

## **INTRODUCTION**

1. Every year at this time we prepare for a new year.
2. We stay up late to countdown with the rest of the world something new.
3. But are we really prepared for something new?
4. We make resolutions but they are only those that are based on what is seen instead of the unseen.
5. 2008 is just two days from now.
6. What resolutions have you made?
7. Is your resolution to live more today than you did yesterday for Jesus?
8. Is your resolution to be more prepared for heaven than you were yesterday?
9. Is your resolution to be godly? For “nothing is more contrary to a heavenly hope than an earthly heart.”<sup>1</sup>
10. Thomas Watson said, “The soul being so precious, and salvation so glorious, it is the highest point of prudence to make preparations for another world. It is beyond all dispute that there is an inheritance in light, and it is most strenuously asserted in Holy Scripture that there must be a fitness and suitability for it (Col.1:12).

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<sup>1</sup> I.D.E. Thomas, A Puritan Golden Treasury, (Pennsylvania: Banner of Truth, 1975). 134.

What a rare thing godliness is! It is not airy and puffed up, but solid, and such as will take up the heart and spirits...Godliness is a spiritual queen, and whoever marries her is sure of a large dowry with her. Godliness has the promise of the present life and of that which is to come (1 Tim.4:8). Godliness gives assurance, yes, holy triumph in God, and how sweet that is (Isa.32:17)...Godliness puts a man in heaven before his time. Christian, aspire after piety; it is a lawful ambition.”<sup>2</sup>

11. So what have you set your heart to for the new year?
12. Are you preparing for something new?
13. Are you focused more on being godly than being satisfied?
14. A.W. Tozer said “The true Christian ideal is not to be happy but to be holy.”
15. As we focus on 2008, I want to encourage you to consider 4 truths that will aspire you on to godliness.
16. These four goals will keep your heart where it needs to be.
17. The first has to do with Jesus—keep your focus on Jesus!
18. When Jesus spoke about His departure from this world, He told His disciples, “I will come again.”

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<sup>2</sup> Thomas Watson, *The Godly Man's Picture*, (Pennsylvania: Banner of Truth, 1992). 7-8.

## I. Keep Your Focus on Jesus

Jesus said in **John 14:1-3 (NASB77)** <sup>1</sup> "Let not your heart be troubled; believe in God, believe also in Me. <sup>2</sup> "In My Father's house are many dwelling places; if it were not so, I would have told you; for I go to prepare a place for you. <sup>3</sup> "And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you to Myself; that where I am, *there* you may be also.

This is what theologians commonly refer to as the rapture of the church.

Probably the most preached passage on this subject is **1 Thessalonians 4:13-18 (NASB77)** which says, <sup>13</sup> But we do not want you to be uninformed, brethren, about those who are asleep, that you may not grieve, as do the rest who have no hope. <sup>14</sup> For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so God will bring with Him those who have fallen asleep in Jesus. <sup>15</sup> For this we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive, and remain until the coming of the Lord, shall not precede those who have fallen asleep. <sup>16</sup> For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of *the* archangel, and with the trumpet of God; and the dead in Christ shall rise first. <sup>17</sup> Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and thus we shall always be with the Lord. <sup>18</sup> Therefore comfort one another with these words.

- A. Do Not Be Ignorant Regarding Those Who Have Died in Christ Lest you have Continual Sorrow as Those who Have No Hope (v.13)

B. God Will Resurrect the Dead in Christ (vv.14-15)

1. He will do this because of Christ's resurrection

Paul says, "For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so God will bring with Him those who have fallen asleep in Jesus."

Jesus' death and resurrection are past historical events. All four gospel accounts record the events of His death as well as His death.

Matthew says that Jesus "yielded up His Spirit" (Mat.27:50).

Mark says Jesus "breathed His last" (Mk.15:37).

Luke also says that Jesus "breathed His last" (Lk.23:46).

John says that Jesus "gave up His spirit" (Jn.19:30).

Just as all four gospels record Jesus' death, they also record His resurrection. The prevailing testimony of the gospels is "He's not here, for He has risen, just as He said" (Mat.28:6).

