CHARACTERISTIC SIX: GODLINESS

Lesson 14: Staying Godly in a Godless Culture?

2 Peter 1:6 "…to perseverance, godliness,…"

Power, pride, materialism, lust, pornography, illicit sex, drugs, alcohol, these are just a few things that the enemy throws at us every day; in short, godlessness pervades our society and the world. No matter where you turn, there is opportunity to sin and make ungodly decisions. As we mentioned in our last lesson, the definition of godliness is "a spirit of reverence and deference to God in all matters."[1] But how do we, as men of faith and followers of Christ, maintain godliness in a godless culture?

Really, this is not a new question, it's one that all believers have faced even in the early church. They were challenged by many around them who worshipped false gods and lived in immorality. The believers in the Corinthian Church lived in a city that had temples built to worship Poseidon, Apollo, Aphrodite and more. They had to guard themselves from falling into the same false teachings and perverseness as those around. It was for this reason that the Apostle Paul wrote to them in 1 Corinthians, bringing encouragement, correction and practical wisdom on how to continue to contend for the faith. Because of this, they found power by the Holy Spirit to live righteous and holy lives regardless.

I believe the same is true for us today. We all have flesh that wants its own way, just as everyone has since the fall in the Garden. Our natural desires are to fulfill the lust of the flesh and when I say "lust", I am not just speaking of sexual desires, but any desire that is uncontrolled and contrary to God's Word. James says this about lust in James 1:12-15:

> Blessed is the man who endures temptation; for when he has been approved, he will receive the crown of life which the Lord has promised to those who love Him. Let no one say when he is tempted, "I am tempted by God"; for God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does He Himself tempt anyone. But each one is tempted when he is drawn away by his own desires and enticed. Then, when desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, brings forth death.[1]

He says, "Blessed is the man who *endures* temptation;" We are all tempted, even Jesus was, yet He *endured* it by resisting His flesh. The problem with our flesh is that it's never satisfied. You can see one pornographic image and your flesh wants more, you have

[1] *The New King James Version* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1982), Ja 1:12-15. (NKJV).

sex for the first time and it's a never-ending quest to satisfy your flesh and left uncontrolled can lead to perversion and even adultery. You get that one materialistic thing that you've always wanted and before long there is something else you want. It's a never-ending cycle. These things, sexual desires, certain needs or even wants are not in and of themselves wrong, God created us with those desires, the problem is when we continually feed our flesh without having self-control is that it can lead to unwise and godless decisions.

If you haven't noticed yet, throughout this "Be A Man" Bible study series, none of these characteristics happen in a vacuum, they're intertwined. For example, I cannot have godliness without having self-control and I cannot have self-control without the knowledge to know what to have self-control over. In essence, godliness is taking what we have learned through reading, studying and hearing God's Word, then applying faith, self-control and perseverance to it by walking it out in our personal lives by the choices we make every day. In other words, making right choices based upon God's Word that affects our actions. It does us no good, to read, study or hear the Bible preached, but not follow it up with our works. As we've read before, James says in James 1:22-25:

> But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves. For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man observing his natural face in a mirror; for he observes himself, goes away, and immediately forgets what kind of man he was. 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.[2]

To be clear, our works don't save us, only Jesus' blood can, but when you are saved your desire should be to do good works and follow God's Word. The Apostle Paul, when writing to Timothy in 1 Timothy 6:11-12 says,

> But you, O man of God, flee these things and pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, gentleness. Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life, to which you were also called and have confessed the good confession in the presence of many witnesses.[3]

Within the context of this passage, Paul is addressing materialism and greed. Paul uses several verbs or actions (works) he tells Timothy to do to overcome greed and its power. They are– flee, pursue, fight, lay hold on. He says,

- *Flee* the ungodly things.
- *Pursue* the godly things (righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, and gentleness).
- *Fight* the good fight of faith.
- *Lay hold of* eternal life.

This is true godliness, “giving reverence and deference to God”–not our flesh, “in all matters” and it’s the only way that, we as men of God can truly stay godly in a godless culture.

Lesson 14 Questions

1. We obviously live in a culture that is directly opposed to the standards that God gives us in His Word, how can we, as men of God, lead our families in godliness?

2. How does sin (of any kind) begin in our lives?

3. How do we gain and maintain the power to “endure” temptation?

4. Although our works can’t save us, only Christ’s blood can, why are works important in our lives?

[1] Charles F. Pfeiffer and Everett Falconer Harrison, eds., *The Wycliffe Bible Commentary: New Testament* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1962), 2 Pe 1:5.

[2] Jas 1:22–25. (NKJV).

[3] 1 Tim 6:11-12, (NKJV).