

The Power Of Doing Good

Acts 10:38 KJV How God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Ghost and with power: who went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed of the devil; for God was with him.

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

I. THE BACKGROUND OF THE TEXT

-This verse picks up in the sermon that Peter is preaching to Cornelius and is a key to his conversion. Peter has some things to contend with when he preaches Jesus Christ to this centurion of the Roman army.

A. Rome

-At this point in history, Rome is in charge of the then known world. Everything about Rome was formed in excellence and extravagance.

- Its public buildings that showcased architecture.
- Its huge temples that promoted idolatry.
- It's lavish public baths that promoted sexual immorality.
- Its entertaining shows that encouraged hedonism.
- It's large army that spoke of military prowess.
- It's political machinery that held up democracy for the rest of the world to see.

-There was nothing that compared to Rome at the time. There was something about just going to that great city that would impress even the harshest of critics. But there was one thing that seemed to be missing in all of Rome's majesty—it was a world without love.

-Rome was full of want, suffering, and debauchery. There were no social or political movements that could fill this giant void.

-Certainly there were efforts to relieve suffering and occasionally the government would give things to the needy. Periodically the orators who commanded the language with excellence would break down and give some money to help some cause but by and large, there was little that was done in Rome simply to help others.

-One man named Severus established a school for young men but their main object really was to promote a place where they could be recruited by the army.

-Plato, the famous philosopher, wrote that the ideal state had no room for the poor and that beggars should be expelled or left to die.

-Aristotle, another famous philosopher, might have had some virtuous leanings but it turned out that the generosity he encouraged was really to promote more greed and extravagance on those who were helping.

B. Why Rome Fell

-Cornelius and those men who he was in charge of were aware of this glaring defect in Roman society. If you want to get a real idea of what Rome really looked like from the standpoint of the spiritual nature and moral tones, read Romans 1 and you will get a good idea of what things were in Rome.

-The Roman citizens watched the limited welfare program at work and began to hate and loathe work. They were only interested in the ease and enjoyment they would pull from their rulers. This leaning toward leisure brought a great indifference to them when they looked on those with real needs.

-They became consumed with the capacity for immediate and large self-gratification. Maybe our time might say they were “living large.”

-Love and concern always looks for the sore places in the world of the destitute. It will be discriminating in what actions it takes and yet when love does lead a man to do something, the recipients receive much sympathy.

-Edward Gibbon who is famous for having written the six-volume work called *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* noted five reasons for the fall of Rome:

- Rapid increase of divorce, with the undermining of the sanctity of the home, which is the basis of society.
- Higher and higher taxes; the spending of money for bread and celebrations.
- The mad craze for pleasure, sports becoming every year more exciting and more brutal.
- The building of gigantic armaments, when the real enemy was within; the decadence of the people.
- The decay of religion; faith fading into mere form, losing touch with life, and becoming unable to guide it.

-If there were any who were going about doing good it was because they were doing so because it was a fine thing to do, not necessarily from a sense of duty or a love for others.

C. Jesus, Who Went About Doing Good

-Peter comes along and preaches a Jesus Christ who goes about doing good. His actions are literally changing the world for the better. I can imagine that for a moment, this looked very foolish in the human reasoning of Cornelius.

-How could a Man who had no real pedigree, no monetary resources, and no important followers do so much in the face of Roman culture? He would have appeared to have been terribly inadequate in what He was attempting to do.

-This is God's way. . . He always works in this manner!

- **Amos**—A fig farmer who preached to kings and political leaders.
- **David**—Went from a shepherd's role to being a warrior and finally a king.
- **Esther**—Changed from a peasant to a queen.
- **Ruth**—Went from an intruder to one of those in the blessed family tree of Jesus Christ.

-The Bible is loaded with examples like this. God has the great capacity to take a little good and use it to His benefit to change the world. People doing what they could to make it a better place.

