

“Guard Your Life and Doctrine”

I Timothy

Downtown and Lexington

June 7, 2020

Goodmorning. Grab a Bible and go to 1 Timothy 4. Last week we said was part 1 on ch. 4, this week is part 2.

To recap - last week we did some diagnosing. And our main thread from vs. 1-5 was this → “Lies are the most powerful destructive force working against us.” And how the devil, the father of lies, is the great deceiver, working with deceitful ideas that play to our disordered desires - putting question marks where God has put periods to get us to begin to believe and live out of lies.

And what we said was that this isn't something that happens overnight. No one wakes up one morning all of a sudden wanting to follow satan. Not how it works. But it's a slow fade. It's little lie after little lie, little decision after little decision, a small action here, a small decision there.

In other words, **the devil's long game is to destroy you, little bit by little bit.**

In the same way, **we're going to see today, Jesus' long game is to sanctify you, to grow you into a life of godliness and holiness, and this also happens little bit by little bit.**

Let's look at it together.

1 Timothy 4:6

If you put these things before the brothers, you will be a good servant of Christ Jesus, being trained in the words of the faith and of the good doctrine that you have followed.

Everything Paul just warned Timothy about in 4:1-5 he needs to then relay to his church. That what it means in this moment for Timothy to be a good servant of Christ Jesus, a good pastor → Let your church know - some will fall away. **There's an enemy of God, he's real, and he's a liar out to deceive.**

1 Timothy 4:7

Have nothing to do with irreverent, silly myths. [Probably the same myths Paul addressed in Chapter 1] Rather train yourself for godliness

If you like to write in your Bible underline that phrase “Train yourself for godliness”.

Let's talk about this idea of godliness. Godliness is sort of a mini-theme in the book of 1 Timothy. So on a large scale, and we've said this, the book is about instructions for the church - how do the people of God live as a family? What does it mean for the church to be the church? - But underneath that theme Paul continues to reiterate the need and importance of **godliness**. In fact, the word godliness is used 15 times in the entirety of the New Testament, and 8 of those 15 are here in 1 Timothy. This is a big deal for

Paul in this letter - something he continually calls Timothy and this church at Ephesus back to over and over again - to godliness.

So what does it mean to be godly?

Godliness is really pretty simple - it's a heart and life devoted to God.

It's taking the whole of your life - how you think, what you love, how you live - all of it and turning it in a Godward direction. God - I'm gonna think how you want me to think. I'm gonna love what and how you call me to love. I'm going to live how you call me to live. This is what it means to be a Christian, to be a follower of Jesus, to be godly. **It's an all of life surrender.** All of life lived under the rule and reign of God with Him as King.

For so many of us the Christian life has been boiled down to something less than this:

- For some of us, to be Christians means we prayed a prayer one time or walked an aisle at a youth camp. We would affirm - there's a God and he exists and he loves people. Great, I'm a Christian now.
- For others of us, to be Christians means we say "no" to a bunch of things. To be a Christian means we don't drink, don't cuss, don't smoke. That's what it means to be godly.

And while Christianity is certainly a belief system...we believe specific things. That's crucial and vital. While our move towards godliness is certainly learning to say no to ourselves and our sinful desires.

To be a Christian, to be a follower of Jesus is so much bigger than that. It's learning to turn all of our lives godward. Another word that's often used is holiness - which means to be set apart from the rest of the world and set towards God. If all of us have disordered desires within us, growing in godliness or holiness means a reordering of our desires to day by day, more and more love what God calls us to love.

That's God's heart for all of His people. For all of us as followers of Jesus, the aim is godliness. That's the goal. What is God's will for your life as a Christian? That you would learn to be godly. That we would more and more day in and day out live lives that reflect God's design, that we would more and more love what God loves, think how God wants us to think. All of that.

And that's what Paul addresses here. Turn away from destructive lies and turn to live lives of godliness.

