

Epistle 321

by George Fox

George Fox's sermon emphasizes the necessity of good works as a vital expression of genuine faith in Christ.

Scripture: Matthew 26:10, John 13:17, Galatians 6:9-10, Colossians 1:10, 2 Thessalonians 2:17, 1 Timothy 5:10, Titus 2:14, Titus 3:8, Hebrews 10:24, James 1:27

Topics: "Faith in Action", "Good Works"

Description

George Fox emphasizes the significance of good works in the life of a believer, illustrating that Christ gave Himself to redeem us and purify a people zealous for good deeds. He references various scriptures to highlight the importance of being fruitful in good works, caring for the needy, and practicing pure religion by helping the afflicted. Fox encourages the church to actively engage in acts of kindness and charity, reminding them that faith without works is dead. He concludes by urging believers to not only profess their faith but to live it out through their actions, following the example set by Christ.

Transcript

Who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works [Tit 2:14]. Titus ii. 14.

The woman wrought a good work upon Christ [Mat 26:10], as he saith. Matt. xxvi. 10.

Paul saith to the church of the Colossians, being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God [Col 1:10]. Col. i. 10.

And that you may be established in every good word and work [2 Th 2:17]. 2 Thess. ii. 17.

She (to wit, a widow) well reported for her good works [1 Tim 5:10]. 1 Tim. v. 6.10.

That the church which believe in God might be careful to maintain good works; these things are good and profitable to men [Tit 3:8]. Tit. iii. 8.

And let ours also (to wit, the church of Christ) learn to maintain good works for necessary uses, that they may not be unfruitful [Tit 3:14]. This says Paul to Titus, and to the church. Tit. iii. 14.

Let us consider one another, to provoke unto love, and to good works [Heb 10:24]. Heb. x. 24.

That they do good, that they be rich in good works, ready to distribute, willing to communicate; for God giveth us all things to enjoy [1 Tim 6:18,17]. 1 Tim. vi. 17, 18.

But to do good, and to communicate, forget not; for with such sacrifices God is well pleased [Heb 13:16]. Heb. xiii. 16.

As God hath distributed to every man, and as the Lord hath called every one, so let him walk, and so ordain I in all churches [1 Cor 7:17]. 1 Cor. vii. 17.

And Paul exhorts the church of the Romans to their distributing to the necessity of the saints, and of being given to hospitality [Rom 12:13]. Rom. xii. 13.

And to make contribution for the poor saints that were at Jerusalem [Rom 15:26], which the apostle Paul mentions to the Romans. Chap. xv. 26.

Only that we should remember the poor, the same which I also was forward to do, [Gal 2:10] said the apostle to the church at Galatia. Gal. ii. 10.

If any man minister, let him do it as of the ability which God hath given him, that God in all things may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom be praises and dominion for ever and ever. Amen [1 Pet 4:11] 1 Pet. iv. 11.

And let us not be weary in well-doing; for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not; as we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially to the household of faith [Gal 6:9f]. Gal. vi. 9, 10.

And whatsoever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus [Col 3:17]; and whatsoever ye do, do it heartily, as unto the Lord, knowing that of the Lord ye shall receive the reward of the inheritance; for ye do serve the Lord Christ [Col 3:23f]. Col. iii. 17, 23, 24.

Therefore, to him that knoweth how to do good, and doth it not, it is to him sin [Jas 4:17]. James iv. 17.

He that hath pity on the poor, lendeth unto the Lord; and that which he hath given will he pay him again [Prov 19:17]. Prov. xix. 17.

And you may see, such as were careful to hearken unto the voice of the Lord God, and to obey and keep his commandments; for the Lord thy God will bless thee, as he hath promised, thou shalt lend unto many nations, and thou shalt not borrow [Deut 15:5f], &c. Deut. xv. 5, 6.

For the Lord shall open unto thee his good treasure, the heaven to give thee rain unto thy land in his season, and to bless all the works of thine hands; and thou shalt lend unto many nations, and thou shalt not borrow [Deut 28:12]; and all people of the earth shall see, that thou art called by the name of the Lord; and they shall be afraid of thee [Deut 28:10]. Deut. xxviii. 10, 12.

And David said, I have been young, and now am old, yet have I not seen the righteous forsaken, nor his seed begging bread; for he is ever merciful and lendeth, and his seed is blessed [Psa 37:25f]. Psalm xxxvii. 25, 26.

A good man sheweth favour, and lendeth, he will guide his affairs with discretion [Psa 112:5]. Psalm cxii. 5.

The righteous showeth mercy, and giveth [Psa 37:21]. Psalm xxxi. 21.

The righteous giveth, and spareth not [Prov 21:26]; he that hath a bountiful eye shall be blessed; for he giveth of his bread to the poor [Prov 22:9]. Prov. xxi. 26. and xxii. 9.

And he that giveth to the poor, shall not lack [Prov 28:27]. Prov. xxviii. 27.

God giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not [Jas 1:5]. So all men should give of that which they have received of him, liberally, without upbraiding, as in James i. 5.

And he that giveth, let him do it with simplicity [Rom 12:8]. Rom. xii. 8.

