

CHAPTER 22

OUR DUTY TO RESIST THE WICKED

*“Cry aloud; do not hold back;
lift up your voice like a trumpet;
declare to my people their transgression,
to the house of Jacob their sins.
Isaiah 58:1 (ESV)*

⁶ *“Is not this the fast that I choose:
to loose the bonds of wickedness,
to undo the straps of the yoke,
to let the oppressed go free,
and to break every yoke?
Isaiah 58:6 (ESV)*

*He who justifies the wicked and he who condemns the righteous
are both alike an abomination to the Lord.
Proverbs 17:15 (RSV)*

*Thus says the Lord: Do justice and righteousness, and deliver from the hand of the oppressor him
who has been robbed.....*

Jeremiah 22:3(a) (ESV)

*Hate evil and love good,
and establish justice in the gate....
Amos 5:15(a) (RSV)*

*Rescue those who are being taken away to death;
hold back those who are stumbling to the slaughter.
Proverbs 24:11 (RSV)*

*take away the wicked from the presence of the king,
and his throne will be established in righteousness.
Proverbs 25:5 (RSV)*

⁹ *Everyone who goes on ahead and does not abide in the teaching of Christ, does not have God.
Whoever abides in the teaching has both the Father and the Son. ¹⁰ If anyone comes to you and does
not bring this teaching, do not receive him into your house or give him any greeting,
2 John 9-10 (ESV)*

God wants us to be grieved by the wickedness of our generation and by the abominations committed in our midst.

Before we can resist the wicked, or even warn them, we first need to be aware of their wickedness and of the abominations that are being committed in our midst by our generation. Moreover, those abominations need to *grieve us*. That is we need to begin to see them as God does and they need to matter to us. There is a sobering passage in Ezekiel in which God sends out angels as ‘executioners’ into Jerusalem to bring judgement on the people because of their wickedness. There is also an intriguing verse in which God tells the angels they must first put a mark upon the foreheads of all who “sigh and grown over all the abominations that are committed in it”:

Then he cried in my ears with a loud voice, saying, “Bring near the executioners of the city, each with his destroying weapon in his hand.”

Ezekiel 9:1 (ESV)

And the Lord said to him, “Pass through the city, through Jerusalem, and put a mark on the foreheads of the men who sigh and groan over all the abominations that are committed in it.”

Ezekiel 9:4 (ESV)

The point is that God’s judgment was to be brought upon all the people except for that minority who had the mark put onto their foreheads as a result of being so grieved about the wickedness around them. So, there is an urgent need for us to take wickedness seriously and for it to matter to us:

⁵ And to the others he said in my hearing, “Pass through the city after him, and strike. Your eye shall not spare, and you shall show no pity. ⁶ Kill old men outright, young men and maidens, little children and women, but touch no one on whom is the mark. And begin at my sanctuary.” So they began with the elders who were before the house.

Ezekiel 9:5-6 (ESV)

We must hate wickedness and resist wicked people, even while praying for them.

The fact that we have to pray *for* the wicked, and even to forgive them, does not mean that we must cooperate with them or give in to them. On the contrary, part of our role as Christians is to resist the wicked, both for our own sake, and also for the benefit of others. There are many weak and defenceless people out there who are depending on us to stand up to the wicked on their behalf. They can’t do it themselves, so we must do it for them:

*learn to do good;
seek justice,
correct oppression;
defend the fatherless,
plead for the widow.
Isaiah 1:17 (RSV)*

*It is not good to be partial to the wicked
or to deprive the righteous of justice.
Proverbs 18:5 (ESV)*

It is right to be merciful with the weak, the immature, those who make mistakes and sometimes even the wicked. But we must never be weak or sentimental towards the wicked. Neither should we ever appease or accommodate them. Many sincere but naive Christians speak as if we should, but it isn’t what God wants. God wants us to resist the wicked and not to give way to them at all. We must make ourselves an obstacle in their path. God is not pleased with anyone who gives way before the wicked, or who lets them get what they want, either in our lives, or in the lives of others:

*Like a muddied spring or a polluted fountain
is a righteous man who gives way before the wicked.
Proverbs 25:26 (RSV)*

*²⁰ Woe to those who call evil good
and good evil,
who put darkness for light
and light for darkness,
who put bitter for sweet
and sweet for bitter!*

Isaiah 5:20 (ESV)

Furthermore, it is perfectly legitimate, where a wicked person is causing problems in a workplace or neighbourhood, or even in a church, to take steps to *remove* them or to ask God to do so. When such a person is removed the whole atmosphere will change:

*Drive out a scoffer, and strife will go out,
and quarrelling and abuse will cease.
Proverbs 22:10 (RSV)*

Consider also what Job said about his handling of the wicked and remember that God spoke of him in the most exemplary terms, as a model of how we should act. It is therefore very significant that Job says of himself that he stood up for the poor and the weak and confronted their oppressors:

¹⁵ *I was eyes to the blind,
and feet to the lame.*
¹⁶ *I was a father to the poor,
and I searched out the cause of him whom I did not know.*
¹⁷ *I broke the fangs of the unrighteous,
and made him drop his prey from his teeth.*
Job 29:15-17 (RSV)

King David's sense of his own duty to resist the wicked and to defend the righteous

King David felt it was his duty to resist the wicked, thwart their plans, remove them from power and even kill them. He was determined to oppose the wicked wherever he came across them:

⁴ *A perverse heart shall be far from me;
I will know nothing of evil.*
⁵ *Whoever slanders his neighbor secretly
I will destroy.
Whoever has a haughty look and an arrogant heart
I will not endure.*
⁶ *I will look with favor on the faithful in the land,
that they may dwell with me;
he who walks in the way that is blameless
shall minister to me.*
⁷ *No one who practices deceit
shall dwell in my house;
no one who utters lies
shall continue before my eyes.*
⁸ *Morning by morning I will destroy
all the wicked in the land,
cutting off all the evildoers
from the city of the LORD.*
Psalm 101:4-8 (ESV)

You may not be King of Israel, but there will be areas of your life where you have some authority, even if only at a low level. You could be a teacher or a shop assistant or work in an office. You might even be a manager or supervisor. Or you could be a leader in a church, or even an ordinary member. Whatever you are, there will be some people, or things, for which you are responsible. In those areas you have the opportunity, and the *duty*, to resist the wicked. It could be wickedness coming from your colleagues, staff, customers or bosses.

You can make yourself an obstacle to their plans by refusing to join in with what they do, or to cover up for them. It will not necessarily involve open confrontation and can often be done just by quiet resistance. God wants us all to uphold righteousness and oppose wickedness, but in our rapidly degenerating society we see the opposite happening. The Police ignore, or even excuse, the wicked. They choose not to prosecute crimes such as fraud, pornography and especially paedophilia by Muslims. Yet they are eager to prosecute decent people who break minor traffic laws.

