

The Profit and Promise of Godliness

1 Timothy 4:1-5

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⁶ If you put these things before the brothers, you will be a good servant of Christ Jesus, being trained in the words of the faith and of the good doctrine that you have followed. ⁷ Have nothing to do with irreverent, silly myths. Rather train yourself for godliness; ⁸ for while bodily training is of some value, godliness is of value in every way, as it holds promise for the present life and also for the life to come. ⁹ The saying is trustworthy and deserving of full acceptance. ¹⁰ For to this end we toil and strive, because we have our hope set on the living God, who is the Savior of all people, especially of those who believe.

If you had to take a Burpee test in a three-minute time span, how many would you do?

Burpees are those workout exercises where you squat, kick back your legs, stand and jump. Burpees can be a way as a way to measure strength endurance. The National Library of Medicine documented the results of a three-minute Burpee Test

Now, these exercises may not be for every age group but those with an average strength endurance performed about 56 burpees per minute in males and 48 per minute in females.

Now, why do I begin this introduction? When Paul uses the word “train” in verse 7, he uses the word “*gymnna*”. This is the verbal form for the word “gymnasium”.

Paul writes to Timothy that training for physical fitness is valuable but is not of lasting value. He says godliness is of lasting value.

Godliness is profitable. Not only is it profitable but godliness promises a wonderful future.

Before we dig in to the Paul’s instruction, what is godliness?

Godliness is the reverence, the honor, the loyalty, the respect a creature displays towards God.

The Bible tells us that godliness is not *natural* to man. Matter of fact, ungodliness, unrighteousness and lawlessness is native and natural to man. And ungodliness only leads to destruction.

Listen to the words of Jesus on what comes out of the unregenerate unconverted heart – “*For from within, out of the heart of man, come evil thoughts, sexual immorality, theft, murder, adultery, ²² coveting, wickedness, deceit, sensuality, envy, slander, pride, foolishness*” (Mark 7:21-22)
“*Surely there is not a righteous man on earth who does good and never sins*” Ecclesiastes 7:20
“*None is righteous, no, not one; no one understands; no one seeks for God*”. Romans 3:11

Performing pious or religious deeds to appear godly without a change on the inside is just external behavior.

I remember growing up in a Christian family, attending church four times a week. To the outside world I was a church goer doing churchy things. I had memorized Bible verses but there was no inner godliness in me at least until my teen years. So when does godliness begin?

Godliness begins when you know the holiness of God. Godliness begins when you see your own sinfulness in the light of God's majesty and holiness. Godliness begins with an internal spiritual transformation.

This is what the prophet Isaiah responded when he saw the holiness of God.

Let me read the first five verses from Isaiah chapter 6.

"In the year that King Uzziah died I saw the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up; and the train of his robe filled the temple. ² Above him stood the seraphim. Each had six wings: with two he covered his face, and with two he covered his feet, and with two he flew. ³ And one called to another and said: "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts; the whole earth is full of his glory!" ⁴ And the foundations of the thresholds shook at the voice of him who called, and the house was filled with smoke. ⁵ And I said: "Woe is me! For I am lost; for I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips; for my eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts!"

True godliness begins when you see God's holiness, when see your sin, when you are ashamed of your sinful actions, when you blush *and* in conviction of your sin, you turn and trust in Jesus Christ the only Savior. You trust in Jesus that he took your shame and your sin and its penalty. Romans 4 and 5 tells that it is "God who justifies the ungodly" (Romans 4:5) and "For while we were still weak, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly" (Romans 5:6). True godliness begins when you delight in Jesus deep in your soul.

This is what Paul taught Timothy. When Paul wrote to the church in Corinth, Paul said, "*That is why I sent you Timothy, my beloved and faithful child in the Lord, to remind you of my ways in Christ, as I teach them everywhere in every church*". 1 Corinthians 4:17

Paul gives two specific instructions to Timothy:

Promote the things that lead to godliness

Look at verse 6.

⁶ If you put these things before the brothers, you will be a good servant of Christ Jesus, being trained in the words of the faith and of the good doctrine that you have followed.

Paul commends Timothy for what he had followed so far. But he also encourages and urges Timothy to continue in the same in the future. How do I know he says such a thing?

The phrase “you have followed” is in perfect tense. Meaning Timothy has been a faithful follower of Jesus in the past in the past and he must continue like that in the future.

Paul urges Timothy to promote these *two* things before the church.

- Words of the Faith
 - a. The words of the faith – these are the essentials of what we confess as Christ followers. “Great indeed, we confess, is the mystery of *godliness*: He was *manifested* in the flesh, *vindicated* by the Spirit, *seen* by angels, *proclaimed* among the nations, *believed* on in the world, *taken up* in glory.” 1 Timothy 3:16. Timothy was trained in the words of the faith. This training refers to the nourishment, sustenance and preparation of the mind. Godliness involves the training of the mind.
- Good doctrine
 - a. Paul tells Timothy to promote good doctrine to contrast with some who were promoting bad doctrine. Bad doctrine or false teaching leads to *ungodliness*. That is what the false teachers were doing in the Paul’s day and we see so much more today. The false teachers were promoting myths, genealogies, asceticism ungodly chatter. “*But avoid irreverent babble, for it will lead people into more and more ungodliness*”. 2 Timothy 2:16. On the other hand, good doctrine leads to right thinking, right belief and right living and promotes godliness.

