

SHALL WE KNOW ONE ANOTHER?

AND OTHER PAPERS.

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DO WHAT YOU CAN.

“She hath done what she could.”—Mark xiv. 8.

THE text which heads this paper deserves attentive consideration. It contains words which were spoken by the Lord Jesus Christ in praise of a woman. Her name we are not told: this single action is all that we know about her. But she was praised by Christ. Blessed indeed are those whom the Lord commendeth!

The circumstances of the history are few and simple. Our Lord was sitting in the house of Simon the leper, at Bethany, “two days” before his crucifixion. The end of his work was drawing near, and he knew it. The cross and the grave were in sight, and he saw them. “As he sat at meat, there came a woman having an alabaster box of ointment of spikenard very precious; and she brake the box, and poured it on his head. And there were some that had indignation within themselves.” They found fault with the woman’s action. They said it was “waste.” They murmured against her. But here at once the Great Head of the Church interposed. He declared that the woman had “done a good work.” She had seized the last occasion she had of doing honour to her Master. She had used the only means she had of testifying her affection. And then he placed on her conduct the seal of his approbation in these solemn words—“She hath done what she could. . . . Wheresoever this Gospel shall be preached throughout the whole world, this also that she hath done shall be spoken of for a memorial of her.” Such was the occasion when these words were spoken. Now, what are the lessons they are meant to teach us? There are two which appear to me to stand out prominently on the face of the sentence, two mighty principles which ought never to be forgotten. Let me try to show what they are.

1. We learn, for one thing, that the Lord Jesus likes his people to be *doing Christians*. He commends the action of the woman before him. Others sat by in idle admiration, but never lifted a finger to do honour to their Messiah. It was very different with this woman. She “did” something. She did “what she could.” Hence the praises bestowed on her. The Great Head of the Church likes “*doing*” Christians.

What do I mean by “*doing*” Christians? I mean Christians who show their Christianity in their lives—by deeds, by actions, by practice, by performance. True religion is not made up of general notions and abstract opinions—of certain views, and doctrines, and feelings, and sentiments. Useful as these things are, they are not everything. You must not rest content with them. You must see that they produce a certain line of conduct in daily life. The wheels of the machine must move. The clock must go as well as have a

handsome case and face. It matters little what a man thinks, and feels, and wishes in religion, if he never gets further than thinking, and feeling, and wishing. The great question is, What fruit does the man bring forth? What does he do? How does he live?

“*Doing*” is the only satisfactory proof that a man is a living member of the Lord Jesus Christ, and that his faith is the faith of God’s elect. True faith is not like the faith of devils, who “believe and tremble,” but neither love nor obey. True faith will never be found alone, though it alone justifies. Where there is faith, there will always be love, and obedience, and an earnest desire to do God’s will. Living members of Christ will always show something of their Master’s mind. Weak as they may be, they love to follow his example whose whole life was action. It may be little that they are able to do, but that little they will try to do. We may be very sure there is no grace where there is no “doing.”

“*Doing*” is the only satisfactory proof that your Christianity is a real work of the Spirit. Talking and profession are cheap and easy things. They cost nothing. They are soon picked up, soon learned, soon forgotten, and soon laid aside. But “doing” requires trouble and self-denial. It looks like “business,” and makes the world believe that religion is a reality. I care little to hear that a man likes sermons, and always goes to hear, and thinks sermons very good and very fine. I have lived long enough not to be satisfied with this. It is only blossoms; it is not fruit. I want to know what the man DOES?—What does he do in private? What does he do in his family? What does he do on week-days? Is his religion anything better than a Sunday coat—a thing put on every Sunday morning, and put off every Sunday night?—If there is no “DOING” in a man’s religion, it is not of the right sort. It has not got the true stamp on it. Like bad silver and gold, or plated articles, it has not got the Goldsmiths’ Hall mark on it. It is worth little now; it will bring no peace on a death-bed; it will not pass the gate of heaven.