That is partly because such easy targets improve their statistics, but it is also because their heart-attitudes are wrong. In one case a woman removed her senile father from a dreadful care home, where he was being neglected and abused. She was then jailed for five months by the Court of Protection. Her father was deemed to be a 'mental patient' and was under the 'protection' of that Court, and they said that she was '*interfering*'. The authorities threw everything they could at that woman, even though she did what any right-thinking person should do.

They only prosecuted for her because her intervention showed up their own ineptitude and neglect of duty. They could not tolerate that. But they had no difficulty in tolerating the neglect of her elderly father, about which she had complained, and which they did nothing to address. Instead, the daughter was punished because she exposed the failings of the system. That embarrassed the authorities, so they hit back at her, firstly for vengeance and, secondly, to deter others. Conversely, those who were responsible for those failings went completely unpunished and were not even investigated.

We saw the same injustice and corruption in the scandal of Mid-Staffordshire NHS Trust, which neglected and mistreated thousands of hospital patients, causing countless unnecessary deaths. Yet, not one person has ever been prosecuted. The wrongdoers were allowed to get away with it completely. Some were even promoted, whereas the 'whistle-blowers' who complained, or who tried to alert managers to the abuse, were victimised and driven out by a ruthless and unprincipled management.

They now find it hard to find work at any other hospital because the establishment is closing ranks and making sure that nobody elsewhere offers them a job. The managers' focus was solely on *preserving themselves*, not protecting the patients. Therefore they attacked all those staff who told the truth. That self-serving attitude is now commonplace in our hospitals, schools, workplaces and police forces. They routinely defend the guilty, despise victims, and undermine witnesses, as we saw in Rotherham, Sheffield, Birmingham and elsewhere.

In all those cities cowardly, dishonest, politically correct police and councillors did nothing whatsoever to protect *thousands* of girls whom they *knew* were being raped and abused by Muslim men. They calculated that arresting vast numbers of Muslim men and exposing what they had done might harm their own promotion prospects or cause them to be accused of 'racism'. They weren't willing to risk that, so they looked away, did nothing, and silenced anyone who tried to speak up. The girls meant nothing to them in comparison to their own careers.

An experience I had as a School Governor

On a much smaller scale, I was once a school governor in a state Secondary school, before my own children went to school. At one Governors' meeting an item arose on the agenda concerning a girl of about 13 who was being bullied at her present school elsewhere. She was applying to join our school to escape from her tormentors. The Headmaster set out his view to the Board of Governors and recommended that the girl's request be refused. He gave some feeble excuses about how the school was '*crowded*' and that it would not be in the "*financial interests of the school*" to let her in.

There may have been some elements of truth in what he said, but those were not his real motives. What he actually thought was that this girl might be bullied at his school too. If so, that would mean more work for him in taking disciplinary action and conducting meetings with parents. There would also be bad statistics for his school if he had to record new incidents of bullying. He preferred to 'solve' the

bullying problem more simply, by keeping out of the school any pupil who was *likely to be bullied*. In his mind it was the *victims* who were primarily the problem, not the bullies.

To him, the victims were like magnets to bullies and thus they would probably be bullied whichever school they went to. So, the way he saw it was that letting this 13 year old girl join his school would create more work for him, as the bullying would only stop if he put himself to a lot of inconvenience. He didn't want to do that because the truth was he didn't really care about the bullying, or about that girl. From his own self-centred perspective, that twisted logic made sense, because keeping the victims out was far easier than investigating and expelling the bullies.

He was thinking only of what was easiest for himself, and for his staff, not his duty towards victims. He would have justified his approach to himself by saying he was merely being realistic. I didn't think so. I felt he was being callous and was neglecting one of his most basic duties, which was to protect children. I was appalled by his attitude and said that the bullied child was what mattered, and that if we refused her admission we would be letting her down and acting disgracefully. I was the only committee member to speak up against what the Head (and also one of the teachers) had said.

After I spoke the other Governors felt ashamed at having said nothing on the girl's behalf and unanimously voted to overrule the Head and to support me. So we let the girl in. But she never knew that it had almost gone the other way, and would have done so, if I had not spoken up for her. Our Headmaster had the same selfish attitude as the Head at the previous school, who had neglected the complaint of bullying for exactly the same reasons. He too didn't want the hassle of confronting the bullies, meeting their parents, expelling the bullies and handling the protracted appeals process.

In fairness to them both, it is also the fault of the County Councils and Education department. In their upside-down world, a school gets marked down in league tables if the staff *expose* incidents of bullying, and especially if they expel the bullies. If such actions are recorded it counts *against* that school. It ought instead to count *for* them, as it shows they are taking bullying seriously. Therefore, it is even more in the interests of school Heads and teachers to pretend that bullying isn't happening. Then no such records need to be made. So the first Head had 'solved' the problem the same way, by neglecting the complaint so as to cause the *victim* to leave the school, while all of the bullies stayed.

That outcome suited him very well. It reduced his own workload and avoided black marks being recorded against his school. However, I expect that nothing would ever induce him to admit any of that publicly. This sad story demonstrates how the duty to oppose the wicked and defend the innocent does not only apply to Kings and Prime Ministers, but also to you and me in our small daily dealings. I was just a junior member of a small committee, with only one vote. But I was able to make a difference and I like to think that that girl's life was changed for the better by my intervention.

God wants us to stand up for the weak, the poor and those who have no voice.

God wants Christians to speak up for the weak, the voiceless and the poor. Without us, they would be left desolate and would be continually oppressed. Therefore, we have a clear duty to intervene and protect them and to defend their interests:

*⁸Open your mouth for the dumb,
for the rights of all who are left desolate.
⁹Open your mouth, judge righteously,
maintain the rights of the poor and needy.
Proverbs 31:8-9 (RSV)*

It is a betrayal of the people whom we are called to protect if, because of fear, we tolerate what the wicked are doing. We are commanded to be solid in our resistance, standing in their path and obstructing their aims. If we do that, and rebuke the wicked, we will experience God's blessing:

²⁴*He who says to the wicked, "You are innocent,"
will be cursed by peoples, abhorred by nations;
²⁵but those who rebuke the wicked will have delight,
and a good blessing will be upon them.*

Proverbs 24:24-25 (NKJV)

Therefore be zealous and tenacious in opposing the wicked. See it as a normal part of what it means to be a Christian. Show the same indignation that Jesus showed when He cleared the Temple of the corrupt money changers. That is a righteous form of anger which it is entirely permissible for us to have, and to express. It has nothing to do with temper, which comes from our fleshly nature:

⁵³*Hot indignation seizes me because of the wicked,
who forsake thy law.*

Psalms 119:53 (RSV)

We must not form alliances with the wicked, or do anything to serve their purposes.

