

Godliness

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Near the end of Peter's inspired list of traits that characterize those who are "partakers of the Divine nature" and who have escaped a corrupt world, is "godliness" (2 Pet. 1:6). Contrary to popular belief, *godliness* does not mean "godlikeness" or imitating God. Rather, it means to be devout or pious, to revere, fear, or worship God, to have a Godward attitude, to do that which is well-pleasing to God (cf. Vine, Thayer).

Secular man has no respect for God and His righteous Will. If he did, he would not remain impious, irreverent, and ungodly because God teaches us to deny ungodliness and to replace it with godly behavior (Tit. 2:12). Godliness is a basic trait of the Christian personality, having to do with the attitude and posture of the heart. While one can appear to be godly by an outward show of piety (as did the hypocrites of Jesus' day [Mat. 6:1-18]), such pretense is but a "form of godliness" that denies the **power** of true godliness (2 Tim. 3:5).

Our world has gone pleasure-mad in its ungodliness. Modern man is drowning in vain, blasphemous humanism which alleges that there is no higher being than man and no higher purpose than his own pleasure. Accepting this premise, he has concluded that whatever brings pleasure is good and whatever causes pain, or inconvenience, is evil. This attitude has produced open rebellion against God's moral principles. It has generated the "sexual revolution" whereby sexual intimacy has been moved from the sacredness of the marriage bed to the area of unrestricted recreation. The same selfish "pleasure ethic" abounds on every moral issue.

The ungodliness in the world has seeped into the church, defiling, prostituting, and profaning her. Many are openly irreverent toward God in their disdain for true doctrine and Scriptural practice. In some congregations, preachers are forbidden to preach on certain subjects (e.g., marriage, divorce, and remarriage, church discipline, drinking, dancing, immodest apparel, et al.). Worldliness and indecent behavior are rampant in many congregations. The craze of some to make a theatrical production of our worship assemblies and to demand "something different" every Sunday over the simple practices of Scriptural worship is gross ungodliness. The effort to attract (and hold) large numbers of people by whatever means necessary shows disrespect for the crucified Christ, the powerful Gospel, and all of those who have faithfully proclaimed Christ across the centuries (John 12:32; Rom. 1:16; 1 Cor. 2:2).

The respect and reverence toward God which constitutes godliness cannot be measured except by respect for His Word. It is a life-principle for the Christian that will cause him ever to

seek the Father's good pleasure. Godliness will not allow one knowingly to speak, act, or even think irreverently or impiously. It is no small matter that we constantly cultivate godliness because the very wrath of God is already revealed against all ungodliness (Rom. 1:18).

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