

Striving For Godliness

“Grace has brought us into union with the Son of His own satisfaction, and if we are attempting to satisfy Him by any other means than the apprehension of that union, we have stepped outside of the confines of the fellowship He recognizes and in which He participates.”

—Rabon Byrd.

Why is life going in this direction? Where am I even going? Why am I not getting a job? Why haven't I received the promotion? I keep getting passed up over and over again for a position that I know that I'm very capable of doing. Life can seem so repetitive and dull. Day after day it seems like the schedule is the same; going to work 8 to 10 hours, then coming home to clean, do laundry, prepare dinner, and be ready to do it all over again the next day. The repetition leads to dullness, exhaustion, and laziness for anything else. Friends want me to go out with them, but life seems so busy and difficult to even think about adding anything to this busy schedule. What is the meaning to all of this? I'm going to go out on a limb and say, "There has to be more!" Even Solomon's pursuit for purpose and meaning didn't lead him anywhere when he looked for it in possessions, money, pleasure, or relationships. It doesn't matter what Solomon tried. He couldn't find true joy with more things. *Ecclesiastes 1:14 says, "I have seen everything that is done under the sun, and behold, all is vanity and a striving after wind."*

Solomon finally figured out why all people are created. Meaning and purpose to life is found only when we trust that God is good and wants His best for us. God is worthy of our respect and obedience. This needs to be our primary desire and pursuit. Solomon figured this out, and this is still true for us today. We were created for one purpose. That is to know God and live a godly life that brings honor and glory to Him in everything we say and do. *Ecclesiastes 12:13-14 says, "...Fear God and keep his commandments, for this is the whole duty of man. For God will bring every deed into judgment, with every secret thing, whether good or evil."*

We must understand that godliness does not automatically happen for the Christian. The moment of salvation gives us the ability to strive for godliness, but it doesn't come easy. When you take a close look at your life, do you see godliness? Have you periodically tried to be godly only to find that you failed in your attempts? Why do we seldom succeed even when our desires are genuine, and our efforts are sincere? We want to glorify God in our daily lives, yet we tend to fall short of our goal.

I was talking with a brother the other day and I mentioned how when I first became a Christian, there were certain sins that God convicted me of immediately. I believe God had me concentrate on sins one at a time. I used to swear before I came to know the Lord and so I didn't know how I was going to remove this from my life. Swearing was ingrained in my vocabulary. I prayed and asked God how I might be able to eliminate this sin from my lips. I got the thought that I can pray for someone's salvation each time I swore. I decided that I would pray for my uncle's salvation if a swear word came out of my mouth. I must have prayed for his salvation over fifty times on the

first day. I continued to do this every day until the prayer for my uncle dwindled down to zero within less than two weeks. A few months after I found victory over this sin, I heard that my uncle received Christ into his life, and he was excited about all the things that he was reading in God's Word. Praise God!

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To live a godly life, we have to equip ourselves with the right tools. The person who is training to run a marathon will surround themselves with the right equipment to achieve their goal. Serious runners want to consider good shoes, proper clothes, and possibly a treadmill. In the same way, if we are going to train ourselves to be godly, we need the right equipment. 1 Timothy 4:7-8 says, "...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."

2 Peter 1:3 is an important verse, because it tells us that only God possesses the ability to provide all that we need to live godly lives. "His divine power has given us everything we need for life and godliness through our knowledge of Him who called us by His own glory and goodness." This power does not naturally come from human strength. In and of ourselves, we will always fail to be godly. This verse uses the word power, which refers to the natural capability to do something. The one who has this kind of power is not dependent upon someone else to accomplish the task. The power completely resides within the individual. The verse uses the term 'divine power', which means that only God has within Himself the capability of equipping us with everything we need to live a godly life. We cannot manufacture godliness on our own. Job 14:4 talks about this when he asks, "Who can bring what is pure from the impure? No one." David also says in Psalms 14:3, "All have turned aside, they have together become corrupt; there is no one who does good, not even one." Then again, Romans 3:10-12 says, "...There is no one righteous, not even one; there is no one who understands, no one who seeks God. All have turned away, they have together become worthless; there is no one who does good, not even one." Since we are incapable of being godly, the only way we can live a life that glorifies God is if God Himself, who has the divine power, comes to dwell within us and places His own godliness within us through His Spirit. Peter assures us that God's divine power has given the believer everything needed for a godly life.

It's critical to note that God has already given godliness to us and has given us everything we need. This describes an action which is viewed as having been completed in the past. A once and for all action and it never needs to be repeated. This has been done for us and not by us. Every person who names Christ as Savior is the receiver of everything needed to be godly! We don't need to manufacture any goodness, because we already have it. 2 Peter 1:3 as mentioned earlier says that "through our knowledge of Him who called us by His own glory and goodness." Goodness comes through our knowledge of God. As we grow in our knowledge of God, we are given everything we need to live a godly life.

It's important to keep in mind that there is a big difference between head knowledge and heart knowledge. Knowing God isn't just knowing about Him. If all you have is an intellectual

knowledge of God, you are not going to gain what you need to live a godly life. You will only have gained knowledge. This knowledge may tell you that you should be godly and even what you need to do to be godly, but it is not going to give you the reason and incentive for the daily discipline required for living that godly life. Without the proper heart's motivation to be godly, all your godly deeds will become mere actions that carry no meaning or purpose other than to fulfill your obligation as a Christian. Your life will become focused around work instead of a relationship. It will become a burden instead of a blessing.

I had someone in my life who was a well-educated professor at a university. She decided to read the Bible to see for herself what the Bible said. She didn't read this from a heart's motivation, but rather only to gain more head knowledge. When she finished reading the Bible, she concluded that it was simply a book of fiction. Some people believe that if they read enough books, attend enough Christian seminars, study the Bible enough, and gather enough data; then godliness will automatically follow. Each of these activities have value, but we must realize that there are some people that are "always learning but are never able to come to acknowledge the truth." (2 Tim. 3:7). The fact is, studying the Bible and accumulating knowledge all by itself can lead to spiritual dryness. If your head knowledge is not accompanied by a change in your heart through God's truth, then that knowledge can actually cause you to stop growing. Beware of becoming so dependent on knowing things that you never work on applying to your life the things that you have already learned. "Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says." (James 1:22). Show action!

Jesus said, "You search the Scriptures because you think that in them you have eternal life; and it is they that bear witness about Me, yet you refuse to come to Me to have life." (John 5:39-40). The people Jesus was talking to liked learning things, but their heart's motivation was wrong. Their focus was on gaining knowledge of the Word of God for the sake of knowledge itself. They placed such great value on their head knowledge that they totally missed the Son of God who was standing right before them. You can know a lot of Biblical truths and principles, but if you're not living those truths out in your life, then you are not glorifying God. When I think of how this can relate to a true believer, sometimes there will be Christians that will read things to try and better others, but they don't work on themselves. Pray that you will never be someone that totally misses what God is showing you because your heart's motivation is wrong. May we always continue in prayer and daily devotion!

Insights & Scripture to ponder:

“Get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice. Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you.”
–Ephesians 4:31-32.

“Those who consider themselves religious and yet do not keep a tight rein on their tongues deceive themselves, and their religion is worthless.”
–James 1:26.

“When you feel yourself to be utterly unworthy, you have hit the truth.”
–Charles Spurgeon.