A prophet called Jehu, the son of Hanani, (not King Jehu) rebuked King Jehoshaphat of Judah because he had assisted the wicked King Ahab of the Northern Kingdom. He had formed an alliance with him and then taken the Southern Kingdom of Judah into battle alongside King Ahab's army. God was angry that King Jehoshaphat had done that. What he should have done was to resist the wicked, not join alliances to assist them:

¹*Jehosh'aphat the king of Judah returned in safety to his house in Jerusalem. ²But Jehu the son of Hana'ni the seer went out to meet him, and said to King Jehosh'aphat, "Should you help the wicked and love those who hate the Lord? Because of this, wrath has gone out against you from the Lord. ³Nevertheless some good is found in you, for you destroyed the Ashe'rahs out of the land, and have set your heart to seek God."*

2 Chronicles 19:1-3 (RSV)

King Jehoshaphat did not learn his lesson, even after being rebuked by Jehu the prophet. Later in his life he acted wrongly again by assisting the wicked King Ahaziah, who was also from the Northern Kingdom, by building ships to use alongside his. Therefore another prophet, Eliezer, rebuked Jehoshaphat again for assisting the wicked, rather than opposing them, or at least keeping out of it and not helping them:

³⁵*After this Jehosh'aphat king of Judah joined with Ahazi'ah king of Israel, who did wickedly. ³⁶He joined him in building ships to go to Tarshish, and they built the ships in E'zion-ge'ber. ³⁷Then Elie'zer the son of Dodav'ahu of Mare'shah prophesied against Jehosh'aphat, saying, "Because you have joined with Ahazi'ah, the Lord will destroy what you have made." And the ships were wrecked and were not able to go to Tarshish.*

2 Chronicles 20:35-37 (RSV)

Has God ever had to intervene in your life to resist you, or to destroy something you have made, because you were using it to assist the wicked? Have you ever even thought about that? It may be worthwhile to reflect on that question.

Zerubbabel is a model for us in how to deal with the wicked.

Zerubbabel was better than most of us in identifying and resisting the wicked. He rebuilt the second Temple in the face of bitter opposition from wicked men. That opposition was not done openly, but by cunning and deception. They even tried to infiltrate the group and to undermine them from within. But Zerubbabel discerned their schemes and would not let them join in with the work. You might imagine

that such a policy of infiltration could never be used against you, but it could. It was used against me many times when I ran my own law firm for 13 years.

I set it up because I believe God wanted there to be a law firm which He could use, in many different ways, to achieve His purposes. I needed 100% ownership so that I could be free to run it in His way, and to make it entirely available to Him to use in any way He wished. In my previous law firm I was only a one third owner, so I was not free to do whatever I wanted. I had to take note of the wishes of the other equity partners. Therefore setting up that new firm had a significant spiritual purpose. The demons knew that too and were determined to resist me.

What I did not realise for quite some time was that one of their main tactics was to bring in new staff, of their choosing, to work in my firm. Those employees, whom they planted in my firm, could sabotage what I was doing, waste my time, and undermine me. So, one after another, the demons guided wicked people to apply to join my firm and helped them to get in. They then became an ongoing thorn in my side for 13 years. One by one, I realised what these staff were doing and got rid of them. But, one by one, replacements came in to carry on the disruption.

In the end, I got far more effective at spotting such people at interview stage and weeding them out. If that failed, I got rid of them earlier and earlier, preferably while they were still on trial/probation. I would have done better if I had had the level of discernment that Zerubbabel had, so as to prevent them getting in. But I didn't, at least not at the time. However, those years of difficulty had a redemptive purpose, which God was able to use. The stream of wicked employees who got into my firm gave me a host of experiences and lessons which I was able to use in writing this book.

Without them I couldn't have done it. Then others wouldn't have had the chance to learn from my mistakes. The enemies of Zerubbabel did not give in either, or stop trying to oppose him. When infiltration failed they tried instead to discourage, frustrate and intimidate the workers from the outside. These same policies will be used against you, if you are a genuine Christian. The demons will ensure that every follower of Jesus is opposed in these ways. There are so many wicked people for them to choose from that they do not find it difficult to bring them into your life, to become your opponents.

The Devil has no shortage of staff. Therefore this is a major part of the demons' approach in opposing us. That being so, be on the lookout for such people and never yield to them. What Zerubbabel did to resist the wicked may seem obvious to us now, as we read about him in the Bible. But most of us, when faced with such obstacles, would just give in and stop trying. Zerubbabel resumed the rebuilding work, even while the opposition was ongoing, whereas many of us would wait until there was no opposition at all before starting again.

That approach won't work because the things that arouse the greatest opposition are the very things that God most wants to be done. Therefore, never make the absence of opposition a pre-condition to being willing to do something, or to try again. The absence of opposition is actually a sign that you are *not* doing what God wants, rather than that you are, because God's will is always opposed by the Devil, the demons and the wicked.

When the work was resumed, Tattenai the Governor told King Darius, hoping that he would stop the work. But Zerubbabel was bold and stood his ground. He lobbied King Darius and told him that a decree had been made years earlier, by King Cyrus, which had authorised the work to be done. Zerubbabel was in some danger for defying the order, but he bravely pointed out the earlier decree and carried on. King Darius searched to see if any such decree existed, and when it was found, ordered the work to be resumed. So, the lies of the wicked rebounded on them. Zerubbabel was not only permitted to continue building, but got the support of King Darius as well:

¹³Then, according to the word sent by Darius the king, Tat'tenai, the governor of the province Beyond the River, She'thar-boz'enai, and their associates did with all diligence what Darius the king had ordered. ¹⁴And the elders of the Jews built and prospered, through the prophesying of Haggai the

prophet and Zechari'ah the son of Iddo. They finished their building by command of the God of Israel and by decree of Cyrus and Darius and Ar-ta-xerxes king of Persia;¹⁵ and this house was finished on the third day of the month of Adar, in the sixth year of the reign of Darius the king.

Ezra 6:13-15 (RSV)

Zerubbabel faced the same opposition that we all face, albeit on a larger scale. The wicked will use all of those tactics against us if we try to do God's work. It is not a sign that we are on the wrong track. Their hostility actually shows that we are on the *right track*. Opposition is not our cue to stop, slow down or compromise. Be encouraged by it because it shows that what you are doing is worthy of opposition. That is a good sign, and even a compliment. Therefore expect such opponents to arise, and to use all the same tactics as were used against Zerubbabel. Don't be surprised by anything they do.

