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Godlines

- Promise Of Life!



Mario Dučić,

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"But reject profane and old wives' fables, and exercise yourself toward godliness.

For bodily exercise profits a little, but godliness is profitable for all things, having promise of the life that now is and of that which is to come. This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptance. For to this end we both labor and suffer reproach, because we trust in the living God, who is the Savior of all men, especially of those who believe. These things command and teach." (1 Timothy 4.7-11)

The apostle Paul, as a spiritual mentor, wrote these words to the young pastor Timothy in 64 AD. Apparently Paul wrote from Rome shortly before his execution. He encouraged Timothy against constant pressure, conflicts, and challenges presented by the church and surrounding gentile culture.

In Ephesus, where Timothy led the church, much emphasis was placed on bodily exercise. Nearly every Greek city had a sports center at that time. History states that young people between ages 16 – 18 spent a lot of time training in various sports.

Therefore, having understood these circumstances and events, the apostle Paul uses an illustration from that time and points us to those things that he believes to be of great help amidst the pressure: godliness. He encourages Timothy and says: *"Exercise yourself toward godliness"* The Greek word used for godliness is *eusebeia*, which means, to live with God or to live a morally good life. It points to godliness i.e. quality relationship with God. In other words he says: *"exercise a quality relationship with God."*

Peter also talks about godliness *"But also for this very reason, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue, to virtue knowledge, to knowledge self-control, to self-control perseverance, to perseverance godliness, to godliness brotherly kindness, and to brotherly kindness love."* (2 Peter 1:5-7)

★ **Godliness is a way of living in which God has been honored and by living a holy life in the world.**

In today's Christian society much emphasizes is put on healthy nourishment and physical fitness, which is not bad. Western publishers earn a lot of money by selling various books on healthy Christian food and fitness, etc, but somehow have forgotten what is most important, which is exercise of true godliness. Briefly, godliness is a way of living in which God has been honored and by living a holy life in the world.

▶ TRUE GODLINESS KEEPS US AWAY FROM FALSE BELIEF

When Paul says Timothy to *"But reject profane and old wives' fables!"* he is referring to false teachers whom he mentioned in his pastoral letter in Titus 1:14 where he commands such people *"not to listen to Jewish myths."*

At that time Jewish Gnosticism (sect created by a mixture of Christianity, Jewish teaching, and Gentile philosophy) was making it's way into the New Testament with their so-called deep philosophical thoughts infecting newly born believers. Today's churches are full of such mystics who under the veil of spirituality and revelations negate the truth of the Word of God by purporting their false doctrine; false doctrine that is popular but, rather

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than directing people to truth, leads them to disaster.

Those who have no personal discipline – true godliness – become like them. Such people have no discipline in life. They most often are not under authority, either in the society, family, or church. They do not work, are lazy, and do not serve because they think they are called to be either apostles or prophets.

Look how Paul described such persons to Timothy: *"For there are many insubordinate, both idle talkers and deceivers, especially those of the circumcision, whose mouths must be stopped, who subvert whole households, teaching things which they ought not, for the sake of dishonest gain. One of them, a prophet of their own, said, "Cretans are always liars, evil beasts, lazy gluttons." This testimony is true. Therefore rebuke them sharply, that they may be sound in the faith, not giving heed to Jewish fables and commandments of men who turn from the truth." (Titus 1.10-14)*

These persons usually do not want to work, do not have good testimony in the world, serve no one, are arrogant and haughty; they are church parasites and lazy gluttons as Paul says. For certain, when such people do not work, they occupy themselves with idleness. Many believe fables, the world is fully their concern because, spiritually speaking, they are fat and lazy. When Paul says to Timothy *"exercise yourself toward godliness"* he means constant exercise in order to maintain the inner man. A discipline is needed.



As we should be disciplined in physical exercise to maintain our outer man, spiritual exercise is also important to maintain our spiritual life, our inner man.

Can you imagine an undisciplined sportsman? Any of them can testify to the importance of effort and a lot of sacrifice in order to win. The same is true with godliness; it will not come from a healing seminar, rather from constant personal discipline.

