

## We Can Believe

### Part 9

#### **Text – Ezekiel 22 : 30**

**Intro** – I’d like to begin with a portion of an article from the **Holocaust Encyclopedia**: “Leaders and clergy of German Protestant and Roman Catholic churches were to a large degree **complicit** in the persecution of Jews.

Most Christian leaders in Germany welcomed the rise of Nazism in 1933. They did not speak out against hateful speech or violence. After 1933, most did not speak out against legal measures that progressively stripped Jews of their rights. Some church leaders, particularly within the highly nationalistic ‘German Christian’ movement of the main Protestant church, enthusiastically supported the Nazi regime.

Only a small minority of religious leaders, ministers, and priests, usually in isolated parishes, spoke out against Nazi racism, gave Sunday sermons decrying the persecution of Germany’s Jews, provided aid, or hid Jews. **Without the support of their leaders and institutions, voices of dissent had little effect on government policy.** Churches across Germany also helped facilitate the implementation of racial laws. They provided people with copies of family baptismal records. The Nazi regime used these records to help decide a person's racial status and that of their parents and grandparents.”

Sadly, as you can see, the Christian voice in Germany was mostly silent and it facilitated the persecution and murder of over 6 million Jews by the Nazis.

**Why begin with this today?** Because it teaches us a very valuable lesson about what and why we believe, what we do and how important it is to proclaim it to those around us.

As a believer in modern day America, I am alarmed at the rights we hold dear that are being attacked and diminished by those in power, whether that power is the government, the news media, or social media.

We have to believe that we can make a difference. As we wrap up this series on apologetics, let’s begin with a familiar question:

#### **I. Why It Matters –**

- Why does it matter if the Church of Jesus Christ is silent? Let me give you a few **reasons**:

##### **1. It is a Violation of Who We Are when we Remain Silent –**

- There is an interesting situation that John tells us about in **John 7:45-53**.
  - A division sprang up among the people who listened to Jesus.
  - Some of the people thought he was a prophet or the Christ the O.T. prophesied.
    - Others believed Him to be a false prophet.
  - The religious leaders had ordered for Jesus to be brought in.
  - In **verse 45**, the officers return empty handed with their reason being, “Never has a man spoken the way this man speaks.”
  - The religious leaders criticize them by sarcastically asking, “**You have not also been led astray, have you?**”
  - They go on and say this also, “**No one of the rulers or Pharisees has believed in Him, has he?**”
- Well, guess who is in the midst of these religious leaders? **Nicodemus**.
  - The same Nicodemus who came to Jesus at night and who is now described as “**one of them.**”
  - The best Nicodemus offered was a mild and timid question of his own, “**Our Law does not judge a man unless it first hears from him and knows what he is doing, does it?**”
    - Instead of a bold and confident testimony of the life-changing power of Christ, the best Nicodemus could muster was a question about finding out more about Jesus before they rush to judgment.
- **I would submit to you that the Church has way too many folks like Nicodemus today!**
  - In the face of open and unashamed wickedness, what we need are less “woke” questions and more testimonies of the grace and transformative power of God on display in our lives as His children.

## **2. We are Being Disobedient to our Calling –**

- In **Acts 1**, we see the account of Jesus being taken back into Heaven.
  - Before Christ’s ascension, the disciples ask Him if He is going to restore the kingdom to Israel now?
  - Jesus’ answer is, “**It is not for you to know...**”
    - In other words, “Don’t get worked up about when the kingdom will be restored. Listen to me and what I want you to do in the meantime.”
  - What He does want them to know is their **mandate**: “**but you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be My witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth.**” (Acts 1:8)

- Think about where Jesus wanted His disciples to be witnesses for Him:
  - **Jerusalem** – the place where He was hated, tried, and crucified.
  - **Judea** – the place that rejected Jesus’ ministry during his time on Earth.
  - **Samaria** – a land filled with “worthless half-breeds.”
  - **Remote parts of the earth** – Gentiles who were deserving of Hell.
- This is our mandate also. **We go, not where we may like to go or to the people we would prefer to go, but where Jesus tells us to go.**
  - No matter where we go or to whom we go, we go as witnesses of Jesus.
  - Jesus specifically states that we are to be **His witnesses.**
    - That tells us that our conversations & lifestyles are to center around who Jesus is and what He has done in our lives.
- When we fail to be His witnesses, we are acting in direct disobedience to His mandate for our lives.

