

(1 Timothy) Exercising Yourself Towards Godliness

by Brian Brodersen

The sermon emphasizes the importance of exercising oneself towards godliness, which brings physical, emotional, intellectual, and relational blessings, and promises for the life to come.

Duration: 59:03

Scripture: Matthew 6:33, 1 Timothy 4:7-9, Hebrews 12:1

Topics: "Christian Living", "Spiritual Discipline"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker begins by sharing his personal experience of watching a film about the church in China and another Christian movie. He mentions that while the production quality of the movies may not have been the best, they still had a good message. The speaker then transitions to discussing the importance of not wasting time watching worthless and morally opposed content on television. He emphasizes the need for consistency and commitment in living according to God's moral standard. The speaker also mentions the significance of prayer, meditation, study, praise, fellowship, service, and witness in the lives of believers. Additionally, he briefly touches on the rapid development of events in the world that align with the prophetic scenario mentioned in the Bible, specifically mentioning the reassembly of the Sanhedrin in Israel after a 1700-year break.

Transcript

So we're picking up tonight in chapter four of 1st Timothy and once again this evening we're gonna look at some of the verses that we've already discussed, but we only discussed them very briefly, sort of in passing. So tonight I want to concentrate on verses 7 through 9 of 1st Timothy chapter 4. The latter part of verse 7, Paul says, exercise yourself toward godliness. 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. So here in these verses, Paul is once again seeking to establish in the minds of believers the superiority of the spiritual over the natural and the eternal over the temporal. So he says, bodily exercise profits a little or could be translated for a little while, but godliness, and you could translate this word holiness, you could also look at it as spirituality.

Godliness, holiness, spirituality is profitable for all things, having promises of the life that now is and of that which is to come. And so what we want to consider tonight is how we are to go about this admonition. The

apostle gives us the admonition to exercise ourselves toward godliness or training ourselves to be godly.

So we could also take and translate exercise yourself toward godliness in a variety of ways. If you look at some of the other translations, you'll find that there are a variety of translations. Let me give you a couple of other ones.

Train or discipline yourself for spiritual fitness. That's from the New Living Translation from the Living Bible. Spend your time and energy in the exercise of keeping spiritually fit.

I like both of those. Those really, you know, I think quite clearly communicate what the apostle is wanting to tell us. We need to train.

We need to discipline ourselves for spiritual fitness. Why? Because spiritual fitness, in contrast to physical fitness, which has only limited and temporary benefits, has much greater profit. Spiritual fitness profits not just ourselves, but it profits others as well.

And spiritual fitness has eternal benefits. Physical fitness has limited and temporal benefits. They're limited primarily to you.

And of course, they're only beneficial as long as you're in the physical realm. But spiritual fitness, it profits not just you, but it profits others. And there are eternal benefits connected to it.

So how does godliness profit in this life? For that's what Paul says, godliness is profitable for this life. How does godliness profit for this life? Well, godliness brings, number one, a physical blessing. Generally speaking, godliness brings a physical blessing, bodily health, generally speaking.

Now, of course, this doesn't mean that Christians never get sick. It doesn't mean that we don't battle with disease. But if you are pursuing godliness, if you are seeking to discipline and train yourself spiritually, then you're going to stay miles and miles away from many of the things that harm us bodily.

You know, before I was a Christian. I was like many of you, undoubtedly, and many, many others, I was pretty much on a self-destruction course. I was just living a reckless life.

I was involved in all kinds of things that were, among other things, they were just simply physically unhealthy. I was drinking, I was doing drugs. Occasionally I was, you know, I was just involved in all kinds of things that would ultimately had I continued on in those things certainly had a negative impact upon me physically.

And it was through coming to Christ and beginning to exercise myself toward godliness that all of that stuff was taken out of my life. And I know there are many people that could testify to how. Their conversion and then their their commitment to Christ did indeed result in a great transformation in their lives in a physical sense and brought a physical blessing.

Secondly, there is an emotional blessing that comes. You see, it's only when I'm committed to Christ and pursuing the things of the spirit that I can really be a mentally balanced person. So if you want true mental health or emotional health, that comes through godliness.

