

ADORNING THE DOCTRINE OF CHRIST (Part 3)

By Brent Hunter, Evangelist Johnson Avenue church of Christ

Paul tells Titus that Christians are to “adorn the doctrine of God our Savior in every respect” (Titus 2:10). In two previous articles we talked about the importance of this subject. I will begin with a brief review before we finish with this final installment of this article on “Adorning the doctrine.”

How can church members effectively adorn the doctrine of Christ?

The scriptures teach this is done in four ways: First, through **consistent righteous moral living**. The key here is be a good example (I Tim 4:12). Folks would rather “see a sermon than hear one.” When we live the life we are confessing, we complement and adorn the message rather than contradict it. Secondly, we adorn the doctrine by **standing for truth and doing so with the right attitude**. Thirdly, we adorn the gospel by maintaining a proper understanding, response, and **focus on God’s grace**. The fourth way is the subject of part three of this article:

The church is adorned when good works are the persistent pursuit of all Christians

An overview of Titus chapter three demonstrates the importance of “being zealous for good works” (Titus 2:14). The chapter can be divided up as follows:

1. The good works of a Christian citizen (3:1-2).
2. The Christian’s motivation for good works (3:3-8).
3. The good work of Christian faithfulness (3:9-11).
4. The purpose of the Christian’s good works (3:12-15).

The context is saying that one important way of “adorning” the doctrine is through the Christian’s faithfulness to do “good works.” It reminds me of the summary statement about Jesus’ life in Acts 1:1: Luke says his gospel is about the things Jesus “began both **to do** and to teach.” Jesus went about *living* the message of the kingdom by *doing good*, not just by preaching. God’s plan for the church is for the individual members of its body to “do good to all people, and especially to those who are of the household of faith” (Gal 6:10). In so doing, the gospel’s power is demonstrated to a lost and dying world! It is not surprising that the crucified savior calls the saved to a crucified, transformed life of service. When the world sees God’s love and grace showered upon the body, (See Jn 13:1 ff) and the community, (James 1:17), then God’s church will be properly adorned. It is certainly right that God’s plan for general benevolence be done by individuals and not out of the church treasury. But how often is the focus on the wrong way others do it, while neglecting our responsibilities to “practice pure and undefiled religion” and to be involved in serving our communities as individual Christians? One preacher asked recently, “If this church were to suddenly disappear from this community, would the community notice, would you even be missed?” Jesus said we must not put our light under a bushel but on the lamp stand so it would give light to all that are in the house (Matt 5:15). May the church of Jesus Christ never be so afraid of going over board, that we are not serious about getting on board! The church will never adorn the doctrine by championing primarily the negative. In other words our main focus must not be simply making sure we don’t do good works in the wrong way. It must also encourage its members to positively obey these commands in the right way! Yes, the church must keep in mind that yes, “Unless Jehovah builds the house we build it in vain” (Ps 127:1) but never forget the **house must be built!** For the church to be adorned it must follow the example of Jesus and “send out laborers into His harvest” (Lk 10:2), this goes beyond having an outreach which is almost exclusively from pulpits in church buildings. Like Jesus, we must do more than teach, the church must serve and be busy about doing good. **We are saved to serve, taught to teach, and won to win!**

Christians are to be “**rich** in good works” (I Tim 6:8), a “**pattern**” or example of good works (Titus 2:7), be “**zealous for good works**” (Titus 2:11-14), “**careful to maintain good works**” (Titus 3:8, 14), and willing to “**stir each other up** to do good works” (Heb 10:24).