Neither should you be discouraged when they achieve, or appear to achieve, some successes in slowing you down. It is all part of the game and is fully to be expected. It is also part of the process that God uses to train, build, strengthen and educate you. The wicked people who try to oppose us are often the very people whom God is using to develop in us the skills needed to become overcomers. So, in dealing with the wicked, we have the opportunity to grow in boldness, bravery and courage. Accordingly, even their opposition can be turned to our own advantage, at least in the longer term.

Nehemiah is another model for us in how to deal with the wicked.

Nehemiah faced similar opposition when he set about rebuilding the walls of Jerusalem. He was given permission to do so by King Artaxerxes, but when he started he was opposed by two more wicked men, Sanballat and Tobiah, who were determined to stop the work:

¹⁷Then I said to them, "You see the trouble we are in, how Jerusalem lies in ruins with its gates burned. Come, let us build the wall of Jerusalem, that we may no longer suffer disgrace." ¹⁸And I told them of the hand of my God which had been upon me for good, and also of the words which the king had spoken to me. And they said, "Let us rise up and build." So they strengthened their hands for the good work. ¹⁹But when Sanbal'lat the Hor'onite and Tobi'ah the servant, the Ammonite, and Geshem the Arab heard of it, they derided us and despised us and said, "What is this thing that you are doing? Are you rebelling against the king?"

Nehemiah 2:17-19 (RSV)

However, Nehemiah was equally determined that the work should not be stopped, so he responded boldly:

Then I replied to them, "The God of heaven will make us prosper, and we his servants will arise and build; but you have no portion or right or memorial in Jerusalem."

Nehemiah 2:20 (RSV)

The work was progressing, but Sanballat and Tobiah used every possible scheme to stop it, starting with ridicule and discouragement:

¹Now when Sanbal'lat heard that we were building the wall, he was angry and greatly enraged, and he ridiculed the Jews. ²And he said in the presence of his brethren and of the army of Samar'ia, "What are these feeble Jews doing? Will they restore things? Will they sacrifice? Will they finish up in a day? Will they revive the stones out of the heaps of rubbish, and burned ones at that?" ³Tobi'ah the Ammonite was by him, and he said, "Yes, what they are building—if a fox goes up on it he will break down their stone wall!"

Nehemiah 4:1-3 (RSV)

Nehemiah responded with 'imprecatory prayer' *against* his enemies (see chapter 26 below). Note how bluntly and fiercely Nehemiah prays for God to intervene and to oppose his enemies:

⁴Hear, O our God, for we are despised; turn back their taunt upon their own heads, and give them up to be plundered in a land where they are captives. ⁵ Do not cover their guilt, and let not their sin be blotted out from thy sight; for they have provoked thee to anger before the builders.

Nehemiah 4:4-5 (RSV)

Then, having prayed, and regardless of the opposition, Nehemiah and his men got back on with the work:

So we built the wall; and all the wall was joined together to half its height. For the people had a mind to work.

Nehemiah 4:6 (RSV)

Sanballat and Tobiah did not stop there. They plotted to attack the workers, to force them to stop:

⁷But when Sanbal'lat and Tobi'ah and the Arabs and the Ammonites and the Ash'dodites heard that the repairing of the walls of Jerusalem was going forward and that the breaches were beginning to be closed, they were very angry; ⁸and they all plotted together to come and fight against Jerusalem and to cause confusion in it.

Nehemiah 4:7-8 (RSV)

Nehemiah refused to let these plots stop him, or even slow him down. He prayed again for God's help against these enemies. But, at the same time, he also took practical steps to prepare to fight to defend the wall:

¹³So in the lowest parts of the space behind the wall, in open places, I stationed the people according to their families, with their swords, their spears, and their bows.

Nehemiah 4:13 (RSV)

Nehemiah and his men also remained vigilant and were ready at all times to resist any attack, even while they carried on rebuilding the wall:

¹⁵When our enemies heard that it was known to us and that God had frustrated their plan, we all returned to the wall, each to his work. ¹⁶From that day on, half of my servants worked on construction, and half held the spears, shields, bows, and coats of mail; and the leaders stood behind all the house of Judah, ¹⁷who were building on the wall. Those who carried burdens were laden in such a way that each with one hand labored on the work and with the other held his weapon.

Nehemiah 4:15-17 (RSV)

Even then Sanballat and Tobiah did not give up. When they saw that the workers on the walls were armed and ready to fight, they tried a different tactic. They repeatedly attempted to lure Nehemiah into coming to meet them in a village, some distance away from the wall, so they could attack him when he was isolated, away from his supporters:

¹Now when it was reported to Sanbal'lat and Tobi'ah and to Geshem the Arab and to the rest of our enemies that I had built the wall and that there was no breach left in it (although up to that time I had not set up the doors in the gates), ² Sanbal'lat and Geshem sent to me, saying, "Come and let us meet together in one of the villages in the plain of Ono." But they intended to do me harm.

Nehemiah 6:1-2 (RSV)

Again, Nehemiah discerned their sinister intentions and refused to meet them:

³And I sent messengers to them, saying, "I am doing a great work and I cannot come down. Why should the work stop while I leave it and come down to you?" ⁴And they sent to me four times in this way and I answered them in the same manner.

Nehemiah 6:3-4 (RSV)

When that tactic failed Sanballat and Tobiah tried another. They wrote an open letter, which they let Nehemiah see, in which they falsely alleged that he intended to rebel against the King (who was occupying Israel) and that Nehemiah was aiming to set himself up as King. They showed this letter to Nehemiah and threatened to give it to the King. They hoped that threat would intimidate him:

⁵*In the same way Sanbal'lat for the fifth time sent his servant to me with an open letter in his hand. ⁶In it was written, "It is reported among the nations, and Geshem also says it, that you and the Jews intend to rebel; that is why you are building the wall; and you wish to become their king, according to this report. ⁷And you have also set up prophets to proclaim concerning you in Jerusalem, 'There is a king in Judah.' And now it will be reported to the king according to these words. So now come, and let us take counsel together."*

Nehemiah 6:5-7 (RSV)

The likelihood is that they never actually intended to send that letter to the King. Had they done so, and the King had learned of the lies it contained, they would have been in trouble themselves. They were bluffing and their real aim was just to intimidate Nehemiah. But it didn't work. He carried on with the work and renewed his prayer for God's help:

⁸*Then I sent to him, saying, "No such things as you say have been done, for you are inventing them out of your own mind." ⁹For they all wanted to frighten us, thinking, "Their hands will drop from the work, and it will not be done." But now, O God, strengthen thou my hands.*

Nehemiah 6:8-9 (RSV)

