



Pastor John Underhill

Introduction

2000 years ago Jesus commanded his followers that they were to exert a godly influence in an ungodly society:

"You are the light of the world. A city on a hill cannot be hidden. [15] Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. [16] In the same way, let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven. Matthew 5:14-16 (NIV)

This fall we've been looking at what it means to "let your light shine before men." Today we're going to conclude that study. Fasten your seat belts. We're going to take a whirlwind tour through the Bible asking this question: **"What does the Bible have to say about good works?"**

I. What is a "good work"?

A. Using your gifts and resources to meet the needs of others

1. From the recipient's side, good deeds meet pressing needs (Titus 3:14)

Our people must also learn to engage in good deeds to meet pressing needs, so that they will not be unfruitful. Titus 3:14 [NASB-U]

One translator puts it this way, "*Our people must really learn to make themselves practically useful.*" (Scott) Necessary and urgent uses. Things like food, medicine, shelter, clothing, paying utility bills, gasoline, etc.

Note—the **Great American Ideal** of living a life of independence, indulgence, personal peace, security, and affluence where I'm not bothered by anyone and no one bothers me, the Bible calls that unfruitful or unproductive. Withdrawal, disengagement, retreat from the needs of others isn't an option for anyone who desires to be a fruitful Christian.

2. From the giver's side, good deeds are any opportunity to generously share (1 Tim 6:18)

Command those who are rich in this present world not to be arrogant nor to put their hope in wealth, which is so uncertain, but to put their hope in God, who richly provides us with everything for our enjoyment. [18]

Command them to do good, to be rich in good deeds, and to be generous and willing to share. [19] In this way they will lay up treasure for themselves as a firm foundation for the coming age, so that they may take hold of the life that is truly life. 1 Tim. 6:17-19 (NIV)

This passage is clear, being rich in good deeds means generosity and a willingness to share. Four observations:

- Doing good is a command, not an option.
- I should view greater wealth as giving me greater opportunity to do good works
- Sharing with others in need is one way of entering into fellowship with them (koinonia)
- Sharing my wealth with others results in my gaining treasures in heaven

Thanksgiving morning. We're getting ready to head across town to my brother's house and share the day with my family. And the phone rings. Here's a lady named Nancy who needs food. She, her son, and three grand children don't have any food. So I ask Nancy if they'd be willing to drive to a church for Thanksgiving dinner if I can locate one for them. That would be OK she says. I spend the next 40 minutes tracking down what churches in Spokane are fixing meals that day, so Nancy and her family can go. Then Nancy calls back and tells me they're out of gas. I'm getting to my limit now. But I arrange with Carolyn that we can leave early, stop by Nancy's house and give her gas money. Nancy calls back again and indicates that her son's car was repossessed—all they have now is his truck—and the car-seats for the grandkids were in the car. They can't get to the church. So I call the church back and ask if they could fix "Thanksgiving to Go" for Nancy and her family. They're willing. So we swing by Nancy's house, and by time we get there, I'm hot and bothered and just want to get in, pray for them, and get out. But Carolyn sees their need and wants to give them some money. And I'm suddenly rebuked from heaven. What is it that you've been preaching the past few weeks? Examining who is your neighbor, and what our responsibility is toward people with needs that God brings across our path. Don't you just hate it when God does that? Reminds you of something you've said to others, and puts your name in the blank instead of theirs?

3. A few common examples of good works:

having a reputation for good works; and if she has brought up children, if she has shown hospitality to strangers, if she has washed the saints' feet, if she has assisted those in distress, and if she has devoted herself to every good work. 1 Tim. 5:10 (NASB-U)

The context is speaking of widows who are under consideration to be placed on the church's list of those eligible for help/assistance. They should have a track record of good works:

- Good works include ordinary things like taking care of children
- Good works include menial things like washing feet
- Good works include necessary things like hospitality
- Good works include unexpected things like helping those in trouble

B. Jesus paints a picture of a neighbor who does good works (Luke 10)

[30] In reply Jesus said: "A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, when he fell into the hands of robbers. They stripped him of his clothes, beat him and went away, leaving him half dead. [31] A priest happened to be going down the same road, and when he saw the man, he passed by on the other side. [32] So too, a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side.

