is not something "forced" on one (How can we "force" someone to be good, anyway?), but must be something we do willingly for good to abound on this earth. Just as there are examples of evil-doing in the Bible, so also, we see examples of people who were good in the Bible. First and foremost is Jesus Christ. He "*went about doing good*" (Acts 10:38). Our Lord was the epitome of goodness and righteousness. He "*did no sin, neither was guile* (deceit, NKJ, NAS) *found in his mouth*" (I Pet. 2:22). In all things, He was determined to do only the will of the Father (Jn. 4:34; 12:49-50; etc.). His example is one we need to follow today. Not only is Christ an outstanding example of good, but so also was Demetrius (III Jn. 12). He had a good report from all who knew him. In this same epistle, John encouraged the brethren not to do evil, but to do good (III Jn. 11). Again, such a warning shows us that the good we do is our own choice. Goodness needs a "willing servant"! Peter asked, "*who is he that will harm you, if ye be followers of that which is good?*" (I Pet. 3:13).

Friends, are we following what is good? Are we willing servants of what is right, proper, and well-pleasing to God? The key to a fulfilling and worth-while life is revealed in I Peter 3:10-11. Notice what Peter said and note how it takes a willingness on my part to accomplish this. *"For he that will love life, and see good days, let him refrain his tongue from evil, and his lips that they speak no guile: Let him eschew evil, and do good; let him seek peace, and ensue it."* Our Lord expected men to be good. He said, *"Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven"* (Matt. 5:16) Paul told Titus to show *"a pattern of good works"* (Titus 2:7). Are we following in the examples of goodness from Christ, Paul, Timothy, Titus, and so many others? In light of this study, what kind of life are we living? Are we shunning evil and being a willing servant of good? That is the question all men must answer while upon this earth. Based on what we have learned, we know that no one will be able to stand before the Lord on the Day of Judgment and say, "He/She made me" We have choices to make daily. What kind of example are we leaving for our children, grandchildren, and loved ones who know us so well (Matt. 5:16; I Tim. 4:12; Phil. 3:17)? God has given us two options, but only one life to use in His service. Therefore, let us choose wisely! God through Moses told the Jews: *"I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing: therefore choose life, that both thou and thy seed may live"* (Deut.

30:19). In like manner, I encourage all of our dear readers to choose the course which brings spiritual life by walking the *"strait and narrow"* way; *"the good way"* that has been laid out by God in the Scriptures. Let us be willing servants of good (Matt. 7:14; Jer. 6:16).
 — Jarrod Jacobs



***"A wise son accepts
 his father's
 discipline, but a
 scoffer does not
 listen to rebuke.
 From the fruit of a
 man's mouth he
 enjoys good, but the
 desire of the
 treacherous is
 violence. The one
 who guards his
 mouth preserves his
 life; the one who
 opens wide his lips
 comes to ruin."
 Prov. 13:1-3***



MONTHLY CHALLENGE

DIRECTIONS: Each first Sunday of the month, we will have challenges that you should attempt to complete by the end of the month. If we all, as members, complete these challenges, our church will grow in spirit and in number.

1) Blessing Rather Than Cursing Challenge

1 Peter 3:8-9 *"To sum up, all of you be harmonious, sympathetic, brotherly, kindhearted, and humble in spirit; not returning evil for evil or insult for insult, but giving a blessing instead," 1 Pet. 3:8-9.* In light of the amazing example of forgiveness displayed recently in a court room setting, it makes us think how easy it is for us in situations where we have been wronged or offended to curse such individuals rather than bless them. As I think about how difficult it is to refrain from returning evil for evil or insult for insult, I think perhaps I am not training my heart and mouth to be ready in those instances. So here's the challenge: for the rest of this month, each week choose someone who has brought evil or insult towards you, or perhaps towards someone you know. Focus on that individual each week, and offer prayers of blessings towards them. Pray for their salvation. Pray for good to come into their life. "But I say to you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, so that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven," Matthew 5:44-45. Perhaps by the end of the month we will develop a new habit which will train our hearts to bless rather than curse.

2) USING YOUR BIBLE IN THE WORLD

Share the following verses with someone who does not attend this congregation at least twice this month:

John 10:7-17

"So Jesus said to them again, 'Truly, truly, I say to you, I am the door of the sheep. All who came before Me are thieves and robbers, but the sheep did not hear them. I am the door; if anyone enters through Me, he will be saved, and will go in and out and find pasture. The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly. I am the good shepherd; the good shepherd lays down His life for the sheep. He who is a hired hand, and not a shepherd, who is not the owner of the sheep, sees the wolf coming, and leaves the sheep and flees, and the wolf snatches them and scatters them. He flees because he is a hired hand and is not concerned about the sheep. I am the good shepherd, and I know My own and My own know Me, even as the Father knows Me and know the Father; and I lay down My life for the sheep. I have other sheep, which are not of this fold; I must bring them also, and they will hear My voice; and they will become one flock with one shepherd. For this reason the Father loves Me, because I lay down My life so that I may take it again."