After that trick failed a man called Shemaiah tried to intimidate Nehemiah by telling him that men would come at night to kill him. It was a lie and was meant to scare Nehemiah and to get him to hide himself in the Temple instead of doing God's work. The demons and the wicked are well aware of the power of fear to paralyse us. They will use it against you, hoping you will become so afraid of real or imagined dangers that you will shrink back from doing God's work. But Nehemiah refused to be diverted. He also discerned that Shemaiah's words were lies anyway:

¹⁰*Now when I went into the house of Shemai'ah the son of Delai'ah, son of Mehet'abel, who was shut up, he said, "Let us meet together in the house of God, within the temple, and let us close the doors of the temple; for they are coming to kill you, at night they are coming to kill you." ¹¹But I said, "Should such a man as I flee? And what man such as I could go into the temple and live? I will not go in." ¹²And I understood, and saw that God had not sent him, but he had pronounced the prophecy against me because Tobi'ah and Sanbal'lat had hired him. ¹³For this purpose he was hired, that I should be afraid and act in this way and sin, and so they could give me an evil name, in order to taunt me.*

Nehemiah 6:10-13 (RSV)

Nehemiah also prayed that God would act in response to the evil things which Sanballat, Tobiah and others had been doing. Most Christians spend little or no time even praying *about*, let alone *against*, the wicked. It does not occur to most of us to do so, or if it does, it is assumed to be inappropriate. But Nehemiah didn't think so. He called on God to remember their deeds against them. He was effectively asking for God's judgment upon them. I discuss this practice, which is called 'imprecatory prayer', in Chapter 26:

¹⁴*Remember Tobi'ah and Sanbal'lat, O my God, according to these things that they did, and also the prophetess No-adi'ah and the rest of the prophets who wanted to make me afraid.*

Nehemiah 6:14 (RSV)

Eventually the wall was finished. When the wicked saw that, it was their turn to be afraid:

¹⁵So the wall was finished on the twenty-fifth day of the month Elul, in fifty-two days. ¹⁶And when all our enemies heard of it, all the nations round about us were afraid and fell greatly in their own esteem; for they perceived that this work had been accomplished with the help of our God.

Nehemiah 6:15-16 (RSV)

Even then, the wicked did not stop trying to obstruct and sabotage the work. Nehemiah discovered that Tobiah had got himself a room within the Temple. He got it from Eliashib, a priest, who must have been lied to, bribed or otherwise induced to give him that room. Tobiah wanted it so that he could continue to undermine the work, even from within the Temple. As the wicked so frequently do, he had found a way to infiltrate God's people and to get himself inside their group, so that he could sabotage things from within:

⁴Now before this, Eli'ashib the priest, who was appointed over the chambers of the house of our God, and who was connected with Tobi'ah, ⁵prepared for Tobi'ah a large chamber where they had previously put the cereal offering, the frankincense, the vessels, and the tithes of grain, wine, and oil, which were given by commandment to the Levites, singers, and gatekeepers, and the contributions for the priests. ⁶While this was taking place I was not in Jerusalem, for in the thirty-second year of Ar-ta-xerxes king of Babylon I went to the king. And after some time I asked leave of the king ⁷and came to Jerusalem, and I then discovered the evil that Eli'ashib had done for Tobi'ah, preparing for him a chamber in the courts of the house of God.

Nehemiah 13:4-7 (RSV)

Nehemiah did not hesitate because he realised the harm that Tobiah could do from that strategic vantage point. He therefore threw him straight out. Christians are often too wet to take decisive action against the wicked, and too "nice" to confront people. It is assumed that it "wouldn't be the Christian thing to do". That is misguided, woolly-minded nonsense. We are commanded to be kind and gentle, at the right times, and with the right people. However, there is no command to be 'nice'. It isn't even a biblical word.

The naïve and misguided desire to be nice will cause you to do the wrong things, and to fail to do the right things, or to fulfil your duty, when dealing with the wicked. Therefore don't think in those unbiblical terms. Be godly, righteous, holy and bold. Be kind, patient and generous too. But don't be nice! Many Christians also fear the wicked and worry that decisive action might antagonise them. So they look the other way, avoid confrontation, and let the wicked get away with things. That was not Nehemiah's approach. He took direct action to remove the wicked and their possessions too:

⁸And I was very angry, and I threw all the household furniture of Tobi'ah out of the chamber. ⁹Then I gave orders and they cleansed the chambers; and I brought back thither the vessels of the house of God, with the cereal offering and the frankincense.

Nehemiah 13:8-9 (RSV)

Mordecai is another model for us in terms of how to deal with the wicked.

Another man who stood up to wicked men was Mordecai, the cousin of Queen Esther. We first see him in action when he discovers that two of the King's advisers are plotting against the King. Mordecai tells Queen Esther and she tells the King:

²¹ And in those days, as Mor'decai was sitting at the king's gate, Bigthan and Teresh, two of the king's eunuchs, who guarded the threshold, became angry and sought to lay hands on King Ahasuerus. ²² And this came to the knowledge of Mor'decai, and he told it to Queen Esther, and Esther told the king in the name of Mor'decai. ²³ When the affair was investigated and found to be so, the men were both hanged on the gallows. And it was recorded in the Book of the Chronicles in the presence of the king.

Esther 2:21-23 (RSV)

This intervention led to the two traitors being caught and executed. Some Christians would feel squeamish about reporting a person to the police, or to their employer, because it may get that person into trouble or lose them their job. But that was not how Mordecai saw it and neither should we. That is not to say that we should always go running to our employer, or to the police, reporting every little thing that we see or hear about. However, where there is some significant wrongdoing, we need to be guided by our conscience, and by wisdom, as to whether to report it and even to give evidence.

Vastly more crimes could be detected and prosecuted, and a lot of workplace misconduct stopped, if more people were willing to speak up as Mordecai did. Mordecai was later used by God, alongside his cousin, to defeat Haman, a powerful but wicked official working for King Ahasuerus. When Haman was promoted to the highest place in the service of the King he wanted everyone to bow to him. But Mordecai was not intimidated and refused to degrade himself, or to be dominated:

¹After these things King Ahasu-e'rus promoted Haman the Ag'agite, the son of Hammada'tha, and advanced him and set his seat above all the princes who were with him. ²And all the king's servants who were at the king's gate bowed down and did obeisance to Haman; for the king had so commanded concerning him. But Mor'decai did not bow down or do obeisance.