Now, think about it. The person who is pursuing godliness is a person who is indeed emotionally healthy because there's. This emphasis in their life on the things of the spirit and what happens as we pursue the things of the spirit, what is the fruit of the spirit? Well, we know the fruit of the spirit is love.

We know the fruit of the spirit is joy. We know the fruit of the spirit is peace. These are all of the things that really describe mental wellness or emotional wellness.

People who are mentally or emotionally, I'm using those terms synonymously. People who are unstable in those areas generally are people who are lacking love. They're people who have no joy.

Their lives are in turmoil rather than in peace. But when you train yourself toward godliness, it results in an emotional blessing. It also results in blessing intellectually.

Because what happens is as you exercise yourself toward godliness, the mind is then trained in the truth. You know, some people have the mistaken notion that to become a Christian means to, you know, just sort of check out intellectually. It means that you throw your brain out the window and you just get caught up in some emotional kind of an experience.

Nothing could be further from the truth. God created us with all of our mental capacities. God created us as intelligent beings, and we are only truly intelligent when our mind is trained in the truth.

You know, most of the great scientific minds in history, the founding fathers of what we know today as science, most of them were believers in the Lord Jesus Christ. Some of them were not necessarily Christians, but they were definitely men who had a theistic worldview, in some cases, maybe a deistic, which is still a belief in God. God's just a bit further away.

But, you know, atheism hasn't really brought us any benefits whatsoever. And as science has become, in a sense, predominantly atheistic, science hasn't done a whole lot for us. All that we have in all of our modern developments and things are really just sort of a working out of the things that were discovered back in the 16, 17 and 18 hundreds by the founding fathers of science who were, as I said, all spiritual men for the most part.

So there's a blessing intellectually that comes godliness, profiting in this life. There is blessing relationally. There's blessing relationally.

When you are a godly person, when you are a person whose life is marked by a deep and a true spirituality. Centered in the truth of Jesus Christ, this brings about a tremendous blessing relationally, it blesses you in your relationship with your friends, it blesses you. As a member of a family, it blesses your marriage, it blesses your children.

And of course, since the family is sort of the foundation stone of society, godliness produces a social blessing as well. You know, people who are really godly, they become a great blessing to society. I was watching last night a DVD from a series that I was given on the church in China.

And it was the third DVD in the series called The Bitter Cup in this. This program entitled The Cross, and actually I think they showed it in the fellowship hall today as well, but I was watching it last night. And one of the interesting things that they were bringing out was how the believers in China, the underground church, of course, because the church is oppressed and persecuted, they have to exist in an underground sort of a state.

But the believers were talking about the fact that they were not opposed to the government. They wanted to pray for their leaders. They wanted to, as much as possible, be an encouragement to the situation governmentally and socially and so forth.

And, you know, as I was watching that listening to I was thinking, you know, that's really the truth. When a person becomes a Christian, when a person is converted and becomes a believer and begins to follow Jesus, that's when that person really does become a productive person in society. A person who is making a contribution rather than a person who is creating a problem.

And again, I can think of my own experience, you know, prior to becoming a Christian, I was on the road to being a menace to society. And I didn't really care much about whether or not that was the case. You know, you're just living in this state of rebellion and any authority is something that you ought to rebel against.

And that's exactly what I was doing. I wasn't thinking in any way, shape or form in being a person who was going to be productive in society. So when you exercise yourself toward godliness.

It has promises for this life, blessings in all of these different areas, you are blessed and then you become a blessing to others. But then Paul says that it also profits for the life to come. How does godliness profit in the life to come? Well, the obvious, of course, we would all know immediately is that we are going to heaven, not to hell.

That's a tremendous profit right there. And that's where we start. But of course, going to heaven is predicated upon receiving Christ and his grace, the gift of salvation.

That's a gift from God. But Paul's talking about really cultivating. A spiritual life, and he says it has promises for the life that is to come.

Here's something that's often overlooked. Amongst us and this issue is one that I think we need to pay closer attention to. It's the issue of position in heaven or another way to look at it is reward in heaven.

Now, we generally tend to think that heaven itself is the reward, but heaven is not the reward because a reward is the result of a work. You do something, you accomplish something, and then you're rewarded for it. Heaven, we know, is a gift.

