

# Adorning the Doctrine of God Our Savior

by Charles Finney

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*We should adorn the doctrine of God our Savior by living out the spirit of the gospel in word and deed, and by being ourselves an illustration of its meaning, and by evincing to all its spirit and efficacy.*

**Scripture:** Matthew 5:16, Romans 12:1-2, 2 Corinthians 3:2-3, Galatians 5:22-23, Ephesians 2:8-10, Philippians 1:27, Colossians 3:17, Titus 2:10, James 1:22, 1 Peter 2:12

**Topics:** "The Power of Grace", "Living Out the Gospel"

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## Description

Charles Finney emphasizes the importance of adorning the doctrine of God our Savior, as expressed in Titus 2:10. He explains that this doctrine is centered on God's grace aimed at redeeming and purifying us to live holy lives. Finney urges believers to honor the gospel through their actions, as their lives serve as a testament to its power and truth. He warns that failing to adorn the gospel not only dishonors it but also leads to personal ruin and hinders its success in the world. Ultimately, he encourages Christians to live out their faith authentically, as their example can draw others to Christ and demonstrate the transformative power of the gospel.

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## Transcript

"But showing all good fidelity, that they may adorn the doctrine of God our Savior in all things." Titus 2:10.

In our last Friday prayer meeting, one of the brethren quoted this passage in prayer. It struck me with great force; indeed, I never had seen its beauty and power so fully before. It turned my mind upon this passage with so much interest, that I have concluded to present my views upon it in this morning's discourse.

1. First, let us inquire, what is this doctrine of God our Savior?

The chapter in which the passage occurs, affords us all the answer we need. Paul is instructing Timothy how to teach and preach the gospel to his converts. He specially applies the gospel to "aged men," "aged women," "young women," "young men," to himself, as a "pattern of good words," and to "servants;" and in this latter connection, comes in our text. This exhortation is then enforced as well as explained in these remarkable words:--"For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, teaching us that denying ungodliness, and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world; looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Savior Jesus Christ; who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a

peculiar people, zealous of good works."

Let this suffice to show what the doctrine is that Christians of every class in life should strive to adorn. The essential idea of the doctrine is that God's infinite grace towards our lost world had for its aim to redeem us from all iniquity, and purify us unto himself--in short, to make us holy.

2. We must next inquire--what is it to adorn this doctrine?

To adorn it is to honor it, and make it honorable before all. It implies that we commend it by being ourselves an illustration of its meaning, and by evincing to all its spirit and efficacy. We are to prove the excellence of the doctrine by showing, in our own case, what it can do in the hands of the Holy Spirit to reform the world. The doctrine is good or otherwise, according to its practical results. If it accomplishes what it aims to, it is beyond expression valuable and glorious. That it can and does, is just the thing which God leaves for his people to prove by their lives. Hence, they must live so as to hold forth the excellence, beauty and power, of the gospel.

3. What are the particular reasons for our thus adorning the gospel?

Unless we adorn and honor the gospel, it will dishonor us. Paul said--"I magnify my office." He honored the office of an apostle and it honored him. But if he had neglected and disparaged the office, it would have visited disgrace on him. So if we do not magnify our office, all will despise us--the devil and all the universe will count us too mean to be cared for. To have such responsibilities and then to heed them not; to be pressed with such motives, and yet have no sensibility to their pressure and force--this would show that our character has no worthy elements in it, and ought to subject us to dishonor. If you do not adorn the gospel, there must be a reason; and what is it? This--that you are playing the hypocrite!

Again, if we do not adorn the gospel, it will more deeply ruin us. The gospel, instead of blessing us, will only work for us a deeper damnation. There is no avoiding such a result from such a life.

It will greatly grieve the Savior. If we profess the gospel and yet do not adorn it, we do the worst thing we can do to injure his cause and wound his feelings. Accordingly, we find that he expresses the utmost displeasure and disgust towards those who profess to love and honor him, yet do not. To one of the seven churches of Asia, he said--"I know thy works that thou art neither cold nor hot; I would thou wert cold or hot. So then, because thou art lukewarm and neither cold nor hot, I will spew thee out of my mouth!" No such language can be found elsewhere in the Bible;--from which we may infer that the Savior hates no other form of sin more intensely and with more utter loathing.