So how do we do that? What does it look like for us to actually move towards godliness.

What I want to do this morning is just to pull some stuff out of the passage that Paul says godliness requires. Four things that godliness requires for those of us that want to follow Jesus over the long haul.

First, godliness requires effort.

I Timothy 4: 7-10

Have nothing to do with irreverent, silly myths. Rather train yourself for godliness; for while bodily training is of some value, godliness is of value in every way, as it holds promise for the present life and also for the life to come. The saying is trustworthy and deserving of full acceptance. For to this end we toil and strive, because we have our hope set on the living God, who is the Savior of all people, especially of those who believe.

Paul says *train* yourself for godliness. Godliness is not simply something you stumble into. None of us just default to godliness. We don't wake up one morning suddenly living the life God calls us to live. It takes time. It takes small moments. Little decision by little decision.

Godliness is not something that just happens all of us a sudden to you the minute you become a Christian.

There is a difference, the Bible gives, between our *positional holiness* and our *practical holiness*. Whatever term you want to use.

Your positional holiness is your standing before God. That's immediate. The moment you turn from your sin, put your faith and trust in Jesus as Savior and Lord, you are now positionally holy before God. God views you as He views Jesus - holy, righteous, godly, set apart. The Bible says we are actually given the holiness of Jesus. Not because of anything that you have done but because of Jesus on the cross on your behalf. You're washed clean and made new by the blood of Jesus. Immediate. You are immediately positionally holy before God.

Very different from our practical holiness. We then begin the move towards actually living lives of holiness. We are holy before God, now we learn to live in light of that reality. We want to grow more and more into what is already true about us.

We are in an instant claimed as sons and daughters of God. Then for our entire lives we learn what it means to live out of that identity. We are in an instant given new hearts, set free from the bondage of sin and shame. Then for our entire lives we learn what it means to walk in that freedom and not return to being captive to our sin.

The problem is that we think both should happen in an instant. I put my faith in Jesus, my struggle with sin should be over. But that's not how growth in godliness works.

It's so helpful that Paul then gives us this parallel with bodily training.

I Timothy 4:7b-8

Rather train yourself for godliness; 8 for while bodily training is of some value, godliness is of value in every way

Now this would have hit home for the Ephesians quite a bit. Ephesus was something of a hot spot for athletes training in that time. Lots of Olympic hopefuls would come to Ephesus to train for the Olympics

and other various sporting events throughout ancient Greece. So the church here would have had a category for this. The amount of effort, sweat, labor, toil, and sacrifice these athletes went through to train their body and get stronger and stronger for their desired goal.

For many of us, we understand the reality of this physical training. We have some fitness goals we want to reach - run a 5k, a half marathon, a full marathon. Some peloton output goal we want to hit. Lift this much weight, lose this much weight, gain this much muscle. And all of us thinking logically realize that's gonna take time to get there. It's going to take sustained effort over a long period of time - in the gym, eating right, getting up early, drinking more water - there are these tangible steps we take to train ourselves towards a goal, towards an end.

For others of us, maybe we relate a little less to exercise, but we still have a category in our lives for sacrifice and training. Maybe for you:

- **Career.** You know what it's like to train your mind, to take all the right steps, you've worked long hours way past 5pm to get ahead, to get advanced knowledge, get that next degree, to train yourself to take those steps you wanted to take.
- **Music.** For others of us, it's musically. Hours and hours and hours spent on a guitar or piano or drums or vocals, learning and practicing and fine-tuning our craft to be the best that we can be.

We have a category for - this is going to take some sacrifices. I'm gonna have to say no to some things - time with friends, time with family, extra sleep, whatever - to get to the goal I'm trying to get to.

But for some reason, then when it comes to our godliness, our walks with Jesus, we have no category for sacrifice or effort.