“*Doing*” is the only evidence that will avail a man in the day of judgment. Let any one note the conclusion of the 25th chapter of St. Matthew, and he will see what I mean. Your works will be the witnesses by which your faith will be tried. The question will not be, “What church did you attend? and what profession did you make? and what experience have you had? and what did you wish to be?” The only question will be, What FRUITS did your faith produce? “Faith,” says James, “if it hath not works, is dead, being alone” (James ii. 17).

Your works cannot justify you, my dear reader. They cannot save. They cannot put away our sin. Christ’s work alone can do that. But there never was a justified man who did not do works—at any rate, some. Your works do not go before you into heaven, nor yet alongside of you. The souls that get there see none of their works. They only see Jesus Christ’s precious blood

and all-prevailing intercession. But your works are to “*follow*” you, if you are to go to heaven, in order to speak to your character. “Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord, that they may rest from their labours; and their works do follow them” (Rev. xiv. 13). Never was there a greater mistake than to suppose that works are of no consequence because they cannot justify and cannot save. The supposition shows gross ignorance, and is a sad perversion of Scripture.

Are true Christians *God’s workmanship*—are they new creatures? Yes! The Spirit made them what they are. But mark what St. Paul tells the Ephesians (ii. 10): “We are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.”

Are true Christians a *peculiar people*? Yes! God has chosen them out of the world, and called them to be his. But wherefore? St. Paul tells Titus “that they may be zealous of good works—careful to maintain good works” (Titus ii. 14; iii. 8).

Remember this, dear Reader. Let no man deceive you with vain words. Let none persuade you that “doing” is not an important part of Christianity. It is an old saying, “Handsome is that handsome does.” I will mend it. I say, “Christian is that Christian does.” Would you be a happy Christian, and enjoy great comfort? would you be useful and a benefit to others? I trust many would like this. Then store up my advice today. Be a doing Christian. “Be doers of the word, and not hearers only” (James i. 22).

2. We learn, for another thing, from this woman’s history, that *all true Christians can do something*, and that all should do what they can. What do I mean by “doing something?” I mean doing something for God’s glory—something for Christ’s cause—something for the souls of others—something to spread true religion—something to oppose the march of sin and the devil—something to enlighten the darkness around us—something to improve and amend the world. Something or other, I say, every true Christian can do, and what he can do he ought to do.

Now I know well the devil labours to make true Christians do nothing. Doing Christians are the devil’s greatest enemies. Doing Christians pull down his work, and weaken his hands. He will try hard to prevent your being a man of this character. I warn every one who has reason to hope that he is a true Christian to remember this, and to be on his guard. Listen not to the reasons which Satan puts into your heads. Satan was a liar from the beginning, and you must not let his lies prevent you doing good. Stand on your guard and be not deceived.

Satan will tell some that they are *too young* to do anything. Believe him not: that is a lie. The greatest men in the world and Church began to work, and were great, at a very early age. Alexander the Great conquered the world before he was thirty. Pitt was prime minister of England before twenty-five.

It is never too soon to begin working for Christ. Yet a little while and the enemy will say, "You are too old, and it is too late."

Satan will tell others that they *stand alone too much* to do any good. Believe him not: that is another lie. There never was a change for good or evil in the world's history which may not be traced up to one man. Martin Luther, Mahomet, Napoleon—all are cases in point. They all rose from the ranks. They stood alone at first. They owed nothing to position or patronage. Yet see what they did! Away with the idea that numbers alone have power! It is minorities, and not majorities, that shake the world. Think of the little flock Christ left behind him. Think of the 120 believers in the upper chamber of Jerusalem, and remember what they did to the nations. And then learn what wonderful things a few resolute hearts can do.

