

**1st Timothy 4: 6-9; “Godliness is Profitable”, Sermon # 49 in the series –
“To Honor God in the Church”, Delivered by Pastor Paul Rendall on
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We are living in days, here in the United States of America, where there are multitudes of people who are concerned with exercise. They are devoted to the strength and beauty and health of the body. They spend thousands of dollars on exercise equipment and many regular hours a week working on the body, strengthening the muscles, working out with weights, running, and walking. All this is done with a view to being a person of strength and beauty; to be a person who preserves, protects, and enhances their health. Our text says that bodily discipline profits a little. Some people live and act as though it was everything. Some people are extremely fit physically who pay little or no attention to their souls. They are men and women of the earth, of this world. And they do not understand that they have an eternal soul that needs to be rescued from the decays of sin and death. They are indeed dead spiritually in their trespasses and sins.

Then, too, there are people who are Christians, people who have been born again of the Spirit of God. who need to think upon these verses, as we will this afternoon. There are some Christians who have not yet understood as they should, that they need to exercise towards godliness. Now, the verses before us pertain in the first sense, to the Christian minister. Timothy was being instructed by the Apostle Paul on the importance of exercising in God’s gymnasium. But these verses may also be applied to all of God’s people because the principle pertains to all people who would be godly. We want to ask the question this afternoon, Why is the exercise toward godliness profitable for all things? And we answer; the exercise towards godliness is profitable for all things because it holds promise. It holds promise in the following ways.

1st, Because it holds promise of our becoming strong and healthy Christians, and good ministers of Christ Jesus.

You see this in verse 6 – “If you instruct the brethren in these things, you will be a good minister of Jesus Christ, nourished in the words of faith and of the good doctrine which you have carefully followed.” So, Godliness is a life of devotion to God. But it is a life of devotion that leads to obedience and Christian character development. He has just been informing the brethren of the fact that some in the latter times would give heed to deceiving spirits and doctrines of demons and that they would depart from the faith. Verses 1-5 that go before this, show us that to be a true Christian you must abide in Apostolic teaching – in the truth and sound doctrine of the Bible. You must not believe every spirit that animates men to speak lies in hypocrisy concerning spiritual truth.

You must understand that there are those who would teach a gospel contrary to the Bible or a godliness which is based upon observing some religious traditions and believing in doctrines which are revisions of absolute truth. These persons think that they are saved by their religious works, like partaking of baptism and They partake of the Mass, they say the Rosary and rub the beads, and think that they will eventually be forgiven of all of their sins. But where do they learn this? Certainly it is not found in the Bible. Here in these verses, however, we see that the exercise of godliness is really based upon good spiritual nutrition. The person who is abiding in the Word of God is being “nourished in the words of faith and of the good doctrine which is carefully followed”.

The Word of God, the Bible is the Christian’s food. When you believe in Jesus, when you become a Christian, you find out from the word of God, and others of the saints showing you this truth in the word, that you have born again by the Spirit of God working in your heart. You then understand, the Spirit confirming these things in your mind and heart, that God Himself has

brought you forth by the Word of God, as it says in James 1: 18, but even so, you must take care that your faith is being nourished on a regular and daily basis, drinking in the pure milk of the word, partaking of the meat of sound good doctrine which is found in God's precious word. The words of faith are those words from God's Word will show you that the salvation of your soul has not come from yourself, or from the religious acts which men called priests perform over you, but rather your salvation has come from Christ Himself.

It is absolutely essential to your growth and strength as a Christian that you understand that God is the One who gives to you a faithful and godly minister to preach the word to you Sunday by Sunday so that you can be nourished on sound doctrine. Have you ever read John Bunyan's Pilgrim's Progress, the part where Christian is in the house of Interpreter, early on in his journey to the Celestial City? Interpreter said – "Come in; I will show thee that which will be profitable to thee." "So he commanded his man to light the candle, and bid Christian follow him; so he had him into a private room, and bid his man open a door; the which when he had done, Christian saw the picture of a very grave person hang up against the wall; and this was the fashion of it." "It had eyes lifted up to heaven, the best of books in his hand, the law of truth was written upon his lips, the world was behind his back." "It stood as if it pleaded with men, and a crown of gold did hang over its head."

