

TEXT: II Peter 1:1-15

TITLE: Spiritual Training of Godliness X AM

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Introduction

Every genuine child of God must live a life of practical godliness. While godliness does spring forth as a result of God's grace by which a man is made willing and able to live to God, yet we are not passive when it comes to godliness. I Tim. 4:7, "Exercise yourself toward godliness." If we want to know the reward of the godly hereafter, then now is the time in which we must live the godly life. Titus 2:11f, "For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men, teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in the present age, looking for the blessed hope and glorious appearing of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ, who gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from every lawless deed and purify for Himself His own special people, zealous for good works." I Jn. 3:2, 3, "Beloved, now we are children of God; and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be, but we know that when He is revealed, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is. And everyone who has this hope in Him purifies himself, just as He is pure."

Now this is not a walk in the park! Standing in your way is the kingdom of darkness composed of the world and the flesh and headed by the devil. Your enemy does not give up on you, but pursues you relentlessly at every turn. Thank the Lord that by His Kingdom of Grace He strengthens us. He has given us the Holy Spirit, a new nature and the Church that we would be strengthened to live lives of godliness. Last Lord's day morning we began to open this work of the Spirit as we first opened the Apostle Peter's instructions in II Peter 1, to Christians who possessed "grace and peace" but were - as we are - in need of having that increase and multiply. To that end he declares, v. 3, "His divine power has given to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of Him who called us by glory and virtue, by which have been given to us exceedingly great and precious promises." Every genuine believer has been renewed in the spirit of their mind after the image of God in true knowledge, righteousness, and holiness. You have been born again of the Spirit and that same Spirit has cleansed you by the application of Christ to you, and now indwells you as God's temple. Thus, our God and Savior has, by His divine power, "given to us all things that pertain [all that tends to or is needed for] to life and godliness..." It is the Spirit's work, poured out by Christ working in us and giving us gifts which build us up in godliness. We looked specifically how the Spirit sets your faith upon the power of Christ's death and resurrection, and indicts in us prayer to our Lord. Now follow with me how the Spirit of truth as our Lord promised in Jn. 15:26, works....

I. The Spirit sets out the truth as it is in Jesus Christ.

The Spirit bringing to God's children the truth as it is in Jesus, counters the father of lies who continually warps and obfuscates God's truth. So the Apostle warns: II Tim. 1:13, "Hold fast the pattern of sound words which you have heard from me, in faith and love which are in Christ Jesus. That good thing which was committed to you, keep by the Holy Spirit who dwells in us." This is not simply for ministers though specifically directed to them. It is true and with practical implications for each of you as a Christian. Remember: Titus 1:1, "...the truth which accords with godliness." The Spirit of truth leads in the way of truth and godliness the very opposite of error and wickedness. I Tim. 4:1f, "Now the Spirit expressly says that in latter times some will depart from the faith, giving heed to deceiving spirits and doctrines of demons..." Satan's fog of lies and Scripture twisting distortions have led many to say *How can I know for sure when there is so much disagreement? So many differing doctrines?* Just to have the Spirit-worked conviction to live a godly life is a great thing. Follow that light and ask God to lead you into all truth which the Spirit will do. Make that Spirit speaking in the Scriptures your guide and He will keep you. How?

A. The Spirit of truth gives rules to distinguish between truth and error.

Genuine sound doctrine glorifies God - The Apostle Paul did not come parading his own great learning or oratory: I Cor. 2:1f, "For I determined not to know anything among you except Jesus Christ and Him crucified. I was with you in weakness, in fear, and in much trembling. And my speech and my preaching were not with persuasive words of human wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power, that your faith should not be in the wisdom of men but in the power of God." "He who glories, let him glory in the Lord." The Holy Spirit does not center in men's experiences - as we often hear men and women claiming this and that experience or leading of the Spirit centered on their own feelings and often opposite of God's Word. Rather the Spirit glorifies Christ in the truth and according to the Word of truth. The Holy Spirit who inspired the Prophets and Apostles proclaims Christ - salvation by Christ alone, by grace alone, through faith alone. II Pe. 1:19f, "And so we have the prophetic word confirmed which you do well to heed as a light that shines in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts; knowing this first, that no prophecy of Scripture is of any private interpretation, for prophecy never came by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit." I once went to a Bible study where the teacher (who supposedly had all the gifts of the Spirit) announced that those truly in Christ could be lost! You could immediately tell that this did not glorify the Triune God whose purposes in grace cannot be defeated, whose atoning sacrifice secures redemption, and whose Spirit so unites us to Christ that we shall be brought to glory.