2. Because Jesus arose from the dead so will His followers (v.14b)

This is the plan of God for those who follow Jesus—they will be resurrected from the dead

- a) Paul says in **1 Thessalonians 4:14 (NASB77)**  
<sup>14</sup>For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so God will bring with Him those who have fallen asleep in Jesus.
- b) **John 5:28-29 (NASB77)** <sup>28</sup>"Do not marvel at this; for an hour is coming, in which all who are in the tombs shall hear His voice, <sup>29</sup> and shall come forth; those who did the good *deeds* to a resurrection of life, those who committed the evil *deeds* to a resurrection of judgment.
- c) **John 6:39-44 (NASB77)** <sup>39</sup>"And this is the will of Him who sent Me, that of all that He has given Me I lose nothing, but raise it up on the last day. <sup>40</sup>"For this is the will of My Father, that everyone who beholds the Son and believes in Him, may have eternal life; and I Myself will raise him up on the last day." <sup>41</sup>The Jews therefore were grumbling about Him, because He said, "I am the bread that came down out of heaven." <sup>42</sup>And they were saying, "Is not this Jesus, the son of Joseph, whose father and mother we know? How does He now say, 'I have come down out of heaven'?" <sup>43</sup>Jesus answered and said to them, "Do not grumble among yourselves. <sup>44</sup>"No one can come to Me, unless the Father who sent Me draws him; and I will raise him up on the last day.

- d) **John 6:54 (NASB77)** <sup>54</sup> "He who eats My flesh and drinks My blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day.

This should provide the greatest comfort for the child of God but gets even better in verse 16 of 1 Thessalonians because it's here where we hear that Jesus will return for His own.

C. Jesus will Return (v.16)

Paul says in **1 Thessalonians 4:16 (NASB77)** <sup>16</sup> For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of *the* archangel, and with the trumpet of God; and the dead in Christ shall rise first.

1. He will "descend from heaven"

He will not merely send His angelic deputies to call the saints; He will return physically for them in His glorified body.<sup>3</sup>

- a) Jesus said in **John 14:3 (NASB77)** <sup>3</sup> "And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you to Myself; that where I am, *there* you may be also.
- b) When Jesus was ascending to His Father, the angels said to the disciples in **Acts 1:9-11 (NASB77)** <sup>9</sup> And after He had said these things, He was lifted up while they were

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<sup>3</sup> D. Edmond Hiebert, *The Thessalonian Epistles*, (Chicago: Moody, 1971). 198.

looking on, and a cloud received Him out of their sight. <sup>10</sup> And as they were gazing intently into the sky while He was departing, behold, two men in white clothing stood beside them; <sup>11</sup> and they also said, "Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking into the sky? This Jesus, who has been taken up from you into heaven, will come in just the same way as you have watched Him go into heaven."

- c) In the Olivet Discourse Jesus said in **Matthew 24:30 (NASB77)** <sup>30</sup> and then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in the sky, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the SON OF MAN COMING ON THE CLOUDS OF THE SKY with power and great glory.
- d) The apostle John said in **Revelation 1:8 (NASB77)** <sup>8</sup> "I am the Alpha and the Omega," says the Lord God, "who is and who was and who is to come, the Almighty."

2. He will summons those in the graves

Paul says He will "descend from heaven with a shout."

"The noun rendered *shout* means 'a shout of command' and implies authority and urgency" (Hiebert).

Fritz Rienecker says, "In most places it denotes a loud, authoritative cry, often one uttered in a thick of a great excitement."<sup>4</sup>

- a) **John 5:25-29 (NASB77)** <sup>25</sup> "Truly, truly, I say to you, an hour is coming and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God; and those who hear shall live. <sup>26</sup> "For just as the Father has life in Himself, even so He gave to the Son also to have life in Himself; <sup>27</sup> and He gave Him authority to execute judgment, because He is *the* Son of Man. <sup>28</sup> "Do not marvel at this; for an hour is coming, in which all who are in the tombs shall hear His voice, <sup>29</sup> and shall come forth; those who did the good *deeds* to a resurrection of life, those who committed the evil *deeds* to a resurrection of judgment.
- b) **John 11:43-44 (NASB77)** <sup>43</sup> And when He had said these things, He cried out with a loud voice, "Lazarus, come forth." <sup>44</sup> He who had died came forth, bound hand and foot with wrappings; and his face was wrapped around with a cloth. Jesus said to them, "Unbind him, and let him go."