Like there just seems to be a disconnect where we understand that we don't just instantly become an expert piano player, that we can't just wake up one morning and go run a marathon. That it takes effort, sacrifice, work. But yet we think our godliness is just supposed to happen by itself and we get so frustrated when it actually feels like...work.

Train yourself for godliness. This takes time. This takes effort.

It's no wonder Paul says in verse 10 - **"we toil and strive"**.

Our growth in godliness requires toil - It's hard work to follow Jesus. While grace is free, we just have to accept/embrace and believe, that sanctification is work. It's hard. It's toil. It requires effort/energy. Takes some sweat. Some hard work.

Our growth in godliness requires striving - This idea of contending with an adversary. Struggling, fighting with an enemy.

It's a battle, it's a fight. Don't be caught off guard. You will save yourself so much inner heartache and grief if you learn now that following Jesus is not easy. It takes effort, discipline, sweat, tears. You must learn, by God's grace, to turn everything inside of you that was running full steam ahead towards the

things of this world, towards whatever you desired and wanted, to turn towards Christ. Reorienting your entire life around Jesus. Letting him be King and have complete say and complete control is hard.

This is why throughout the gospels Jesus' response to people who want to follow Him is to **count the cost**. Don't make this decision lightly. Don't trust me all willy-nilly. This means your whole life must change. And idols do not die easily.

Godliness requires effort. Let's speed up a bit.

Second, godliness requires examples.

I Timothy 4:11-15

Command and teach these things. Let no one despise you for your youth, but set the believers an example in speech, in conduct, in love, in faith, in purity. Until I come, devote yourself to the public reading of Scripture, to exhortation, to teaching. Do not neglect the gift you have, which was given you by prophecy when the council of elders laid their hands on you. Practice these things, immerse yourself in them, so that all may see your progress.

This is written as a call to Timothy as a pastor - that through his godliness and holiness, his devotion to right teaching and right living, many would be saved. But family, that reality doesn't just apply to pastors, it applies to all of us as followers of Jesus.

Your godliness has an effect on others. Last week we talked about these liars that were leading others astray. That there were those whose consciences had been seared, and how it didn't stop with them, but like a domino effect, their belief in a lie spread to someone else, then to someone else and then to someone else.

The Bible paints the same picture for godliness. It's just incredible how this works. One person starts getting serious about their holiness. They start getting serious about the things of God, and then it just starts to slowly permeate throughout their whole friend group, their family, or Lifegroup or whoever is around them and in a close circle with them.

So Paul tells Timothy → Set the example.

- In your speech - the way you talk.
- In your conduct - the way you live.
- In your love - the way you relate and sacrifice.
- In your faith - the way you believe and cling to hope.
- In your purity - the way you say "no" to the world and "yes" to God.

In all of this - let others see it. Not in some boastful proud way. Not in a "look at me, I'm so godly" type of way. But in a genuine way of inviting others to see - hey look at the beauty of a life following after Jesus. Look at how compelling this can be. Don't you want this too? The way Jesus says in **Matthew 5** to let your light shine before others so they may see your good deeds and praise GOD. Not you, but God.

Robert Murray M'Cheyne, a Scottish pastor in the 1800s, said about pastoral ministry - "**My people's greatest need is my personal holiness.**"

That's actually true of all of us. Our church needs your holiness. Our church is better when you strive to be godly. When you toil and labor. That's what our church needs from you, your LifeGroup needs from you, your LifeGroup Leader needs from you. That's what Charlotte needs from you. Your holiness. Your desire to pursue and run after God.

Other people need you to be godly. And you need other people to be godly. You need their example and they need your example.

Paul says in verse 15 to practice these things - **so that all may see your progress.** They need to see his growth.

Did you know that people need to see your progress? That is part of how we encourage each other. Your growth in Christ is actually not just about you. It's about all of us. We need to see God's work in your life because it gives us hope for ourselves.

