**THE EXPOSITION OF HOLY SCRIPTURE BY ALEXANDER MACLAREN**

**GALATIANS-010**. **DOING GOOD TO ALL by ALEXANDER MACLAREN**

*"As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all ..."*

*Galatians 6:10*

As we have therefore--that points a finger backwards to what has gone before. The Apostle has been exhorting to unwearied well-doing, on the ground of the certain coming of the harvest season. Now, there is a double link of connection between the preceding words and our text; for do good looks back to well-doing, and the word rendered opportunity is the same as that rendered season. So, then, two thoughts arise--well-doing includes doing good to others, and is not complete unless it does. The future, on the whole, is the season of reaping; the present life on the whole is the season of sowing; and while life as a whole is the seed-time, in detail it is full of opportunities, openings which make certain good deeds possible, and which therefore impose upon us the obligation to do them. If we were in the habit of looking on life mainly as a series of opportunities for well-doing, how different it would be; and how different we should be!

Now, this injunction is seen to be reasonable by every man, whether he obeys it or not. It is a commonplace of morality, which finds assent in all consciences, however little it may mould lives. But I wish to give it a particular application, and to try to enforce its bearing upon Christian missionary work. And the thought that I would suggest is just this, that no Christian man discharges that elementary obligation of plain morality, if he is indifferent to this great enterprise. As we have an opportunity, let us do good to all. That is the broad principle, and one application is the duty of Christian men to diffuse the Gospel throughout the world.

**I. Let me ask you to look at the obligation that is thus suggested.**

As I have said, well-doing is the wider, and doing good to others the narrower, expression. The one covers the whole ground of virtue, the other declares that virtue which is self-regarding, the culture which is mainly occupied with self, is lame and imperfect, and there is a great gap in it, as if some cantle had been cut out of the silver disc of the moon. It is only full-orbed when in well-doing, and as a very large constituent element of it, there is included the doing good to others. That is too plain to need to be stated. We hear a great deal to-day about altruism. Well, Christianity preaches that more emphatically than any other system of thought, morals, or religion does. And Christianity brings the mightiest motives for it, and imparts the power by which obedience to that great law that every man's conscience responds to is made possible.

But whilst thus we recognise as a dictate of elementary morality that well-doing must necessarily include doing good to others, and feel, as I suppose we all do feel, when we are true to our deepest convictions, that possessions of all sorts, material, mental, and all others, are given to us in stewardship, and not in absolute ownership, in order that God's grace in its various forms may fructify through us to all, my present point is that, if that is recognised as being what it is, an elementary dictate of morality enforced by men's relationships to one another, and sealed by their own consciences, there is no getting away from the obligation upon all Christian men which it draws after it, of each taking his share in the great work of imparting the gospel to the whole world.

For that gospel is our highest good, the best thing that we can carry to anybody. We many of us recognise the obligation that is devolved upon us by the possession of wealth, to use it for others as well as for ourselves. We recognise, many of us, the obligation that is devolved upon us by the possession of knowledge, to impart it to others as well as ourselves. We are willing to give of our substance, of our time, of our effort, to impart much that we have. But some of us seem to draw a line at the highest good that we have, and whilst responding to all sorts of charitable and beneficent appeals made to us, and using our faculties often for the good of other people, we take no share and no interest in communicating the highest of all goods, the good which comes to the man in whose heart Christ rests. It is our highest good, because it deals with our deepest needs, and lifts us to the loftiest position. The gospel brings our highest good, because it brings eternal good, whilst all other benefits fade and pass, and are left behind with life and the dead flesh. It is our highest good, because if that great message of salvation is received into a heart, or moulds the life of a nation, it will bring after it, as its ministers and results, all manner of material and lesser benefit. And so, giving Christ we give our best, and giving Christ we give the highest gift that a weary world can receive.