Heaven is a gift, but the Bible definitely speaks about an aspect of reward in heaven. What is that based on? It's based upon my faithfulness to the Lord here in this life. It's based upon my commitment to his work.

It's based upon my pursuit of godliness and things of that nature. Paul spoke of those. Who would make it to heaven.

But basically, they would make it by the skin of their teeth. He used a different term, but it's essentially the same thing. He spoke of those who were saved as though through fire.

Those who made it in, but all of their works were consumed. All of their works were burned up in that that time of testing. Now, the the implication there is that that's not what we want to see happen in our lives.

Peter spoke about having an abundant entry into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. That's what we want. We want Paul is really talking about here.

Godliness has promises for the life that is to come, because we need to realize that the life that is to come is not merely going to heaven and sitting around and just looking at the scenery going to heaven involves serving God there and holding positions there and doing things and ruling over certain regions and so

forth, which is all to some degree based upon. Our faithfulness to what God gave us to do here on earth. So that I think is what he's talking about when he says that godliness.

It profits not only in this life, but also in the life to come. Now, here's the question, how do we exercise ourselves to godliness? How do we get in shape spiritually as we're being exhorted to do? Well, let's take an analogy from the physical realm. Let's say I am.

A doctor and. I'm a doctor who's, you know, oriented toward nutrition and toward, you know, preventative kind of medicine and all of that sort of thing, and I have a patient, that patient comes in to me and is extremely overweight, smokes like a chimney, drinks like a fish, you know, diet is out of control. And he comes in, he says, now, doctor, I want to get in shape.

What do I do? Well, if I'm a good doctor, I don't initially send him down to get a membership that 24 hour fitness. Because if I did that, that'd probably kill him. First of all, we've got to deal with some more fundamental kind of things.

There needs to be a radical lifestyle change for this guy and we need to address those things. There are certain things in his life that just have to be eliminated. If he's going to get in shape, if he's going to, you know, become healthy, then there are certain things that are going to have to be eliminated.

He's going to have to reduce his alcohol intake. And, you know, all of those other excessive things that he's involved in dietarily and so forth. All of those things are going to have to go through a radical readjustment.

Then I can go ahead once we've established that and once we've moved in that direction, then I can go ahead and I can begin to add other things. I can begin to establish an exercise routine, instruct him regarding a good diet and, you know, just a whole lifestyle change is what needs to take place. Well, we can sort of look at that.

And find really a similar thing in the spiritual realm. There's a parallel between what you would have to do physically and what we need to do spiritually. So we want to exercise ourselves toward godliness.

We want to train and discipline ourselves to be spiritually fit. What do we do? Well, first of all, we need to eliminate certain things. If I am going to develop my life spiritually the way I am being encouraged to do here in this passage, then I have got to, first of all, make sure that certain things are not a part of my life.

There needs to be a radical lifestyle change. So there needs to be an elimination, first of all, an elimination of any known and obvious sin. Any obvious sin, any any sin that you are just totally conscious of being involved in is something that needs to be removed from your life immediately.

You can't really go anywhere until that takes place. You're not going to be able to really progress in godliness if you're going to continue to live in that sinful state. So there has to be a turning away from that.

There has to be a decision to just walk away from it, whatever it is. I'm going to go in a different direction. So that's step number one.

Secondly, we need to reduce things that dole us spiritually. You know, Hebrews chapter 12, verse one tells us something like this. It says, therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses talking about all those godly men and women that were just mentioned in the previous chapter, therefore,

since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside.

Every weight. And the sin that so easily besets us and let us run with endurance, the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus, the author and the finisher of our faith, the same sort of thing that we're talking about here, we must set aside the sin, but we also need to set aside the weights. Now, what are weights? Weights are things that.

Hinder you, things that slow you down, things that keep you back from. Being able to run swiftly and freely. With endurance, the race that is set before you.

And so once we deal with the known and the obvious sin in our lives, then we need to, as I said, reduce the things that dole us spiritually. There are things that I think will dole us spiritually. And one of the main things that I think will dole us spiritually.

Is the preoccupation with entertaining ourselves. This is an area where I think we of all people are most in jeopardy. We're in jeopardy of just losing our spiritual edge because we're so caught up in just what goes on in the culture, which is basically the hot pursuit of.

