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EXERCISING GODLINESS

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„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 4:8-11)

It is interesting to see how church undergoes pressure from the world's emphasis on physical activity, nutrition and health yet less and less on godliness. It is sad to see how so many fall into these traps and attribute more value to something

that profits little while neglecting or hardly mentioning godly exercise for which the apostle Paul, when encouraging young Timothy, says, “Godliness is profitable”

This is evidence that today's church of Jesus Christ is not in the condition it should be; she expends her efforts on that which has little value for promoting the Kingdom of God.

While looking at the back cover of a DVD recently I noticed a picture of a female singer wearing a small t-shirt that effectively showed off her perfectly flat belly. The church has physically well developed Christians

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who are perfectly willing to show their skills or starved bodies but are spiritually on the level of a little child – constantly weeping, whining, and arguing.

Paul gave a good description of such people in **1 Timothy 6:3- 5**:

„If anyone teaches otherwise and does not consent to wholesome words, even the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, and to the doctrine which accords with godliness, (Greek word Eusebeia– godliness) he is proud, knowing nothing, but is obsessed with disputes and arguments over words, from which come envy, strife, reviling, evil suspicions, useless wranglings of men of corrupt minds and destitute of the truth, who suppose that godliness is a means of gain.“

We desperately need an awakening! There is too much of this kind of worldly thinking that is responsible for the spiritual demise of our country. Therefore I would like to speak about the necessity of

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exercising godliness in the church. It is our only hope if we as individuals, and collectively as a church, are to return to real life in Christ!

► **1. EXERCISING GODLINESS PROMISES LIFE – PRESENT AND FUTURE**

„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 word godliness (Greek word: *eusebeia*) has an interesting history. The Greek poet Homer first used this word around 1000 B.C. After him this word was usually used in classic Athenian Greek as describing one’s personal godliness through fulfillment of human relationship. This word was also used to describe a person who was faithful in fulfilling their religious duties to their Greek gods.

When the same word started to be used in the Koine Greek language it denoted *„inner godliness“* or spirituality and *„duty“* that a believer owed to God in the inner man. We could say that it is actually control or fulfillment in the Holy Spirit, which brings the quality of Christ into someone’s life. In general, this

word describes a person who lives a godly, mature and moral life.

It is interesting to see how the apostle Paul puts these verses into context in warning of false teachers, having already pointed out that their spiritual senses were not exercised and that their godliness was not in line with true godliness.

Therefore one of the characteristics of such people is that they do not bring life into the church, but death and division, because they heed *"old wives' tales"*. The Greek word indicates that they heed *"myths"*; in other words, those things that are not true, or that cannot be confirmed as truth.

Apostle Paul further mentions that they are obsessed with disputes and arguments over words, from which come envy, strife, reviling, and evil suspicions toward other people. The result is an ungodly life that brings death.

It is no wonder, then, that today's churches are in a lifeless condition; there are few that exercise godliness. Many suppose they exercise their "spiritual muscles" by reading and studying the Bible yet they don't want to stir up their gifts and talents to serve. They are

only interested in fulfilling their own desires or selfishly wish to profit from faith. They sit with their arms crossed murmuring and disputing over the meanings of words, therefore, death and negativity rule in them; they have no faith in the Lord.

But godliness is that which brings life – present life, which displays a quality relationship and service as well as investment in the Kingdom of God and future life; eternal life.

When Paul spoke to Timothy about the practical effects of godliness he said: *"Take heed to yourself and to the doctrine. Continue in them, for in doing this you will save both yourself and those who hear you."*

(1 Timothy 4:16)

✦ **Many suppose they exercise their "spiritual muscles" by reading and studying the Bible yet they don't want to stir up their gifts and talents to serve. They are only interested in fulfilling their own desires or selfishly wish to profit from faith.**



We should take care of ourselves and exercise ourselves spiritually in order that we might be spiritually alive, bring life to those around us and have the promise of life to come!

▶ **2. EXERCISING GODLINESS REQUIRES EFFORT, WHICH RESULTS IN DESPISING THE WORLD**

„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 4:9-11)

Godliness is not a kind of anointing that descends on us while we sleep. Many would like to become godly but godliness has its price!

Someone said once, “A godly

man is a man who prays.” Today the average believer “prays” only several minutes a day, does not serve in the church with their gifts and talents, does not read their Bible daily, and are not an example to others by their words, behavior (some Christians need to learn better etiquette and manners), and cleanliness yet still want to have all the blessings from the Gospel!

C.H. Spurgeon once said, *„You who do not know what is a cry or tear shedding are deprived of basic godliness.“*

Godliness requires great effort. If you take a closer look at the directives Paul gave to Timothy in 1 Timothy 4:12 up to the end of chapter 6 you will better see that much of it was written in the imperative mood; he commanded certain actions that show true godliness and then told him to “command and teach” (1 Timothy 4:11).

Greek word for command is “*paraggello*”, which means to share information or give a command. It comes from the word “*paraggelia*”, which means information or a command and is closely related to a command given by a superior person to be forwarded to others.

