

LESSON 9

*Godliness**“[add] to perseverance godliness”*

To be “*partakers of the divine nature*” (2 Peter 1:4) we must not be “*barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ*” (2 Peter 1:8). We must first aspire to the virtue of Christ and possess the courage it will require to reach it. Knowledge is the second of “*these things*” (2 Peter 1:8) Peter instructs us to add to our faith. There is no growth and no change of will or action without the foundation of knowledge. Self-control is added to knowledge and gives it life through application. Perseverance proves character (cf. Romans 5:3-4), showing the self-control to be a constant companion of true inward conviction. The one who is constant in the discharge of their duties before God even amid opposition and adversity manifests, and further nurtures, godward piety. Their actions are born of consciousness of the Divine will. Peter instructs, “*[add] to perseverance godliness.*”

GODLINESS (EUSEBEIA) DEFINED

- “Piety” (STRONG)
- “(1) Reverence, respect (2) Piety towards God, godliness” (THAYER)
- “awesome respect accorded to God, devoutness, piety, godliness” (BDAG)
- “from *eu*, ‘well,’ and *sebomai*, ‘to be devout,’ denotes that piety which, characterized by a Godward attitude, does that which is well-pleasing to Him.” (VINE)

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“*Godliness*” is not an imitative characteristic (God-likeness) but is a disposition which leads to action. It is a consciousness of God and His authority which translates into the proper attitude before Him. It will result in imitation of God, but ultimately it is the governing quality which would lead one to submit to God’s will.

This comes, not by mere knowledge of God, but by the appropriate corresponding reverence and awe. A godly person is deeply mindful about God and His will and does everything in pursuit of pleasing Him. “*Godliness*” is where the sovereignty of God has met the free-will of man in full submission. The godly one lives and breathes to submit to God, and measures each thought and action by the will of heaven.

GODLINESS (EUSEBEIA) IN THREE PARTS

The virtue of “*godliness*” has several factors which need to be considered. Some view godliness in a very subjective and superficial way, as though it simply amounted to sincerity. Some view it merely as the strict adherence to rules. However, “*godliness*” is far richer than either of these views.

1. **Godliness is rooted in the revelation of divine truth.** It is ironic that some speak of godliness in connection with those who do not know God. It is not possible to act with reverence for one of which you are ignorant. Especially when He is the Sovereign Creator who dictates what consists in proper obeisance to Him. Paul observed such inconsistency in Athens where some erected an altar with the inscription, “*TO THE UNKNOWN GOD*” (Acts 17:23). He followed, “*Therefore, the One whom you worship without knowing, Him I proclaim to you.*” They were “*very religious*” (v. 22), and he acknowledged such, but it was vanity, not true godliness. Godliness would be produced through the accurate message of God that Paul preached.

Lest he preach what was unfit, or conduct himself improperly, Paul instructed Timothy to “*reject profane and old wives’ fables, and exercise yourself toward godliness*” (1 Timothy 4:7). He would do this by directing his mind toward the “*mystery of godliness*” (1 Timothy 3:16). Paul uses the figure of speech, metonymy – the effect put for the cause. The cause is the gospel, the effect is godliness.

2. **Godliness is the inward effect divine revelation has on an honest and tender heart.**

Eusebeia is “*awesome respect accorded to God*” (BDAG). The revelation of God is required to elicit such awesome respect. However, the revelation is not always met with reverence. One who possesses the virtue of godliness is primed with an honest heart to respond appropriately to God. Many are flippant about God and His will. Those who belong to God are moved by His majesty and revelation in the inward man.

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When Paul revealed God’s will that the church in Corinth would repent of their sinful conduct they were filled with godly sorrow. “*Now I rejoice, not that you were made sorry, but that your sorrow led to repentance. For you were made sorry in a godly manner, that you might suffer loss from us in nothing. For godly sorrow produces repentance leading to salvation, not to be regretted; but the sorrow of the world produces death*” (2 Corinthians 7:9-10). Paul explained, “*I made you sorry with my letter*” (v. 8). They received an inspired letter from an apostle, a revelation from God, and such agitated within them sorrow of a godly sort which led to a change of their ways. Godliness is not simply about our awareness of God and His will, but how it relates to us as those who are amenable to it. It is the Godward attitude cultivated by hearing His will which manifests in right action.

3. **Godliness is the outward manifestation of the inward effects of divine revelation.** It “*denotes that piety which, characterized by a Godward attitude, does that which is well-pleasing to Him*” (VINE). If the inward effect of God’s word on the heart does not translate

into actions of obedience, it is not true godliness. Conversely, Paul spoke of some *“having a form of godliness but denying its power”* (2 Timothy 3:5). They were conducting themselves outwardly in ways which showed a façade of godliness but had no inward renewal. This was vain. However, to suggest an inward change and reverence for God only to fail to apply His entire will is to be guilty of the same inconsistency as those who promote *“faith only”* salvation. Such is no less a denial of the power of godliness. In exhorting the brethren to life befitting the knowledge of the Lord’s eventual coming, Peter joined *“holy conduct”* with *“godliness”* (2 Peter 3:11). Those who act with holy conduct are godly, and those who are godly will act with holy conduct.