Every imaginable form of entertainment. And as a culture, we just tend to gravitate toward those kinds of things. Now, I'm not saying that we can enjoy ourselves, I'm not saying that we don't go out and have fun and those kinds of things.

But if that is the thing that you're living for. Which is really ultimately just another manifestation of seeking to gratify the flesh. If you're living for that, you're going to be dole spiritually.

We have got to be living for the things of the spirit. Now, I've mentioned this many times before, but I will bring it up again because I think it's the biggest curse on the culture. It's the biggest curse in the lives of so many Christians.

You're just sitting in front of the television. Endlessly sitting there watching mindless program after mindless program, you want to dole yourself spiritually. Well, you just sit in front of that thing for a while and it'll be sure to happen real, real quickly.

Now, again, I'm not saying that you can't watch television and occasionally there are, you know, there's a good news program. Maybe there's something good of a historical nature sometimes when they're not trying to rewrite history, which are generally trying to do. Occasionally you find something that's just good, wholesome, you know, fun entertainment, which is fine as well.

And likewise, you know, with the videos and the DVDs and the theaters every week when a new movie comes out, all of those kinds of things. You know, if we do that with. A strong degree of moderation, we're going to be OK, but what happens so often is we have no moderation at all, we just this is just what we do, this is what our lives are taken up with.

And I wonder how many. Christian people. Spend.

The majority of their free time just sitting in front of the television and soaking in all of the. Worthless stuff and not only worthless stuff, but sometimes stuff that's very much opposed to what we believe and to the moral standard that God has called us to live. So you see, we've got to get serious about things like this.

Last night I was, as I mentioned, I watched that one film on the church in China and then somebody else had given me another. Movie produced by a Christian guy and, you know, an interesting movie, good, good message, the production was a little weak, but, you know, it was it was rather enjoyable. So I watched that and then right at the end.

The DVD flipped out in my computer when I couldn't see the end, so I went from my computer, I went over the TV and I put it on and in the course of that, the news came on and so. I don't know why I'm telling you all those details, but I just wanted you to get the feel, you know, just there with me in my living room and. So anyway, I'm there and I'm waiting, I'm trying to get the DVD fixed and at the same time I'm flipping around, I'm looking at some of the different things that are coming on and I think is about 1130 or something.

So David Letterman was on, Jay Leno was on and, you know, I spent a couple of minutes stopping there, just kind of watching them begin with their monologues. And, you know, these guys are filthy, they're they're arrogant there. And I'm just looking at this thinking, man, this is pathetic.

How many Christians just sit in front of that and soak that stuff in? And we have to really be on our guard. And literally every single channel I went to had some perverse, vile thing on it. And, you know, it was just unbelievable.

Finally, I just went to the the Spanish station and I don't know what they're saying. So I was fine and I watched a good boxing match. So you see my point, I'm not standing up here saying you can't watch TV or anything, but I'm just saying, look, as Christians, we have got to be wise because this stuff, it will dull our senses spiritually if we don't watch out what we allow to come in.

We have got to have a standard and we've got to just simply say to a lot of things, you know, no, I'm not going to do that now. I'm not going to watch that. And it might be hilarious.

It might be. A few weeks back, somebody was watching some of the Seinfeld stuff and I sat down, watched a couple funny, hilarious stuff. Great.

Next one comes on filthy, unbelievably filthy, just said, OK, boom, that's it. This stuff's out of the house. You know, we can't do that and you have to draw the line.

You have to set a standard. You have to say no, because these things will work against. What we're talking about, what we're admonished to do, these things will work against exercising ourself toward godliness.

So these are the things that we must eliminate and these are the things that we must reduce in our lives. We must eliminate those things that are, of course, sinful and are going to have that kind of an impact upon us. But then we really need to sharply reduce just those those things that are worthless, a waste of time, because, of course, so much of it is just that it's just simply a waste of time.