Remember, too, that the impartation of this highest good is one of the main reasons why we ourselves possess it. Jesus Christ can redeem the world alone, but it cannot become a redeemed world without the help of His servants. He needs us in order to carry into all humanity the energies that He brought into the midst of mankind by His Incarnation and Sacrifice; and the cradle of Bethlehem and the Cross of Cavalry are not sufficient for the accomplishment of the purpose for which they respectively came to pass, without the intervention and ministry of Christian people. It was for this end amongst others, that each of us who have received that great gift into our hearts have been enriched by it. The river is fed from the fountains of the hills, in order that it may carry verdure and life whithersoever it goes. And you and I have been brought to the Cross of Christ, and made His disciples, not only in order that we ourselves might be blessed and quickened by the gift unspeakable, but in order that through us it may be communicated, just as each particle when leavened in the mass of the dough communicates its energy to its adjacent particle until the whole is leavened.

I am afraid that indifference to the communication of the highest good, which marks sadly too many Christian professors in all ages, and in this age, is a suspicious indication of a very slight realisation of the good for themselves. Luther said that justification was the article of a standing or a falling church. That may be true in the region of theology, but in the region of practical life I do not know that you will find a test more reliable and more easy of application than this, Does a man care for spreading amongst his fellows the gospel that he himself has received? If he does not, let him ask himself whether, in any real sense, he has it. Well-doing includes doing good to others, and the possession of Christ will make it certain that we shall impart Him.

**II. Notice the bearing of this elementary injunction upon the scope of the obligation.**

Let us do good to all men. It was Christianity that invented the word humanity; either in its meaning of the aggregate of men or its meaning of a gracious attitude towards them. And it invented the word because it revealed the thing on which it rests. Brotherhood is the sequel of Fatherhood, and the conception of mankind, beneath all diversities of race and culture and the like, as being an organic whole, knit together by a thousand mystical bands, and each atom of which has connection with, and obligations to, every other--that is a product of Christianity, however it may have been in subsequent ages divorced from a recognition of its source. So, then, the gospel rises above all the narrow distinctions which call themselves patriotism and are parochial, and it says that there is neither circumcision nor uncircumcision, Jew nor Greek, Barbarian, Scythian, bond nor free, but all are one. Get high enough up upon the hill, and the hedges between the fields are barely perceptible. Live on the elevation to which the Gospel of Jesus Christ lifts men, and you look down upon a great prairie, without a fence or a ditch or a division. So my text comes with profound significance, Let us do good to all, because all are included in the sweep of that great purpose of love, and in the redeeming possibilities of that great death on the Cross. Christ has swept the compass, if I may say so, of His love and work all round humanity; and are we to extend our sympathies or our efforts less widely? The circle includes the world; our sympathies should be as wide as the circle that Christ has drawn.

Let me remind you, too, that only such a world-wide communication of the highest good that has blessed ourselves will correspond to the proved power of that Gospel which treats as of no moment diversities that are superficial, and can grapple with and overcome, and bind to itself as a crown of glory, every variety of character, of culture, of circumstance, claiming for its own all races, and proving itself able to lift them all. The Bread of God which came down from heaven is an exotic everywhere, because it came down from heaven, but it can grow in all soils, and it can bring forth fruit unto eternal life everywhere amongst mankind. So let us do good to all.

And then we are met by the old objection, The eyes of a fool are in the ends of the earth. Keep your work for home, that wants it. Well! I am perfectly ready to admit that in Christian work, as in all others there must be division of labour, and that one man's tastes and inclinations will lead him to one sphere and one form of it; and another man's to another; and I am quite ready, not to admit, but strongly to insist, that, whatever happens, home is not to be neglected. All men includes the slums in England as well as the savages in Africa, and it is no excuse for neglecting either of these departments that we are trying to do something in the other. But it is not uncharitable to say that the objection to which I am referring is most often made by one or other of two classes, either by people who do not care about the Gospel, nor recognise the good of it at all, or by people who are ingenious in finding excuses for not doing the duty to which they are at the moment summoned. The people that do the one are the people that do the other. Where do you get your money from for home work? Mainly from the Christian Churches. Who is it that keeps up missionary work abroad? Mainly the Christian Churches. There is a vast deal of unreality in that objection. Just think of the disproportion between the embarrassment of riches in our Christian appliances here in England and the destitution in these distant lands. Here the ships are crammed into a dock, close up against one another, rubbing their yards upon each other; and away out yonder on the waters there are leagues of loneliness, where never a sail is seen. Here, at home, we are drenched with Christian teaching, and the Churches are competing with each other, often like rival tradespeople for their customers; and away out yonder a man to half a million is considered a fair allowance. Let us do good to all.

