

The sermon

Intro

What is godliness? How do we become godly? How do I know if I'm godly? We're on godliness this morning.

Godliness works somewhat similar to my pellet stove. First, you need the right fuel: pellets. Banana peels aren't going to work. Second, you need steady fuel. The pellets have to keep coming or the fire dies. Third, you can't have any obstructions that block the fuel. After a while, if I don't clean out the ashes under the fire pot, the ashes build up and they prevent the fire from igniting.

I need the right fuel. I need a steady supply of fuel. I need to ensure there's no obstructions blocking the fuel.

Godliness operates in a similar fashion.

READ PASSAGE

Body

Passage Focus

Timothy's agenda must be personal godliness.

Point 1: Truth fuels godliness (4:6)

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.

Timothy

Paul's speaking directly to Timothy. Faithful pastors are trained in the words of Scripture (predestination, propitiation, justification). Faithful pastors put Scripture before the flock. Faithful pastors obey the Scriptures.

"these things" = warning God's people about deceitful, demonic teachings and encouraging them to receive God's good gifts like food and marriage with gratitude.

Truth

Paul's described truth in a variety of ways:

- In 3:15, the church is called *"a pillar and buttress of the truth."* The church supports the truth, preventing it from crashing to the ground. The church protects the truth from false teachers.
- In 4:3, the truth is something that is believed and known. The truth can be known. It's possible to correctly understand where mankind came from, how we're to live today, and what the future holds.
- In 3:16, *"the mystery of godliness"* consists of six facts about Jesus. Six truths the church confesses and preserves. *"mystery of godliness"* indicates truths about Jesus fuel godliness.
- In 4:1, we have people departing from the faith. That's abandoning the Christian faith. *"the faith"* indicates there's one and only one Christian faith.
- In 4:6, it's the duty of Timothy (and all teachers in the church) to be *"trained in the words of the faith."* *"the faith"* is composed of words. We don't make it up ourselves.

▪ In 4:6, Timothy must also be *“trained...in the good doctrine.”* “good” meaning healthy, sound, without defect, beneficial. “doctrine” meaning the content we teach, the truths, the beliefs that make up the Christian faith. “good doctrine” means a set of healthy truths that benefit our soul. Is that how you view the Bible?

The truth = the faith = the mystery of godliness = sound doctrine = God’s word = the gospel.

The truth means there’s truth and lies. There’s accurate assessments of reality and there’s false assessments of reality. There’s accurate statements about God and false statements about God. There’s correct ways to relate to God and incorrect ways to relate to God. There’s correct ways to behave and there’s incorrect ways to behave.

The truth means don’t follow your heart! The truth means bring your heart into agreement with reality. The truth means allow your heart to be corrected. The truth means we can know how we’re supposed to think and how we’re supposed to feel and how we’re supposed to live. The truth means we can know why we exist. The truth means we can know what the future holds. The truth means we can know where to place our hope.

Objections

If you have a hard time believing the Bible could be 100% true, I’d love to have that conversation. A few thoughts.

1. If God’s able to create our world and the galaxies by speaking them into existence, he’s able to ensure the words he wanted were written.
2. The fact that the Bible declares the future hundreds of years before it happened indicates we have a supernatural book from a Divine source.
3. Jesus’ miracles and resurrection furnish proof his claims.

He is who he said he was. We can take his words to the bank.

Application

My point is **Truth fuels godliness.** I get this from the phrase *“the mystery of godliness.”* The mystery is a set of truths that produces godliness. I also get this from a number of Scriptures.

I have stored up your word in my heart, that I might not sin against you. – **Psalm 119:11**

Memorizing, remembering Scripture keeps us from sinning. The Bible is effective in fighting sin. The Bible has power to alter human hearts (our thoughts, attitudes, loves, desires) so that a person lives differently.

The Bible is God’s means of effecting change in human hearts. Like an ongoing flow of pellets is required to keep the fire going, an ongoing flow of Bible is needed for ongoing victory over sin and ongoing transformation. No pellets, no fire. No Bible, no godliness.

Truth fuels godliness. That’s one reason I introduced a 2 year Bible reading plan this year. I’m encouraged by those who’ve told me they’ve seen things they’ve never seen before.