Again, if we do not adorn the gospel, we shall greatly hinder and retard its success. We shall stumble others who would enter the narrow way. Our life scandalizes the gospel which it should, but does not, adorn. He who, professing the gospel, does not adorn it, gives his highest influence against it. He throws against it the whole weight of his example.

If you reply to this that it is better to profess religion and be a somewhat decent backslider, than to come out in open opposition, this is not true. No argument which an opposer can use against the gospel will have the weight that a protesting life will have. He who professes love but lives hatred; whose lips honor Christ, but whose life protests against him, is Christ's worst enemy. The gospel does not suffer from any other foes as from him.

On the other hand, if we do adorn the gospel, it will surely adorn us. Let any one really adorn the gospel, it shall be to him a mantle of glory. If men witness in him the spirit of Christ, they will admire that spirit and honor him who exhibits it. Besides this, it will win others to love the Savior. If we illustrate it in our lives, it will carry conviction and persuasion too. It is true that in many things, the motives of Christians are liable to be misjudged. Sometimes, when they do right, false motives are imputed to them. Yet, though this be true, there will be many things which the world will be obliged to confess, and this reluctant testimony will be the more to their real honor. Wicked men cannot gainsay their living testimony to the power of the gospel on their own hearts, as manifest in their lives. A holy life will command the attention of the world, and they will inquire what this doctrine may be. They are forced to exclaim--How beautiful their lives are! and how sweet their temper! Who is this Savior whom they profess to follow, and to whose influence they attribute their peculiar spirit and life? If this doctrine begets such a spirit and such a life, we ought to know it and ought to have it!

So it will always be. If this doctrine is really adorned, it will be sure to create inquiry. It must arrest attention. There are probably few men of the least observation who have not known certain persons whose lives have arrested their attention. A man can hardly live anywhere without coming in contact with someone of whom he is constrained to ask--What is it that enables him to live so? What spirit is this? When they see its striking and beautiful manifestations, they are constrained to inquire thus for its causes, and are anxious to learn what they may be.

Mere philanthropists commonly ascribe every thing to phrenological development, and make nothing of it but mere humanity. But let them come into contact with a living and earnest Christianity, and they will see the difference. They will see that while the Christian lays all due stress on the rights of man and of woman too, they lay yet more stress upon the rights of God, and ought to. They will see that God has a rightful claim to the homage of his creatures, and that no man deserves much praise for justice who does not give God his rights as well as man his. Thus, the presence of a living Christianity corrects the common mistake of the mere philanthropist. In fact, this class are wont to make this mistake only where they see no living Christianity, but only a doctrinal one--only one which has its embodiment in creeds and pulpit teachings--not in the spirit and life of its professors. Let them see the doctrine really adorned, and they will then know the difference.

It is remarkable that modern philanthropy goes out only to the animal part of our nature, being, in this respect, on a level with the sympathy of brutes towards their own species. It troubles not itself to save the soul--all this is dropped out. You may see these philanthropists exceedingly zealous in defence of mere earthly interests, solicitous about visible and bodily joys and sorrows,--boiling over with excitement about the body;--but call them to labor for the soul,--they have no heart in it--no interest, no sympathy; those things lie beyond their sphere of care or concern.

Now let the doctrine of God our Savior be really adorned by those who believe it, and let no rights of man or woman be overlooked, and yet let all the rights of God be seen to be uppermost in their regards;--then philanthropists will see their mistake.

Again, let this doctrine be steadfastly honored, and men will surely see the beauty and truth of the doctrine of sanctification. Let Christians persevere, and they will certainly overcome. Overcoming sin and Satan, they will certainly prove to all that there is a power in the gospel to save from sin. Here what they will say:--"I have seen this man or woman now these years, and I know there must be something in them that I do not understand.["] Said one man of my acquaintance concerning a young lady who had been several

weeks in his family, and whose life eminently adorned the gospel--"Now, wife, I want you to tell me in what one thing that young woman sinned while she was in our family? Did you see her do or hear her say any single thing that was not in harmony with the gospel? I must confess, I say and heard nothing out of the right way." Yet he watched her with an eagle eye. He was not a Christian himself, and was by no means prejudiced in her favor as a Christian; but he could not help observing so peculiar a life, and he soon found that it commended itself most entirely to his moral feelings and judgements, so that he could say nothing against it.