Then we would add good things to our lives, and these are the things and we've talked about these things many times before, and I even struggled today with going back over these things again because we've brought them up recently. But I just felt prompted by the Lord to to bring these issues before you again, because the question is, how do I exercise myself toward godliness? How do I strengthen myself spiritually? How do I become a godly person? How do I become a spiritually fit person who can have the kind of life God wants me to live with those blessings that we talked about earlier and the kind of impact he

wants me to have on the lives of other people? How do I do it? Well, it's not just by eliminating things from my life or reducing certain things, it's by making sure that other things are. At the center of what my life is all about and they are the basic things that we talk about over and over again, but you know what, this is just the way it is, this is the way to it.

There isn't any other way if I'm going to be a spiritual person, there are just certain spiritual disciplines I must participate in, and if I don't, then I won't be. But if I do, then the promise is that I will be. So what are they? Prayer, meditation, study, praise, fellowship, service, witness.

Those are the things. These are the things that we, as God's people, must be committed to and involved in in our lives and especially in the days that we're living in. It is just unbelievable the stuff that's going on in the world today, and I'll tell you guys, the whole prophetic.

Scenario that we talk about occasionally and that we're all somewhat aware of, it is amazing how rapidly things are developing all over the world, things that are just moving just right in the direction that Jesus said they would move in before he came back. A couple of things I was studying up on today, fascinating things in Israel. In Israel, back in October, the Sanhedrin reassembled.

After. A seventeen hundred year break, October of last year, they reassembled. They reassembled last year, Sanhedrin, remember, that is the body, the legislative body that passed the death sentence on Jesus Christ.

They reassembled and they have put themselves forth now as the legal and moral voice for the nation of Israel, what they're talking about, what they're debating, what they're considering even now is the re-implementation of the sacrificial system. They're actually talking about debating whether or not they should sacrifice a lamb for Passover. And there's there's a diversity of opinion and what they're you know, some people want to do it, others are saying, no, we can't do it yet, we must wait for a reconstructed temple.

So this is this is going on in Israel. These guys are challenging the Knesset. And they're they're they're rising up and taking authority in the land.

Amazing in Europe, the things that are developing in Europe, we've talked about those things occasionally in the midst of the European Union, the twenty five nation confederation. There is another element to the European Union that is not so well known publicly, it is known as the Western European Union, the Western European Union is the military and defense element of the European Union, the Western European Union is made up of ten nations. Now, we're always talking about this ten nation confederacy, because that's, of course, what Daniel says, that's what the Book of Revelation refers to, and there's been a lot of sort of, you know, not confusion, but people have wondered, well, how's that all going to work out because we've got twenty five nations, how are we going to get back down to ten? We don't have to get back down to ten.

The Western European Union is a ten nation confederation. And amazingly, I was on their website today, I was on the website of the Western European Union and. The Western European Union has on their website.

They have basically laid out a variety of things that they plan to do in the future and they have a number of recommendations, you know, they will get together in these councils and they will put forth

recommendations and they'll recommend a variety of things. Recommendation six hundred and sixty six. States.

That the European Union. Would put forth a man with strong political influence. To represent.

The union in its entirety, you know, you wonder, did they go to Revelation and actually kind of read it and say, OK, this is what we're going to do right here. I mean, it's unbelievable. It's absolutely unbelievable how this stuff is just unfolding right before our eyes.

And as it is unfolding right before our eyes and, you know, all of this stuff is rising up and, you know, morals and righteousness and all of that is crumbling around us. What are we doing? We need to be exercising ourselves toward godliness in these days. We don't have time to wait around.

Now is the time. And so I want to take a minute and I want to just go over each one of these points that we've discussed in the past, but just maybe just a slightly different perspective on each of these points. And I want to encourage you in this direction.

So these are the things that we must do to fulfill the word, to exercise ourselves toward godliness. We need to pray. We need to pray personally and privately.

We need to pray publicly and with other believers as well. Ladies and gentlemen, we must. Become people who pray.

We must pray more. And I know we live in an insanely busy world and you're asking yourself, when, how do I find the time? Well, this goes back to what I was talking about earlier. I believe that we probably do have time, but it's occupied right now with a lot of meaningless things.

So what we have to do is we have to look at our lives and say, OK, what do I need to get rid of so I can bring in the things that I need to be doing? And I would imagine that if we got rid of a lot of the things that are worthless kinds of things, that we would have that time. But we've got to commit ourselves to prayer personally and privately and also together with other believers. And then, of course, for my own life personally, I need to spend time meditating in the word of God, which means I need to read it for myself, not just depend on getting Bible studies when I go to church.