Charles Spurgeon told of the celebrated Captain James Cook who was a world explorer. He went around the globe on the high seas several times in efforts to explore uncharted territories. It was told that when he arrived at one of these places, that from his ship he would take a small paper bag about the size of a small lunch bag full of seeds.

These seeds were English flowers and when he would broadcast them in the wilds in hopes they would grow. Years later when other Englishmen would land on distant shores they would be shocked to find flowers growing from their native lands. That is how we ought to live our lives. We have good and precious seed in our soul that deserves to be sown into the hearts of those who are less fortunate than what we are. Sow in kindness and generosity and it will come back to you as a great blessing if you will go about doing good.

-But then as Cornelius heard more of this Jesus Christ, his heart became receptive. Here was a Man who was willing to give all and expect nothing in return.

- He healed lepers.
- He opened blind eyes.
- He straightened bent and withered limbs.
- He pulled paralytics from their stretchers.
- He cooled fevered brains.

-Asking nothing in return from any of these. . . Cornelius soon hears that calling voice of the Lord through the words of a preaching fisherman.

-Jesus was motivated by pointing out truth that could help men. It helped them in such a way that they could overcome their own poverty and distress on the earth for a brief period of time and in turn help another man by doing their own good.

D. The Lesson Passed On to the Churches

-The actions of the Lord were passed on to the churches after His ascension. The churches that were blessed in wealth in Greece would take up offerings and then shuttle them off to poor saints in Palestine.

-The widows were regularly provided for. Good was done!

-Edward Gibbon writes in his history of Rome about a plague that swept the city of Rome in the third century. This plague destroyed almost half of the citizens and then it extended to Carthage where a pastor named Cyprian was working for God.

-The masses that could fled to another place in an effort to seek out safety. Their departure led to corpses lying in the homes and streets where they succumbed to death. Some of the rogue citizens turned to looting and criminal ways during the plague and Cyprian gave himself to the task of preaching and guiding his church.

-Everywhere he went he was encouraging, advising, organizing, helping the sick and dying with his own hands and he recruited anyone and everyone who would help him.

-Some of the saints only wanted to help those in the church they associated with. They did not want to help any of the heathen because only recently these same sick men had been the men who had beaten and imprisoned them for their beliefs. Now Cyprian expected them to help him to ease their suffering.

-In one of his sermons, Cyprian asked his church:

If we only do good to those who do good to us, what do we more than the heathen and the publicans? If we are the children of God, who makes His sun to shine upon the good and the bad, and sends His rain on the just and on the unjust, let us now prove it by our own acts, let us bless those who curse us.

-Cyprian also worked diligently to respect the poor miners. They were the lowest class in the society and often went without much clothing and had pitiful rations to eat. Many contracted lung disease and died at very young ages. Cyprian had much compassion to help these people.

-There was another group that he helped were prisoners. Some of these people were thrown into prison for the most minor of offenses and were literally left by the Romans to rot. Cyprian would work at physical labor so he could earn wages and then turn that money so he could help others.

The story was told of an old man who became a Christian very late in his life and was suddenly faced with the question as to what he could do that would be good. He made a list of his old friends and associates and began to pray over the names on the list. Soon he began to look them up and talk to them. Some he witnessed to and others he gave good Christian books to them. The list contained 116 names. Some refused to listen and others made fun of him but within two years time of praying for and working with these men, 100 of them had made a conversion of their ways. . . Go about doing good no matter what it costs!

II. WE HAVE TO FOLLOW THAT EXAMPLE

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

-Just as the Lord went about doing good, we have to do the same thing. This is a challenging thing to do in life! Always doing good and being a help to those who are about you.

-You have to give your life a test and see how well you live up to the examination.

- Test your speech by it. . . let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth. Only let encouragement pour out of your mouth.
- Test your entertainment by it. . . does my recreation bring me closer to God or pull men further away?
- Test your time by it. . . is my time being invested in high and holy purposes?
- Test your blessings and status in life by it. . . Am I more willing to serve even though there is more advancement that is brought into my life?

