

The Brown Street Beacon

*"...Shine out among them like beacon lights,
holding out to them the Word of Life" (Phil 2:15-16)*



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Exercising unto Godliness

We are living in an exercise crazed society. Everybody wants to be in great shape and look good. There is certainly nothing inherently wrong with this, though it seems that many people want to be in good shape for the wrong reasons. They simply want to draw attention to themselves. Still, striving to keep the body healthy by exercising regularly has some value to it. However, Paul said, *"...For bodily exercise profiteth little..."* (1 Timothy 4:8). The reason behind this is simple enough. Our physical bodies are temporal. No matter how strong we build up our earthly tabernacle, it is going to experience decay and corruption (1 Peter 1:24).

There is a type of exercise that is more than just a little profitable. In the same passage where Paul spoke of bodily exercise, he also said, *"...and exercise thyself rather unto godliness."* Why? Because *"...godliness is profitable unto all things, having promise of the life that now is and of that which is to come."*

What Is Godliness?

In 2 Timothy 3:5 Paul spoke of those who had a *"form of godliness."* A form is simply an outward appearance of something. One may have a form of godliness, yet not be godly at all. You might be surprised at some who have a form of godliness. Paul refers to a rather unbecoming group of people as having such in 2 Timothy 3:2-7. Be sure to read that passage. What, then, does it mean to truly be godly, rather than just having a form of godliness? W.E. Vine gives a good definition of godliness. He says that godliness *"Denotes that piety which is characterized by a Godward attitude, and does that which is well pleasing to Him."* There are two ingredients in godliness:

Attitude Towards God

To have true godliness is to always give God the respect and reverence He deserves. It is to recognize in our hearts the greatness and glory of Yahweh. In a prayer David uttered to God, he demonstrated the kind of attitude we should all possess. Listen to his words: *"Thine, O Lord, is the greatness, and the power, and the glory, and the victory, and the majesty: for all that is in the heaven and in the earth is thine; thine is the*

kingdom, O Lord, and thou art exalted as head above all" (1 Chronicles 29:11). That is godliness! Without that kind of attitude, one may have a form of godliness, but not true godliness. A person may *do* the right things, i.e., his actions may be right, but not have the right attitude. The Pharisees exemplified that truth in the days of Christ.

The Proper Action

While it is true that godliness begins with the heart, a person who has it will demonstrate it in his daily life. One may do the right things and not necessarily be godly, but one cannot be godly without doing the right things. Peter accentuated this when he stood before the Jewish leaders who had instructed the apostles not to preach in the name of Jesus. He said, "...*We ought to obey God rather than man*" (Acts 5:29). The apostles stood ready to be persecuted. Man's desire was not the important thing to them, instead it was the will of God. Paul had the same mentality. In Galatians 1:10 Paul said, "*For do I now persuade men, or God? or do I seek to please men: for if I yet pleased men, I should not be the servant of Christ.*" The implication is that Paul, just like Peter, was more interested in pleasing God than he was in pleasing man, and that godliness lead to proper action. Paul gave his life to preaching the gospel. Why? He gave his life because it was God's will, and Paul was godly. Peter followed Jesus faithfully as one of His apostles. Why? He followed Jesus because he was godly. Godliness leads people to live according to the will of God. Remember the definition that we gave earlier. Vine said that godliness was not only having a Godward attitude, but also that it "*does that which is well pleasing to Him.*" Does this mean that those who are godly never sin? Of course not. We have all sinned (Romans 3:23). John tells us that if we deny that we have sinned, we deceive ourselves and make God a liar (1 John 1:8-10). Those who are godly do fall short from time to time, but what they do not do is live and dwell in a sinful state. David's life is an illustration of this. Yes David sinned, but his godliness lead to repentance. So then, godliness has to do with having the proper attitude and action.

Why Should We Strive for Godliness?

Paul said that godliness is profitable unto all things. It is profitable for this life. When one lives a godly life, he can find true happiness and contentment. Man has experienced that having fame and fortune, earthly power and prestige, etc., does not bring true fulfillment. Godliness leads to a pure life and that is always beneficial. More importantly, however, is that godliness is profitable in regard to the life that is to come. God will judge the ungodly (2 Peter 2:4-6). The godly, however, shall be delivered by God. Peter said, "*The Lord knoweth how to deliver the godly out of temptations...*" (2 Peter 2:9). The end of godliness is eternal life with God in heaven. Let us "*work out*" spiritually so that we may develop the kind of godliness that Christ wants us to possess, and that will truly be profitable for us. It will be worth the effort!

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