3. The archangel will sound

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<sup>4</sup> Fritz Rienecker and Cleon Rogers, *The Linguistic Key to the Greek New Testament*, (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1976, 1980). 599.

“voice” Gr.phone, means, “a sound”

“archangel” (archangelos), used only here and in Jude 9 where it is used of Michael.

“The voice of the archangel” “may denote a vocal utterance by the archangel or a sound or tone produced by him, namely, with the trumpet” (Hiebert).

**Matthew 24:31 (NASB77)** <sup>31</sup> "And He will send forth His angels with A GREAT TRUMPET and THEY WILL GATHER TOGETHER His elect from the four winds, from one end of the sky to the other.

4. The trumpet will sound

“Trumpet” Gr.salpinx, “a trumpet”

“In ancient Israel, as in many ancient lands, the trumpet was used to announce important convocations” (John MacArthur, Matthew 24-28, p.58).

- a) A trumpet was blown to gather Israel at Mt. Sinai to receive the law (Ex.19:13,16,19).
- b) A trumpet was blown at the beginning of war times (Jos.6:5, 20).
- c) A trumpet was blown as a sign of victory over Israel’s enemies (Judg.3:27).

d) **Revelation 1:10-11 (NASB77)** <sup>10</sup> I was in the Spirit on the Lord's day, and I heard behind me a loud voice like *the sound* of a trumpet, <sup>11</sup> saying, "Write in a book what you see, and send *it* to the seven churches: to Ephesus and to Smyrna and to Pergamum and to Thyatira and to Sardis and to Philadelphia and to Laodicea."

5. The dead in Christ will rise

**1 Corinthians 15:51-52 (NASB77)** <sup>51</sup> Behold, I tell you a mystery; we shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, <sup>52</sup> in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet; for the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we shall be changed.

D. Jesus will Rapture His Church (v.17)

The Latin word "rapturo" is where we get the word "rapture" from. The word itself does not occur in the Bible but the concept does.

It is defined as the catching away. The words "caught up" (harpazo), means "to snatch or catch away." It "denotes a sudden forcible seizure, an irresistible act of catching away, due to divine authority" (Hiebert).

1. This word is used of Phillip being snatched away by the Holy Spirit in **Acts 8:39 (NASB77)** <sup>39</sup> And when they came up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord snatched Philip away; and the eunuch saw him no more, but went on his way rejoicing.

2. It is also used of Paul being caught up to the third heaven in **2 Corinthians 12:1-4 (NASB77)** <sup>1</sup> Boasting is necessary, though it is not profitable; but I will go on to visions and revelations of the Lord. <sup>2</sup> I know a man in Christ who fourteen years ago—whether in the body I do not know, or out of the body I do not know, God knows—such a man was caught up to the third heaven. <sup>3</sup> And I know how such a man—whether in the body or apart from the body I do not know, God knows— <sup>4</sup> was caught up into Paradise, and heard inexpressible words, which a man is not permitted to speak.

Now since Jesus is going to return, you need to keep your focus on Him and prepare yourself for His return. This should be renewed in your heart daily.

**1 John 3:2-3 (NASB77)** <sup>2</sup> Beloved, now we are children of God, and it has not appeared as yet what we shall be. We know that, when He appears, we shall be like Him, because we shall see Him just as He is. <sup>3</sup> And everyone who has this hope *fixed* on Him purifies himself, just as He is pure.

## II. Train Yourself in Godliness

**1 Timothy 4:7 (NASB77)** <sup>7</sup> But have nothing to do with worldly fables fit only for old women. On the other hand, discipline yourself for the purpose of godliness.”

### A. The Definition of “Discipline”

The word “discipline” comes from the word *gymnos*, which means “naked” and is the word from which we derive our English word *gymnasium*.

In traditional Greek athletic contests, the participants competed without clothing, so as not to be encumbered.

