

## Exercise Thyself Unto Godliness

*"... but refuse profane and old wives' fables. And exercise thyself unto godliness, for bodily exercise is profitable for a little; but godliness is profitable for all things, having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come. Faithful is the saying, and worthy of all acceptance" (1 Tim. 4:7-9).*

Timothy had been urged to be a good minister of Christ; nourished in the words of the faith and of the good doctrine he followed. While he was to follow the words of the faith; he was, on the other hand, to refuse profane (secular, common) and old wives (silly) fables. A fable is a story which is manifestly foolish and untrue.

Timothy was not only to be nourished in the words of the faith; he was to exercise himself unto godliness. In a word, he was to put into practice the things he had learned. This word "exercise" is the Greek word *gumnazo* which means to train the body or mind. From this word comes our English "gymnastic." Thus the appeal, "exercise thyself unto godliness" is to train the mind and body in godliness. Godliness is a word which means "to be devout, denotes that purity which characterized by a Godward attitude. does that which is well-pleasing to Him" (Vines' *Expository Dictionary of N.T. Words*, Vol. 2, p. 162). When coupled with "righteousness" (as it is in other passages), it has a more restricted application, but when found by itself, it has a broader meaning of a devout and pious attitude and life toward man and God (1 Cor. 9:27; Heb. 5:14; 12:11; 2 Pet. 2:14).

When Peter wrote of the approaching fiery end of our universe, he asked, "seeing that these things are thus all to be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy living and godliness?" (2 Pet. 3:11). Paul wrote Titus: "The grace of God hath appeared, bringing salvation to all men. Instructing us to the intent that denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously and godly in this present world" (Titus 2:11)

"Bodily exercise profiteth a little." The apostle acknowledged there was a little benefit in bodily exercise. Still, whatever profit there is in such, that benefit is confined to this physical, present age. By exercise, we may keep our body in shape and extend physical life; by mental exercise we may stave off the perils of loss of reason which frequently comes with age. But, either is profitable for just a little. However, "godliness is profitable for all things, having promise of the life that now is and of that which is to come." Godliness serves us well in this life. Godliness is the devout and right attitude toward God, can bring about serenity and ease of mind. "Godliness,"

right attitude and deeds toward man, can aid us in our dealings with mankind -- for often -- what we demonstrate to others will in be returned to us. The wise man wrote, "*As in water face answereth to face, so the heart of man to man*" (Pr. 27:19).

The greatest benefit of "*godliness*" is its promise of the life which is to come. The life "*which is to come*" is that eternal life which those privileged to stand on the Master's right hand will enter into (Mt. 25:34, 46). This world is training ground for another life and we can enter that life only by living godly in this present one. Did not Peter say, "*Adding on your part all diligence, in your faith supply virtue, and in your virtue knowledge; in and in your knowledge self-control; and in your self-control patience; and in your patience godliness; and in your godliness brotherly kindness, and in your brotherly kindness love. For if these things are yours and abound, they make you not to be idle nor unfruitful unto the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ ... for thus shall be supplied unto you the entrance into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ*" (2 Pet. 1:5-8, 11)?

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