Esther 3:1-2 (RSV)

It was soon noticed that Mordecai would not bow down to Haman. Therefore the supporters of Haman tried again to intimidate him by falsely implying that the King had commanded everyone to bow. In fact, there is nothing to indicate that the King ever made any such order. It was purely Haman's own doing. Mordecai would have realised that they were just followers of Haman, seeking to ingratiate themselves to him. Such acolytes, or 'groupies', always surround powerful men and they will do you harm if it improves their own standing:

³Then the king's servants who were at the king's gate said to Mor'decai, "Why do you transgress the king's command?" ⁴And when they spoke to him day after day and he would not listen to them, they told Haman, in order to see whether Mor'decai's words would avail; for he had told them that he was a Jew.

Esther 3:3-4 (RSV)

When Haman heard that Mordecai would not bow to him he was furious. He resolved to kill not only Mordecai, but the entire Hebrew race as well. That vicious response gives you the measure of the man. It is no coincidence that he had the same idea as Hitler. It came from the same satanic source. Haman then lied to the King and manipulated him into giving an order that all Jewish people should be put to death, throughout the entire Empire:

¹³Letters were sent by couriers to all the king's provinces, to destroy, to slay, and to annihilate all Jews, young and old, women and children, in one day, the thirteenth day of the twelfth month, which is the month of Adar, and to plunder their goods. ¹⁴A copy of the document was to be issued as a decree in every province by proclamation to all the peoples to be ready for that day.

Esther 3:13-14 (RSV)

Mordecai was appalled, but he still did not give in. Neither did he remain passive. He actively set about seeking to get the order revoked, with the aid of his cousin, the Queen. She agreed to help, even though it would put her own life in danger. Exposing Haman required her to approach the King uninvited, for which the penalty could be death. Meanwhile, Haman built a gallows on which he intended to have Mordecai hanged. At a private dinner with the King, Queen Esther chose her moment to reveal Haman's wickedness to him, despite the danger to herself:

¹So the king and Haman went in to feast with Queen Esther. ²And on the second day, as they were drinking wine, the king again said to Esther, "What is your petition, Queen Esther? It shall be granted you. And what is your request? Even to the half of my kingdom, it shall be fulfilled." ³Then Queen Esther answered, "If I have found favor in your sight, O king, and if it please the king, let my

life be given me at my petition, and my people at my request. ⁴For we are sold, I and my people, to be destroyed, to be slain, and to be annihilated. If we had been sold merely as slaves, men and women, I would have held my peace; for our affliction is not to be compared with the loss to the king.”⁵Then King Ahasu-e'rus said to Queen Esther, “Who is he, and where is he, that would presume to do this?”⁶And Esther said, “A foe and enemy! This wicked Haman!” Then Haman was in terror before the king and the queen.

⁷And the king rose from the feast in wrath and went into the palace garden; but Haman stayed to beg his life from Queen Esther, for he saw that evil was determined against him by the king. ⁸And the king returned from the palace garden to the place where they were drinking wine, as Haman was falling on the couch where Esther was; and the king said, “Will he even assault the queen in my presence, in my own house?” As the words left the mouth of the king, they covered Haman’s face. ⁹Then said Harbo'na, one of the eunuchs in attendance on the king, “Moreover, the gallows which Haman has prepared for Mor'decai, whose word saved the king, is standing in Haman’s house, fifty cubits high.”¹⁰And the king said, “Hang him on that.” So they hanged Haman on the gallows which he had prepared for Mor'decai. Then the anger of the king abated.

Esther 7:1-10 (RSV)

Most Christians today would be too scared to clash with someone as wicked as Haman. They would either be passive and do nothing at all, or they would seek a compromise. But Mordecai and Esther tackled him head on, and they won.

Never pander to the wicked or try to appease them. They will only despise you for doing so.

When dealing with the wise and the simple, and sometimes even fools, it is possible to win their cooperation by offering compromises. In a situation of tension or conflict gracious offers, and a willingness to give up rights, can sometimes be the right things to do. With decent people a conciliatory approach can produce an equivalent response, because they can see your own concessions in the right way. However, when dealing with the wicked, the same rules do not apply.

Any concessions on your part will be misunderstood and abused, as they can only be seen as weakness. Instead of matching your decency and graciousness, they will just demand even more from you. Therefore, when engaging in any negotiation we need, first of all, to discern what type of person or group we are dealing with, because they each react in very different ways.

Otherwise we are likely to make serious errors and be badly misunderstood if we compromise or offer any leeway. When dealing with someone whom you believe to be wicked, the only appropriate response is to *resist them firmly*. Give no ground and make no concessions. Showing any kind of favour to them will not cause them to improve their behaviour. Neither will they give you any favour in return. That is simply not how the wicked operate:

If favor is shown to the wicked, he does not learn righteousness; in the land of uprightness he deals perversely and does not see the majesty of the LORD.

Isaiah 26:10 (RSV)

Therefore a wise person will choose to resist the wicked, wherever he is able to do so:

***A wise king winnows the wicked,
and drives the wheel over them
Proverbs 20:26 (RSV)***

Likewise, don't ever excuse the wicked, or speak well of them in any way. To do so would not only be ineffective, but wrong. Instead, we should rebuke them:

He who says to the wicked, "You are innocent,"

will be cursed by peoples, abhorred by nations;
Proverbs 24:24 (RSV)

In the past I have tried to appease, or cooperate with, people who later turned out to be wicked. I hoped that if I was accommodating with them, they would reciprocate. But they never did. That said, on those occasions, I was often not aware at the time that they were wicked, mainly because I did not even ask myself what they were.

The policy of appeasing Adolf Hitler in the 1930s

The most famous example of the folly of appeasing the wicked is the way the pre-war governments of Stanley Baldwin, and then Neville Chamberlain, handled Hitler. When he came to power, in January 1933, Hitler's intentions and beliefs were already well-known. He had set them out with unmistakable clarity in his autobiography and political manifesto, '*Mein Kampf*'. Thus there was no excuse for anybody not realising how evil he was, or what he intended to do. The real problem was that our leaders *chose* not to see what Hitler really was, because they *did not want to take action*.

That reluctance to act was because that generation of politicians had served in World War One themselves, or had lost sons and relatives as part of its vast casualty figures. Thus it was understandable that they were desperate to avoid even the possibility of starting another war. They allowed their fear, and their intense desire for peace, to cloud their judgment until they could not, *or would not*, see the plain facts. They chose to believe what they *wanted* to believe, rather than face reality. Therefore, year after year, the British Government gave way to Hitler and appeased him.

On each occasion they convinced themselves that by giving way to Hitler, "*just this once*", or "*for one last time*", they were avoiding war. In fact, they were doing the exact opposite. They were making war inevitable, and on a vastly larger scale than if they had acted earlier. They therefore let Hitler get away with repeated and blatant breaches of the terms of the Versailles Treaty. In particular, they allowed him to build up his armed forces, even his air force, not only to equal our own, but to be far larger. They also allowed him to take territory in the Rhineland, Austria and Czechoslovakia.