It's wonderful that you come to church. It's wonderful that you get Bible studies when you come to church. It's wonderful that you can turn on the radio and get Bible studies, but you have to read, meditate on the scriptures yourself.

God wants to meet you in a special way and touch your life in a unique way as you do that. So we need to meditate upon the word of God. We need to take.

Advantage of all of the blessings that he's given to us. We have many things to help us to understand the word of God, we have commentaries in written form, we have many audio commentaries and things of that nature. But it's this combination of of me seeking the Lord personally in my own sort of devotional life, if you want to call it that, in his word and then taking advantage of the instruction that he's given us through a number of different avenues.

We need to do that, we need to take time, not just simply blast through a chapter because, OK, I got to get out the door, but we need to take the time to sit down and read it over and ponder it and think about it and

pray on it. And let it. Find its place in our hearts, we need to study, we need to study things that will build us up and strengthen us in our faith and help us to contend against all of the deception, all of the deceit, all of the lies that we're being bombarded with in our culture.

You see, we've got to equip ourselves, each and every one of us are called to be able to give an answer to everyone who asks us a reason for the hope that is in us, we're not to spend our whole Christian lives just depending on somebody else to do that for us. We need to ourselves study and grow and learn. The things that pertain to the faith so we can be strengthened by those things and we can help others, we can be a blessing to others, I want to do this tonight, I want to recommend to you five books to read over the next year.

Five books to read over the next year, you'll have to turn off your TV to get through these because it's going to take some time, but I guarantee if you take these five books and you read them over the next year, you shut off the television, you occupy yourself with this stuff, you're going to come in a year from now and you're going to say, thanks for telling me to do that because it has enriched my life spiritually. That's what's going to happen. These five books I want to recommend to you.

Number one, what the Bible teaches, the author is R.A. Torrey, what the Bible teaches, give you a whole. Look at what the Bible teaches all of the different subjects that the Bible addresses are contained in this book, what the Bible teaches a fantastic book, secondly, and these are not in, you know, you can read them in the order that you choose. Secondly, I would recommend Church History in Plain Language, the author is Bruce Shelley.

Church History in Plain Language, you know, it's it's a good thing to know a little bit about what's happened in the history of the church, there's a lot of disastrous things that have happened in the history of the church and there are a lot of wonderful things that have happened and we need to know both. I would recommend a book entitled How We Got the Bible. The author is Lightfoot, Neil Lightfoot, how we got the Bible, how many times do you get a question about the Bible and how often do we hear that? Oh, the Bible, you can't trust it.

It's it's not reliable. It was written by men. It's full of mistakes and contradictions and all of this sort of thing.

I'm sure if you converse with people out in the world, you've probably heard those kinds of remarks made. So we need to understand how we did get the Bible so we can answer people when they come up with those kinds of things. Another book I would recommend is a book entitled The Long War Against God, written by Henry Morris, The Long War Against God.

It traces the theory of evolution all throughout history, shows that it did not begin with Darwin, by the way. It goes all the way back to the to the days of the Greek philosophers. The Long War Against God.

A vitally important topic to be familiar with in these days. And finally, the book is called Jerusalem to Erie and Jaya. Jerusalem to Erie and Jaya.

It is a history of missions. And the author is Ruth Tucker. If you take the next year and read through these five books.

Commit yourself to study. I promise you, I guarantee you, you'll be blessed, you'll be strengthened and you will be. Impacted yourself and able to impact others as well, we need to study, we need to praise the Lord, you know, there's something about praise, it's not just.

You know, it's not just coming and singing a few songs before a church service, it's really engaging with the Lord and really lifting our hearts in thanks and praise to him in the scripture, we find praise over and over again, rising up from the people of God and. We need to be a people of praise, not just when we gather together, but in our lives privately as well. And I would encourage you in those private devotional times where you're praying, where you're meditating on the scripture, you know, maybe take that time just to praise the Lord.

Just to lift your voice in praise to him, if you feel better listening to some music that will encourage you in that direction, then do that. We get so much stuff coming in from everywhere else and, you know, we find a lot of times we're going along, we're singing this, that and the other thing. And and that's OK.

