

Spiritual Gymnastics

by George Kulp

Godliness is profitable unto all things, having the promise of the life that now is and of that which is to come.

Scripture: Psalm 37:25, Matthew 6:33, Romans 8:38, 1 Corinthians 15:58, 1 Timothy 4:7

Topics: "Godly Living", "Eternal Rewards"

Description

George Kulp preaches on the profitability of godliness, emphasizing the Apostle Paul's dedication to spiritual athleticism and the eternal rewards of living a godly life. He highlights the importance of practical godliness in everyday life, business, politics, and the working environment, using examples of godly individuals who found success and honor through their faith. Kulp stresses that godliness is not only beneficial in this life but also promises rewards in the life to come, where believers will receive eternal recognition and joy in the presence of God.

Transcript

"Exercise thyself unto godliness, for godliness is profitable unto all things, having the promise of the life that now is and of that which is to come."

I Tim. 4:7, 8

The author of our text was a spiritual athlete. He was fully determined, by all the means in his power, to be at his very best for God. Others might put themselves in training for laurel crowns that soon would fade, -- he was in training for a crown of eternal life; he indulged in no shadow battles, fighting as one that beateth the air, but made every effort tell for good. He was running a race with his eye fixed on a definite goal. He had journeys to make, trials to bear, testimonies to raise, controversies to conduct, sorrows to assuage, a great and arduous career and, by the grace of God, he put all his force into it, ran his race of duty with ardor, and fought his fight of faith with resolution. He kept his body under by hard work and he endured "as seeing Him who is invisible." The weapons of his warfare were not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of the strongholds of sin and Satan and, as he writes to his young friend Timothy, he advises him to exercise himself unto godliness. The race course, the Corinthian games, the athlete's struggle profiteth little, but practical godliness is profitable unto all things, for all time and all eternity.

The text is an exhortation unto practical godliness; there is nothing the world needs more and there is nothing attended with greater profit. The Apostle on this question of the profit of godliness is in line with his Lord and Master, who said, "Every one that hath forsaken houses or brethren or sisters or father or mother

or wife or children for My name's sake, shall receive a hundred fold and shall inherit everlasting life."

There is a profit in godliness to the man who will exercise godliness, practice godliness, let the world see godliness. All that the world knows of practical godliness it has to learn from the lives of Christians. Theoretical godliness will do for the schools, but in every-day life, to be real witnesses for Jesus we must let the world see exhibitions of practical Christianity. But some one may say, "If you practice godliness, you will be persecuted, accounted strange, peculiar, fanatical." Yes, that is so, -- the most godly man that ever walked this earth was crucified, another was stoned to death, aye time fails when we attempt to tell of them of whom the world was not worthy, who were beaten with rods, sawn asunder, torn by wild beasts, butchered to make a Roman holiday, and yet the crucified Christ said godliness is profitable a hundred fold here.

The author, Paul the Apostle, says "Godliness is profitable," not will be, -- is now. He writes these words just before he is beheaded by Nero at Rome. He has been stoned and left for dead but he says, "godliness is profitable." He has been scourged and beaten with rods, but he still insists, "godliness is profitable." He is in the Mamertine prison writing to his son in the Gospel before he goes out to die, but he writes after such a life and in view of such a death, "Godliness is profitable unto all things, having promise of this life and the life which is to come."

What is godliness? Well, it is real, vital, practical, experimental, genuine religion. It is Godlikeness; that is, it, Godlikeness, is profitable. Exercise Godlikeness, be like God. The Godlike man is world proof and devil proof. Jesus was offered all the kingdoms of the world to do wrong, but He said, "Get thee behind me, Satan." The devil tempted Him in the wilderness, but found he had run upon Jehovah's buckler and recoiled in dire defeat, and the Christian who is godly, like the God-man, like Him will be more than conqueror. He will be a success for time and for eternity.

Cyrus Field laid the Atlantic Cable, amassed millions, and died broken-hearted. Vanderbilt gathered one hundred millions in bonds and stocks and cash but died saying, "I am poor and needy." A wealthy lawyer in one of our large cities put up in his room these words, "My life has been a failure." Worldliness, like the world, spells failure, but godliness is profitable for two worlds, for time and eternity.