The church is full of false prophets and teachers who don't live the Word but feed themselves with spiritual hormones. Instead of everyday discipline they want to live an unhealthy life and are therefore weak depending on who knows what kind of preachers. Their Christian life is like a yo-yo going up and down and consequently they find themselves in delusion.

What God desires is spiritually strong, healthy, and disciplined Christians who will constantly exercise godliness. They do not fall into delusion but are steady in the race to which we are all called to run. They don't run in vain but to win, to get a prize, an imperishable crown of eternal life, says Paul in 1 Corinthians 9.24—27:

"Do you not know that those who run in a race all run, but one receives the prize? Run in such a way that you may obtain it. And everyone who competes for the prize is temperate in all things. Now they do it to obtain a perishable crown, but we for an imperishable crown. Therefore I run thus: not with uncertainty. Thus I fight: not as one who beats the air. But I discipline my body

and bring it into subjection, lest, when I have preached to others, I myself should become disqualified."

Paul had the stability and godliness, which brought him to the end of the race. He could say with certainty: *"For I am already being poured out as a drink offering, and the time of my departure is at hand. 7 I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith."* (2 Timothy 4.6-7) The point is not how eagerly we start but how we end!

Spiritual discipline is needed. This process isn't a myth and it does not depend on miracles. We simply have to constantly maintain our spiritual inner man as many do with their outer man. If we do not discipline ourselves we will be trapped by the world in sin or became fruitless and misled. If we neglect reading Bible, personal prayer, and service to the Lord we will experience personal shipwreck of our faith or, even worse, we will become a hearer only, complainers, and parasites who only receive but give nothing in return; false teachers.

Nowadays our churches are filled with these spiritually lazy and undisciplined parasites who don't want to serve in the church; they only enjoy being clever and debating but do not wish to be under authority, often

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they are unemployed, unbridled, and live in complete disorder yet they proclaim their godliness, speak falsely, share wrong doctrine by which they trap the infirmed, young, and undisciplined souls. If you don't have true godliness you may easily become their prey.

The church in Ephesus was full of such people. Therefore Paul said to Timothy: *"remain in Ephesus that you may charge some that they teach no other doctrine, nor give heed to fables and endless genealogies, which cause disputes rather than godly edification which is in faith. Now the purpose of the commandment is love from a pure heart, from a good conscience, and from sincere faith, from which some, having strayed, have turned aside to idle talk, desiring to be teachers of the law, understanding neither what they say nor the things which they affirm.."* (1 Timothy 1.4-7)

This kind of person has always existed and will continue to exist among the people of God. The Scriptures say that: *"many will follow their destructive ways..."* Peter describes: *"they cannot cease from sin... enticing unstable souls. They have a heart trained in covetous practices, and are accursed children... wells without water, clouds carried by a tempest..."*

★ **The reason why many churches grow religious over time is because they do not persist in their spiritual discipline.**

For when they speak great swelling words of emptiness, they allure through the lusts of the flesh, through lewdness (contrary to godliness) the ones who have actually escaped from those who live in error (newly converted persons). While they promise them liberty, they themselves are slaves of corruption (after some time they simply degenerate in all areas in life)" (2 Peter 2:2,10,14,17-19)

▶ TRUE GODLINESS BRINGS PURE LIFE PRODUCING FRUITS

"For bodily exercise profits a little, but godliness is profitable for all things, having promise of the life that now is and of that which is to come." (1 Timothy 4:8)

The reason why many churches grow religious over time is because they do not persist in their spiritual discipline. They stop reading the Bible, they stop praying, testifying, and serving yet they continue speaking religious phrases that do not contain real life and produce fruit. This is the reason why there are many congregations that do not grow, because God will not give newborn babies to lifeless bodies!

Isaiah, in his 40th chapter, prophetically calls for renewal and comfort for the people of God and calls them to repent and be disciplined so that they will be able to see His glory and experience awakening. One of the crucial elements is godliness.