-There will also be that contention that you will have to confront also. There will be those who accuse you when you give yourself to helping others. Jesus had malicious opposition leveled against him when He performed good deeds.

-When He cast out devils, He was called a magician. When He ate with sinners, He was called a wine-bibber and glutton.

-That is the challenge of the times. . . go about doing good. . . The Lord will give you the power to do so.

The Paradoxical Commandments—Kent M. Keith

People are illogical, unreasonable, and self-centered. Love them anyway.
If you do good, people will accuse you of selfish ulterior motives. Do good anyway.
If you are successful, you win false friends and true enemies. Succeed anyway.
The good you do today will be forgotten tomorrow. Do good anyway.
Honesty and frankness make you vulnerable. Be honest and frank anyway.
The biggest men and women with the biggest ideas can be shot down by the smallest men and women with the smallest minds. Think big anyway.
People favor underdogs but follow only top dogs. Fight for a few underdogs anyway.
What you spend years building may be destroyed overnight. Build anyway.
People really need help but may attack you if you do help them. Help people anyway.
Give the world the best you have and you'll get kicked in the teeth. Give the world the best you have anyway.

III. CONCLUSION—BLUE COLLAR, BLUE SCRUBS

-Michael J. Collins is an orthopedic surgeon who practices in Illinois. He wrote a book called Blue Collar, Blue Scrubs about his entrance into medical school under some of the most incredible circumstances. Collins served as a chief resident at the Mayo Clinic before going into private practice.

He tells the story in the opening chapters about two men—his Uncle Jack and an old black man named Jesse Perkins. His Uncle Jack paid his way through medical school because Collins could not get any grants, loans, or scholarships. Jesse Perkins was a guy that got Collins attention when he was working on Johnny Battaglia's break-out rock crew. Both of them worked at Vittoria Scalese's Construction Company throwing rocks and breaking up concrete.

One day Jesse made a comment to Michael because he wanted him to do something bigger with his life than just toss rocks. Jesse had been on the crew longer than anyone else and because of that, he had some perks that none of the other men had. He routinely kept a fifth of Vodka in one of his pockets and a cooler of Schlitz Malt Liquor in his truck. He would sip the vodka and drink the beer all day long and even more during the wilting Chicago summers.

Collins said he learned things that he never would have learned in a college classroom from Jesse. Jesse was as coarse as sackcloth and had a vocabulary that was just as salty. One day he confronted Michael about the low pay and tells him that he is working with a bunch of drunks. He railed on him, insulted him, yelled at him, cussed him, and then he commanded him to get up and walk away from the job and really do something with his life.

At first Collins thought Jesse was just goofing around with him but the longer he yelled and cussed the more that Collins said he felt something rising up in him. “Look around you boy!” When Collins looked around on that particular day, he saw something he had never seen before. Men had been working so hard that they were literally exhausted. Lying up under the trucks and the Caterpillars trying to find some spot out of the sun. Their boots were off, their eyes bulging, and clothes soaked with sweat. Collins said on that day, Jesse made him see. “Boy, you gon’ be just like ‘em iffen you don’t do something! Go and do something!” “Look around and don’ ever forget what you sees and then get out of here or you gon’ be an ol’ man like me, wore out and broke down!”

“You can spend yo life in the breakout gang throwing rocks with the rest of us fools. Then they throw you on the junkpile when they’s through with you. Get out before it’s too late!”

Collins said on that day after work he went to a book store and bought two books. *The Making of a Surgeon* and *The Medical College Admissions Test Prep Book* changed the direction of his future. Collins wrote in that book that this was what turned him into the path that he got on. . . someone decided to do something good.

-The world needs men like Uncle Jack and Jesse Perkins, but more importantly, they need a lot of us like Jesus Christ. People who go about doing good!