This is part of why we do so much together, in community. Our website is followingjesustgether.com not followingjesusaloneonanislandbymyselfforeverjustmeandgod.com. First, because that's a terrible website name. Second, because we are doing this together. We need each other. We need to be able to lock arms.

On the days when I am ready to throw in the towel on my godliness, I need to look over and see you pursuing the Lord. And you need the same from me on your days.

Godliness requires effort. Toil, strife, fighting, little bit by little bit.

Godliness requires examples. We do this together. Side by side.

Third, Godliness requires endurance

I Timothy 4:16

Keep a close watch on yourself and on the teaching. Persist in this, for by so doing you will save both yourself and your hearers.

Crossfit Documentaries. I love crossfit documentaries. Every year they do an international crossfit games, all of the world's best crossfit athletes come together to compete to find out who "the fittest on earth" is. And I love watching it. Love watching these athletes compete. So one day, a few weeks into quarantine, I get this idea in my head that I'm going to become an extremely fit crossfit athlete. My gyms closed, I can't go hop on my elliptical like I like to do (don't hate it if you ain't it). So I borrow some free weights and stuff from some friends, and I start googling at home crossfit workouts. I'm pumped. I'm telling Lindsay about it. I'm ready to go.

I lasted 2 days. 2! I got so frustrated at how I just wasn't able to do what I wanted to do. *"I should be in better shape than this. This is hard. I'm not making any progress."* Yeah, cause you did it for 2 days.

Family - godliness is a long game. This is not an instant thing. It takes endurance. It takes persistence. It takes perseverance. A willingness to live with the end goal in mind. A willingness to take it day by day, little bit by little bit.

We said last week it's a slow fade away from faith in Jesus. Little lie after little lie. Little decision after little decision. Same thing is true with growth in our spiritual lives. It's the small things over time. It's the little decisions of discipline - taking the steps when you don't feel like it.

- I'm gonna choose to wake up a little early this morning and get in God's Word for 5 minutes. It's going to be boring. I'm going to be sleepy. I'd much rather sleep and I probably won't get anything out of it. Great. You're training. Then one day by God's grace through little steps of faith, you're going to come face to face with a deceptive idea, with a lie that can destroy you. And those small, 5 minute chunks of time you spent on reading God's truth, the Holy Spirit is going to bring those back to mind, and you'll find yourself rooted and grounded, not tossed back and forth.
- I'm gonna choose to show up and participate in Sunday Worship. Right now, that means actually carving out an hour on a Sunday. In the future, this looks like getting the kids in the car and actually making it to church, and not just showing up but participating. I might not get that much out of the sermon, they might not pick the songs I really wanted to sing. That's ok. I'm going to engage. You're training. Then one day a storm is going to come, and by God's grace you'll be reminded of that song we've sung over and over again or that one sermon - and you can stand in the storm, because you know how to worship even when you don't want to.
- I'm gonna be present with my Community Group. I'm gonna volunteer to pray. I'm gonna confess my sin. Feels like a repeat every week. Same old same old. It just feels so redundant and repetitive. I'm so tired from the work day. That's great. You're training. Then when you fall into temptation, when everything in you wants to hide that sin, you've trained yourself - I can confess this. I know what it's like to walk in the light. It's better. I know that because I've seen it and done it, little bit by little bit.
- I'm gonna serve my neighbor, my coworker, my friend in need. I'm gonna give of my time, talent, and treasure to see God's Kingdom advance. Right now, it just feels like sacrifice. I'd rather do something else, buy something else, invest it somewhere else. Doesn't feel like it's actually making an impact. Great. You're training. Then when a global pandemic hits - "oh yeah, I can give sacrificially to help those in need. This is what I'm trained to do."

Slowly over time, little decision after little decision. This is what shapes you into a person who loves Jesus and His Kingdom in 5 or 10 or 20 or 30 or 50 years.

Verse 8 that we read earlier says this: **[8] godliness is of value in every way, as it holds promise for the present life and also for the life to come.**

Godliness has value in EVERY way both for the life to come with God forever, but also for the now.

