

Living a Fruitful Life The Fruit of godliness

Intro: In our culture we're seeing a renewed emphasis upon getting in physical shape. You will see people running or jogging through the neighborhood, attending aerobics classes or doing weight lifting, etc. to promote their physical health. And all of this has benefit to our lives; but Paul stresses another kind of exercise that has even greater benefit!

On the other hand, discipline yourself for the purpose of godliness; for bodily discipline is only of little profit, but godliness is profitable for all things, since it holds promise for the present life and also for the life to come. (1 Tim. 4:7-8)

A characteristic that brings blessing to us now and in eternity is surely worth our attention. And Peter shows us that this characteristic is also a part of what it means to live a fruitful life.

Now for this very reason also, applying all diligence, in your faith supply moral excellence, and in your moral excellence, knowledge;⁶ and in your knowledge, self-control, and in your self-control, perseverance, and in your perseverance, godliness; (2 Pet. 1:5-6)

But what is godliness? How do we show it? And how can we cultivate it?

What is godliness?

In English many of our words ending in “ly” can be defined with the first word and adding “like.” Thus, if one is manly is he “man like.” And it might be tempting then to think that the word “godly” means “God-like.” However there does not seem to be any connection between the Greek word for godliness and the idea of being God-like.

The word translated "godliness" in the NT translates the Greek word "eusebeia". It is a part of a constellation of Greek words that convey the idea of fear or reverence for God.

The kindred verb "sebomai" is derived from a root meaning originally to step back from someone or something, to maintain a distance. It came then to take on the idea of trepidation that grows out of shame of failure, or the wonder of being in the presence of the majestic or sublime, or something approaching fear. It led to the word “sebomai” meaning “I worship”.

A kindred adjective is often used to describe a person who is “devout.” like Ananias or Cornelius.

A kindred participle is used to describe Gentiles that converted to Judaism. They were called “God-fearing” Greeks.

So then, godliness is that devotion or attitude of respect that grows out of our understanding of God's majesty, His greatness, His worthiness to be respected

that motivates us to show caution and circumspection in our spiritual lives and that motivates us to worship and obey Him.

How do we show godliness?

Here are some things that will demonstrate that godliness is alive and well in our lives.

Offering reverential worship to God

People who did not worship the true God and did not glorify Him or give thanks to Him were called “ungodly.”

For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who suppress the truth in unrighteousness, (Rom. 1:18)

But those who out of respect for God worship Him in reverence could be called “godly.”

Therefore, since we receive a kingdom which cannot be shaken, let us show gratitude, by which we may offer to God an acceptable service with reverence and awe; for our God is a consuming fire. (Heb. 12:28-29)

Making careful use of His name

The Law forbade the use of God's name irreverently, for example, in the making of false oaths with His name.

“You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain, for the Lord will not leave him unpunished who takes His name in vain. (Ex. 20:7)

Certainly respect for God calls for caution and circumspection in the use of God's name. Misuse of His name in anger would be just as sinful as misusing it in false oaths or lying. A godly man will show respect for God by controlling His tongue and how He uses God's name.

With it we bless our Lord and Father; and with it we curse men, who have been made in the likeness of God; from the same mouth come both blessing and cursing. My brethren, these things ought not to be this way. (James 3:9-10)

Showing more exactness in learning and doing what pleases Him.

Godliness makes us cautious and circumspect in what we decide to do to the glory of God. We consult His word first!

First of all, then, I urge that entreaties and prayers, petitions and thanksgivings, be made on behalf of all men, for kings and all who are in authority, in order that we may lead a tranquil and quiet life in all godliness and dignity. (1 Tim. 2:1-2)

Therefore also we have as our ambition, whether at home or absent, to be pleasing to Him. (2 Cor. 5:9)

Concern and help of our family

but if any widow has children or grandchildren, let them first learn to practice piety in regard to their own family, and to make some return to their parents; for this is acceptable in the sight of God. (1 Tim. 5:4)

Paul may be thinking of the reverence or honor that we have for our parents; but even this reverence is a manifestation of our reverence for God as well.

And by implication Paul is suggesting that pious or godly life is characterized by a desire to help those around us in need.

How do we get more godliness?

By reflecting upon the greatness of God as creator

Paul charged the Gentiles with irreverence because they failed to consider the greatness of God as creator and show respect for Him. *For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who suppress the truth in unrighteousness, because that which is known about God is evident within them; for God made it evident to them. For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes, His eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly seen, being understood through what has been made, so that they are without excuse. (Rom. 1:18-20)*

“Oh Lord my God when I in awesome wonder consider all the world thy hands hath made; I see the stars, I hear the rolling thunder, thy power throughout the universe displayed; then sings my soul, my Savior God to Thee, “How great thou art.” That’s godliness! Get more familiar with the world God has made. Take some time to see its grandeur, its immensity, the wisdom of its design. Even sometimes shows that are design to undermine theism actually make us believe in God more.

By reflecting upon the justice of God toward sinners

A part of godliness is the recognition of God’s just judgment of sinners. All throughout Scripture we have evidence of God’s judgment of impious individuals like Nadab and Abihu or even a whole impious world. Peter reminded his readers of the cataclysm that destroyed the ancient world; and reminded them that there was yet another judgment coming by fire.

But the day of the Lord will come like a thief, in which the heavens will pass away with a roar and the elements will be destroyed with intense heat, and the earth and its works will be burned up. Since all these things are to be destroyed in this way, what sort of people ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness, (2 Pet. 3:10-11)

By reflecting upon the grace of God toward the saved.

Paul urged Titus to explain to the churches that their godly conduct was to be produced by the recognition of God’s grace through the gospel. It announces God’s love in saving us from our sins through Jesus Christ just as Paul said:

For while we were still helpless, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly. (Rom. 5:6)

But it also teaches us to live a new life of righteousness by that same grace.

For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to all men, instructing us to deny ungodliness and worldly desires and to live sensibly, righteously and godly in the present age, (Tit. 2:11-12)

Conclusion: I must caution you that a godly life will not be without difficulty.

And indeed, all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will be persecuted. (2 Tim.

3:12)

But in spite of this, there is a great blessing in godly living: “...godliness is profitable for all things, since it holds promise for the present life and also for the life to come.” (1 Tim. 4:8)

Paul not only tells us that it is profitable both for the life that now is and the one that is to come; when accompanied by contentment it brings “great gain.”

Growing in godliness helps us become people that God can use! Our respect makes us accurately represent Him to the world, and to strive to overcome those things displeasing to Him. In this way the entrance into the eternal kingdom will be abundantly supplied to us.