**III. Lastly, note the bearing of this elementary precept on the occasions that rise for the discharge of the duty.**

As we have opportunity. As I have already said, the Christian way to look at our circumstances is to regard them as openings for the exercise of Christian virtue, and therefore summonses to its discharge. And if we regarded our own position individually, so we should find that there were many, many doors that had long been opened, into which we had been too blind or too lazy, or too selfishly absorbed in our own concerns, to enter. The neglected opportunities, the beckoning doors whose thresholds we have never crossed, the good that we might have done and have not done--these are as weighty to sink us as the positive sins, the opportunities for which have appealed to our worse selves.

But I desire to say a word, not only about the opportunities offered to us individually, but about those offered to England for this great enterprise. The prophet of old represented the proud Assyrian conqueror as boasting, My hand hath gathered as a nest the riches of the peoples ... and there was none that moved the wing, or opened the mouth, or peeped. It might be the motto of England to-day. It is not for nothing that we and our brethren across the Atlantic, the inheritors of the same faith and morals and literature, and speaking the same tongue, have had given to us the wide dominion that we possess, I know that England has not climbed to her place without many a crime, and that in her skirts is found the blood of poor innocents, but yet we have that connection, for good or for evil, with subject races all over the earth. And I ask whether or not that is an opportunity that the Christian Church is bound to make use of. What have we been intrusted with it for? Commerce, dominion, the impartation of Western knowledge, literature, laws? Yes! Is that all? Are you to send shirting and not the Gospel? Are you to send muskets that will burst, and gin that is poison, and not Christianity? Are you to send Shakespeare, and Milton, and modern science, and Herbert Spencer, and not Evangelists and the Gospels? Are you to send the code of English law and not Christ's law of love? Are you to send godless Englishmen, through whom the name of God is blasphemed amongst the Gentiles, and are you not to send missionaries of the Cross? A Brahmin once said to a missionary, Look here! Your Book is a good Book. If you were as good as your Book you would make India Christian in ten years.

Brethren! the European world to-day is fighting and scrambling over what it calls the unclaimed corners of the world; looking upon all lands that are uncivilised by Western civilisation either as markets, or as parts of their empire. Is there no other way of looking at the heathen world than that? How did Christ look at it? He was moved when He saw the multitudes as sheep having no shepherd. Oh! if Christian men, as members of this nation, would rise to the height of Christ's place of vision, and would look at the world with His eyes, what a difference it would make! I appeal to you, Christian men and women, as members of this nation, and therefore responsible, though it may be infinitesimally, for what this nation is doing in the distant corners of the world, and urge on you that you are bound, so far as your influence goes, to protest against the way of looking at these heathen lands as existing to be exploited for the material benefit of these Western Powers. You are bound to lend your voice, however weak it may be, to the protests against the savage treatment of native races--against the drenching of China with narcotics, and Africa with rum; to try to look at the world as Christ looked at it, to rise to the height of that great vision which regards all men as having been in His heart when He died on the Cross, and refuses to recognise in this great work Barbarian, Scythian, bond or free. We have awful responsibilities; the world is open to us. We have the highest good. How shall we obey this elementary principle of our text, unless we help as we can in spreading Christ's reign? Blessed shall we be if, and only if, we fill the seed-time with delightful work, and remember that well-doing is imperfect unless it includes doing good to others, and that the best good we can do is to impart the Unspeakable Gift to the men that need it.