



“Semper Reformanda”

Study 7: Christ’s Good Works (Tit. 3:1-14)

o The teaching and gospel ministries of the church must be accompanied by the ministry of good works, and not replaced or overshadowed by it.

I. The significance of Christ’s gospel ministry.

1. Under the Kingship of Christ, we saw how a recovery of mission-mindedness followed the Great Awakening under George Whitfield and the Wesley brothers. The Particular Baptists co-operated with the General Baptists of the New Connexion in missions but, sadly, this was accompanied by a de-emphasis on the doctrinal integrity. The same situation was observed among other denominations.
 - The pursuit of inter-denominational co-operation in missions was accompanied by the condemnation of denominational rivalry and religious bigotry “which frequently appears under the guise of a zeal for truth”. History showed that the pendulum had swung too far the other way. Theological Liberalism appeared in the late 19th century, spread, and grew to a head in the early 20th century. This, as we have seen, was met head-on by the conservative Evangelicals, which then split into three main camps - the Fundamentalists, the Reformed, and the Neo-Evangelicals. A fourth grouping, viz. Charismatic, arose, consisting of the Pentecostal movement of the early 1900s and the Charismatic renewal movement of the 1960s.
 - Along with a recovery of mission-mindedness following the Great Awakening was a recovery of “good works”.
2. John Newton (1725-1807), an Anglican minister and former slave shipmaster spoke out against slave trading. He had an influence upon many young Evangelical Christians, especially William Wilberforce (1759-1833) who fought for the abolition of slavery in Parliament. In America, slavery was finally abolished in 1865.
 - At the same time, various medical, moral and educational charities were formed, including the Sunday School movement. Co-operation in these works led to denominational barriers crumbling down, and distinctive doctrinal convictions melting away. This was the age of CH Spurgeon (1834-1892) winning souls to Christ in London, George Mueller (1805-1898) and his orphanage in Bristol, Hudson Taylor (1832-1905) and the evangelisation of China. It was an extension of the work of John Newton and William Wilberforce in Britain, William Carey (1761-1834) in India, and Adoniram Judson (1788-1850) in Burma.
 - After the confrontation between Theological Liberalism and Conservative Christianity in the early 20th century, the Neo-Evangelicals were on the forefront of carrying on the work of missions and social action. Some promulgate the modern church growth ideas of Donald McGavran and Peter Wagner that repudiates social action while advocating social

and marketing strategies to gain numerical success. Others advocate the social action of Ron Sider and John Stott which have caused consternation in some quarters.

- By the end of the 20th century and at the beginning of the 21st century, the missional church movement has taken over in which the earlier ideas of contextualisation and inculturation are combined with the postmodern ideas embracing the seeker-sensitive approach to reach out to the unreached. The New-Calvinists like Tim Keller and John Piper are among the chief advocates.
3. What of the Fundamentalist and Reformed camps on missions and social action?
- We have noted that, after the confrontation between the Conservatives and the Liberals, there were some readjustment and realignment of individuals in the four camps - the Fundamentalist, Reformed, Neo-Evangelical, and Charismatic camps. There have been Charismatics who adopted Reformed theology (often, only the Five Points of Calvinism) and vice versa. The same may be said of the other groups.
 - Among the Fundamentalists who have adopted Reformed theology, there have been those who advocated Theonomy, which is basically the attempt to christianise politics, economics, and the other institutions in society. The impact of Theonomy (or Reconstructionism) has been minimal - confined largely to the realm of the theoretical.
 - Traditionally, Evangelical churches - including the Fundamentalist and Reformed - have actively engaged in missions and social concerns. It remains to work out a biblical basis for the relationship between the two areas of concern. Newer Reformed churches struggle over the relationship of good works to missions and evangelism.

II. The character and relevance of Christ's ministry.

1. Good works are the fruit, not the cause, of saving faith.
 - Justification is by faith alone, but the faith that saves will result in works of piety and mercy (Rom. 3:30; 5:1; Gal. 2:16; James 2:20). Such "good works" are acts of devotion to God or compassion for man, arising from faith in Christ. (See Matt. 23:23.) Our focus here is on works of compassion.
 - Good works are commanded by God (Mic. 6:8; Matt. 25:38-40; Luke 10:25-37) and expected from all true believers (Eph. 2:8-10; Tit. 3:8, 14; James 2:20).
 - Just as the church should organise outreach, so also it should organise good works (Matt. 4:23; 9:35). Since good works are to accompany teaching and preaching the gospel, there is ample scope for such works, e.g. outreach to prisoners, old folks' homes, hospitals, free tuition to the poor, etc. While the word is to be taught regularly, good works may be done as and when needed (cf Acts 18:4; Mark 6:5; Matt. 11:1).
 - : Natural disasters, which often occur, provide opportunities for good works. The danger is to be diverted away from the primary work of teaching and preaching the gospel.
2. Primacy of the word must be maintained in the life of the church.
 - The GC is about planting churches, not doing good works. Good works, however, not excluded.
 - : A church should not be known solely for its social work (cf Phil 2:14-16).
 - : On the other hand, a church without good works has failed to understand GC (Matt 5:13, 14, 16).
 - Good works should accompany, not overshadow or replace, the word (Matt 5:16; 6:3.)
 - : Knowing our limitations is important (Gal 6:10; Matt 26:11).
 - : We want to minimise the possibility of producing "rice Christians", i.e. those who profess faith to gain material things from the church. We look for genuine conversion, wrought by

the Holy Spirit (Acts 16:14), by the hearing of the gospel (Rom. 10:17),

3. Did Paul engage in good works?

- He personally engaged in good works (Gal. 2:10; Acts 11:27-30; 1 Cor. 16:2; 2 Cor. 9:1, 5).
 - : Corporately, the church to give (Gal 6:10; Acts 6:1-4; 11:27-30. Also Rom 15:26; 1 Cor 16:1-2; 2 Cor 9:1, 5).
 - : Individually, to give. More blessed to give than to receive. "If God touches the heart, he touches the wallet as well."
- Indispensability of good works taught, not just giving financially.
 - : True faith shows good works (James 2:17-18; Tit 3:8, 14).
 - : Good works adorns the gospel (Matt 5:16).

= The church should be known more as a centre of truth rather than social work, although plentiful good works are to be done quietly, in conjunction with the preached word.

Review Questions

1. What was recovered after the Great Awakening, and what was de-emphasised?
2. What else was recovered following the Great Awakening?
3. After the confrontation with Theological Liberalism, who were at the forefront of missions and social action?
4. Describe the "missional church movement".
5. Who were the people advocating Theonomy?
6. What is the relationship between good works and saving faith?
7. How should good works be done by the church?
8. What must be maintained in the life of the church?
9. What is the relationship between good works and the word of God?
10. State the conclusion of this study.

Assignment/Discussion

CH Spurgeon wrote, "A man who is perfect before the Lord lays out his substance for God's cause, depend on that." Giving of our substance is doing good works. It may not be good works in some situations (cf. Mark 12:41-44). Comment.

Memory passage (Micah 6:8)

He has shown you, O man, what is good;
And what does the Lord require of you
But to do justly,
To love mercy,
And to walk humbly with your God?

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