



Godliness Matters

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Racism, divorce, poverty, depression, sexual addiction, substance abuse, hurtful anger, cutting gossip, broken relationships, paralyzing anxiety & total burnout. Many of today's problems can be boiled down to the absence of one thing—godliness. *Ungodliness* is living far from and out of step with the God who designed us to live a certain way. His way. The way of godliness. *Godliness* is getting so close to God that you resemble him, that you line up with his unique design. Line after line of our passage amplifies one main message—*godliness matters*. It shows us: *where it comes from* (divine power), *how to get it* (faith works), and *what happens without it* (sensory malfunction). Godliness.

Divine Power

Washing machines, laptops, phones all require power. They are dependent upon a power outside of themselves. Godliness also requires power, divine power: “His divine power has granted to us all things that pertain to life and godliness,” (1:3). What is this divine power? The text says it is “his” divine power which points us back to v.2, the Lord Jesus, who is also said to have come in power and majesty in verse 16. So, Christ possesses divine power required to live a godly life, a life close to and like God. How do you get it? It “has been granted” to us. This verb is in a tense that means given once but continues to give or live on. A self-sustaining power supply for godliness! How do you crack that tech? At Pentecost, the power cracks us. It comes upon the church, “But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you” (1:8). In the OT, the Spirit of God hovered over the waters of the deep to create, led Israel in a pillar of fire and wind through the wilderness, but after Jesus’ ascension he sends the Spirit to do something new. The Spirit doesn’t just hover over us; he *enters into* us. The wind and the fire don’t remain out front; they come rushing through the church in an upper room! The power that was once outside of us comes to dwell inside of us, residential power. A NT prayer, “be strengthened with power through his Spirit in your inner being” (Eph 3:16). The power is a **person**, the third person of the Trinity. Divine power is the self-generating presence of the Spirit in all who believe. Why is he here? To grant to us all things that pertain to life and godliness. Now just think what would happen to society, to your community, if we yielded to this power for life and godliness. Crime would plummet; marriages would heal; anger would turn to patience, and hope would replace despair. It would produce a distinctive community (and this squares with the history of revivals). But divine power does not exist to just produce something; but for us to know someone, His divine power has granted to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of him who called us to his own glory and excellence” (3). This hints at how Spirit’s power works; it flows toward the knowledge of Christ. And it refuses to be strictly intellectual. In fact, it’s reverential; *it moves toward the glory and excellence of Christ*. It’s a knowledge that *changes us*. Think about your deeper relationships. They tend to be with people you revere, respect, admire. Some part of them is attractive to you. And if you yield to this (as opposed to jealous), the admiring leads to imitating. You take on their better qualities. I met Stephen 17 years ago. He welcomed me into a new job in a new city with a huge smile, and firm handshake saying, we’ve been eager to meet you. It was believable. You could see it in the kindness of his eyes. In the self-effacing way he asked questions with genuine interest in me. He’s also brilliant, a Ph.D from

Cambridge, but you wouldn't know it. Do you know what attracted me to Stephen? Humility. Until then it was an abstract quality, but when I came to know it in Stephen, I latched onto it and have aspired to it ever since. You see, you don't become rich in character by simply reading books and making resolutions. Godliness comes through knowing, and knowing by revering, admiring Christ so much that you take on his qualities. You say I don't have any friends like that or the strength to do it. Oh yes you do, you have the power inside of you, Spirit compelling you to revere and imitate Christ.

Faith Works

The power for godliness comes from the Spirit inclining us to Christ. But how do we get godliness *practically*? Two words—faith **works**. Peter says, “[For this very reason, make every effort to supplement your faith with virtue](#)” (5). Virtue is another word for godliness so we're still on the same track. Make *every* effort. Virtue requires work. Peter shows us how to work by giving us a list of virtues. The Greeks maintained that a virtuous life was a life of excellence. The best life. Americans have swapped the virtuous life for the comfortable life, a life of ease. Don't settle for easy. God called you to live at your best, to his own glory and excellence, to live in a sustained drive toward godliness. I know it's easier to be apathetic, easier to be comfortable, easier to make excuses but it's not better. [Knowledge, self-control, steadfastness, godliness, brotherly affection, love](#). Pick one. Work on it. Find a person with it and imitate it. Make it a focus in your fight club, a group of 2-3 men or women who *repent from sin, rejoice in Christ, and reproduce their faith in others*. Faith works. Now you may have noticed that godliness is actually one among others in the list of virtues. Why is that? I thought the list was how we get godliness. Well, that's because everything between virtue and love can be ungodly. Ungodly knowledge, ungodly self-control, and so on. How? Because these virtues easily become inward badges, decorative pieces we proudly display. But if you follow the arc of faith you'll see it lands on love. Why? Because love bends all the virtues outward. It's not enough to work. You have to work by **faith**, and faith works through love. Faith is a love machine. St. Paul, “nothing matters but faith working through love.” In a fantasy novel by CSL a conversation ensues between an angel and a woman, and the woman is trying to get to heaven but can't let go of things she loves. The angel insists, “[Every natural love will rise and live again in this country: but none will rise again unless it has been buried. There is but one good; that is God. Everything else is good when it looks at him and bad when it turns from him.](#)” What's he saying? There are natural loves, relationships, accomplishments, even virtues that must be *buried* before we can enter heaven. Stephen didn't put his PhD out front; he puts Christ out front. Think of the person who's so disciplined that they talk about their self-control all the time, their workouts, their routines, their children's schedule. I think of runners who run so much they blow out their knees, mothers who rigidly order their children's life that they rebel at 13. A good thing turned bad. There's only one love that matters in the end, and it's the love of Christ (not the love of your family, job, social service). And when Christ is your supreme love, he turns all the other things in your life good. So work but work by *faith*, like a love machine, driving after Christ, admiring him. So how do you get to Christ? Verse 4, faith in [his precious and very great promises](#). Practically, you have to know and trust his promises. What promises? They are immediate and ultimate. *Immediate*, like “Your lovingkindness is better than life.” I trust in the lovingkindness of God I thrive. I trust in making a comfortable life, I will not enjoy the lovingkindness of God. Ultimate promises are long-range. It takes

