

## **Stronger in Godliness**

2 Peter 1:3-11

Series “Stronger”

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We are in week three of our *Stronger* series. We’re talking in this summer series about what it takes to grow stronger spiritually, with the goal being that by the end of the summer our church is FULL of buff...ripped Christians.

We’re getting in the gym this summer! And these workouts each weekend are meant to help you personally during the week as you lift and workout on your own. Just going to the gym once a week won’t do it...you have to take what we’re talking about here and put it into practice (i.e. exercise/weight train) during the week.

The title of the message today is: **Stronger in Godliness**

Let’s look at our text together. **2 Peter 1:3-11 – “His divine power has granted to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of him who called us to his own glory and excellence,<sup>4</sup> by which he has granted to us his precious and very great promises, so that through them you may become partakers of the divine nature, having escaped from the corruption that is in the world because of sinful desire. <sup>5</sup> For this very reason, make every effort to supplement your faith with virtue, and virtue with knowledge, <sup>6</sup> and knowledge with self-control, and self-control with steadfastness, and steadfastness with godliness,<sup>7</sup> and godliness with brotherly affection, and brotherly affection with love. <sup>8</sup> For if these qualities are yours and are increasing, they keep you from being ineffective or unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. <sup>9</sup> For whoever lacks these qualities is so nearsighted that he is blind, having forgotten that he was cleansed from his former sins. <sup>10</sup> Therefore, brothers, be all the more diligent to confirm your calling and election, for if you practice these qualities, you will never fall. <sup>11</sup> For in this way there will be richly provided for you an entrance into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.”**

Now, by way of review, let’s just look at where we have been up to this point and remind ourselves of several truths before jumping into the subject of godliness today.

We said in week one...looking at this passage of scripture that:

### **1. God wants us to grow stronger spiritually**

The whole of scripture teaches this. We looked at many of them in week one underscoring this reality. Go back and listen if you missed that message or miss any of these messages for that matter!

We enter into a relationship with Christ by faith and the goal from that point on is what theologians call “progressive sanctification” – we are to be made more and more like Christ as we walk with him each day.

We are to grow up...develop...mature...we are to grow strong spiritually. God gives us his Holy Spirit at salvation that helps in this.

A second truth we talked about is the fact that:

## 2. God has given us everything we need to grow stronger spiritually

The scripture says, God has given us everything we need (v. 1) to live a life of godliness. We have divine power – the Holy Spirit at work in us! We have divine promises (v. 4) the word of God – Peter calls them “precious promises”.

When you receive and walk in God’s divine power and give yourself to knowing and understanding and walking in his divine promises, you become a divine partaker (v. 4b) – saying “no” to sin and yes to the work of God in your life, and it’s in this that you become to be more and more like God.

In order for this to happen though, the third truth we talked about:

## 3. We have a responsibility to do what it takes to grow stronger spiritually

Peter said WE are to “strive” ...we are to make “every effort” ...WE are to be zealous about growing in our faith and getting stronger spiritually.

It’s not just going to happen! WE play a part in our sanctification! WE have a responsibility to cooperate with the Holy Spirit in his work in our lives.

**Illus. Weights** - Remember, we took weights like these! We can look at them...we can ride around with them...we can polish them and keep them clean, BUT until we start lifting them, we will NEVER get stronger!

What’s true in the physical realm, is true in the spiritual realm. It takes effort to grow stronger spiritually...to add to our faith virtue...and knowledge as Mark preached about last week.

This week the subject we are talking about is, godliness.

Now, these traits that Peter tells us to add to our faith, don’t see them as like pearls on a necklace or as steps that come one after the other. These are cyclical...we’re working on them all the time!

NONE of us have arrived. We’ll be stronger in some areas than others – but these qualities...these supplements to our faith should be increasing and as Peter writes in (v. 8), and as they increase and as we get stronger, we will be the exact opposite of ineffective and unproductive.

So, let’s begin by talking about godliness. Let’s first define it. Then, we’ll talk about how to develop it. And then we’ll close with some practical application as to how it’s demonstrated in two key areas of our life.

First, let’s define godliness. The word is used some 15x in the New Testament. *Vine’s Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words* defines godliness like this:

**Godliness – to be devout, denotes that piety which, characterized by a Godward attitude, does that which is well-pleasing to Him.”**

Someone said that godliness is “devotion in action”. Chuck Swindoll defines it in his commentary as an “authentic piety”. It’s a heart-level devotion that works itself out in daily life.

**Illus. Jerry Bridges** (college story) – *The Pursuit of Holiness* (entire book is highlighted). He also has a book called, *The Practice of Godliness*.

I took it off the shelf this week and began to read through it again...so good, and I would encourage anyone that wants to grow in this area to grab this book (*The Practice of Godliness*).

Bridges defines godliness...he kind of sums up all the definitions and encapsulates them in one, central truth. He defines discipleship as “devotion to God which results in a life that is pleasing to him”.

Bridges and his thoughts and teachings on godliness was heavily influenced by a man by the name of William Law who lived in England during the late 1600, early 1700-time frame.