Give, and it shall be given unto you [Luke 6:38], saith Christ. Luke vi. 38.

And see the care of the apostles of the poor saints, as in 2 Cor. ix. 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11.

But this I say, he which soweth sparingly, shall reap sparingly; and he which sows bountifully, shall reap bountifully [2 Cor 9:6]. 2 Cor. ix. 6.

So every man, according as he purposeth in his heart, so let him give, not grudgingly or of necessity; for God loveth a cheerful giver, (mark, a cheerful giver,) and God is able to make all grace abound towards you, that ye always having all-sufficiency in all things may abound to every good work [2 Cor 9:7f], as is written, 'He hath dispersed abroad, he hath given to the poor, his righteousness remaineth for ever [2 Cor 9:9, Psa 112:9];' mark! now he that ministereth seed to the sower, both ministereth bread for your food, and multiplies your seed sown, and increaseth the fruits of your righteousness [2 Cor 9:10]. Isa. lv. 10. and 2 Cor. ix. 7.10.

Being enriched in every good thing to all bountifulness, which causeth through us thanksgiving to God [2 Cor 9:11].

And you may see how the disciples, every man according to his ability, determined to send relief unto their brethren, who dwelt in Judea, and they sent it by the hands of Saul and Barnabas [Acts 11:29f]. Acts xi. 29, 30.

And so of brotherly love, ye need not that I write unto you; for God teacheth you to love one another [1 Th 4:9]. 1 Thess. iv. 9.

But whoso hath this world's goods, and seeth his brother have need, and shuts up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him? [1 Jn 3:17] 1 John iii. 17.

There is a generation whose teeth are as swords, and their jaw teeth as knives, to devour the poor from the earth, and the needy from among men [Prov 30:14]. Prov. xxx. 14.

And therefore the poor and needy are not to be oppressed nor vexed, nor sent away empty, but relieved, and their cause is to be pleaded [Prov 31:9]; as in Prov. xxxi. 9.

And the apostle saith to the church, 'Give to him that needeth [Eph 4:28].' Eph. iv. 28.

'But my God shall supply all your need, according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus [Phil 4:19].' Phil. iv. 19.

And Christ said, 'The Father knoweth what things ye have need of [Mat 6:8].' Matt. vi. 8.

And you may see the manner and way of collections, that the apostles ordered for the saints [1 Cor 16:1-4], in 1 Cor. xvi. 1.

And the Lord saith, 'If thou deal thy bread to the hungry, and that thou bring the poor that are cast out to thy house, and when thou seest the naked that thou cover him, and that thou hide not thyself from thy own flesh, then shall thy light break forth as the morning, and thy health shall spring forth speedily, and thy righteousness shall go before thee; the glory of the Lord shall be thy reward [Isa 58:7f].' Isaiah lviii. 7. and 8.10.

And if thou draw out thy soul to the hungry, and satisfy the afflicted, then shall thy light arise in obscurity, and thy darkness shall be as the noon-day [Isa 58:10].

And the Lord shall guide thee continually, and satisfy thy soul in drought, and make thy bones fat, and thou shalt be like a watered garden, and like a spring of water whose waters fail not [Isa 58:11]. Here is the practice of godliness. Isaiah lviii. 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, &c.

'The hungry and thirsty, their souls faint in them, then they cry unto the Lord, and he satisfieth the longing soul in their trouble, and filleth the hungry with goodness [Psa 107:5f,9], (or good things [Luke 1:53].) Psalm cvii. 50.

The Lord which made heaven and earth, which giveth food to the hungry, preserveth the stranger, and relieveth the widow and fatherless; but the way of the wicked he turns upside down [Psa 146:5-9]. Psalm cxlvi. 9.

If thy enemy hunger, give him bread to eat; and if he thirst, give him water to drink. Thou shalt heap coals of fire upon his head, and the Lord shall reward thee [Prov 25:21f]. Prov. xxv. 21, 22.

And the law of God ye may see in Ezek. xviii. 7.9. He that hath not oppressed any, but hath restored the debtor his pledge, and hath spoiled none by violence, and hath given his bread to the hungry, and hath covered the naked with his garment [Ezek 18:7], he shall surely live, saith the Lord God [Ezek 18:9].

And Job said, 'Because I delivered the poor that cried, and the fatherless, and him that had none to help, the blessing of him that was ready to perish came upon me. I caused the widow's heart to sing for joy [Job 29:12f], and I was a father to the poor [Job 29:16].' Job xxix. 12, 13.

Dorcas, (a woman,) a certain disciple of Jesus Christ; when she was dead it is recorded, 'This woman was full of good works, (mark, full of good works) and alms-deeds, which she did in her life time [Acts 9:36]; and all the widows, (mark, all) they stood by Peter, (the widows,) and wept, and showed him the coats and garments that she had made whilst she was alive with them [Acts 9:39],' mark, with them. A women's meeting in the practice of religion. Acts ix. 36 to the end.

'Pure religion, and undefiled before God and the Father, is this: to visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world [Jas 1:27].' James i. 27.