Chr. "Then said Christian, 'What meaneth this?' Inter. "The man whose picture this is, is one of a thousand; he can beget children, travail in birth with children, and nurse them himself when they are born." "And whereas thou seest him with his eyes lift up to heaven, the best of books in his hand, and the law of truth writ on his lips, it is to show thee, that this work is to know and unfold dark things to sinners; even as also thou seest him stand as if he pleaded with men; and whereas thou seest the world as cast behind him, and that a crown hangs over his head, that is to show thee that slighting and despising the things that are present, for the love that he hath to his Master's service, he is sure in the world that come next to have glory for his reward."

"Now, said the Interpreter, I have showed thee this picture first, because the man whose picture this is, is the only man whom the Lord of the place whither thou art going, hath authorized to be thy guide in all difficult places thou mayest meet with in the way; wherefore, take good heed to what I have showed thee, and bear well in thy mind what thou hast see, lest in thy journey, thou meet with some that pretend to lead thee right, but their way goes down to death." Ah, my dear friends, do you believe that God calls men to preach and calls them into the pastoral and preaching ministry? Do you believe that it is the Holy Spirit who first raises up the man, giving him gifts and abilities for ministry, and then that these gifts and character qualities are confirmed by the way that he lives his life, according to 1st Timothy 3: 1-7? You ought to think this way, if you do not now presently think so. For a call to the ministry it is a most Biblical doctrine. But a man's call and the way that he lives and acts in relation to his family and others in the church must also be considered.

It is his feeding the flock with the word of God which will be his task. And it will not just be his feeding them from the word of God, but it will also be how he goes about to shepherd the flock that he leads, which will become the basis for the strength and spiritual stability and growth of many of the members there. In the members of the church, in the words and lives of God's people who are attempting to carefully following Christ, there will come to be a receiving of the truth of God's word, and then a going about to do what the Lord of the Word commands. They will take the word that they have read at home, and they will take the word which they have had preached to them when they come to church, and they will live it out in their lives.

And so, the daily intake and meditation on the Word of God and the weekly Sunday by Sunday intake of the word at church becomes a very important exercise with them. They are appointments which, you and I must be diligent and regular to keep. We cannot expect to be

godly people without regular attendance upon the word read or the word preached. I believe that this is one of the main reasons that many Christians are not having a greater influence on others for the sake of the gospel in our days. Christ's kingdom cannot grow and flourish and be built by mal-nourished Christians. There are certain principles of Bible study that will help us. Turn with me over to Proverbs 2: 1-5 – “My son, if you *receive* my words, and *treasure* My commands within you, so that you *incline* your ear to wisdom, and *apply* your heart to understanding; yes, if you *cry out* for discernment, and *lift up* your voice for understanding, if you *seek her* as silver, and *search for her* as for hidden treasures; then you will understand the fear of the Lord and find the knowledge of God.”

Now as Jerry Bridges points out in his book *the Practice of Godliness*, we need to focus on the verbs here in these verses if we would be exercising toward godliness. We need to see that this is the exercise. If we will receive His words, if we will store them up, if we will incline our heart, if we will lift up our voice, if we will seek, if we will search, then we will understand the fear of the Lord. This means that the focus of our heart must be, not only to take time to read and receive and meditate upon the Word of God, but also to carry it with you, then, into every situation of your life. You will then find, that this carefully following what the Bible says, brings about the blessed result of obedience and character development. Not just a moral life, but a life of living interaction with the Risen Christ over all your words and deeds and actions in relation to keeping the commandments of God. That is the Christian life.

Remember that becoming a strong Christian is not simply a matter of information from the Bible, but it is rather a meditation upon it and prayer concerning it, in order to do what it says by faith in Christ. This will mean that you will have to develop a prayer life in order to see this happen. Your engaging in prayer will speak to God of your dependence upon Him, in order to do any good thing. A prayerless man will think that he is already sufficient to do what God commands, without any grace, without any help. A godly man will pray regularly, and he will long to see God do in him what he knows it will take God's grace to do; that is, to develop Christian character.

2nd – Exercising yourself toward godliness is profitable for all things because it enables you to discern and to reject what is false.

