

True Godliness

Radio Broadcast

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Bible Text: 1 Timothy 4:1-8

Preached On: Sunday, January 29, 2012

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Welcome to the Grace Abounding broadcast brought to you by the congregation of the Shreveport Grace Church that meets at 2970 Baird Road in Shreveport, LA. My name is Ken Wimer and it is my privilege to bring to you today a message that seeks to exalt the Lord Jesus Christ and his glorious person and finished work of salvation accomplished for sinners at the cross. Please stay tuned.

Today I would like to speak with you on a subject that is quite popular if you listen to preachers and read commentaries or some of their literature and that has to do with true godliness. Many preachers and teachers that talk about godliness and yet Paul warns Timothy that all that is called godliness is not necessarily so. In fact, he uses a little bit stronger language than that, calling it the doctrines of devils. So, now that I have your attention, let me read for you from 1 Timothy 4:1-8 where Paul gives instruction to Timothy on how he's to preach true godliness. In 1 Timothy 4:1 we read,

“Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils; speaking lies in hypocrisy; having their conscience seared with a hot iron; forbidding to marry, and commanding to abstain from meats, which God hath created to be received with thanksgiving of them which believe and know the truth. For every creature of God is good, and nothing to be refused, if it be received with thanksgiving: for it is sanctified by the word of God and prayer. If thou put the brethren in remembrance of these things, thou shalt be a good minister of Jesus Christ, nourished up in the words of faith and of good doctrine, whereunto thou hast attained. But refuse profane and old wives' fables, and exercise thyself rather unto godliness. For bodily exercise profiteth little: but godliness is profitable unto all things, having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come.”

Here we see Paul exhorting Timothy to exercise himself unto godliness. That word does not mean to try to live a sinless life. That would be impossible in this flesh and it would go contrary to all that the Scriptures teach concerning our nature being sinners from birth. But godliness has to do rather with a God-fearing, a knowing of God in truth which can only be taught by the Spirit of God. So, it is a spiritual gift which God gives, a revelation

of the Lord Jesus Christ in the heart of a sinner and stands in contrast to much of what is preached as godliness which is nothing more than works or something that the sinner himself attempts to do to make himself like God. That's an impossibility.

Here in these initial verses that I've read for you, the Holy Spirit distinctly and clearly warns us that in these last days, some professing Christians will listen to and follow evil men, and these are preachers, who profess to speak for God but who out of covetousness and hypocrisy handle the Word of God deceitfully. They will not only listen to these deceivers but will receive their lies and false doctrines. That's what Paul refers to here as departure from the faith. The faith being that revelation of Christ as it's revealed in the gospel, in the Word, in connection with Christ and his death and what he accomplished. You see, if righteousness could come by any other way that would mean then that Christ died in vain. But the reason that God the Father sent his Son into this world to die for sinners, is because there was no other way. There was no other way than through his person and through his work that sinners could be reconciled unto a holy and just God.

So, a departure from the faith is a departure from that truth. There are many that have departed from the faith, preachers and people alike. But there are men whose effort is to persuade men to worship God or seek acceptance before God by the works of the flesh such as mentioned here, abstaining from certain meats or even from marriage or from food on certain days and observing certain rules and days of fasting. Sound pretty familiar? But men by nature, natural minded men, not ones taught of the Spirit, they're inclined towards such self-righteous activity, what the Scriptures call carnal worship, fleshly worship of God. And, therefore, are averse towards true spiritual worship and dependence on the righteousness and mercy of God in the Lord Jesus Christ alone. Such men are blinded by Satan. It was so from the beginning and this is why Paul calls it here giving heed to seducing spirits and doctrines of devils.

So, being blind and ignorant and lost, men prefer to be told something to do or something to give up for salvation rather than simply bow to the Lord Jesus Christ and his work accomplished for sinners there at the cross, his shed blood. And upon completion of his death, God declaring righteous those for whom Christ died.