GODLINESS (EUSEBEIA) DISPLAYED

GODLINESS SHOWS ITSELF
IN ACTION. IT BEARS
FRUIT. GODLY PEOPLE
ACT IN CERTAIN WAYS.

It has been demonstrated that godliness is more than a simple attitude. It is a Godward attitude cultivated by heavenly revelation. As all attitudes do, godliness shows itself in action. It bears fruit. Godly people act in certain ways. Ultimately, in ways which are in conformity to divine law – *“the law of Christ”* (Galatians 6:2).

- **Morality:** In his second letter to the Corinthians, Paul warned them about receiving the grace of God in vain (2 Corinthians 6:1). They had been initially reconciled to God in baptism but were maintaining fellowship with unrighteousness (cf. 2 Corinthians 6:11-18). Paul instructed, *“Therefore, having these promises, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God”* (2 Corinthians 7:1). They needed to perfect holiness through a cleansing of their impure ways. The motivation to do so was *“the fear of God.”* Godward piety always leads to moral living. His grace teaches us to deny a sinful life, and live one of sobriety, righteousness, and godliness (cf. Titus 2:11-12).
- **Attire:** Paul addressed the women in 1 Timothy 2 concerning their attire – *“in like manner also, that the women adorn themselves in modest apparel, with propriety and moderation, not with braided hair or gold or pearls or costly clothing, but, which is proper for women professing godliness, with good works”* (1 Timothy 2:9-10). Ultimately, the instruction is for their outer wear to agree with the inner rule of God in their heart. Their dress must not be loud and glaring, for what is precious in God’s sight is a gentle and quiet spirit (cf. 1 Peter 3:4). It must not be insufficient, but in conjunction with *“shamefastness”* (ASV) it must cover the shame of nakedness which God has carefully detailed in scripture (cf. Genesis 3:7, 10, 21; Exodus 28:42-43; Isaiah 20:3-4; 47:2-3; Nahum 3:5; Ezekiel 16:7-8). The Christian’s attire must be congruous with their profession of godliness.
- There are endless applications to the display of godliness. The one who has a godward attitude which seeks to please Him in all things will not hesitate to take any positive or negative action required to do so.

EXERCISING TOWARD GODLINESS (EUSEBEIA)

Paul told Timothy to *“exercise yourself toward godliness”* (1 Timothy 4:7). The context contains several of the spiritual “exercises” Timothy would engage in to grow in godliness. We should implement them as well.

1. **Diligent Study:** Timothy was to be given to *“reading, to exhortation, to doctrine”* (1 Timothy 4:13). While much of this would be public, it would of necessity begin with his personal efforts – *“Take heed to yourself and to doctrine. Continue in them”* (v. 16). *“Keep the truths of the Gospel well in your minds, and keep yourselves well in the attitude of contact with Jesus Christ, and power for life will come into you. But if the fountain is choked, the bed of the stream will be dry.”* (Alexander MacLaren)
2. **Meditation:** *“Meditate on these things; give yourself entirely to them”* (1 Timothy 4:15). Without meditation, study is simply an intellectual practice. *“Meditate”* is the Greek, *meletaō*, “to practice as the result of devising or planning” (VINE). We must continually reflect on the things we have come to know through study. How do they apply to me? How do I implement them in daily life? (cf. James 1:22-25)
3. **Abstinence and Pursuit:** Timothy was to *“be an example to the believers in word, in conduct, in love, in spirit, in faith, in purity”* (1 Timothy 4:12). We need to show the application of God’s word in our lives. Such comes in the negative (abstaining from sin) and the positive (pursuing righteousness). In each of these (word, conduct, love, spirit, faith, purity), we should abstain from what God’s word prohibits, and pursue what God’s word requires and encourages.
4. **Focus on the Goal:** Paul gave Timothy a good reason to do as he instructs – *“for in doing this you will save both yourself and those who hear you”* (1 Timothy 4:16). If our eyes are not fixed on heaven, we will find it difficult to be focused on the things of God while on earth (cf. Philippians 3:18-21). Paul explained that the reason he labored and suffered reproach for the gospel was the promise of the life that is to come (1 Timothy 4:8-11). We seek to please God because we want to be with Him for eternity.

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LESSON 9 QUESTIONS

1. What connection does *“godliness”* have with the preceding virtue of *“perseverance?”*
2. Define *“godliness,”* and describe it.
3. What is the ultimate cause of *“godliness?”* (cf. 1 Timothy 3:16)
4. What effect is the revelation of God meant to have on the heart?
5. If one truly possesses *“godliness,”* what will they do?
6. How does *“godliness”* relate to morality?
7. How does *“godliness”* relate to attire?
8. What other ways is *“godliness”* displayed?
9. What are four ways (described in the lesson) we can exercise toward *“godliness?”* (cf. 1 Timothy 4)
10. What other *“exercises”* we can engage in to develop *“godliness?”*