Believing and doing God's truth promotes godliness - The truth as it is in Jesus promotes godliness, living to God, obedience to God's word. Eph. 4:17f,

“This I say, therefore, and testify in the Lord, that you should no longer walk as the rest of the Gentiles walk, in the futility of their mind, having their understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God, because of the ignorance that is in them...But you have not so learned Christ, if indeed you have heard Him and have been taught by Him, as the truth is in Jesus, that you put off, concerning your former conduct, the old man which grows corrupt according to the deceitful lusts, and be renewed in the spirit of your mind, and that you put on the new man...” BCO Preface II.4. *Godliness is founded on truth. A test of truth is its power to promote holiness according to our Saviour’s rule, “By their fruits ye shall know them” (Mt. 7:20). No opinion can be more pernicious or more absurd than that which brings truth and falsehood upon the same level. On the contrary, there is an inseparable connection between faith and practice, truth and duty. Otherwise it would be of no consequence either to discover truth or to embrace it.* IE. We are coming up on what some think is a great idea: Lent! But, is that in the Scriptures? NO. Does it promote godliness? Well, there is Mardi Gras, Carnival - Are they pictures of righteousness? Is a person giving up something for a week - say an extra Coke, to be compared with a life of repentance? Titus 2:11f, “For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men, teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in the present age.”

Practicing the truth produces comfort- The Spirit counters the lie of the world, the flesh, and the devil, that disobedience to God’s Word is the path of enjoyment, pleasure, and profit. The Spirit never, never leads contrary to God’s Word promising good through the path of least resistance. Ro. 15:4, “For whatever things were written before were written for our learning, that we through the patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope.” Walking in the truth of practical godliness which is living to God in Christ has a promise for the life that now is and that which is to come (I Ti. 4:8). John’s great tests of life point to this very reality: I Jn. 1:6, “If we say that we have fellowship with Him, and walk in darkness, we lie and *do not practice the truth*. But if we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin.” This is why Ps. 19:11, speaks of God’s Word, His truth, “Moreover by them Your servant is warned and in keeping them there is great reward.” Jn. 13:17, “If you now these things, blessed are you if you do them.” Ja. 1:25, “But he who looks into the perfect law of liberty and continues in it, and is not a forgetful hearer but a doer of the work, this one will be blessed in what he does.” Truth is justified in her children because they show living faith to their own comfort in doing the truth.

B. The Spirit of truth produces a love for God’s truth.

Ps. 119:97, “Oh, how I love Your law! It is my meditation all the day.” That is the Spirit of God speaking! Is that your attitude? Your heart desire? A love for God’s truth? The Spirit cultivates love for God’s truth. While our Lord loved and lived in the truth what spirit was it that brought the opposite? Who is it that works deceit as II Thess. 2:9f, in those who “did not receive the love of the truth, that they might be saved”? Jn. 3:19, “And this is

the condemnation, that the light has come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. For everyone practicing evil hates the light and does not come to the light, lest his deed should be exposed. But he who does the truth comes to the light, that his deeds may be clearly seen, that they have been done in God.” The Spirit cultivates a heart-love for the truth in all the godly. He reveals truth and brings them to love the truth. He teaches the godly to love and to practice the truth.

The Spirit teaches how horrid it is to resist and reject the truth - It is the Spirit who opens our eyes to see that God wants truth in the core of our beings and what great misery is to be found in disobeying God’s truth. Pray that the Spirit may show you the reality of where resistance and rejection of God’s truth leads. Satan is a great fisherman! He will always present a delectable bait and hide the hook! As unpleasant as it may seem, pray that the Spirit may show the consequences to you of disobedience! Think before you leap!

The Spirit teaches the loveliness of obeying God - I Pe. 1:22, “Since you have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit in sincere love of the brethren, love one another fervently with a pure heart.” It is a joyful, invigorating practice to be a creature who obeys his Creator, one of the redeemed who obeys his Redeemer. It is the Spirit who makes us see clearly what Christ has done for us and to be freely willing to hear and obey Christ in love. He is the author of that zeal to serve Christ. While Satan and the world always paint careful obedience to Christ with a bad brush - *too picky, you can be just as good a Christian without worship, without being in Sunday School, without being in the word, in prayer...* Yet pray that the Spirit may show you the loveliness of godliness in Christ.

The Spirit teaches us that this world is not God - The world always presents the world, its power, position, pleasure as the highest and best, the most important, the priority of all priorities. It is the splendor of idol worship. As Satan showed Christ all the kingdoms and their glory - simply avoid the trouble of obedience to God and serve him and all this will be yours! The Spirit shows us the Lord and His truth which is eternal and is not passing away and the vanity of this world for which worldly people commit many sins.