Therefore, the word “train” [discipline] originally carried the literal meaning, “to exercise naked.” By New Testament times it referred to exercise and training in general. But even then it was, and is, a word with the smell of the gym in it—the sweat of a good workout.

“Gymnasticize (exercise, work out, train) yourself for the purpose of godliness” conveys the feel of what Paul is saying.<sup>5</sup>

So the words, “train, discipline, and “exercise” is an athletic term denoting the rigorous, self-sacrificing training an athlete undergoes. Spiritual self-discipline is the path to godly living<sup>6</sup>

What is one to train himself in? Paul says, “godliness.”

#### B. The Definition of “Godliness”

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<sup>5</sup> R. Kent Hughes, *Disciplines of a Godly Man*, (Wheaton: Crossway, 1991). 14.

<sup>6</sup> John Jr MacArthur, *The MacArthur Study Bible*, electronic ed. (Nashville: Word Pub., 1997, c1997). 1 Ti 4:7.

What is godliness? Godliness is two things: First, it's what God does in the heart at salvation. Paul said in **Philippians 3:9 (NASB77)** <sup>9</sup> and may be found in Him, not having a righteousness of my own derived from *the* Law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which *comes* from God on the basis of faith.

Second, it's what one produces when walking by the Spirit.

Thomas Watson, in his book "The Godly Man's Picture" says, "Godliness is the sacred impression and workmanship of God in a man, whereby from being carnal he is made spiritual.

Godliness is a real thing. It is not a fantasy but a fact. Godliness is not the feverish conceit of a sick brain; a Christian is no enthusiast, one whose religion is all made up of fancy. Godliness has truth for its foundation; it is called 'the way of truth' (Psa.119:30). Godliness is a ray and beam that shines from God. If God is true, then godliness is true.

Godliness is an intrinsic thing. It lies chiefly in the heart: 'circumcision is that of the heart' (Rom.2:29). The dew lies on the leaf, the sap is hidden in the root. The moralist's religion is all in the leaf; it consists only in externals, but godliness is a holy sap which is rooted in the soul: 'in the hidden part thou shalt make me to know wisdom' (Ps.51:6). The Chaldean expounds it, 'in the close place of the heart.'

Godliness is a supernatural thing. By nature we inherit nothing but evil. 'When we were in the flesh, the motions of sins did work in our members' (Rom.7:5). We sucked in sin as naturally as our mother's milk, but godliness is the 'wisdom from above' (Jas.3:17). It is breathed in from heaven. God must light up the lamp of grace in the heart. Weeds grow of themselves; flowers are planted. Godliness is a celestial plant that comes from the New Jerusalem. Therefore it is called a 'fruit of the Spirit' (Gal.5:22). A man has no more power to change himself than to create himself.

Godliness is an extensive thing. It is a sacred leaven that spread itself into the whole soul: 'the very God of peace sanctify you wholly' (1 Thess.5:23). There is light in the understanding, order in the affections, pliability in the will, exemplariness in the life...Grace is called 'the new man' (Col.3:10), not a new eye, or tongue, but a new man. He who is godly is good all over; though he is regenerate only in part, yet it is in every part.

Godliness is an intense thing. It does not lie in a dead formality and indifference, but is vigorous and flaming: 'fervent in spirit' (Rom.12:1). We call water hot when it is so in the third or fourth degree. He whose devotion is inflamed is godly and his heart boils over in holy affections.

Godliness is a glorious thing. As the jewel to the ring, so is piety to the soul, bespangling it in God's eyes. Reason makes us men; godliness make us earthly angels; by it we 'partake of the divine nature' (2 Pet.1:4). Godliness is near akin to glory: 'glory and

virtue' (2 Pet.1:3). Godliness is glory in the seed, and glory is godliness in the flower.

Godliness is a permanent thing...a blush of godliness is not enough to distinguish a Christian, but godliness must be the temper and complexion of the soul. Godliness is a fixed thing."<sup>7</sup>

In other words, godliness is what God does to the heart. It is a transformation from carnality to spirituality which is done initially at salvation.

Since godliness is that which God does in the heart, we must pursue it with all our heart.