Such was the case of the Samaritan woman in John 4 that the Lord encountered. Here was the Lord Jesus Christ, the very water of life before her and yet in her blindness she spent her time initially talking about her religion. In verse 22 our Lord told her directly, "Ye worship ye know not what." There are people today that become offended if you were to tell them that, that they worship ignorantly. They worship God in a way that he has not instructed in his Word, particularly in a society like ours that considers itself Christian and where people open this book, the Bible, and read it and are directed by it and yet to be told that they worship what they know not.

Our Lord said this to the Samaritan woman for a reason. It was for such sinners that he came into this world to save. Not everybody, but his path was directed here toward this Samaritan woman on this day, at this particular time to speak with her. So, our Lord

would show her her own ignorance and lostness. Before then, he would reveal himself in her.

John 4:22-24 we read, “Ye worship ye know not what: we know what we worship: for salvation is of the Jews.” It doesn’t mean that you had to become a Jew in order to be saved, but the Lord purposed that salvation would come from that lineage. So, Christ is the son of David and so it was that he was to come, but this was a Samaritan woman. And you can read the history of the Samaritans. They were in the beginning Jewish tribes that had apostasized and then mixed with the Assyrians back in the day and so, their race had become impure and the Jews considered them to be off-casts of society, not true Jews. But, our Lord wasn’t saying this in order to simply show her that being a Jew meant that you were saved, but he was speaking rather of God’s purpose in bringing the Christ, the Savior through that Jewish line. So, in verse 23, he says to her, “But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship him. God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth.” Here it is that the Spirit of God who has inspired this Word that I’m reading for you, directs us away from the works of the flesh to the Lord Jesus Christ alone.

In verses 3-5 we see Paul expressly speaking of, writing of those things whereby men try to dominate other men’s consciences, that is, by laws and by rules and traditions. This is, by no means, an exhaustive list here, but it certainly summarizes men’s teachings. The very first thing is forbidding to marry. There are some that are being taught that not to marry and to take a vow of celibacy is a way in which to be closer to God in spirituality than others that would marry but that is not taught in Scripture. Nowhere is anyone considered holier or more godly for not marrying.

They also command men to abstain from meat or certain meat on certain days. Again, this is described here by the Word as a hypocritical pretense of holiness and temperance. Have you ever run into somebody that by their fasting or abstaining from certain meats that they give the impression that they’re holier than you are? All of this, the Scriptures describe here, is doctrines of devils and men speaking lies in hypocrisy. The reason that they preach such things, that somehow, again, by something you do or something you give up, that you’re closer to God. They have their conscience seared with a hot iron. In other words, they know nothing, they’re lost.

This is hard for many people to take because they look at their preacher and they see a man who outwardly seems very moral and sincere and trustworthy. And yet, if that man is preaching any other righteousness than the righteousness of the Lord Jesus Christ which he came and worked out to the satisfaction of God the Father, then that man is an evil worker. He is an instrument of Satan and his doctrine that of the devil. I’m not just saying that judgmentally. That’s exactly what this Word is saying if you’ll take the time and opportunity to consider it.

Here, clearly, in this portion of Scripture beginning with verse 4. As far as food, we read here that any creature which is made for food, and this is easy to be discerned if you’re a

thinking person, is not to be refused on the basis of spiritual contamination if it is received as from the Lord with a thankful heart and a prayer of thanksgiving. Something that people commonly call today blessing the food. I don't particularly like that term. When I'm asked to bless the food, it's not I that blesses the food but it is the Lord who has given it. Therefore, it is to be received with thanksgiving. Now, if some cannot eat for medical reasons, that's understandable. But as far as spiritual eating or partaking, it has nothing to do with spirituality or godliness. That is a man-made lie. There is nothing in itself that is unclean or unfit for use if it's received in moderation and with thanksgiving. Do we need to be moderate? Yes. But there's nothing that goes into a man that defiles that man or that woman spiritually. This is brought out in Matthew 15 and verse 10-20 and I would encourage you to look at these Scriptures as the Lord directs.

