

60-03-01-Adorning the Doctrine

testimony, beauty, doctrine, godliness, virtues topics

Tit 2:9-10; 1Pe 3:3-5a

The Gospel becomes attractive when faith is adorned with godliness.

INTRODUCTION:

–God uses *human relationships* to illustrate His people, so that His *instructions to people* in those relationships *apply to all believers*. For instance, the *bond-servant* and the *bride*. Hear what He says: *first, to the bond-servant*– Titus 2:9-10 (ESV) Bondservants are to be submissive to their own masters in everything; they are to be well-pleasing, not argumentative, not pilfering, but showing all good faith, so that in everything they may adorn the doctrine of God our Savior. *then, to the bride*– 1 Pe 3:3-5a (ESV), *Do not let your adorning be external—the braiding of hair and the putting on of gold jewelry, or the clothing you wear— but let your adorning be the hidden person of the heart with the imperishable beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which in God’s sight is very precious. For this is how the holy women who hoped in God used to adorn themselves...* Both exhortations teach the same lesson: Christians are to adorn the faith they profess. We are to clothe the bare bones of doctrine with *godly, virtuous conduct*.

–Hypocrisy in Christians turns people off. But **HOM.idea**.

I. Adorning the Doctrine Is the Test of Truth

- A. *False doctrine* is confronted by *orthodoxy* (but *creeds aren’t the only measure of truth*.)
1. We can devise *doctrinal formulas* and *theological test-questions*, but *God’s test of truth* is the testimony of godly living (choosing the Creed is supposed to mean changing our conduct).
 2. The best evidence of true doctrine is the godly life it promotes [from John Greenleaf Whittier wrote: *The dear Lord’s best interpreters / Are humble human souls; / The Gospel of a life like theirs / Is more than books or scrolls. / From scheme and creed the light goes out / The saintly fact survives; / The blessed Master none can doubt / Revealed in holy lives.*]
- B. What is *doctrine* all about? (For us, it’s often a list of right beliefs; for God it’s a lifestyle of right behaviors.)
1. *Sound doctrine* is crucial, but *living it out* is the *test of true faith*.
 2. For example, Paul’s teachings on grace always introduce *ethics*. (All points of *doctrinal belief* are followed by *life applications*.)
 - a. Belief about the mercy of God– Ro 12:1, Therefore, I urge you,

brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God--this is your spiritual act of worship.

- b. Belief about what happens at salvation— **Ro 6:2**, We died to sin; how can we live in it any longer? [the meaning of baptism: our old life dies and is buried in Christ, then we rise to live a whole new way of life.]
 - c. Belief about who we are— **1 Th 5:5-6**, You are all sons of the light and sons of the day. We do not belong to the night or to the darkness. So then, let us not be like others, who are asleep, but let us be alert and self-controlled.
3. Another example is John's teachings on the nature of God:
- a. Our belief that "God is light"—**1 John 1:5-6**, This is the message we have heard from him and declare to you: God is light; in him there is no darkness at all. If we claim to have fellowship with him yet walk in the darkness, we lie and do not live by the truth.
 - b. Our belief that "God is love"— **1 John 4:7-8**, *Dear friends, let us love one another, for love comes from God. Everyone who loves has been born of God and knows God. Whoever does not love does not know God, because God is love.*

TRANS: The test of orthodoxy and sound doctrine is how well we adorn the Gospel with holy behavior. We are people of the truth when we live our lives in line with the truth. Mere statements about moral behavior based on doctrinal belief isn't enough. **The Gospel becomes attractive when faith is adorned with godliness.**

II. Adorning the Doctrine Is the Testimony of Truth

- A. Christ's reputation can be ruined by poorly groomed Christians [*disloyal friends, hard bargainers, unkind employers, lazy employees, habitual gossip*]- **Ro 2:23-24**, You who brag about the law, do you dishonor God by breaking the law? As it is written: "God's name is blasphemed among the Gentiles because of you."
- B. Because inconsistency is quickly dismissed, moral consistency is*
 1. *the best defense of the Gospel— **1 Pe 2:15**, For it is God's will that by doing good you should silence the ignorant talk of foolish men.
 2. *the best rebuttal to unbelief (*non-Christians don't walk by faith, but by sight: seeing is believing* [I was a thin high school shot-putter, mocked by the heavyweights. But I beat them, because my coach was an Olympic shot-putter, who taught me the *right form*].

TRANS: The Gospel message is not to be isolated from Gospel living.

The Gospel attracts the lost when faith is adorned with godliness.

III. Adorning the Doctrine Is the NT Teaching of Truth (In the NT doctrine and ethics are *inextricably* intertwined)

- A. All points of NT theology lead to a changed life: **We believe***
 1. *in God the Father, Who wants His children to live like Him.
 2. *in God the Son, Who is both our Savior and our Example—
 - a. His incarnation is a model of self-emptying love for others.
 - b. His cross paid for our sins, but also broke sin's power over us.
 - c. His resurrection raised us up to a new life of victory.
 - d. His ascension left us behind as channels of His work.
 3. *in God the Spirit, Who produces in us a Christlike character.
 4. *in grace, both for salvation and for growth in godliness.
 5. *in Christ's return, inspiring both hope and ethical purity— **1 Jo 3:3**, Everyone who has this hope in him purifies himself, just as he is pure.
 6. *in God's kingdom— **Ro 14:17**, For the kingdom of God is not a matter of eating and drinking, but of righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit.
- B. NT teaching is "good news"— **It's glorious news! because***
 1. *the Gospel of Christ is not just another system of ethics; it's about Christ Himself living His life in us and through us.
 2. *it's relevant to daily experience and confronts life's problems.
 3. *Christlike living makes the Gospel understandable; it makes the truth plain, to those puzzled or repelled by a theoretical faith.

CONCLUSION:

—Christian truth is made beautiful by Christian deeds. **The Gospel becomes attractive when faith is adorned with godliness.**

—Without holy behavior, *our Gospel invitation is inadequate, our faith is disfigured, truth is obscured, and ultimately, Christ is betrayed*. God wants our salvation adorned in daily, Christlike conduct.

—Let's seek the face of God for a fragrant Christian life; let's live lovely, delightful lives in Christ; let's yield to the Holy Spirit's work of transforming us, so that **we make the Gospel attractive by clothing our faith with godliness.**

—[The hymn of Isaac Watts sums this all up so well: *O let our lips and lives express / The holy gospel we profess; / So let our works and virtues shine, / To prove the doctrine all divine. / Thus shall we best proclaim abroad / The honours of our Saviour God, / When the salvation reigns within / And grace subdues the power of sin.*]