[33] But a Samaritan, as he traveled, came where the man was; and when he saw him, he took pity on him. [34] He went to him and bandaged his wounds, pouring on oil and wine. Then he put the man on his own donkey, took him to an inn and took care of him. [35] The next day he took out two silver coins and gave them to the innkeeper. 'Look after him,' he said, 'and when I return, I will reimburse you for any extra expense you may have.'

[36] "Which of these three do you think was a neighbor to the man who fell into the hands of robbers?" [37] The expert in the law replied, "The one who had mercy on him."

Jesus told him, "Go and do likewise." Luke 10:25-37 (NIV)

Let me give you some adjectives that describe this sort of caring:

1. **Costly:** I help even when it may require a financial commitment
2. **Hidden:** I help even when no one may notice
3. **Risky:** I help even when it may be uncomfortable or not safe
4. **Indiscriminate:** I help no matter what the class or race or creed of the person in need
5. **Spontaneous:** I help even when the unexpected need disrupts my plans or schedule
6. **Time consuming:** I help even though I may not know the full extent of my future involvement

II. Five reasons why doing good works is so important

A. Number One: Good works and creation: we were created for the purpose of doing good works

For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do. Ephes. 2:10 (NIV)

- This ought to give us a **sense of excitement** each morning, “God, I don’t know what you’ve planned this day, but I’m willing and ready!”
- This ought to give us a **sense of confidence**. God may well bring people or situations across your path that appear overwhelming, but since He’s the One who has led you here, I’ll believe He can and will give me strength and wisdom.
- This ought to give us a **sense of fulfillment** like no other. To realize that the God of the universe utilized you in his eternal plans of extending His kingdom reign on this earth!

B. Number Two: Good works and salvation: they won’t save you, but they may save others!

1. Your good works are not designed to earn your salvation

- **We don’t earn eternal life by our good works...**
But when the kindness of God our Savior and His love for mankind appeared, [5] He saved us, not on the basis of deeds which we have done in righteousness, (Titus 3, NASB)
- **...We are given eternal life as a gracious gift of God the moment we believe in Christ’s work for us on the cross.**
... but according to His mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewing by the Holy Spirit, [6] whom He poured out upon us richly

through Jesus Christ our Savior, [7] so that being justified by His grace we would be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life. (Titus 3, NASB)

2. But your good works are designed to draw others to salvation

- **God’s kindness toward us should result in our kindness toward others...**

[8] This is a trustworthy statement; and concerning these things I want you to speak confidently, so that those who have believed God will be careful to engage in good deeds. (Titus 3, NASB)

“Be careful” could also be translated, “take the lead” in good works. It means that doing good to others not be simply occasional, random, sporadic, but planned, deliberate, thoughtful.

Application: Sit down with your family and decide what good you’re going to do over the Christmas season:

- Ring a bell for Salvation Army.
 - Set aside some money for a missionary.
 - Invite a college student who can’t get home to join you for Christmas.
- **...So that the beauty and value of our works may draw them to Christ**
These things [doing good deeds] are good and profitable for men. (Titus 3:8 NASB)

“Good” (kalos) has the idea of beautiful, attractive. After Hurricane Katrina hit, I watched an interview with a grandmotherly lady who was cooking at a Southern Baptist run kitchen. And another man who was an agnostic showed up to help as well. He watched the love, the care, the attitude of the Southern Baptist lady, and though he hadn’t yet put his trust in Jesus Christ, he was being drawn closer and closer by what he was seeing.

“Doing what is good benefits people, not only by affecting them positively, but also by attracting them to the truth of the gospel.” Gordon Fee

C. Number Three: Good works and sanctification: they demonstrate our deepening maturity in Christ

Your growth as a Christian will be stunted, not at all what God wants, if you fail to engage regularly in doing good. Doing good is such an important part of our maturity that we are to prod, poke, prompt, challenge each other to good deeds!

1. Doing good is one important tool God uses in helping us grow, so encourage each other to do good works

And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds. Hebrews 10:24 (NIV)

I think about Sarah Wilson our youth group offering free babysitting regularly as a way of doing good to the married couples in the church..