"Prepare the way of the LORD; make straight in the desert a highway for our God. Every valley shall be exalted and every mountain and hill brought low; the crooked places shall be made



straight and the rough places smooth; the glory of the LORD shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together; for the mouth of the LORD has spoken." The voice said, "Cry out!" And he said, "What shall I cry?" "All flesh is grass, and all its loveliness is like the flower of the field. " (Isaiah 40.3-6)

A fruitful life does not come about through anointing or by way of a guest speaker; awakening will not happen if we are content to only eat and watch TV; if we fail to serve; if we enjoy world, and wait for something supernatural to awaken us.

God's resurrection life will not enter lifeless churches if we don't do our part. C.H. Spurgeon said, *"you who don't know what tears and cries are, desperately need godliness."* We are the ones who should discipline ourselves; we must not be lazy while submitting ourselves to various spiritual manipulations waiting for some special revelation. It is we who should shout in America and say, "brothers and sisters, become godly!! Draw nearer to your Creator, discipline yourselves in godliness, otherwise we shall undergo to God's judgment!"

Rather than building new buildings (there is nothing bad in having them) consider godliness greater gain than material things we are longing for. Apostle Paul said: *"Now godliness with contentment is great gain."* (1 Timothy 6:6)

Peter also clearly says that true godliness brings visible and palpable results. True godliness is not hanging somewhere

in the air but is palpable and measurable. Christianity is not mystic but a visible and practical relationship with Lord. It (spiritual discipline) always gives visible fruit. It isn't fruitless. It gives fruit. Such are Christians who have developed godliness in them. They are not lazy but go forth in every way bearing fruit: *"But also for this very reason, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue, to virtue knowledge, to knowledge self-control, to self-control perseverance, to perseverance godliness, to godliness brotherly kindness, and to brotherly kindness love. For if these things are yours and abound, you will be neither barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ."* (2 Peter 1.5-8)

The reason why Peter wrote this pastoral letter is because of the false teachers who were among the Christians. They stated that self-control wasn't needed because good deeds were of no consequence. While it is true that good deeds cannot save us it is erroneous to think that they are not important.

We are saved to serve Jesus Christ and others, not only ourselves. In order to serve others God wishes to develop His character in us; and to do this He requires personal discipline and effort.

Our faith must go beyond what we mentally believe. It must become a dynamic part of what we do, resulting in good fruits and spiritual maturity.

Although salvation does not depend on good deeds, it produces good deeds. Those

who say they are saved yet show no changes clearly misunderstand what true godliness is. Therefore, Peter encouraged believers to turn away from false teachers who believed they could live, as they liked – immorally.

In other words, Peter says: "If you really belong to God, your efforts will prove it. If you are not building character and godliness you must ask yourself: Do I really belong to God? If I do, my deeds should prove it."

▶ TRUE GODLINESS REQUIRES EFFORT AND SUFFERING

"For to this end we both labor and suffer reproach, because we trust in the living God, who is the Savior of all men, especially of those who believe." (1 Timothy 4:10)

The Book of Revelation clearly encourages us to "hear what the Holy Spirit says to churches." Those who would like to know what the Holy Spirit says can note this: only winners will be allowed to enter the Kingdom of Heaven! No lazy, immoral, or fleshly Christians who refuse to obey God and His Word, who lack the discipline of true godliness will enter; only those who are firm and disciplined and run to the end.

"To him who overcomes I will give to eat

★ **We must die to ourselves, stay on our knees, and become obedient to our Lord if we are to become really free.**

from the tree of life, which is in the midst of the Paradise of God." (Rev. 2:7b)

Paul is talking about virtues one of which is godliness says: "For he who lacks these things is shortsighted, even to blindness, and has forgotten that he was cleansed from his old sins. Therefore, brethren, be even more diligent to make your call and election sure, for if you do these things you will never stumble; for so an entrance will be supplied to you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ." (2 Peter 1:9-11)

We often don't want to fight, we want life to be easy and without effort. The most ideal thing would be for God to do everything for us. Many live lives of instant Christianity, not based on serving and good deeds but on selfishness and Christian entertainment, such as seminars and conferences where they can hear how to get rich, happy, and be prosperous or thin for Jesus (it would be ideal to have seminar on character, too.)