Now, to produce such results, professors of religion need not be disputatious; they need only live out the spirit of the gospel in word and deed; so will it steadily confound gainsayers. The ungodly will see their need of the gospel, and the religion of the cross will work its way into the profound esteem of mankind.

One of the great reasons many give for not becoming religious is this--"If I should be converted, I could not stand; I should backslide and disgrace myself." This objection is not so common here as elsewhere. Abroad I meet with it almost every where; men saying, "I am afraid to profess religion, lest I should disgrace it and myself too. I had rather not profess than profess, and not adorn it." But, let me say,--If the gospel be adorned by its professors, men will see that it can be honored in the profession--that men can live a holy, blameless life. When abroad among strangers, I often ask individuals,--Do you not know of some one or more within your personal acquaintance, who really honor the gospel? Some, perhaps, will answer, no; but if you converse with them much, you are likely to conclude that they are either dishonest or untruthful. For, with most remarkable forethought, God, in his providence, has scattered some salt all abroad over Christian lands, so that every man shall have the moral trial of deciding whether he will or will not receive the lessons which it teaches.

Adorning the doctrine of Christ will encourage the impenitent to believe that there is something stable in religion. Beholding it in the real life, they will say,--"There is something that I want. I know that must be true religion." I now recollect the case of a lawyer not a professed Christian, one of the leading men in the State in his profession, who, though an entire stranger introduced himself to me while I was preaching from time to time in the city, saying--I have a friend whom I should like to have you see, and should be happy to have you go with me to her residence. Certainly, said I, and with pleasure. I found her an elderly lady, but her heart running over with love to God and to all her fellow-creatures. As our conversation drew out her deep knowledge and experience of the gospel, I saw him dash the tear from his cheek, greatly moved at such a demonstration of the power of the gospel. After we had left the house, he said to me--"What do you think of that? Is not that the true religion of the Bible? I know it is, and am determined never to rest till I have it."

If we adorn this doctrine people who know our life and yet do not embrace religion will feel severely self-condemned. Whether they are ungodly men out of the church or backsliders in it, they will see that their own course is wrong and without excuse. It will beget a sense of guilt and shame that they do not themselves live so as to adorn the gospel. They will see that they must adorn this gospel in heart and life, or they cannot be saved. For this world also they will see that they must be either a blessing in society or an odious nuisance.

4. What are the conditions of so adorning this gospel?

We must earnestly intend it. We must really set our hearts on being living epistles for God, and upon developing in our lives all that the gospel requires.

We must not be satisfied with merely having evidence of our acceptance with God. A hope that we are Christ's should not suffice, and certainly not, a hope which is weakened by much doubt. We ought to know that we have no right to hope unless we are truly in love with this gospel, and unless our heart is set upon adorning it in our temper and life. It will not do for us to rest with being about as good as most professors of religion. We are by no means to make any man our standard.

We should beware of legal motives lest we become unamiable in temper and come under the sway of a legal spirit instead of the spirit of peace, love and joy in the Holy Ghost. Such a temper as would represent the gospel as being unamiable in spirit is especially to be guarded against and deplored.

Beware of mistaking license for liberty; for this doctrine is designed to make us holy, and holiness surely can give no license to sin.

Guard against being in thought diverted from Christ. Let people do what they will, resolve ever so much, they never will live holy if Christ be left out. With Christ left out of one's thoughts, the gospel is left out, and there is no power left. You must give yourselves much to communion with him. Rely upon this, that unless you look to Christ as the center and fountain of your life, you will not live, and all your promises and covenants and resolutions, will not give you life. When you have let Christ pass from your thoughts, he no longer influences you, and he will not save you. Hence, he must be your theme--the great center of your thoughts and of your heart's power.