faith to believe them because they aren't immediately fulfilled. But, they produce the kind of people that change things, that don't settle for easy. Hebrews 11 gives us examples of people with faith in God's ultimate promises. *And what more shall I say? For time would fail me to tell of Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthah, of David and Samuel and the prophets—who through faith conquered kingdoms, enforced justice, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, quenched the power of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, were made strong out of weakness, became mighty in war, put foreign armies to flight. Women received back their dead by resurrection. Some were tortured, refusing to accept release, so that they might rise again to a better life. Others suffered mocking and flogging, and even chains and imprisonment. They were stoned, they were sawn in two, they were killed with the sword. They went about in skins of sheep and goats, destitute, afflicted, mistreated—of whom the world was not worthy—wandering about in deserts and mountains, and in dens and caves of the earth. And all these, though commended through their faith, did not receive what was promised... But as it is, they desire a better country, that is, a heavenly one.*" (32-39). Faith in the promises of God, in a country and a King, a new creation and a new Ruler who would make all things new. And they never saw it. We stand on their faith. They, and the rest in this chapter, gave their best, sacrificed their comfort, buried good things, in zealous pursuit of God. How? By trusting his promises. Faith works. Are you trusting his promises? In the face of suffering, trial, and temptation are you trusting in the precious promises of God? Are God's promises precious to you? Faith, my friends, works through love, and it changes the fabric of a community; lifts the character of a family, renews a city, but only when it works through love, when it admires the one due all our work and praise. Is Christ precious to you? He's the sum-total of the virtues. He's the goal of the promises. He's the one true Good. Turn to him, and all your other virtues will turn outward in love.

Sensory Malfunction or Grand Entrance

Godliness, how to get it (divine power), what it looks like (faith works), and now *what happens without it*. Your response to this text will result in one of two things, sensory impairment or grand entrance. Sensory impairment: "*For if these qualities are yours and are increasing, they keep you from being ineffective or unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. For whoever lacks these qualities is so nearsighted that he is blind, having forgotten that he was cleansed from his former sins*" (8-9). What happens without godliness? Your vision is damaged, preventing you from taking in the glory of Christ. You become are nearsighted, legally blind to the precious sacrifice of Jesus. This is you if you are in habitual sin, if look back over your life and see no progress in godliness. Peter says to you, you're not only nearsighted; you have gospel amnesia. You have forgotten the most memorable thing in history, the death of Christ for the cleansing of your sins. With godliness we enjoy the presence of Christ but without it, sensory impairment. We become what we behold. If you surround yourself with blinding, gospel amnesiacs, you will become blind, forgetful and ineffective in the knowledge of Christ. I've seen it too many times. Godliness matters. God does not make empty threats nor does he offer empty promises. "*Therefore, brothers, be all the more diligent to confirm your calling and election, for if you practice these qualities you will never fall*" (10). Repent hard and often, brothers and sisters. Demonstrate God's favorable choice of you. Bear the family resemblance. If you do, there's a promise you will never fall. What does he mean by fall? He's looking ahead to the

next verse. Refuse to trust in God and his promises and you'll step off the path of the eternal kingdom and fall onto the path that leads to destruction. But if you practice these virtues, if you respect Christ above all, ["there will be richly provided for you an entrance into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ"](#) (11). The flags will unfurl, the confetti of God's grace will fall, the ground beneath your feet will grow firm, as the city of God appears before your eyes. Faith will become sight as you walk into the kingdom of God, taking in the glory and excellence of Christ. There, every love will rise and live again to the glory of our one true God, Jesus Christ our Lord.