Nowadays nobody wants to go to the mission field where they must sacrifice their own wishes and ambitions for Christ. People like reading books and the even the Bible but fail to act accordingly. They lack a workable faith, possessing only a doctrinal one. There is no godliness. The world has entered into each segment of the church while we cry: "only faith" and that's all. However, if we want to enter the Kingdom of God we must do something.



Jesus never said: "Those who want to be saved put your hand up high in the air. "He always required something from the listeners. Actually, He said: *"Brood of vipers! ...Therefore bear fruits worthy of repentance."* (Matthew 3.8)

Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand!" (Matthew 4.17)

"Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven." (Matthew 5.17)

"But I say to you, love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute." (Matthew 5.44)

"Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven (Matthew 7.21)

"Sell whatever you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven!" (Mark 10.21)

The words "easy", "lazy", and "careless" do not belong in Christianity. Only those who are persistent, holy, godly, victorious, and who believe in Him, whose deeds are in accordance with their faith may enter the Kingdom. Nothing is quick and easy; therefore, many churches live spontaneously from project to project, having continual seminars and guests, and supposing that Mr. Spiritual will accomplish something yet are careless, lazy, and lack true godliness, which requires effort and suffering.

It is true that we must fight for our secret closet. It is not easy to become disciplined. We must pay the price. We must die to ourselves, stay on our knees, and become obedient to our Lord if we are to become really free. We must cry for awakening, it won't come automatically.

When apostle Paul wrote these verses to Timothy he wanted to emphasize that service and work for God is not easy, God requires the entire man. Actually the word "effort" means hard work, which leads to full exhaustion and fatigue. This suffering refers to agony and shows the need to be actively involved in the fight. Henry Martyn, a missionary in India once said: "Let me burn for God." David Brainerd, missionary whom God sent to American Indians died before his was thirty because of his non-stop work with Indians. Oswald Sanders, when talking about Christian leadership, said: "If he is not willing to pay the price for efforts, for his leadership, he will always be of medium quality. True leadership always leaves hard tools on the entire man. The more efficient the leadership is, the higher is the price."

► **GODLINESS PRODUCES CONSTANT RESULTS**

Faith is not only intellectual, dealing with various theologies that many of theologians don't understand, but practical godly work. James clearly said "Thus also faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead.." (James 2:17)



True godliness needs effort. Only those who are persistent will enter the Kingdom of Heaven. Only to them belongs the *"promise of the life that now is and of that which is to come. This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptance"* (1 Timothy 4.8-9)

Godliness may be a strange word to you, however remember, without it you are spiritually dead. You will lack the desire to serve, you may fall prey to false teachers who speak frivolous things. You may wish to be godly but have lost the faith.

You may think: "How shall I again become as I should be. Who will help me?" Apostle Paul encourages you, and clearly says not to put your confidence in man, in a guest preacher, a book, or a seminar, but in the living God, *"Because we trust in the living God, who is the Savior of all men, especially of those who believe."* (1 Timothy 4:10)

After Jesus finished speaking to the rich man in Luke 18 He said: *"How hard it is for those who have riches to enter the kingdom of God!"* The listeners asked Him: "Who can then be saved?" But He said, *"The*

things which are impossible with men are possible with God.." (Luke 18.24-27)

The Scriptures say that we should put our hope in Him – the living God! It is the real life of resurrection in Him. With this strength Jesus can revive us and draw us to Him self, give strength to become truly godly, and break connections with the evil one. Everything is possible for Him – He is our Savior! He will rescue us from the hands of our enemies.

"Oh, give thanks to the LORD, for He is good! For His mercy endures forever. Let the redeemed of the LORD say so, whom He has redeemed from the hand of the enemy, and gathered out of the lands, from the east and from the west, from the north and from the south. They wandered in the wilderness in a desolate way; They found no city to dwell in. Hungry and thirsty, their soul fainted in them. Then they cried out to the LORD in their trouble, And He delivered them out of their distresses. And He led them forth by the right way.." (Psalm 107.1-7a)

★ **He will rescue us from the hands of our enemies.**

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