And this religion is to be practised by all the right and true christians. For if a brother or sister be naked, and be destitute of daily food, and thou say unto one of them, depart in peace, warm yourselves, and fill your bellies, notwithstanding you give them not those things which are needful to the body, what helpeth

it? Even so faith, if it have no works, is dead in itself [Jas 2:15-17]. James ii. 15, 16, 17. See how James encourages to practice religion, and to show forth the works of faith, that works by love.

If thou afflict any widow or fatherless child in any wise, and they cry at all unto me, I will surely hear their cry, saith the Lord, and my wrath shall wax hot, and I will kill you with the sword, and your wives shall be widows, and your children fatherless [Exo 22:22-24]. Exod. xxii. 22.

The Lord is good to all, and his tender mercies are over all his works [Psa 145:9]. Psalm cxlv. 8, 9.

The righteous considereth the cause of the poor; but the wicked regardeth not to know it [Prov 29:7], (to wit, the cause of the poor,) what condition they are in. Prov. xxix. 7.

And if thy brother be waxen poor, and fallen in decay with thee, then shalt thou relieve him; yea, though he be a stranger or a sojourner, that he may live with thee [Lev 25:35]. Lev. xxv. 35.

The poor is hated even of his neighbour, but the rich hath many friends; but he that is merciful to the poor, happy is he [Prov 14:20f]. Prov. xiv. 20, 21.

'He that oppreseth the poor, reproaches his Maker; but he that honoureth him, (to wit, his Maker,) hath mercy on the poor [Prov 14:31]. Prov. xiv. 31.

Whoso mocks the poor, reproaches his maker [Prov 17:5]. Prov. xvii. 5.

Whoso stops his ears at the cry of the poor, he also shall cry himself, but shall not be heard [Prov 21:13]. Prov. xxi. 13.

The Lord maketh poor, and maketh rich; he bringeth low, and lifteth up [1 Sam 2:7]. 1 Sam. ii. 7.

Therefore I command thee, thou shalt open thy hand wide unto thy brother, to thy poor, and to thy needy in the land, saith the Lord [Deut 15:11]. Deut. xv. 11.

The poor useth entreaties; but the rich answereth roughly [Prov 18:23]. Prov. xviii. 23.

Here you may see what care the Lord lays upon his people, to look after the poor, widows, and fatherless, both in the time of the law and in the time of the gospel; and how that they should obey him in his commands, the Lord God, who created all, and gives the increase [1 Cor 3:6f] of all, and gives man and woman good things, both temporal and spiritual, to do good withal. So the Lord is to be obeyed, and his truth is to be practised; and the pure religion, that is undefiled before God and the Father, is above all religions in the world. And this religion is, to visit the widows and fatherless in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world [Jas 1:27]; (mark, unspotted from the world.) And this religion is above the Papists, that must have a purgatory to wash off their spots of the world; and above those Protestants, that plead they must have a body of death and sin [Rom 7:24,6:6] to the grave, with which they are spotted like leopards [Jer 13:23?]. . . .

And Job said, 'If I did despise the cause of my man servant, or of my maid servant, when they contended with me, what then shall I do when God shall arise? and when he visiteth, what shall I answer him? [Job 31:13f]' See the care of this patient man! Is not this for all the true christians to practise? Job xxxi. ver. 13, 14, 15. And, saith Job, 'Did not he that made me in the womb, make him? and did not one fashion us in the womb? [Job 31:15]' verse 15. And 'if I have withheld the poor from their desire, or have caused the eyes of the widow to fail, or have eaten my morsel myself alone, and the fatherless hath not eaten thereof;

(for from my youth he was brought up with me as with a father, and I have guided her (to wit, the widow) from my mother's womb:) if I have seen any perish for want of clothing, or any poor without covering; if his loins have not blessed me, and if he were not warmed with the fleece of my sheep; if I have lifted up my hand against the fatherless when I saw my help in the gate; then let mine arm fall from my shoulder-blade, and mine arm be broken from the bone. [Job 31:16-21] 'The stranger did not lodge in the street, but I opened my doors to the traveller [Job 31:32].' 'Did not I weep for him that was in trouble? was not my soul grieved for the poor? [Job 30:25]' Now, here ye may all see the actions and practice of this man, by his practising the pure religion: so it is not a talk, but a walking in it; as you may see in Job xxx. xxxi. chapters.

'And blessed is he that considereth the poor, the Lord will deliver him in time of trouble [Psa 41:1].' Psalm xli. 1.

Now, all you that profess God and Christ, see how you walk in the steps of these good men and women; and not only to talk as they did, but do and practise as they did; for it is not every one that saith, Lord, Lord, enters the kingdom, but he that doth what he commands [Mat 7:21].

And Christ saith, 'Ye call me Lord and master; and ye say well, for so I am; and if I, then, your Lord and master, have washed your feet, ye also ought to wash one another's feet: for I have given you an example, that ye should do as I have done unto you. And if ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them. [John 13:13-17]' John xiii. 17.

And Christ saith, 'Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doth the will of my Father which is in heaven.' Matt. vii. 21.

So all people may see by Christ's own words, that their saying and speaking of God and Christ, and his prophets and apostles, signifies nothing, except they do his will; that is, practise it, and be obedient to what he commands and requires.

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