Every time, they hoped it would be the last demand Hitler would ever make. This went on until Hitler eventually invaded Poland and shattered the remaining illusions of the appeasers. It exposed their naïve policy for the folly that it always was. It was only at the end of August 1939, when it was far too late, that their eyes opened at last and they belatedly stood up to him. But, by then, Germany's armed forces were much stronger than ours, because we had done so little even to rearm ourselves between 1933 and 1939, let alone to stop Hitler rearming Germany.

In fairness, Baldwin and Chamberlain had the best of motives. Their error was that they forgot, or never realised, *or never admitted to themselves*, the nature of the man they were dealing with. Had we been in a commercial dispute with decent nations like Holland, Australia or Norway, then diplomacy and concessions would have made sense. Such magnanimous policies may well have produced a good response. The problem was we were not dealing with such nations, but with a wicked man, surrounded by other wicked men. Our leaders should have seen the reality and acted accordingly.

What makes it even sadder is that if they had done, war could so easily have been avoided. Hitler would have backed down if he had been stood up to. Even if he hadn't, he would have been overthrown. The German generals had already formed a plot to overthrow Hitler if Britain and France issued an ultimatum over Czechoslovakia. Moreover, we were *actually told of this plot in advance*. Therefore, if only we had shown some backbone and stood up to Hitler, even as late as 1938, he would have been deposed by his own generals and war could have been avoided.

Even if Hitler had not been overthrown, and a war actually began, Britain and France combined could possibly have defeated Germany, even as late as 1938. It takes a long time to re-arm, even if you are

Adolf Hitler. The rate of increase in the output of munitions factories and the training of armed forces starts slowly, with only small returns in the early years, but then goes up exponentially. It can double or treble in the later years of the expansion programme. 1938-39 was such a turning point, when Germany's armed strength shot up hugely and they suddenly became stronger than France and Britain combined.

Yet, no ultimatum was issued and war was not declared, even when Czechoslovakia was entirely overrun. The tragedy is that if we had fought earlier, or even threatened to do so, Hitler could have been quickly crushed and removed from office in 1934, 1935, 1936, 1937 and even 1938. However, by 1939, Germany had become too strong for us. From that point on, only a full scale world war would suffice to overcome Germany. By misguidedly appeasing that wicked man, all we achieved was to greatly lengthen and enlarge the war that followed.

The very bloodbath that Chamberlain and Baldwin had sought to prevent was actually made more likely by their policies. In the end, it became inevitable. The same principle applies, on a smaller scale, in our own dealings with other people at work, or in our churches. We should be willing to consider giving way to the wise and the simple, and sometimes even to fools. With them, it may be right to give ground and make concessions. However, when dealing with a wicked person, or a wicked group, we should resist and *make no concessions whatsoever*.

Counter-intuitively, being firm and strong is the only way to win the respect of the wicked. It gets you *less* trouble from them, not more. Appeasing them will only ever cause them to behave in even worse ways. They never put limits on themselves, so they will keep on going farther and farther until they are eventually stopped by somebody else. It is pointless expecting the wicked to restrain themselves, or to recognise any ethical boundaries. They never have and they never will. You have to do it for them by drawing a line in the sand, past which you will not let them go.

The starting point is to *gauge the nature* of the person you are dealing with, to decide what *category they belong to*. Until you do that, you cannot know how to respond to them, i.e. whether diplomacy can, or cannot, be used. That is the approach we need to take as a manager or boss if we are trying to deal with workplace bullying. That said, most employers just turn a blind eye to it. They don't really care about it and can't be bothered with the time and paperwork that is involved in confronting it. So they just let it go on and do little or nothing about it.

I always felt it was my duty to confront all such misbehaviour and to tackle all bullies and wrongdoers head on. Maybe that was partly due to my nature and also to my police background. My aim was to get the bullies out of the firm as quickly as I could, consistent with obeying the law and thoroughly checking all the evidence to make sure it was reliable. That is a more realistic example of what resisting the wicked might mean, in practice, for most of us. In my own position, as an employer, I never had to use any physical force to restrain or apprehend anybody.

Nonetheless, the contest against the wicked at work was entirely real. Sometimes it required a great deal of time, effort, courage, and persistence. Alternatively, even if you are not in a managerial role, resisting the wicked could still mean making yourself into an obstacle to them. You would just go about it in different ways. For example, if there is some kind of fraud at your workplace, involving theft or falsifying records etc, you could just refuse to go along with it. By so doing, you could make yourself into a 'road block' in the way of their plans.

You could even go further and report them to management, if that is possible and appropriate, and if you have a reasonable basis for suspecting them. In lots of other ways too you could refuse to join in with the things that the wicked do, or to cooperate with them. Such action or inaction on your part, can, even by itself, stop something evil from happening. It can also embolden others to resist too. They might not have the courage to be the first, or to do it alone. But they could be brave enough to join in, if you lead the way.

That said, you also need to be realistic and not expect much from others when it comes to courage. Most people have very little, if any, and think only of self-preservation. They will not take any risks merely to do good, though many will take risks in order to do evil. Therefore, you are likely to be entirely on your own if you choose to tackle a person at work, or even in a church. You need to be fully aware of that fact and not be under any illusions at all about what level of support you can expect to receive from others.

An occasion when I had to stand up to a wealthy and powerful client

An example of how a Christian can stop wrongdoing, even single-handedly, was something which happened when I was a young solicitor. I was employed in a large law firm, in the commercial litigation department, and was acting on a case for a company which was being sued for a major sum. We reached the stage where our client had to disclose a list of all relevant documents that had anything to do with the case, as per the Court's standard directions. Both sides had a legal duty to reveal these, regardless of whether they supported or contradicted their own case.

The Managing Director of the client company dropped off a large box of documents at our office for me to look through. My job was to produce a 'List of Documents' on their behalf prior to disclosing them. When I read through the documents I found one which was very damaging to our own client's case. Nobody outside of their company had ever seen it. I immediately saw that it would harm our client's case and asked the Managing Director to come in to see me. I told him the document was very damaging, but that we still had a duty to disclose it.

It meant he would have to settle the claim far less favourably than he had hoped, because it proved that his company was largely in the wrong. He then told me to *get rid* of this document, but I said I couldn't do that. Therefore he said he would destroy it himself. I told him he couldn't do that either, as failing to disclose it would have been fraud. We would be lying to the opponent about our own documents, and about the merits of our case. He then got angry and said that if I disclosed it he would speak to the Senior Partner of the firm I was working for, who was a friend of his.