You will be wise to keep in mind one passage standing in our context--"Who gave himself for us that he might redeem us from all iniquity and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works." Remember that this was his object in dying for us--to make us a holy people to his own praise. For this end he endured all that mortal flesh could bear. Let us then strive to appreciate the value of this great end, even as he did. Let it be with us an omnipresent consideration, that Christ suffered for us to redeem us from all personal sin. Let no one fail to realize the worth of this great object, for none can bring their souls under the full pressure of gospel motives and gospel power unless they keep this great truth in the right place in their mind. You must realize that this is his object and should be yours also. Christ would have you take hold of him for this result that he may take hold of you. David Brainard made a remark which, in my early Christian life, was a great stumbling block to me--to the effect that "he did not expect to make much progress in holiness in this life, sin was so strong." Can this be according to the Bible? If so, then the provisions of grace for sanctification must be radically defective, and that fitness and fulness which so strikingly characterizes every thing else in the gospel are strangely wanting here--here, just where we might expect them to be most abundant. This cannot possibly be true.

Do you believe that Christ wants you to be saved from sin as much as you desire to be? Some of you have come to me to inquire how you may and can be delivered from sin; and I now ask you if you suppose that you are more anxious to be rid of sin than Christ is to have you? Will you not believe that Christ is at the bottom of all those desires which you feel; that his own mind energizes within your soul; that he is always intensely anxious to press this work along--always more interested by far in it than you ever are? What! Will you assume that Christ is so attracted and engrossed by the thundering hallelujahs of heaven that he loses sight of your struggles of a holy heart? Will you think that, when on a lovely Sabbath morning you lift up your heart before him for holiness, he does not hear you? Has he backslidden? Has his love for his people below grown cold? Ah never, NEVER! On this subject his interest never wanes. It has been burning many thousand years, and never can be quenched. Every desire you feel for victory over sin is only reciprocated action, coming from its fountain in his bosom.

Fully expect him to do all he has promised. Do not adopt that blasphemous assumption--that if you expect him to fulfill his promises to you, you will be deceived. Away with that infidel absurdity! Do not insult God by such an assumption;--an assumption that God is a liar!

Be sure to make use of all appropriate instrumentalities for light and life. The reason for this is that God uses them to accomplish his results in the soul of man; therefore, you should use them, that you may co-operate with him. Yet do not rest in these means as having, in themselves, the power to save you. The power resides only and wholly in God. "According as his divine power hath given us all things that pertain unto life and godliness."

It is affecting to think what an interest Christ must have in our character. Could he die for us to redeem us from all iniquity? Then his interest in our holiness is measured by nothing less than his own blood! An interest so deep that he did not even think his life too great a sacrifice for such an end! What a flood of light does this fact throw on his heart-interest for our sanctification!

What an interest every member of the true church must have that we should adorn the doctrine of God our Savior! Paul said--"Who is offended and I burn not?" If any were stumbled in their Christian course, it seemed to set his soul on fire!

What an interest the wicked world must have in the living piety of the church. That ungodly man who has a pious wife might say--I would not have her lose that piety of hers for a thousand worlds! I need it always before me, a living example and rebuke. So may all wicked men say of their Christian neighbors. If there is to be any hope of their salvation, they must have these instrumentalities which God himself has ordained.

What an interest it gives us in defending the character of Christians. Those who love Christ and his cause will not circulate slander against Christ's children. They feel too keenly alive to the interests that cluster around the Savior's name! Sometimes you find persons deeply distressed because they see Christ dishonored through his friends. Sometimes even the fear that he will be, greatly agonizes them, so deeply are their hearts set on his honor and praise. I could name to you facts that show the greatest distress felt by Christians in the supposed dishonor done to Christ through his children

To be careless about adorning this doctrine evinces hypocrisy. There can scarcely be a stronger proof of it than this.

When we really love this doctrine of God our Savior, how watchful we become of each other. Then how it strikes one to see Christ dishonored. But those who are not in sympathy with Christ can see his name continually dishonored, yet manifest no grief. They feel none.

But living Christians will be jealous and tender of each other's reputation. It will offend and grieve them to see the character of Christian brethren assailed. How can it be otherwise, so long as they see Christ thus wounded in the dishonor cast on his doctrine through his professed people?

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