Verse 7 – “But reject profane and old wives; fables, and exercise yourself toward godliness.” It is truly amazing to me how millions of people can believe in fables and stories which have been made up around the Bible's true words and they actually come to refer to those fables as truth, when they are really lies. I am thinking now of the Jewish Talmud; the Mishnah and the Gemara. The Mishnah is the text of the Jewish traditions and the Gemara is the fabulous interpretations of the texts of Scripture. The dreams and fables of this book, which are held in high esteem by the Jews, can never lead any of that people to know God, but only to unreality and absurdity.

I am thinking also of the traditions of the Early Church Fathers which, in the Roman Catholic Church, have been used to confuse those who might be seeking the true God through Christ. They come to believe wrong things about the way of salvation. It is indeed profaning the Lord's Supper to teach that by taking the wafer in the Mass, which has been supposedly been changed into the literal body of our Lord, that salvation is being received by the participant. It flatly contradicts the Scriptures to believe that grace is communicated to the infant's heart in the sprinkling of Baptism, regenerating grace; when nowhere is it taught in the Bible. The traditions and doctrines of men, their stories and fables, will never save a single soul from perishing. These doctrines and practices of religious but unsaved men will never lead people to a godly life. Only the story, the old, old story of Jesus and His love will do that.

That is why Jesus came into this world – to save sinners. He came to live a life in which He did keep His Father's commands perfectly; in His heart, and in His mind, and with His body.

He loved God with all His heart, which we do not do perfectly. He died a substitute for sinners; for you if you will receive it. If you see your need of a Savior, if you see that you cannot keep God's commands and His Word, then believe in Jesus. If you see that sins deserve punishment and you cannot bear the thought that you may someday perish in your sins; then look to Jesus, who died for sinners on the cross. He paid the debt which you could never pay to God. He suffered so that you might not be condemned in the coming Judgment of the Last Day. He also will give you grace to live the Christian life and to be able to face the trials and afflictions of this life. He will give you the calmness of heart, the peace, and the strength which you so much need. Come to Him in prayer and ask Him for the free gift of salvation.

3rd – To exercise yourself towards godliness is profitable because it holds the promise of the life to come. (verse 8b)

There are many people who know in their hearts that there is a life to come. They believe that they will drift into it, by and by, when they die. They believe that they will be in a better place irregardless of how they have lived their lives. But a great disappointment awaits those who disbelieve God and His Word. If you are not a godly person, you cannot expect to enter heaven. And if you are not a godly person, you would not like heaven anyway. The Holy Father is there, the righteous Savior is there, the Holy Spirit is there. But no sin or unrighteousness is there. But the life to come is what all true Christians long for. It is what they look forward to, because the life of godliness will become the eternal life of beholding the glory of our God and our Christ face to face.

Turn with me in closing to Philippians 3: 10-14. Here we see the apostle Paul's goal as a godly man – "That I might know Him and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death, if by any means, I may attain to the resurrection of the dead." "Not that I have already attained, or am already perfected; but I press on, that I may lay hold of that for which Christ Jesus has also laid hold of me." Brethren, I do not count myself to have apprehended; but one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forward to those things which are ahead, I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus." The Apostle is pressing on. He is looking forward, he is forgetting the mistakes and disappointments, and regrets of the past. He wants to finish this life well. He wants to advance on into the life to come.

It is an upward call for the godly man, for the man who has strived for it, and has exercised themselves towards godliness by faith in Jesus Christ and obedience to His word. That person wants to know Christ better and better, before they die. They want to know the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings. Some people just want to escape the sufferings of their bodies in this life. But they do not understand that when they die there will be greater suffering there, in the life to come, if they have not come to know Christ. But the godly man wants to know the fellowship of Christ's sufferings by being made conformable to His death. The death that Christ died, he died to sin, once for all. The sufferings of Christ were for righteousness sake.

When you believe in Jesus you want to live to bring glory to your Savior. You do not want to die until your obedience and your work in His service is finished. He decides that, when your service will end, and you will be content with that. You will want it that way. You are living by faith, you will learn to suffer with Christ by faith, and you will learn to die in the faith of Jesus Christ. Dear listener, will you not see the greatness of His grace today, and receive it? When you do, you will better come to see the importance of your exercising toward godliness; something which is profitable for all things; for this life, and the life to come. It is promised that it will be so in these verses.