Second instruction:

Train for godliness

Verses 7-8

⁷ *Have nothing to do with irreverent, silly myths. Rather train yourself for godliness;* ⁸ *for while bodily training is of some value, godliness is of value in every way, as it holds promise for the present life and also for the life to come.*

Paul wants to make sure Timothy gets what he had already written in chapter one. Now he is repeating himself for emphasis. Stay away from vain talk, unproductive discussion, silly myths. These things don't produce any profit for your spiritual life. Now Paul doesn't give injunctions only he just doesn't tell Timothy those things to avoid but he tells him what is really beneficial. Paul tells Timothy to not just promote the words of the faith and good doctrine but train himself for godliness.

How do you train for godliness?

I remember that old Sunday school song "Read your Bible, pray everyday, you will grow, grow, grow". The first thing is knowing Scripture. In his second letter to Timothy, this is what Paul writes, "*from childhood you have known the sacred writings which are able to give you the wisdom that leads to salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus*". 2 Timothy 3:15

Someone said if you want to know the mind of God, read the Word of God. I was reading an article yesterday that said only about ten percent of U.S residents read their Bible daily. It is said that if you read your Bible for 30 minutes daily, you would have completed reading the Bible two and a half times a year. George Mueller, whom I admire greatly for his faith is said to completed the Bible at least 200 times in his lifetime. I was teaching a discipleship class a couple of years ago and I asked this question, "Who do you meet first thing in the morning?". It is said the Ruth Graham woke up at 4:30am to do her devotions. That made an impression on her roommate.

Why train for godliness?

Two reasons why.

- Profit

- i. ⁸ *for while bodily training is of some value, godliness is of value in every way, as it holds promise for the present life and also for the life to come.*
- ii. One the characteristic feature of ancient Greeks was the gymnasia. The Greeks were known for their devotion to their physical appearance. A gymnasia was a facility where you had a track field, swimming pools and baths. The gymnasium was a big part of the

city of Ephesus. The Romans took the gymnasias and made it a spectator sport. Schools would train gladiators. And combats would be held man against man, man against animal and animal against animal, all for the public entertainment. It was said these spectacles would have such a *debasing* affect that they were eventually banned in A.D. 325. In this passage, Paul compares the benefit and value of physical training with training in godliness. Paul lived in a time when the gymnasium was the cultural craze of the day. I am sure that none of you doubts the value that physical exercise may offer your body for your bodily health. However, physical exercise or fitness routines have a finite or limited value. It has a very predictable lifespan – its value and profit are gone the moment I breathe my last breath. So bodily training is of some value but godliness is of value in every way. The rewards for godliness are innumerable compared to fitness training. Godliness is a reward in itself. Countless lives have been blessed and the blessing passed on to their children and children's children when you have a godly family.

- Promise

- i. Godliness holds the promise of eternal life. How? When Paul wrote the last part of our confession in 1 Timothy 3:16, he said the Jesus was *taken up in glory*. Godliness is *not* an empty promise. This is a real promise and a guaranteed promise not because we did something to achieve it. The promise is real because Jesus the Holy One of God, the Son of God has made a way for us by his resurrection.

Godliness is of value in every way. It holds the promise for this life and the future. Paul's whole life was one of pursuing godliness. So he tells Timothy that godliness is to be so desired that he puts all his strength and energy into this endeavor. Look at verses 9 and 10.

⁹ *The saying is trustworthy and deserving of full acceptance.* ¹⁰ *For to this end we toil and strive, because we have our hope set on the living God, who is the Savior of all people, especially of those who believe.*

Paul writes this way to make something very noticeable and prominent.

Paul says to this end we toil and strive. What is that end? Godliness. It is for the sake of godliness that Paul toils meaning he exerts himself physically, mentally, spiritually, working hard he was weary and tired. Not only did Paul toil and labor, he also was striving for the sake of godliness. This word is where we get the English or "contend" or "fight". The literal translation is to say "strain every nerve" for godliness. When a man came to Jesus and asked, ²³ "Lord, will those who are saved be few?" And he said to them, ²⁴ "Strive to enter through the narrow door. For many, I tell you, will seek to enter and will

not be able". Luke 13:23-24. Striving also has underlying task of self-discipline. Like an athlete who competes, those who desire godliness must exercise self-discipline.

Now why does Paul toil and strive for the sake of godliness?

He gives the reason in verse 10.

Because we have set our hope on the living God. Again, this is perfect tense in grammar. We have set our hope on God in the past we will continue to hope in God in the future.

This is to contrast with the idols of Ephesus. Idols have ears but cannot hear. Mouths but cannot speak. Feet but cannot walk. Hands but cannot touch or save. Eyes cannot see. Idols can give no hope. The living God is the Lord Jesus Christ who is the Savior of all people. Anyone can approach Jesus. Only those who believe in him will be truly saved from sin and its penalty.

What are you straining for and striving towards? If it is godliness God promises you a crown of glory. And inheritance that will never be destroyed, that will never diminish in its value.

¹¹ For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation for all people, ¹² training us to renounce ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright, and godly lives in the present age, ¹³ waiting for our blessed hope, the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ.

----- Discipleship Questions-----

MESSAGE SUMMARY: **The Profit and Promise of Godliness.** 1 Timothy 4:6-10

HEAD: These questions help you examine the truth of God's Word.

1. What is godliness? Go around and share. What is Paul's ultimate hope in pursuing godliness? 1 Timothy 4:10, Philippians 3: 12-14

HEART: These questions help you wrestle with what you believe.

2. Why does Paul urge Timothy to *train* himself in godliness? What reasons does Paul offer for Timothy to pursue godliness? 1 Timothy 4:8
3. What is God convicting you of and to believe in light of this message?

HANDS/HABITS: These questions help you bring the truth into your everyday life and develop behaviors that change your habits.

4. For personal reflection: Do you desire to grow in godliness? How? In what way? Titus 2:11-13