

Hi, This is Stephen David. I am a pastor of Ekklesia Evangelical Fellowship. This presentation is a result of Biblical Discussions that we have weekly, addressing the difficult passages of the Bible.

QUESTION: AREN'T THERE REALLY NO ONE WHO DO NO GOOD?

Romans 3:12 says, "All have turned aside; together they have become worthless; no one does good, not even one."

During this Covid-19 pandemic, we see many celebrities, businessmen, employees, NGOs, and other religious folks doing great charity to help the poor and needy. Aren't these people doing good? Is the Word of God true in its declaration that no one does good, not even one?

How do you justify Rom 3:12 in the context of present reality (all kinds of people doing good to others)?

It seems even early church fathers struggled with this Scripture. For example, Origen (2nd century early church father) said: "That no one has done good, not even one, is a hard saying and difficult to understand. How is it possible that no one, Jew or Greek, has ever done anything good? Are we supposed to believe that nobody has ever shown hospitality, fed the hungry, clothed the naked, delivered the innocent from the hands of the powerful or done anything similar?"

So how are we to understand this text? I would like to share with you five factors to help us understand this text.

FIRST, when the Bible says "no one does good, not even one" it is said in the sight of God who knows the deepest/innermost recesses of the heart. It does not say in the sight of man who looks only at external appearance.

SECOND, the meaning of "no one does good" in Romans 3:12 is not confined to doing just charitable works. Examining the context where the overarching factor is to expose the sinfulness of all men and their need for the Savior, the meaning of "no one does good" seems to be—"no one is morally perfect/excellent in their deeds" or "no one is doing good enough to be saved by their own goodness."

Origen (2nd century early church father) said: If someone lays the foundation for a house and puts up one or two walls or transports some building material to the site, can he be said to have built the house, just because he has set to work on it? The man who will be said to have built the house is the one who has finished off each and every part of it. So I think that here the apostle is saying that no one has done good in the sense that no one has brought goodness to perfection and completion.

Ecclesiastes 7:20 gives us the clarity to understand **Romans 3:12**, “Surely there is not a righteous man on earth who does good and never sins.”

THIRD, the sins that we do far outweigh the good works that we perform.

The sins that we commit are 99.99%, whereas the good works that we perform are just .1%.

For this reason, it is said that man is centrally evil but only peripherally good.

Jesus Himself identified this and said in **Luke 11:13**, “If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children...”

Due to his prevalent evil nature, man’s identity is this: SINNER, not GOOD.

Example: When my children suffer from headache, cold or cough, I can suggest some medicines like Dolo 650mg, Citreline, Cough syrup. But no one calls me a doctor. As a non-doctor I give some basic medicines, but I am not essentially a doctor.

Similarly, as sinners we may do some good works, but that does not make us good or righteous. We are essentially sinful.

It is written in Isaiah 64:6, “We have all become like one who is unclean, and all our righteous deeds are like a polluted garment.”

- **Good News Translation**, “All of us have been sinful; even our best actions are filthy through and through. Because of our sins we are like leaves that wither and are blown away by the wind.”

So, man does not become good by doing some good works because his sins are incomparably greater than his good works, revealing his true nature, that he is a sinner.

FOURTH, the good works that people do, they are not done out their love for the Creator of the heavens and the earth.

What is the most important commandment?

Mark 12:30-31, And you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.’ The second is this: You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’

Serving only our neighbor by refusing to love God is HUMANISM.

Serving only God by refusing to love our neighbor is FANATICISM. (religious fanatics)

Loving God and out of our love for God serving our neighbor is TRUE DEVOTION AND LOVE.

So, these good works which do not reflect their love for God are no good in God’s sight.

FIFTH, people do good works either for their own glory or happiness. They don’t do good works for the glory of God.

The Lord Jesus said to His disciples, “Let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven” (Matthew 5:16).

Who must be glorified through good works? Not man but God.

Since everything exists for God’s glory, even good works exists for the glory of God.

Good works that does not bring glory to God are no good in God’s sight. Such people are robbers of God’s glory in the name of doing good works.

Because man's sins far outweigh the good works he does, because he doesn't do good works out of His love to God, because he doesn't do good works for the glory of God, in God's sight, there is none who does good, not even one.

Illustration: Think about a servant who spurns the King's command, spits on King's face and flees to another kingdom. This servant continues to lie and cheat in another kingdom but does some good works to help people. Although he is doing some good works, this servant is still arrogant and does not want to repent before the King. Someone reports to the King that the servant who spurned and spat on his face is doing some good works in another kingdom. Will the King take delight to hear this? When this servant is arrogant to repent before the King, what good are his good works before the King?

People have sinned and rebelled against God. They are arrogant and don't want to repent of their sins and turn to the Living God. They continue to live in sin for themselves but do some good works. Are these people good in the sight of God?

So what are the good works that God accepts?

Ephesians 2:10, For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.

Who are those in Christ Jesus?

Since man is basically a sinner and cannot save himself from sin and hell by his good works, Christ Jesus came as a man and died for the sins of people. He rose again on the third day evidencing hope in Him. So those who repent of their sins and believe in Christ Jesus, their sins are forgiven and they become a new creation in Him. These are the ones who are in Christ Jesus.

The good works done in Christ Jesus are acceptable and pleasing to God.

Why?

The good works in Christ are not the good works done to be saved but because they are saved by the grace of God. The grace of God is the only hope and not good works.

The good works in Christ are done out of genuine love for God and people.

The good works in Christ are done for the glory of God, reflecting His image.

So, the only good works acceptable and pleasing to God are the good works done in Christ Jesus.

If you are an unbeliever, where is your hope? Your good works can save you or satisfy you. No one is good. Only Christ alone can save you from sin and condemnation. Look to Him. Believe in Him for the forgiveness of your sins.

If you are a believer, are you active in doing good works? We are saved by the grace of God to do good works for the glory of God and for the good of people.