### **3. We miss out on the Spiritual Good that Can be Done –**

- There’s a lot about church, ministry, helping others that can be flat out disappointing and painful at times.
  - People will try to take advantage of our goodness.
  - Others simply get what they can get and then move on to “greener pastures” when it suits them.
  - Others jump around from church to church without developing any real commitment to personal or church growth.
- However, in spite of that, ministry and helping others can be rewarding; both in the here and hereafter.
- Why should we be interested in the **Good that can be Done?**

#### **A. It rescues people from a life of ruin and an eternity of suffering –**

- The psalmist’s words in **Psalm 142:4** sum up the way a lot of people feel today: “Look to the right and see; For there is no one who regards me; There is no escape for me; No one cares for my soul.” (ESV)
- There are numbers of people all around us, due to myriads of reasons, who feel alone, forsaken, and uncared for.
- We have the privilege to care for those who are lonely and lost.
- The difference Christ can make in their lives through us means something today and especially for their eternities.

## **B. It allows us to get our minds and attention off ourselves and onto others –**

- Don't misunderstand what I'm saying here. I'm not opposed, and neither is God, to appropriate rest, and restoration.
- But to be perfectly honest with you, a lot of people I see seem to have very little problem with taking care of their own needs.
  - I mean, when you're the center of the universe, you must take time for yourself! LOL
- Helping others and ministering to others can be one of the most rewarding things you will ever do.
  - If you don't believe me, come, and sit in on a Grief Share or Smart Recovery meeting.
  - Listen to the stories of the people who come to these meetings and hear how God has brought healing to their hearts.
- Listen to what Jesus said His mission was in **Luke 19:10** – “For the Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost.”
- It wasn't the healthy and happy Jesus came to seek. It was the sick, hurt, lonely, and forsaken He came to rescue.
  - That is true for us, as well.

## **C. It allows us to store up treasures in Heaven –**

- Maybe you're thinking, “That sounds selfish. Like all you want is a reward for doing good down here.”
- Listen to the **Shorter Westminster Catechism**: “What is the chief end of man? Man's chief end is to glorify God, and to enjoy him forever.”
- **You know when I enjoy God the most?** When I'm in harmony with Him and with His commandments.
- When I'm in harmony, I enjoy God, and by default, I am going to lay up treasures in Heaven to enjoy for all eternity.
- Plus, God promises rewards for those who love and faithfully follow Him.
  - Listen to what Paul says in **II Timothy 4:6-8** – “For I am already being poured out as a drink offering, and the time of my departure has come. I have fought the good fight, I have finished the course, I have kept the faith; in the future there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day; and not only to me, but also to all who have loved His appearing.”

- This is a vivid reminder about why we must not grow weary in well-doing!

**INVITATION** – Before James Garfield went into politics and became president, he taught at what is now Hiram College in Ohio.

The ambidextrous Garfield would amuse his students by writing on a chalkboard with both hands—one in Greek and the other in Latin—at the same time!

It is said that on one occasion a father came to Garfield and complained that the academic course at the school was too long and arduous and asked if it could be shortened.

“Certainly,” Garfield replied. “But it all depends on what you want to make of your boy. When God wants to make an oak tree, He takes a hundred years. When He wants to make a squash, He requires only two months.”

Let’s go back to the beginning of the message today. Why does it matter if the Church is vocal or silent?

Squash is silent. Nobody pays a lot of attention to squash laying on the ground.

Oak trees are majestic. They demand our attention. They point us to the glory and grandeur of God.

Beloved, now it’s time to determine who we are going to be. Are you going to be “squashed” into silence or will you determine to be an Oak for God?