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In other words, in any other context, godliness is not passive but active. What often confuses many believers is as they make an effort toward godliness the more they are pressured by the world, the greater the effort the greater the battle. However, rather than staying strong in the midst of the battle many neglect spiritual exercise because of increased pressure from the environment around them and because of passivity and lack of exercise they become despondent and bow to the pressure of the world in order to rid themselves of daily pressures around them from work, school, or even their own home.

Christ promised us that heavenly and eternal rewards but never promised an easy life while trying to live a godly in the world. On the contrary, Paul writes: *"...and all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution .But evil men and impostors will grow worse and worse, deceiving and being deceived."* **(2 Timothy 3:12-13).**

This troubles us as we ask ourselves if it is worth it all; then in bitterness toward God we give up. The more we give ourselves to godliness the more trials and hardships we will face.

When Paul, in 1 Timothy, says that they "fought"; the root of the Greek word *oneidos* is used – it means to mock or use somebody. It also describes an object of denigration or shame.

Have you ever felt like that? At work, in school, even among believers – that they belittle you, blame, use you, or put you to shame, and the more you practice godliness the worse it becomes? Sometimes we ask ourselves, "God where are you?" We expect to get help quickly because of our godliness.

Certainly exercising godliness brings blessing and benefit but we do not put our hope in circumstances or in any man who will see our "outer godliness" and praise us for it. Our hope is in the living God because true godliness is the inner heart of man is a lifestyle!

„ ...We both labor and suffer

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reproach, because we trust in the living God, who is the Savior of all men, especially of those who believe.”
(1 Timothy 4:10)

He is our Savior, not a man or change of circumstances, He is the one we live for and sanctify! He is the one who will give us our reward – eternal life. He is our Savior! But remember, the world and false Christians will despise you for the sake of godliness!

▶ **3. EXERCISING GODLINESS WILL KEEP YOU FROM WANDERING AWAY FROM THE FAITH**

„But you, O man of God, flee these things and pursue righteousness,

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godliness... Fight the good fight of faith, (originally: hold out; hold) lay hold on eternal life, to which you were also called and have confessed the good confession in the presence of many witnesses.”

(1 Timothy 6:11-12)

Paul here uses active and strong verbs to describe the Christian godly life connected with active faith: run away, fight, and hold on!

Godly exercise, Christianity in general, is not a passive religion, “waiting for God”. This is one of the reasons why believers of other Christian denominations often resist “Pentecostal expectation” because it is often misunderstood as spiritual manipulation of people or situations. It is also often used to justify laziness or passivity for Christ and His work.

Instead of immediately responding to a situation we say that we are not certain that the situation is “God’s will” or we do not have “a confirmation”. We use various clichés, for example “I will pray about it”, while in advance we know that we do not want to assist in the situation that has been brought before us: in reality it is spiritual sorcery; and we blame God if it does not work!

If we want to live godly and do something for Jesus our faith must be active, we must be obedient to God, be encouraged and do what we know is right!

If we actively exercise godliness it will keep us from wandering away from the faith! Today's believers wander and do not believe because they are passive and bow to the world and consider faith only as a source of profit.

But those, says Paul, will fall into temptation and a snare, and into many "foolish and harmful lusts which drown men in destruction and perdition. For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil, for which some have strayed from the faith in their greediness, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows."
(1 Timothy 6:9-10)

These are lazy, immoral, lustful, and are disobedient according to the apostle, they maintain a show of godliness but deny it's power because they are „men of corrupt minds, disapproved concerning the faith; (originally "godliness")"
(2 Timothy 3:9)

They are the slaves of materialism; they want to build their careers, buy houses and apartments – build

a home on earth and so pierce themselves with various tortures that will lead them far away from the faith.

Unfortunately this is the condition of those who do not exercise godliness – they still come to church, bringing their Bibles with them, and look like Christians but their inner man is not strengthened by faith but passive. Because of their reputation and pride they still continue to go to the church but in their heart they are "*lovers of themselves, boasters, disobedient to parents, unforgiving, slanderers, traitors, headstrong, haughty, lovers of pleasure ...*" because they deny the truth. But they will progress no further," *for their folly will be manifest to all, as theirs also was...."*
(2 Timothy 3:2-5,9)

We must flee this condition! Run toward spiritual exercise instead of physical exercise and actively

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look for God. We should use all our efforts to fight the battle of faith and hold on eternal life to which we are all called! Only in this way will we keep from wandering away from the faith.

A “faithful saying” should be taken seriously! Therefore, flee worldly and false teachings. We have the Word of God before us. We do not need new theology or a new revelation; we must cling closer to Jesus! This will keep the church and the people around us alive; we must not wander away from the faith! We must exercise godliness – make it alive, and strengthen our faith for “*Now godliness with contentment is great gain.*”

(1 Timothy 6:6)

„I urge you in the sight of God who gives life to all things, and before Christ Jesus who witnessed the good

confession before Pontius Pilate, that you keep this commandment without spot, blameless until our Lord Jesus Christ’s appearing, which He will manifest in His own time, He who is the blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings and Lord of lords, who alone has immortality, dwelling in unapproachable light, whom no man has seen or can see, to whom be honor and everlasting power. Amen.”

(1 Timothy 6:13-16)

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