Paul, just before his martyrdom, with the axe and the block in view, writes for the instruction and encouragement of believers in all ages, "Godliness is profitable unto all things, having promise of the life that now is and of that which is to come." Let us test this and see. Does the Word of God bear out this assertion of the Apostle? He says, "having the promise." We will begin with the words of Jesus. Listen, young man, young woman, do you want to be a success forever? Jesus says, "Seek ye first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness and all these things shall be added unto you." What things? The things for which the men of this world are so anxious, food and raiment. Hear the sweet singer of Israel, "I have never seen the righteous forsaken nor his seed begging bread." "Trust in the Lord and do good (exercise godliness) so shalt thou dwell in the land and verily thou shalt be fed." "The Lord God is a sun and shield, the Lord will give grace and glory, no good tiling will He withhold from them that walk uprightly." And "all things work together for good to those who love God." "I am persuaded that neither life, nor death, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature shall be able to separate me from the love of God, which is in Jesus." Yes, Paul, you are right, we have the promise for this life and godliness is profitable now.

Profitable for Business. Sometimes men thoughtlessly remark they can not do business and be Christians, as though godliness was inimical to business. Too many business men are like the Duke of Alva. There had been a very marked eclipse of the moon and someone asked him, "Did you see the eclipse?" "No," answered the Duke, "I have so much to do on earth I have no time to look up." The man who has so much business to do or is in such a business that he can not look up to God will be an eternal failure. You must take in this life and the life to come to know if a man is a success. If a man has good health the first ten years of his life and poor health the last fifty years, you would not call him a "well man" because of his first ten years of health, and the man who is wise only for a time, -- who builds barns and houses and amasses money for this world -- and neglects to lay up treasures in Heaven is pronounced by Infinite Wisdom to be a fool, an eternal failure.

I do not believe that the world regards godliness as a hindrance to business. A young man went to New York City to purchase goods and staying over Sunday went to church. As he walked up the aisle a gentleman, Robert Lennox, invited him into his pew. The next day he went out and purchased his goods, desiring credit. He was asked for references and gave some of his father's friends, when the merchant said, "Hold up, didn't I see you in Robert Lennox' pew at church yesterday?" "Yes, sir, you did." "Well," said he, "all right, any man that Robert Lennox will invite into his pew I will give credit, buy all the goods you want." Godliness is profitable in business. In my native city there are many Quakers, so many in fact that it is called the Quaker City. The vast majority of them are well-to-do. They are strict, plain, godly and I never knew one that was needy. The Quaker business man has few words, no misrepresentation and personally is a safe man to deal with.

Wm. E. Dodge, a godly man of New York City, practiced godliness every day. He was a member of the Union League of that city and withdrew from membership because they sold wine to the members at their banquets. He was a director in three railroad companies and resigned from all three and withdrew his stock because the majority of the Boards voted to run trains on Sundays. Exercising godliness. "Ten per cent and no lies" was the motto of A. T. Stewart of New York. He practiced godliness and prospered. A salesman in his store told a lady customer a piece of calico he sold her was fast colors, would wash, and Stewart overheard him. As soon as the lady had gone he said to the salesman, "What did you misrepresent those goods for? They will not wash. That woman will come back for her money and she ought to have it." And Stewart found godliness profitable for business.

If a man is not a Christian in his business he is not a Christian anywhere. A thief cut a hole in a tent, put his head, arm and hand through. Counsel plead the man wasn't guilty, the man was outside, but the judge instructed the jury that if they found the head, hand and arm guilty they could so declare, -- so they found and head, hand and arm was sentenced to five years in State Prison, -- the rest of the man went along, perforce. Practical godliness gets into the business and runs it. When Jenny Lind was requested to sing on Sunday at the palace of the King of Sweden on a great occasion, she refused. The King called on her and, as her sovereign, commanded her to sing, but she said, "There is a higher King, sir, to whom I owe my allegiance." Exercising Godlikeness.

Godliness is profitable to the workingman, and every man can exercise godliness in his work. Even a converted Chinaman understood that and when a lady, who had had a great deal of trouble with domestics, called on him and was asking him questions, "Do you drink whiskey?" "No, I Clistian man." "Do you play cards?" "No, I Clistian man." He was engaged, and proved to be a capable servant. By and by the lady gave a bridge party, with wine accompaniments. The Chinaman did his part acceptably, but the next morning he appeared before his mistress. "I want quit," he said. "Why? What is the matter?" "I

Christian man. I told you so before; no heathen; no workee for 'Melican heathen." Exercising godliness in an humble position.

Practical godliness is profitable everywhere, profitable in politics. An infidel can not be elected President of these United States nor to any public office, if it is known. The leading candidates for President are nominal Christians. Robert Ingersoll was a candidate for the nomination for Governor of Illinois but the Sunday school sentiment in the State defeated him. Mr. Ingersoll made a speech in the National Convention for Mr. Blaine and ruined Mr. Blaine's chances. He made a speech in favor of Judge Gresham some years later and ruined Mr. Gresham's. This doughty warrior was riding in a train and discanting upon his favorite theme, the follies of the Christian religion, when he asked his opponent, "What did Christianity ever do?" A lady overheard the question and quickly replied, "It prevented Robert Ingersoll from being Governor of Illinois." He was silent for the remainder of his journey and the rebuke, so well deserved, went home.