What are you being trained by? What are you following? These are the questions we need to ask ourselves.

Point 2: Speculations obstruct godliness (4:7)

Have nothing to do with irreverent, silly myths.

Avoid useless distractions. Expend your energy on what’s useful.

Godliness

What is godliness?

- It's the way we do life (1 Tim 2:2).
- Sound doctrine "*accords with godliness*" (1 Tim 6:3; Titus 1:1).
- It's something we pursue (1 Tim 6:11).
- True godliness is marked by power (2 Tim 3:5).

Godliness is lived-out devotion to God in accord with the truth. Godliness is rooted in reverence, respect, and love for God. Godliness is shaped by truth. Godliness is empowered by the Holy Spirit. Godliness is practice.

"irreverent, silly myths"

Earlier in 1 Timothy I told you that these myths were likely fictional accounts of Old Testament people which in reality were speculations, fictions, not truth, not history. 1:4 spoke of "*myths and endless genealogies, which promote speculations rather than the stewardship from God that is by faith.*" Fiction and speculation interfere with faith according to Paul.

The idea here is silly, absurd fictions were being promoted in the church and these silly fictions were irreverent (= godless, worldly). "silly" literally means "characteristic of an elderly women." Old wives' tales. Fictions. Made up stories. They provided no benefit. They weren't from God.

Distractions

"irreverent, silly myths" are fictions that distract. Speculative fictions don't produce godliness. So discard them altogether.

What might the myths be today? Many have incorrectly speculated the identity of the antichrist. Many have incorrectly speculated the mark of the beast. Ironically, speculating on these matters takes our focus off godliness.

Another one from the 1990's, that I hope you have no clue about, is Bible codes. If you take every 10th letter or every 3rd letter of every 10th letter or so in the Hebrew you find things encoded like JFK's assassination. Try enough combinations and you could come up with something vague in any book.

How do I know this stuff? When I was newly saved it's the stuff I picked up in the local Christian bookstore. It's the stuff Christians recommended to me.

Ironically, the purpose of Scripture isn't discovering hidden codes. It's godliness. Speculative myths always take the focus off Scripture's purpose!

Avoid these things altogether. "*Rather train yourself for godliness.*"

Application

"irreverent, silly myths" are kind of like the ashes that collect underneath the burning pot in my pellet stove. The stove can load the pellets, but when too many ashes collect, the ignition is blocked. I need to get rid of the ashes to allow the pellets to do their work.

Likewise, collecting a bunch of godless speculations prevents the flow of truth to your heart. Avoid this stuff altogether!

I don't know what the speculative myths are today because I'm concerned about godliness, not that stuff. Why is it that people are more interested in this stuff than basic gospel living? Speculation requires no effort. Godliness does.

Speculation doesn't challenge our sin. Godliness does. For some it's more pleasant to speculate than it is to let the truth challenge our inner thoughts and behavior.

Point 3: Spiritual exercise fuels godliness (4:7-9)

What should we train for? Godliness.

Rather train yourself for godliness;

“train yourself” originally meant the rigorous physical training of athletes training for a competition. The idea is like an athlete sacrifices time, keeps a consistent schedule, limits what they put into their body, avoids distractions, and pushes themselves to the limit, so also we should train for godliness.

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.

Paul's point isn't don't take care of your body. Paul's point is bodily training is valuable, but it's value pales in comparison to the value of godliness.

“of some value” means there's value in exercise and body care. I worked on submarines for years and never kneeled on the steel. I always wore knee pads because I didn't want to ruin my knees. I got laughed at a lot. But it'll be worth it. I'm trying to get into lifting weights again so I can have strength in my later years. Body care has value.

But godliness has a value that extends beyond this present life. Exercise only helps us today. The athlete who dies with great muscles and endurance doesn't take that with them.

How does godliness profit us in the life to come?

It might mean there's no entry into the kingdom of God without godliness.

Strive for peace with everyone, and for the holiness without which no one will see the Lord. – Hebrews 12:14

Godliness is worth it because only the godly will see God. Faith is shown to be true by works. Godliness is the fruit of faith.

It might mean there's degrees of reward in heaven. Your experience in the kingdom of God will be enlarged because of godly practice in this life. Not that people will be jealous or lacking in heaven. Sin won't be present.