Satan will tell others that they have no *power* to do anything. He will say, "You have no gifts, no talents, no influence. You had better sit still." Believe him not: this also is a lie. Everybody has a certain degree of influence and weight upon earth. Some have a ton-weight, some a hundred-weight, some a pound, some an ounce, some only a grain but all have some. Everybody is continually helping forward the cause of God or the cause of the devil. Every morning you rise from your bed you go forth to gather with Christ or to scatter. Every night you lie down in that bed you have either been building the walls of Zion or helping to pull them down. There are but two parties and two sides in the world—the side of God and the side of the devil—the side of good and the side of evil. No man, woman, or child can ever be neutral, and live to themselves: one of the two sides they are always helping, whether they will or no. Grant that your gifts and powers are but a grain of sand; will you not throw that grain into the scale of God's cause? It is the last grain that turns the scale, and the last pound that breaks the horse's back. Grant that you have only one talent; see to it that your one talent is laid out as heartily for God as if you had a hundred. Ah, reader! it is not gifts that are necessary for doing good, but *will*. It is often the "one talent" people that are the most slow to move.

But Satan will tell some that they have *no opportunities* for doing anything—no door open on any side. Once more I say, Believe him not: this also is a great lie. Never believe that you have no opportunity of doing good, till you are cast on a desert island, and cut off from the face of mankind; never till you are the last man in the world, never till then, believe that there is no opening for doing good.

Do you ask me what you can do? I reply, There is something for every true Christian in England to do. The least and lowest, the weakest and feeblest child of God is surrounded by people to whom he may do good. Have you not got relatives and connections, husband or wife, parents or children, brothers or sisters? Have you not got friends, or companions, or fellow-

servants? Have you not got masters or mistresses, or labourers, or servants? Who in the world, almost, could say, No! to this question? Who but must say, Yes! If you say, Yes! then behold your opportunities of doing good. Harm or good you must do to all about you; you cannot help it. See to it that you do GOOD.

Have you not got a *tongue* to speak with? Might you not often speak a word of counsel? Might you not encourage the wavering, quicken the slothful, recall the backslider, check the profligate, reprove the worldly, advise the weak? Might you not often put in a word for God and Christ, and show your colours? Who can tell the power of “a word spoken in season?” It has often been the salvation of a soul.

Have you not the power of doing good by *your life*? You may work wonders by steady consistency and patient continuance in well-doing. You may make people think by exercising graces before them, when they stop their ears against good counsel, and cannot be reclaimed by the tongue. Patience and meekness, brotherly kindness and charity, a forbearing and forgiving spirit, a gentle, unselfish, and considerate temper—all these have often a mighty effect in the long run. Like the constant dropping of water, they can wear away prejudices. Thousands can understand them, who cannot understand doctrine. There is such a thing as “winning without the word” (1 Peter iii. 1).

I speak of things within the reach of all who have the will to do something for God. I might say more. The field is wide, the harvest great, and the labourers few. I might speak of the good that might be done everywhere by trying to teach the ignorant, to evangelise the wicked, to promote temperance, soberness, and chastity, to encourage honesty, economy, good temper, faithfulness, diligence, and sabbath-keeping. I might speak of help that might be given to charitable and religious societies, merely by making them known. Thousands of pounds might be got for home and abroad, if only men who cannot give themselves would ask others to give.

But I forbear. I have said enough to give food for thinking. Let a man once have the will to do good, and he will soon find the way. He will find that good can be done.

A true Christian should desire to leave the world, when he dies, a better world than it was when he was born, and should give his mite to improve it, whether in money, talents, or time. Let every man on earth who hopes he is a true Christian remember this. Let every one wake up, rub his eyes, look round him, and see if he cannot do something. Let no one say, I can do nothing, unless he has tried. Let no one say he has tried, and it is no use, because he has not done everything that he wanted. There is much pride and mortified vanity in that thought. If we will do nothing unless we can do it perfectly, we shall do nothing at all. Let no one fancy he is doing no good, because he sees

no immediate fruit from it. God's time is often not our time. Duties are ours and results are God's. But something let every true man of God try to do.

Set the Lord Jesus Christ before you, reader; and go forward in his footsteps, looking unto him. Let him be your strength, and let him be your example. "He went about doing good." Go and do like him. You may be able to do very little: but DO WHAT YOU CAN.