We find our Lord giving this instruction because he was in front of the scribes and Pharisees that were at Jerusalem. And they were complaining about his disciples, as it says in verse 2 of Matthew 15, "Transgressing the tradition of the elders." And it had to do with a special ceremony that involved washing their hands when they would eat. Again, it's good to wash your hands for hygiene but here their point was some sort of spiritual or, I should say, religious ceremony that they went through and the disciples didn't follow it nor did our Lord instruct them to do so. They became offended. So the Lord used this opportunity to teach what it is that defiles a man. Here, we would do well to listen because these are the words of the Lord Jesus himself.

So, in Matthew 15:10 we read,

"And he called the multitude, and said unto them, Hear, and understand: not that which goeth into the mouth defileth a man; but that which cometh out of the mouth, this defileth a man. Then came his disciples, and said unto him, Knowest thou that the Pharisees were offended, after they heard this saying? But he answered and said, Every plant, which my heavenly Father hath not planted, shall be rooted up. Let them alone: they be blind leaders of the blind. And if the blind lead the blind, both shall fall into the ditch. Then answered Peter and said unto him, Declare unto us this parable. And Jesus said, Are ye also yet without understanding? Do not ye yet understand, that whatsoever entereth in at the mouth goeth into the belly, and is cast out into the draught? But those things which proceed out of the mouth come forth from the heart; and they defile the man. For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies: these are the things which defile a man: but to eat with unwashen hands defileth not a man."

So, you can see our Lord clearly describes where sin is. It's not in a bottle, it's not on a plate, it's in the heart. And those who believe and know the truth of Christ. Again, as Paul is giving Timothy instruction, here is a young preacher, of how to point his hearers to Christ and preach true godliness. It's not in the works of the flesh, it's not in what we do that somehow we demonstrate that we're godly before the Lord. And we're not to be brought into bondage, as it says in verse 3, "God hath created these things to be received

with thanksgiving.” Notice, “Of them which believe and know the truth.” Those two go together. That word “and” can also be translated “even.” Them that believe even that know the truth. That’s who believes, those that know the truth.

So, the Lord Jesus Christ by his righteousness has freed his people from every yoke of bondage, every ceremony and invention of men. And they find their righteousness, they find their sanctification and they find their redemption in him. All of the glory belongs unto the Lord Jesus Christ alone. I don’t know about you, but this is a freeing message. It frees sinners such as we are, taught of the Lord to worship God in truth and not according to the flesh.

Paul wrote of this to the Corinthians in 1 Corinthians 1:30-31 where he said, “But of him are ye in Christ Jesus.” That is, salvation is of the Lord alone and it’s in Christ Jesus, his Son, “Who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption.” All of salvation is summed up in those four words: wisdom, to know God in truth; righteousness, not something you do but what the Lord Jesus Christ himself came and worked out to the satisfaction of God the Father; sanctification, to be set apart in Christ in his person unto God; and redemption, not only to be redeemed from the curse of sin and the power of sin but, thank God, one day even from the very presence of sin. Dear friend, it’s all in the Lord Jesus Christ. And those that believe and know the truth of Christ have been made free from every yoke of bondage and ceremony and invention of men.

So, Paul instructs Timothy, coming back to 1 Timothy 4:6 to, put the brethren, the brethren are all of those that have Christ as their elder brother for whom Christ paid their debt and worked out that righteousness and are called by the Spirit of God. He says, “If thou put the brethren in remembrance of these things, thou shalt be a good minister of Jesus Christ.” Here is a very clear definition of who is a true minister of the Lord Jesus Christ. How do you know if your minister is a true minister of the Lord Jesus Christ? Well, it’s one who puts his hearers in remembrance of these things, pointing sinners to the Lord Jesus Christ and telling them that Christ came into the world to save sinners. The name Jesus means that. He didn’t come to try to save everybody, but he came to save that which was lost. He didn’t come to call the righteous but sinners to repentance. And his name Jesus, he was called Jesus, for he shall save his people from their sins. Not might, but shall.