Joseph was a godly man and so necessary to Egypt's king that he gave him the second place in the kingdom. Daniel's godliness was the means of placing in his hands the destinies of the Medo-Persian kingdom. The exercise of godliness would clear the political atmosphere, drive out the saloon, exalt the nation and hasten the coming of Jesus.

Hypocrites prove that godliness is profitable. Men always counterfeit that which is valuable. You never heard of men counterfeiting a piece of brown paper. It is always a bank note, and when hypocrites imitate godliness they are commending the real thing.

Godliness is profitable for the life to come. What else is? Saladin, the mighty Saracen conqueror, on his death bed said to one of his soldiers, "Take my shroud, place it on a spear, carry it through the street and proclaim, . 'This is all that is left of the mighty Saladin.'" Alexander the Great gave orders that at his burial his hands should be exposed to public view that all men might see that the mightiest of men could take nothing with him when called away by death. Some one told Erskine that a certain man dying left one million dollars, and he replied, "That is a poor capital to begin the next world with." Another speaking of a man who had just died, asked, "How much did he leave?" and was told "He left it all." But godliness is profitable "to the life to come." Come, go with me to the room of a dying Christian. Listen to him, "precious, precious, precious Jesus." Here is an old philosopher, he, too, is dying. Years ago a friend interested in him said, "Give yourself to God. I'll give you my bond for ten thousand dollars to indemnify you if you ever loose anything by it," and now after all the years death has come and the old philosopher dying, says to his friend, "Take your bond. I've lost nothing. Salvation is the best investment I ever made." When Joseph Camp was dying in Philadelphia he said to his old-time friend, Joseph Kulp, "Think of it, straight from this bed to glory. How old are you Joseph?" "Eighty years," was the reply. "Oh, you will come soon, not much longer and we will all be home."

Profitable for the life to come. This is a good world, many good things here. I have no sympathy with grumblers, but oh! what a grand world hereafter. Sometimes our souls get on fire for Heaven. When the good Lord wonderfully blesses us here, fills these earthen vessels till they run over, we sing, "Oh, what must it be to be there?" In 1879 when the American Board met there were twenty missionaries present and one time during the meeting these twenty men, each in the language in which he was accustomed to labor, sang "Praise God from whom all blessings flow" and a vast amount of enthusiasm was aroused among the people listening to the doxology but oh! how utterly insignificant is such a chorus compared to the mighty anthem that shall be sung by and by when the redeemed millions out of every kindred and tribe

and tongue on the whole earth shall sing the new song, "Unto Him who hath redeemed us and washed us from our sins in His own blood." Aye, there will be scenes there that will astonish the angels.

It is said that the most thrilling moment in the life of John Howard Payne was the night of December 17, 1850, when Jenny Lind sang the song of which Payne was the author, "Home Sweet Home." Daniel Webster, Henry Clay, General Scott and Payne were there. Jenny Lind sang the "Flute Song" and then the "Bird Song" and then her Greeting to America. All these were applauded to the full capacity of a generous and enthusiastic audience, but when the nightingale answered the encore by turning in the direction of John Howard Payne and giving "Home, Home, sweet, sweet Home" with all the purity, tenderness and simplicity befitting the air and the song the audience was off its feet and arose as one man, shouted as if they were mad and it seemed as though there would be no end to the uproar. What a recognition that was for John Howard Payne.

But oh, ye godly men and women, there is another recognition before which even that pales into insignificance. It is in the life to come. The graves give up their dead and the world assembles before Him that sitteth on the throne. Out from the throng of the redeemed the Lord of Life and Glory calls one name. It may be one of the little ones, one of God's saints who was poor on earth, some one like Hannington martyred in the wilds of Africa, some old slave from southern cabins, some forgotten wife or neglected mother from the almshouse, and as she comes forth the King arises and takes her by the hands and says unto her in the presence of the angels from the eternities, "Ye confessed Me on earth, ye wore My name, carried My cross, suffered for Me, and now in the presence of angels and men I call thee Mine." Then I think the redeemed will cry out:

"Angels, assist our mighty joys,

Strike all your harps of gold;

But when you raise your highest notes,

His love can ne'er be told."

And the universal verdict from angels and men will then be, "Godliness is profitable unto all things, having the promise of the life that now is and of that which is to come."

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