What's the point here?

The Christian life isn't passive. The Christian life isn't aimless. The Christian life requires initiative, effort. The Christian life requires godly ambitions. Like godliness.

If you want to run a marathon you need to train. If you want to increase muscle mass you need to lift weights. If you play basketball and want to be a better shooter, you need to practice shooting. If you want to live a godly life, you need to train your heart (mind, loves).

If I want to parent well, I need to study the Scriptures. I need to read good Christian books (or watch good Christian DVDs or hear good Christian podcasts). I need to know how to parent. Then I need to I need to keep a routine and exercise self-control: discipline when appropriate, counsel when appropriate, listen to their heart, quality time with them, family Scripture reading and discussion, being careful to model godliness for them, confessing sin God and to them, praying for God's help in temptations like laziness or unforgiveness, guarding my heart attitude towards them. Parenting

requires knowing truth. Requires action, correct methodology. Requires perseverance. Requires the Spirit's enablement. Requires a transformed heart.

Same thing if you want to evangelize well or be a good steward of money or control the tongue or encourage one another through trial. You need truth. You need self-discipline. You need perseverance. You need God's help.

Point 4: Hope fuels godliness (4:10)

For to this end we toil and strive,

"this end" = growth in godliness. We = Paul and Timothy and the church. *"we toil and strive."*

"toil" = hard work that requires physical exertion like fishing, farming, or working with your hands. Working at godliness like a farmer puts in a hard day's work. Expending ourselves.

"strive" = literally fighting, physical combat and figuratively an intense struggle. Striving for godliness like a gladiator fighting to the death. Fighting against sin and demonic lies.

because we have our hope set on the living God,

What's the right motivation for toiling and striving? Hope in the living God. Hope in God's ability. Hope in the life to come. Hope, or confidence in God, is the fuel that drives the pursuit of godliness.

There really is a hell to avoid. There really is a kingdom to come. There really is a living God who dwells in the hearts of his people. There really is a living God who enables obedience. There really is a message of good news for us to live out before the world. Godliness really is attainable. Not perfection, not free from the battle with sin, but genuine godliness that brings delight to the heart of God.

If I long for the kingdom and the end of sin, I'll long for personal godliness in this life.

If I believe in the transformation power of the Bible and the Spirit, I'll believe godliness is possible. I'll feed my soul with Bible and make the effort.

Truth needs to be connected with hope! **Hope fuels godliness!**

who is the Savior of all people, especially of those who believe.

Especially ≠ God saves everyone, but those who believe in Jesus get a better salvation. That would mean everyone will actually be saved.

Paul disagrees with that conclusion. Elsewhere Paul speaks of people being excluded from the kingdom of God (Gal 5:19-21; Eph 5:5), the wrath of God on the disobedient (Eph 5:6). 2 Thessalonians 1:8-9 says, *"those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus...will suffer the punishment of eternal destruction away from the presence of the Lord"* (2 Thess 1:9).

Those who don't believe won't be saved. But some will be saved. Those who believe.

How is God the Savior of all? God invites all to be saved. The benefits of Jesus' death are available to all. That includes you! Jesus' death is sufficient to save anyone who believes. But Jesus is the actual Savior of some. Those who believe.

Why do I need to be saved you ask? Because God is holy and can't tolerate sin. Sin meaning breaking God's commands. God's holiness is a good thing. God's holiness means he cares when people mistreat you. When they lie to you or spread

lies about you or say mean things about you or destroy your stuff, God cares. Because he's holy. God cares when you sin. God cares when people sin against you.

How can I be saved you ask? By becoming one of those who believe.

Believe what?

1. Believe you've sinned against God by breaking his law.

Have you ever lied? Have you ever uttered hurtful words? Have you ever acted selfishly? Have you ever hated someone?

2. Believe Jesus died on the cross to take your place.

Not humanity generically. But for your actual sins. To take the punishment in your place so you wouldn't have to.

3. If you believe these things, confess your sins to God.
4. If you believe these things, ask for God's forgiveness upon the basis of Jesus' death...
5. And trust that he forgives those who believe.
6. And keep trusting him.
7. And pursue godliness with all your might.