We are not saying that we can't listen to anything other than praise music, but. God wants to receive our praise. And the Bible over and over again exhorts us to praise the Lord.

And as we praise the Lord, something happens inside of me and something happens around me and something happens in the spiritual realm, you know, when God is praised, the enemy is confounded. Truly, you find examples of that in scripture. I think of the story of Jehoshaphat there in Second Chronicles, chapter 20.

As he's being invaded by these. Armies, he's completely overwhelmed, he's completely outnumbered and he's terrified, he doesn't know what to do, and as he's seeking God and praying, the Lord begins to speak, the prophet comes to him and gives him a message. And then ultimately the strategy that God gives to Jehoshaphat is when you go out, I want you to go out and I want you to put in front of you the worship leaders, basically.

And I wanted to sing praise the Lord for his mercy endures forever. And that's exactly what they do. And when they do that, God confounds the enemy and gives Israel a great victory.

You know, sometimes we are being attacked and it's coming at us from every side and we how do we deal with this? What do we do? God has given us this wonderful opportunity of praise to praise him privately, to praise him publicly. And then again, we need to fellowship. We need to fellowship, and I think as a body here on Saturday nights, we have, I think, a good view of what that is.

We're coming here not simply to just sit and listen and get up and bolt out of here as quick as we can, but we're realizing the importance of connecting with fellow Christians. We're realizing the importance of encouraging one another with songs and hymns, spiritual songs, giving one another encouragement through the scriptures, sharing with each other what God's doing in our lives, praying for one another. Those are the things that fellowship consists of.

And then serving, doing some service for the Lord. Now, what does that mean? Does it mean you have to come down to the church and volunteer to sweep the parking lot or something? Well, you could if you wanted to, but it doesn't necessarily mean that because the Bible tells us this wonderful thing that whatever we do, if we do it with our whole hearts as to the Lord and not to men, we're actually serving God in that. But I do think that when we talk about service, I think that there is some connection with blessing the body of Christ.

And so I would encourage you, as I did in the past, once again, to be looking for an opportunity that God might give you to be a blessing to the body of Christ, to serve in some capacity. There are many, many,

many things that can be done that need to be done. There are so many different ministries that you could potentially be involved in in some way.

You know, getting involved in serving God, that is one of the most thrilling things in all the world. It's where so many things come together. You meet people, you fellowship with them.

Of course, when you're serving, you need to be strengthened. So you realize, man, I've got to be in the word. I need to pray.

And sometimes what's lacking in our lives is just that area of service. We're not doing anything. Ask the Lord to show you an area of service for him.

And the final thing in exercising ourself toward godliness is we need to be open and available and ready to share Christ with people as the opportunities arise. And I'll tell you this, this is a way to exercise yourself toward godliness. You know, I love to witness not simply for the benefit of the person.

It's kind of selfish, but I mean, I like that part of it, too. But I like what it does for me. It strengthens me in my faith.

It does something in me that results in a blessing. You see, as God pours this stuff into us, he wants us to pour it out to others as well. Now, I know for some people that's much easier to do than for others.

And and I understand personality differences and struggles and shyness and all of that. I understand all of that. But none of that is really an excuse not to do it, you see, because although we're all different and although we have different personalities and although some of us are going to be very comfortable, some of us are going to be less comfortable, you know.

God doesn't call us to do things that we're comfortable with doing. He calls us to do things that he will help us to do because we can't do them ourselves. So here's what you do.

You just say, Lord, help me. Lord, you know, my shyness or, you know, it's difficult for me or and you know what? I believe that you can do this. And I have been doing this lately.

I have just been telling the Lord, OK, Lord, I want to share people. I know you want people to hear about Christ. I know there are lots of people around that not only need to know you, but I know there are people around that you're working on their hearts and and there's a situation in their life.

Maybe there's a crisis or something. And here's my prayer, Lord. I'll make a deal with you if you connect me with those people, if you get.

Us together, I will speak for you. But you got to get us together. I'm not that good at that connection thing.

But, Lord, you just make the connection and if you make the connection, then I'll just open my mouth and then I'll trust you to help me there, too. So, you know, we can do that. And that's what we ought to do.

You see, again, as you've heard before. What God is really looking for is just willingness. God is looking for availability.