2. Good deeds should be as natural a part of our life with Christ as wicked deeds were a part of our life without Christ

who gave Himself for us to redeem us from every lawless deed, and to purify for Himself a people for His own possession, zealous for good deeds. Titus 2:14 (NASB)

Do you see the parallel in this verse? “*Every lawless deed...zealous for good deeds.*” Before we were redeemed, we eagerly ran after every lawless deed; couldn’t wait to get drunk, couldn’t wait to get on the Internet to see those pictures, to cheat on the test, to rip off my employer...It was all about me.

Good deeds track our growth from a self-centered, self-absorbed, self-consumed focus to a focus on the needs of others. From “Me, My, Mine” to “How can I serve you?”

- So the next time you’re in the grocery store and see a person obviously in a hurry, you say, “Here, why don’t you slip in front of me? I’m not in a hurry.”
- You walk across the street to your new neighbors and offer to pay the way for their first grader to attend AWANA if she wants to.
- Someone in the cafeteria at school realizes she doesn’t have her lunch money, and you say, “Hey, can I pay for you?”

3. Cleansing from sin and growth in holiness are essential for doing good works

If a man cleanses himself from the latter, he will be an instrument for noble purposes, made holy, useful to the Master and prepared to do any good work. 2 Tim. 2:21 (NIV)

“*If a man cleanses himself from the latter...*” Paul has just been speaking about false teachers. He’s thinking of false teachers, false teachings, and the inevitable evil behavior that results from following their ways.

4. Good deeds are an indication of humility and wisdom (maturity)

Who is wise and understanding among you? Let him show it by his good life, by deeds done in the humility that comes from wisdom. James 3:13 (NIV)

D. Number Four: Good works and devotion: they are one suitable way we express our worship to God

I also want women to dress modestly, with decency and propriety, not with braided hair or gold or pearls or expensive clothes, but with good deeds, appropriate for women who profess to worship God. 1 Tim. 2:9-10 (NIV)

The context of this passage is the public worship service. He's just dealt with how men should pray. Now he turns to women.

You got up this morning and asked yourself, "What should I wear to church?" Here's a checklist for you:

- "modestly" is the Greek word *kosmioi* which mean, "in good taste." It shouldn't shout, "LOOK AT ME" for sexual reasons.
- "decency" has the idea of respectful clothing. Some clothing is designed to make a derogatory, disrespectful, in your face statement. It shouldn't shout, "LOOK AT ME" for rebellious reasons.
- "propriety" or "sobriety" carries the idea that our clothing shouldn't be outlandish, frivolous.. It shouldn't shout, "LOOK AT ME" for self-serving reasons.

The best way to look better, a style that is always current, is "wearing" good works.

E. Number Five: Good works and resources. Our doing good is so important to God that He gives us the ability and the resources for it

1. God gives us physical/financial resources so that we can use them in doing good to others

And God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that always having all sufficiency in everything, you may have an abundance for every good deed; 2 Cor. 9:8 (NASB)

I think there's always a concern—"If I give my time, my money, myself to this person with a need, won't I end up depleted as a result?" I want you to circle these phrases in that verse:

- all grace
- all sufficiency
- in everything
- an abundance

You give out to others, God gives back to you.

2. God gives us spiritual resources so that we can do good to others

All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, [17] so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work. 2 Tim. 3:16-17 (NIV)

3. God will repay us for the good deeds we perform

One who is gracious to a poor man lends to the Lord, and He will repay him for his good deed. Proverbs 19:17 (NASB)

God ordained that we do good works before creation. God saved us to do good works. And ultimately, God will reward us for those good works!

3. God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ give us strength for every good deed

Now may our Lord Jesus Christ Himself and God our Father, who has loved us and given us eternal comfort and good hope by grace, [17] comfort and strengthen your hearts in every good work and word. 2 Thes. 2:16-17 (NASB)

III. Two results from doing good works

A. God is pleased

And we pray this in order that you may live a life worthy of the Lord and may please him in every way: bearing fruit in every good work, growing in the knowledge of God, Col. 1:10 (NIV)

B. God is praised

People come to understand the goodness of God by means of the care of His people, and offer their praise to God in heaven

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Conclusion

1. Doing good is a command, not an option
2. Doing good is a continuation of Jesus' ministry
3. Doing good is contagious