#### C. We Are to Pursue Godliness

1. Paul told Timothy in **1 Timothy 6:11 (NASB77)**  
<sup>11</sup> But flee from these things, you man of God; and pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, perseverance *and* gentleness.
2. **1 Corinthians 9:24-27 (NASB77)** <sup>24</sup> Do you not know that those who run in a race all run, but *only* one receives the prize? Run in such a way that you may win. <sup>25</sup> And everyone who competes in the games exercises self-control in all things. They then *do it* to receive a perishable wreath, but we an imperishable. <sup>26</sup> Therefore I run in such a way, as not without aim; I box in such a way, as not beating the air; <sup>27</sup> but I buffet my body and make it

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<sup>7</sup> Thomas Watson, The Godly Man's Picture, (Pennsylvania: Banner of Truth, 1992). 12-14.

my slave, lest possibly, after I have preached to others, I myself should be disqualified.

3. **Titus 2:11-14 (NASB77)** <sup>11</sup> For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to all men, <sup>12</sup> instructing us to deny ungodliness and worldly desires and to live sensibly, righteously and godly in the present age, <sup>13</sup> looking for the blessed hope and the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Christ Jesus; <sup>14</sup> who gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from every lawless deed and purify for Himself a people for His own possession, zealous for good deeds.

Thomas Watson says, “Here is a sharp rebuke to such as are ‘glittering dross’ Christians, who only make a show of godliness, like Michael, who put ‘an image in the bed,’ and so deceived Saul’s messengers (1 Sam.19:16). These our Saviour calls ‘whited sepulchers (Matt.23:27) – their beauty is all paint!

Question: But why do persons content themselves with a show of godliness?

Answer: This helps to keep up their fame: ‘honour me now before the people’ (1 Sam.15:30). Men are ambitious of credit, and wish to gain repute in the world, therefore they will dress themselves in the garb and mode of religion, so that others may write them down for saints. But alas, what is one the better for having others commend him, and his conscience condemn him? What good will it do a man when he is

in hell that others think he has gone to heaven? Oh, beware of this! Counterfeit piety is double iniquity.<sup>8</sup>

### **CONCLUSION**

1. What can you do to train yourself in godliness?
2. Commit yourself to the spiritual disciplines.
3. What are the spiritual disciplines?
4. Reading and studying the Bible, prayer, meditation, and witnessing to others. Stock says, “There is no such thing as drifting into godliness; the ‘stream of tendency’ is against us.” There must be **exercise** and effort.<sup>9</sup>
5. Let me give you some goals to focus on in 2008:
  - a) Spend 30 minutes per day reading the Bible.
  - b) Spend 15-30 minutes per day in prayer.
  - c) Seek to memorize one verse of Scripture per week.
  - d) Seek to reach two families this year with the gospel.

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<sup>8</sup> Thomas Watson, *The Godly Man’s Picture*, (Pennsylvania: Banner of Truth, 1992). 15.

<sup>9</sup> William MacDonald and Arthur Farstad, *Believer’s Bible Commentary : Old and New Testaments* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1997, c1995). 1 Ti 4:7.

- e) Seek to be prepared for worship each time you attend services.
  - f) Seek to be accountable to one person for prayer and spending time in God's Word.
  - g) Seek to be an encourager instead of a complainer.
  - h) Seek to be a peacemaker.
  - i) Seek to rejoice in the Lord in everything.
6. To train yourself in godliness you have to do those things that draw you to God: Prayer (Acts 6:4), Bible study (2 Tim.2:15), Meditation (Jos.1:8), Witnessing (Mat.28:19-20).
7. Matthew Henry said, "If Christ is the light, then it is our duty to follow Him, to submit ourselves to His guidance, and in everything take directions from Him. It is not enough to gaze upon this light. We must follow it, believe in it, and walk in it; for it is a light to our feet, not our eyes only."
8. Invest your life in those things that matter for eternity!
9. If you're here today and you haven't "received" (Jn.1:12) Christ, I want to call you to **Luke 9:23-24 (NASB77)**<sup>23</sup> And He was saying to *them* all, "If anyone wishes to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow Me."<sup>24</sup> "For whoever wishes to save his life shall lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake, he is the one who will save it.

10. Are you “preparing for something new?”

11. Let’s pray.