He warned me that he could do me a lot of damage if I didn't stop "being difficult". It was intimidating, because he was in his fifties, whereas I was an employed solicitor in my twenties. I also knew that he had the power to damage my career. However, I stuck to my position and told him he was free to complain to the Senior Partner. So that is what he did and I was summoned to go to his office. I felt afraid as I walked the stairs to his room but, to my surprise, he supported me. He told the Client that he had to comply with the Court's directions and that I was only doing my job.

So I survived. The point, however, is that the stand I took prevented our client from winning its case by deception, i.e. by hiding relevant documents which supported the other side's case. It therefore prevented the other side from being defrauded. It was my duty to defend my own client, and to present its case to the best of my ability. However, that duty does not extend to helping my client to deceive the Court and its opponent. So, my stand prevented an evil being done and I feel God was pleased with me for being resolute, even when faced with threats.

Even one Christian acting alone, if he is willing to take a stand, can prevent a lot of wickedness.

A heavy weight of responsibility has been laid upon each of us. Just one courageous and resolute Christian can prevent evil from triumphing within a church or workplace. So, we must never give way or betray those who need our help. God will hold us accountable for what we do, or fail to do:

¹⁰*If you faint in the day of adversity,*

your strength is small.

*¹¹Rescue those who are being taken away to death;
hold back those who are stumbling to the slaughter.*

*¹²If you say, "Behold, we did not know this,"
does not he who weighs the heart perceive it?
Does not he who keeps watch over your soul know it,
and will he not requite man according to his work?*

Proverbs 24:10-12 (RSV)

God has sometimes used me to take a stand for him. Though only small, they were things which God wanted me to do and my actions pleased Him. One example was when I was a young police officer and saw a newsagent's shop with some graphic pornographic magazines on full display. I told him to remove them as they were indecent, contrary to The Indecent Displays (Control) Act 1981. He did so, but then spoke to my Inspector, who was a friend of his. Instead of supporting me, the Inspector told me that he wanted the newsagent "*left alone*" and told him that he could put the magazines back on display.

To my surprise, he didn't. For some reason, he listened to me and never put them back. That little victory didn't change the world, but it made a difference in one small newsagent's shop for years afterwards. I think God was pleased by what I did and that it was He who prompted me to do it in the first place. God is not only interested in those few extraordinary people who can change the course of history for whole nations. They are rare and we are unlikely ever to be in that league. But every individual has the capacity to alter the course of events *within his own family, workplace or church*.

You don't need massive faith, strength or ability to do that. God will create small opportunities for each of us to take a stand and make a difference at a local level. We must never despise that responsibility, or consider it insignificant. God will judge each of us for what we do, or don't do, in our small situations, just as seriously as He will judge the great and powerful people for how they handle their major problems. There is no difference in God's eyes. We are all equally accountable, *in relative terms*, whatever level we are at in terms of power and authority.

The time we got a blasphemous film, "The Last Temptation of Christ", banned from our town

Another example was some years later when I was training to be a solicitor. At that time I was actively involved in the Labour Party, though I later moved to the Conservative Party. A film came out called '*The Last Temptation of Christ*'. It was awfully blasphemous and portrayed Christ on the cross having impure thoughts about having sex with Mary Magdalene! When I heard about it I felt appalled and I knew I had to do something. I then heard of a power for local councils to stop a film being shown in their area if they considered it unsuitable.

We had very little time, so I formed a small group and we stood in the town centre getting signatures for a petition. I wrote to the local newspaper too. It caused controversy, and I got a lot of criticism in the letters page. Yet we got over 1000 signatures in a few days. I then put that before the Borough Council and asked them to stop the film being shown in our cinema. To my surprise, they voted (narrowly) to do so. So, though it went all over the world, that vile film never came to our town.

It was only a small victory, but I felt that Jesus' heart was touched that I was willing to stand up for Him and face abuse for His sake. It prevented a blasphemous film from being shown, at least in one small town. And it was all because one apparently insignificant person took action and got the ball rolling. Strangely, the worst opposition and criticism was not from atheists, but from liberal Christians, and especially church leaders. It was not just in terms of receiving active opposition that I felt let down by many church people, but also in their passivity and lack of support.

Many kept silent whom I had imagined would help me and speak up for our campaign. In particular, not even one church leader, of any denomination, chose to be publicly identified with me. None of them wrote to the newspaper to support me, or to respond to those who were writing letters criticising the campaign and insulting me. They did not even send me an encouraging word or letter. Yet over 1000 ordinary people were willing to help, including a lot of sincere Christians. That said, many of those who were appalled by the idea of the film were actually non-Christians.

I actually got better support in the Labour Party than from church leaders, all of whom kept their heads down. By contrast, although a group of Labour Party members opposed me, and asked for a debate on the issue, many others spoke up openly in support of me. Also, later that year, I was elected to be the constituency's delegate to the national Labour Party conference. So, even from them, I received a small reward. Those are the ways in which Jesus can help us, and even honour us, when we take a stand for Him and are willing to receive criticism and abuse for His sake.

One man's letter of complaint caused a major company to withdraw a blasphemous card.

When I was a two year qualified solicitor, a major commercial client, which sold greetings cards, received a single letter of complaint from a young man. He had seen a card in one of their shops which was ridiculing Jesus. It was passed to our law firm for advice and my boss gave it to me to deal with. I advised the client that there was no breach of any law, either civil or criminal, and that they could not be sued or prosecuted. I told them the truth about their strong legal position, but I still recommended withdrawal of the card for a number of public relations and commercial reasons.

To my surprise, the client company agreed and decided that the card should no longer be made or sold. Most of the credit belongs to the young man who wrote in. He was the only person in the whole country who had bothered to complain. But it was also a little victory for me. God used both him and me, despite our smallness and lack of resources, because we were each *willing to speak up*. It shows how any of us, however insignificant we may seem to be, can make a disproportionately large difference if we are willing to be criticised and to risk abuse for the sake of Jesus' name.

How one young mother managed to get Walmart and other large chains to cover up pornographic magazines so that children wouldn't be able to see them

I recently heard an interview online with a young housewife. She was able, all by herself, to get Walmart, and some other large chains, to change their policies on the display of pornographic magazines. This was done without any large scale, coordinated campaign. It was just her, with God's help. It began when she went into a shop and saw the magazines displayed at a child's eye line, clearly visible to them. Instead of doing nothing, like thousands of other customers had, she asked to speak to the manager and explained politely why this was a problem.

This was later escalated to the senior management of Walmart and, to her surprise, they agreed with her. They covered up all the magazines in *all of their stores*, not just the one she went into. She also got similar responses from other chains. Therefore, this one woman, who had no elected position, was able to achieve more than any senators or Congressmen had achieved. And it was all because she cared enough to get involved and was brave enough to speak up, even by herself.