When we grow up into godliness, we actually become people who dwell in the world as we are called to dwell. We become all of the things Christ calls us to become, full of the fruits of the spirit. Can you imagine a group of people embodying and living as Christ calls them to live? How it would affect your home, work, marriage, neighborhood, our city and our nation in this time of crisis?

- A people of love in a time of selfishness
- A people of joy in a time of despair
- A people of peace in a time of anxiety
- A people of endurance in a time of stress
- A people of kindness in a time of harshness
- A people of goodness in a time of brokenness
- A people of faithfulness in a time of compromise
- A people of gentleness in a time of roughness
- A people of self-control in a time of self-fulfillment

But you don't wake up one day and suddenly embody these things. These things don't naturally just come out when circumstances and situations press you. You have to grow them over the long haul.

Eugene Peterson. Eugene Peterson was a pastor that I looked up to in many ways over the past 10 years or so. A great pastor, writer, theologian. He passed away in 2018. And as I was reading the news about it, the story his family shared really struck me. As he was nearing the end, his family said that some of his final words as he longed for heaven and eternal joys with God were simply this: **“Let's go.”** A man deeply in love with Jesus until the very end of his life here on earth.

Some 40 years earlier, Peterson wrote a book about discipleship. He called it “A Long Obedience in the Same Direction”. In the book he writes this - **“There is a great market for religious experience in our world; there is little enthusiasm for the patient acquisition of virtue, little inclination to sign up for a long apprenticeship in what earlier generations of Christians called holiness.”**

Family - you don't get one without the other. You don't get a soul deeply in love with Jesus at the very end of the time God gives you here on earth without signing up for a long apprenticeship in holiness and godliness. Without endurance. Without grace.

Here's the thing, some of us don't want the end goal. Like if we're just being honest we don't really care about our godliness. We're just sort of “meh” about it.

But I think a large majority of us care about being godly, not just right now but in the years to come. We want to be in it for the long haul. We want to have a flourishing faith in 10 years, 20 years, 30 years,

however long we have left. We want to be rooted and established in the love of God. I mean just crushing it for however long God gives us, but we're unwilling to put in the work of dedication and hustle now that it takes to get there. We actually want to follow Jesus and have minds and hearts and lives devoted to Him, **we just aren't willing to put in the sustained effort over a long period of time to get there.**

But that is how you grow. Small decisions, little acts of discipline, moment by moment, day after day.

Fourth, godliness requires expectation.

I Timothy 4:10

For to this end we toil and strive, because we have our hope set on the living God, who is the Savior of all people, especially of those who believe.

Church - we are a people of hope. We, as Christians, more than anyone else, have hope. We believe in a God who rose from the dead. We are a hopeful people. Hope is our thing. And hope is essential for godliness. Paul says we have our hope set on the living God who is our savior. We have hope that our godliness is not just about this present life, while it very much is, but it's also about the life to come.

We're hopeful that where we're at now is not where we will be. That the sin that feels pressing and crushing and enslaving won't always be so. That the idols of comfort, control, approval, and power won't always hold so much sway over our lives. That we won't always be this way and things won't always be like this. We are hopeful.

We're hopeful that we can say with Paul in **Philippians 1:6**,

Philippians 1:6

And I am sure of this, that he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ.

That the work God starts He also finishes. That the godliness he has begun in you, by the power of the Holy Spirit working in you, He will bring to completion.

That we will put forth effort and toil and striving, knowing that it is God who works and wills in us. That we will look for examples of godliness to emulate and follow, knowing Jesus is not just our greatest example but also the one who came to make us godly. That we will endure, knowing that it is God Himself who ultimately keeps us and holds us and will bring it to completion.

Family - will you choose today, by the grace of God and the power of the Holy Spirit, to be godly, with your hope set on Christ, who has come and is coming again?