

It Is Written

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Good Actions Are Never Wasted

By Doy Moyer

No one wants a good deed to be wasted, right? After all, we want to put in time and effort to do what is right, and we wouldn't want any of that energy to count for naught.

Here's the good news. Any action that we engage in that is consistent with Scripture and in accordance with keeping a good conscience will never be wasted. We can know that what we do for the Lord will not be in vain (1 Cor 15:58).

Paul wrote, "Whatever you do, do your work heartily, as for the Lord rather than for men, knowing that from the Lord you will receive the reward of the inheritance. It is the Lord Christ who you serve." (Col 3:23-24) "Whatever we do" includes every act. As we act, we need to strive to be consistent with being servants of Christ. We are to do what we do heartily, to the best of our ability, and not just to please people. It is the Lord Christ who we serve, and what we do—whatever it is—we do for Him. This is a basic principle by which Christians live. Our service to the Lord, in whatever we do, means that we strive for excellence in all things. "Whatever your hand finds to do, do it with all your might" (Eccl 9:10).

Yet another principle by which we live is that we are to keep our consciences pure. Paul told Timothy, "But the goal of our instruction is love from a pure heart and a good conscience and a sincere faith" (1 Tim 1:5). Through the revelation of God's word, Christians may learn to fight the good fight and keep a good conscience. Paul instructed, "This command I entrust to you, Timothy, my son, in accordance with the prophecies previously made concerning you, that by them you fight the good fight, keeping faith and a good conscience, which some have rejected and suffered shipwreck in regard to their faith" (1 Tim 1:18-19).

Other passages like Romans 14 and 1 Corinthians 8 show that we are to act in accordance with a good conscience. There are matters that individuals must decide within a context of Scripture and faith, and no one else is to act as their judge. We try to train our consciences according to God's word and act accordingly. For at least these reasons, we need to know that any actions in which we engage that are consistent with being servants of the Lord, consistent with Scripture, and done in good conscience from faith are never wasted.

This point is true:

1. Even if no one else knows about it. God knows what we do even when others don't, and it is not our job to boast about our own actions. If we act just so that others will take notice, then our motives are off. See Matthew 6 for Jesus' teachings on this. Private actions consistent with Scripture and conscience, when done alone, are still good regardless of who else is aware of them. God is the One we try to please.

2. Even if it has no measurable outcomes by human standards. Whether or not an action is good is not based on that action having measurable outcomes. A good action may have little immediate effect on a situation, but that doesn't mean it's not good. That doesn't change the nature of the action, for "your Father who sees what is done in secret will reward you" (Matt 6:4). This coincides with the first point because we might do something in good conscience, not in violation of Scripture, and yet no one see any particular effects from it. That's okay. We don't need to see such effects if our primary concern is pleasing the Lord. Prayer, for example, is still good even when we don't see an immediate effect, and even if God's answer is, "No." The outcome doesn't change the nature of the good act.

3. Even if others disagree. Disagreement is not the measure of whether something is right, nor can the disagreement of others be what determines our consciences. Romans 14 demonstrates this well. If we act in faith, in all good conscience, and consistent with Scriptural teaching, then someone disagreeing with our application has no bearing on whether or not the action is good. Now it is possible that we have decided something is good when it's not really consistent with God's word, and we need to be careful not to justify ourselves. This is one reason why a constant study of Scripture is needed.

Keep doing good because good actions will never be a waste of time. As Paul by the Spirit wrote, "Let

us not lose heart in doing good, for in due time we will reap if we do not grow weary. So then, while we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, and especially to those who are of the household of the faith” (Gal 6:9-10).

Responding to Our Enemies

By R. J. Evans

“Blessed are you when they revile and persecute you, and say all kinds of evil against you falsely for my sake” (Matt. 5:11).

How do we handle a person who reviles us, persecutes us, and says things about us which are not true? The natural response is to retaliate and get even. But how are we to respond to our enemies and be pleasing unto God? Let us go to His Word for the answers.

1. **REJOICE** if we are being mistreated because we are faithfully serving the Lord. If we are suffering because of our evil deeds, then we should be ashamed. However, the Apostle Peter tells us— “Yet if anyone suffers as a Christian, let him not be ashamed, but let him glorify God in this matter” (1 Pet. 3:15-16). Notice the next verse following our text: “Rejoice and be exceeding glad, for great is your reward in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you” (Matt. 5: 12). Although some may seek to make our lives miserable here on earth, our reward in heaven will be great if we remain faithful while we are hurting for His sake.

2. **LOVE THEM, DO GOOD TO THEM, AND PRAY FOR THEM.** This is what Jesus was teaching in Matthew 5:44: “But I say to you, love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you.” Normally, we will have to do a lot of praying for ourselves, asking for strength, before we will be able to do this for our enemies. But we will reap many benefits if we can sincerely do what Jesus commands in this passage. Again, let us observe the inspired words of the Apostle Peter, as it relates to this kind of situation. “...not returning evil for evil or reviling for reviling, but on the contrary blessing, knowing that you were called to this, that you may inherit a blessing” (1 Pet. 3:9). Remember—this is the example Jesus left for us and we are to follow in His steps. “For to this you were called, because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that you should follow His steps: ‘Who committed no sin, nor was guile found in His mouth,’ who, when He was reviled, did not revile in return; when He suffered, He did not threaten, but committed Himself to Him who judges righteously” (1 Pet. 2:21-23).

3. **TURN IT OVER TO GOD.** When men crucified our Lord, He prayed, “Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they do” (Lk. 23:34). In one short prayer, we find Jesus loving His enemies, blessing His enemies, and praying for His enemies. The Apostle Paul tells us to turn it over to God when he said: “Beloved, do not avenge yourselves, but rather give place to wrath; for it is written, ‘Vengeance is Mine, I will repay,’ says the Lord. Therefore if your enemy hungers, feed him; if he thirsts, give him a drink; For in so doing you will heap coals of fire on his head: Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good” (Rom. 12:19-21). This is basically what Christ was teaching in His “Sermon on the Mount” in Matthew 5:38-48.

In a sense, we are being good to ourselves when we are good to our enemies. May the Lord help and be with us when we are meeting the challenge of correctly responding to our enemies.