When God looks for a person, he doesn't look for the most qualified person in the sense that we would think of. God just looks for the person whose heart is right and who is willing, and that's the one he uses

because he's the one that does the work. So as we make ourselves available, we will find that God is working through us and we will find that we are being exercised toward godliness.

These things are the things that make for spiritual fitness. These are the things that we must do. It's not, hey, you ought to do these things, guys.

You know, it'd be really great if you did them. No, these are the things that we must do if we are going to become strong spiritually. There's no other way to do it.

There's no other way to get there. There's there's no other way to attain. Spiritual maturity and effectiveness, except through these basic fundamental things that we just.

Commit ourselves to and just stick with them, just be faithful to, you know, a person who's in great shape physically now, of course, I'm not speaking from experience here, but I used to be in good shape. So I remember, you know what you do, though, you just do the routine regardless of how you feel, regardless of what the weather's like. All of that is irrelevant.

You just do what you do because that's what you have to do. And and this is true spiritually as well. And you know what happens? And I'm going to close with this.

What happens to us is we start off and whenever you start anything fresh, you kind of have an excitement about it, as you know, you know, you physically say, OK, I'm going to get in shape and you're all excited about it. And that excitement lasts for a few days. And then the reality of getting up early and getting out and doing the roadwork and all of those, you know, whatever you're doing, that sinks in.

And then there's a huge temptation to just slack off a little bit. Let's just back off. Oh, you know, maybe we don't need to be as serious about this.

And and then, you know, as you let that attitude creep in, it doesn't take long before pretty soon you're not doing it at all. The same thing happens spiritually. We get all excited, exercise yourself to godliness, man, that's great.

Yeah, I want to do that. And so here's what I'm going to do. And then we start off and we go for a week.

We might go for two weeks. But then the novelty of it wears off. We don't feel the excitement that we were feeling.

We're not getting the buzz or the thrill out of it. And so we start to slack off. You see, that's what we can't do.

You have to just keep going consistently, steadily. Whether you feel great about it or not, whether you have some great experience or not. You know, sometimes when you're sharing your faith with people, sometimes you feel like heaven opened.

The spirit came down. Man, God was there. Other times.

You feel like. You were completely left alone, abandoned a while back, I had this unbelievable two hour. Witnessing session with this guy was just phenomenal.

And, you know, God just set the whole thing up. It was great. A few days later, I had another opportunity.

It was the exact opposite. It was a total flop. You know, I'm trying to share with the guy and, you know, I just felt like.

I just felt like a dope. And I think he probably was looking at me like, well, what are you trying to say? And I'm not sure what I'm trying to say here, just take this thing and read it and maybe, you know. Oh, God, you know, I just I just totally went blank.

And, you know, when you do that, then you think, well, you're not all that anxious to do it again. But you have to do it again. You have to just press through it.

I remember times years ago, we used to go out and do the street evangelism and we go out sometimes and we just have the most incredible opportunities and other times we go out. It was just the worst experience. But you have to go out again and again and again and not just in this one area.

But I'm saying this with everything, with all of these points, whether it's prayer, meditation, study, praise, fellowship, service, witness, we just have to do it and you got to be consistent at it. So. This is the word.

Exercise yourself toward godliness. Bodily exercise profits a little, but godliness is profitable. For all things, having promised for the life that is all those blessings.

The physical blessings, the emotional blessings, the mental blessings, the relational blessings. The social blessings, they're all their promises for the life that now is and the life that is to come. If we exercise ourselves toward godliness, we'll have an abundant entry into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

Let's pray. Lord, help us to do this. We pray, Lord, we need you.

Fill us, Lord, with your spirit and Lord. May we, by your grace and through your help, exercise ourselves toward godliness. May we, Lord, truly, may we truly spend our time and energy.

In the exercise of keeping ourselves spiritually fit. Show us, Lord, we're all different, we all have different issues and Lord, the things in our life that are. Needing to be eliminated immediately, Lord.

Just make that so clear that there could be no doubt whatsoever, the things that need to be reduced, trimmed back. Lord, give us wisdom regarding that as well and help us to implement. These things, these positive things into our walk consistently.

We pray in Jesus name, amen.

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