C. The Spirit of truth strengthens godly wisdom.

Phil. 1:9f, “And this I pray, that your love may abound still more and more in knowledge and all discernment, that you may approve the things that are excellent, that you may be sincere and without offense till the day of Christ, being filled with the fruits of righteousness which are by Jesus Christ, to the glory and praise of God.” Godly wisdom is the ability to apply the Word of God, the truth of God, to our daily lives. It is that wisdom which is from above (Ja. 3:13f) full of good righteous fruits. It is wisdom which exalts God, encourages our advancement in holiness, and sets before us the comfort and advantages of following God’s truth even in the face of worldly profit, favor or reward. This Spirit-worked wisdom exalts God, encourages in the progress of holiness, comforts the child of God in the practice of godliness.

He shows us that stupidity of setting aside godliness for worldly advancement. The Holy Spirit helps them with truth that is written upon their hearts so that they know that the Lord, who cannot lie, declares godliness to be great gain - no matter what their fleshly feelings or the world may say. This arms you against occasions to sin which simply wash over and take away heedless worldlings.

D. The Spirit of truth when we face trouble.

Perhaps nothing is more difficult than to face trouble while in the path of exercising yourself to godliness. Yet the Spirit teaches us, II Tim. 3:12, "Yes, and all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution." The Spirit teaches God's children how to grow in wisdom and experience and endure in tribulations and trials.

It is the Spirit who teaches us that, ultimately speaking it is not evil men or simply luck or circumstance, but rather that God works all things - both good and calamity - for the good of His own children. You know that from Ro. 8:28 & from Amos 3:6. This is important so that we do not ignore God in these troubles like the worldly do and so that we learn the lessons He is teaching us. This will keep you patient in troubles because you know that the wise and good hand of your heavenly Father is involved. It also teaches you to expect blessings to come as a result of the troubles which God brings upon us. I Pe. 1:6, "In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while, if need be, you have been grieved by various trials, that the genuineness of your faith, being much more precious than gold that perishes, though it is tested by fire, may be found to praise, honor, and glory at the revelation of Jesus Christ." This is what the Spirit teaches us in Heb. 12:3f, that God's chastening is wise, reluctant, and to a good and eternal end. So as it is the Lord who brings these things upon us, so also we may expect deliverance from God.

The Spirit also teaches us that it is often because of our sins that we are afflicted (Dt. 28; Lev. 26). So we are humbled - showing us that sin remains in us, that we are weak and need Christ more and more, that God is building up grace and godliness in us and not content that we should remain the same! IE. Peter was so bold, so sure of himself - *All will forsake you, but not me!* But then the servant girl comes and he denies Christ! The Lord brings our sin to light in order that we would deal with it! He motivates us by these. But also, as our Lord taught in Mt. 5:12, that His children are reviled and persecuted by the world because of their godliness, because they are His own: "Rejoice and be exceedingly glad, for great is your reward in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you." Ie. Spices such as garlic or anise or cinnamon grow in intensity, are released in all their aroma and taste by heating and crushing! Dear Christian, the graces of the Christian such as patience, charity, longsuffering endurance - are never so lush, so aromatic, as when they are heated and crushed in troubles and trials!

The Spirit also teaches you, child of God, that you are loved and precious whether when you are persecuted, tried, or in times of joy. I Pe. 4:14, "If you are reproached for the name of Christ, blessed are you, for the

Spirit of glory and of God rests upon you.” Were the believers, the saints, as precious and beloved by the Lord when they were persecuted by Saul as when they were ministered to by Paul? Remember the identity of the Lord with His own? Acts 9:4, “Why are you persecuting Me?” Isa. 63:9, “In all their affliction He was afflicted.” So the Spirit teaches you that the affliction of the godly or their enduring troubles is not any indication that they are forsaken by the Lord, but rather, as Heb. 12:6,7, “..whom the Lord love He chastens....God deals with you as with sons...” God may have fatherly displeasure and chasten for our sins, but it is an evidence of His fatherly love and faithfulness to us: Rev. 3:19, “As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten. Therefore be zealous and repent.”

Dear Christian, perhaps the worldly friend whispers in your ear when trouble happens with a parent, a spouse, a child, -*What good does it do to serve the Lord? To worship, to obey, to live* -- in so many words - *the life of godliness*. Oh, do not heed the world, the flesh, the devil, but hear the Spirit. Yes, our outward man is perishing and the Lord is using the rock tumbler to wear off our sins that they be put to death and our graces shine more clearly. The precious part, the inward man is being renewed day by day. Listen to the Spirit teach you how to view these things, what your Lord is doing, and learn as your Savior did, Heb. 12:2, “...let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.” He will sustain you. Remember, II Cor. 4:17, “For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, is working for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory, while we do not look at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen. For the things which are seen are temporary, but the things which are not seen are eternal.”

II Cor. 3:17, “Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty. But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as by the Spirit of the Lord.”