This is where one who is a faithful minister of Christ points sinners. And it says, there, “nourished up in the words of faith and of good doctrine.” The faith is the same as good doctrine. Again, it’s that body of truth as revealed in the Scriptures concerning the Lord Jesus Christ, his person, and that work that he accomplished at Calvary, his death. Christ and him crucified. That is a faithful minister of the Lord Jesus Christ. And he says, “it is such that are nourished up in words of faith and of good doctrine. Paul tells Timothy, “If you remind them of these things, you will be a good minister of Jesus Christ. Always feeding. First of all, in nourishing your own self and then being nourished yourself, being grounded yourself in the doctrine of Christ, you will so nourish God’s people on this truth that Christ is all and salvation is of him alone.”

There's a twofold aspect to preaching the gospel. It's a double-edged sword. There is the exalting of Christ but there's also the pointing out of error. So, Paul says to Timothy in 1 Timothy 4:7, "Refuse profane," and what he calls, "old wives' fables." In other words, any doctrine that does not give Christ all the glory and teach sinners that that righteousness that he worked out is the only righteousness that gives acceptance before a holy God. Any other teaching is called here "profane and old wives' fables." That in connection with how he began in verse 1 of teaching doctrines that are by seducing spirits and the doctrines of devils.

Strong language but, again, because it's so important, it's vital, there are men's souls here that are at stake and so he says, "Refuse all these traditions. Outward, fleshly commandments of men and false standards of holiness as so many godless fictions and old sentimental tales." It's just like when we say to somebody, "Oh, that's a wives' tale." It's how Paul, by the Spirit, describes the teachings of men.

Dear friend, if you're taught of Christ, you're going to face opposition because what he's stating here goes against the current of most of what is called Christendom today, or Christianity. Men make their professions, they walk an aisle, they say a prayer and they do all these things according to the instruction of their leaders and yet, in so doing, they are just as lost as when they began.

But here he says, "Rather exercise yourself unto godliness." Again, what is godliness but that which God commands. God-likeness, exercise yourself unto that which God himself has instructed. He's holy, he's just and in order for any sinner to have fellowship with God, that holiness and that justice must be satisfied. There must be a holiness and a righteousness that is just as holy as God himself. When people begin to talk to me about working their way to God I just put my hand up and stop them and say, "Now, let's just talk about who we're talking about here. We're talking about a God that cannot tolerate sin and you're telling me that somehow you're going to work out a holiness and a righteousness that would be of satisfaction to him? Even if you decided today to begin to do that, and that would be a foolish thought, what about your life that you've lived to this point that is marred with sin and everything you've done is nothing but corruption and death? No, dear friend, there's no hope there. It is only in the work of the Lord Jesus Christ and what he has accomplished."

So, exercise yourself, Paul says to Timothy, unto true godliness. If you look in a portion of Scripture in 1 Timothy 3:16, just before this chapter, it gives us the definition of true godliness. Very simply, "And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness." And then it says, "God was manifest in the flesh." That's godliness. If you want to see a godly man, if you want to know how it is that a godly man would live, then look at the Lord Jesus Christ because he was perfection in the flesh. He came to bear the sin of many and yet he, himself being without sin. So, it is to him that we look, not trying to work anything out ourselves but only to him.

In verse 8, Paul calls any other sort of exercise “bodily exercise.” And it, “profiteth little.” It’s not in the sense that it profits at all but it profiteth a little. In other words, he’s saying it has no bearing at all on true godliness. Now, when he talks about bodily exercise he’s not talking about jogging, playing tennis, golf or some other physical exercise of the muscles. He gives the name bodily exercise to all outward actions such as kneeling, fasting, eating, drinking, abstaining from meat. Yes, even some who would abstain from a relationship with their wife or husband, food or whatever that are undertaken for the sake of religious purposes or supposed holiness, such a thing is impossible. But he says, “Godliness is profitable for all things.” In other words, the Lord Jesus Christ and what he has accomplished, that is true godliness. And it is to that end that he says here, it has “The promise of the life that now is,” for those that are so taught of Christ, “and of that which is to come.”

I pray, dear friend, that the Lord would grant you ears to hear and a heart to receive this Word as it has been set forth through this message.

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