Speaking of England, some of our students are across the pond on mission in England right now. I'll be heading over there next week. One of the things I love most about going to the UK is the rich history of faith and missions that have come from there.

Last summer, I was able to preach in the great missionary, William Carey's Church in Moulton. I went to St. Paul's Church in Olney where John Newton (author of Amazing Grace) served and is buried. A couple of years ago, I went to Metropolitan Tabernacle where the prince of preachers, Charles Spurgeon preached...went to his gravesite as well.

Just travel with me to England, we will go see where all the dead preachers are buried! (family loves this app: Find a grave – I digress!)

Well, William Law...going to try to go by his burial place this next trip. He was a priest in the church in England and President of Emmanuel College in Cambridge, but lost his position when he refused to swear an oath to the king.

He was a mystic of sorts – deeply spiritual and his life and teachings specifically his book, *A Serious Call to a Devout and Holy Life* heavily influenced people like the Wesley's, and Whitefield and William Wilberforce.

The book is a classic on this whole idea of what godliness is. Listen to what he writes...Bridges echoes this in his book – this is all about defining godliness.

Here is what Law writes: **“Devotion signifies a life given, or devoted to God. He therefore is the devout (godly) man, who lives no longer to his own will, or the way and spirit of the world, but to the sole will of God, who considers God in everything, who serves God in everything, who makes all the parts of his common life, parts of piety, by doing everything in the name of God, and under such rules as are conformable to his Glory.”**

To Law, this was the epitome of godliness. It was Christian character that flows through the entire being of an individual and is ultimately expressed through every motive and in every action of the individual.

So, how about it? We've defined godliness – it's devotion to God in action...it's thinking AND living in a way that is well-pleasing to God.

We've defined godliness...the question is, does it define you?

It should! As Peter writes, this is something we add to our faith and it should be ever increasing. How does this happen though? How can we increase godliness in our life?

Well, let's look at how it's developed. Like a physical muscle, the discipline of godliness is developed...it can grow and strengthen.

We're told in the scripture that we are to TRAIN ourselves for godliness.

Listen to **1 Tim. 4:7-8** – **“Have nothing to do with irreverent, silly myths. Rather train yourself for godliness; <sup>8</sup> for while bodily training is of some value, godliness is of value in every way, as it holds promise for the present life and also for the life to come.”**

That word, “train” there, it's where we get our English word, “gym” from! It's just what we're talking about with the weights here! To be godly, we have to get in the gym and sweat this thing out...being godly is going to take some work!

Kent Hughes wrote a great book called, *The Disciplines of a Godly Man*. Our young adult pastor, Emory Cothen was taking a group of us through it. Listen to what he writes in this book as it relates working and sweating it (i.e., godliness – adding to our faith...supplementing our faith) out.

**Kent Hughes – “No discipline no discipleship! No sweat no sainthood!”**

So, let's get really practical here and talk about how we can develop godliness in our life. What can we do to TRAIN ourselves for godliness?

I'm going to give you several pointers using the word TRAIN, and this will be the “meat of the sermon” today.

## **T - TIME**

Godliness will not happen overnight. It takes time. It takes time in God's Word. If you remember from week one, I told you that sanctification involves the mind, the heart and the will.

It takes time with God...time with his people...time in his Word to remove old ways of thinking and for our brains to be re-wired by God. This doesn't happen overnight!

It takes time in retraining our mind. It takes time to reshape our affections and passions. It takes time to strengthen our resolve and will so that we can say, “no” to the lusts of the flesh, and say, “yes” to cooperating with the work of the Holy Spirit in our lives.

It's Father's Day...dads, we know that our kids spell love – T.I.M.E. – It's the same with the Lord. We show our love and devotion to him when we give him our time.

I really want to encourage you that if you want to grow in godliness, it begins by spending time with him!

Wake up early and read his word. Get a notebook and write down what you are reading. Write out your prayers so that your mind stays focused!

Mark's gospel tells us (Mark 1:35) that Jesus would get up early to pray and spend time with his Father. If Jesus needed time with his Father, we certainly do.

Training yourself for godliness will take time. Just like an athlete train for an event or a musician train for a concert...they may be naturally gifted, but they don't get where they need to be over night. They train...they spend time sharpening their skills and talents.

The psalmist said in (Psalm 1) I meditate on the scripture day and night...he was a work in progress, and so too are we. If we want to be godly, it will take time...justification is a one-time event, sanctification is process that takes time.

## **R – Responsibility**

Look, no one can make you godly. Your spouse can't do it for you...your parents can't do it for you...your friends can't do it for you.

As a believer in Jesus, we each have a responsibility to grow in godliness. When we stand before God at the end of time and give an account for our lives, which we all will do, there will be no pointing fingers or making excuses...it's why we call our relationship with the Lord a personal relationship.

This is on YOU! Peter tells these believers to strive...to make every effort – we've talked about this. It's the third point we made in our introduction today looking back at the start of this series:

### **We have a responsibility to do what it takes to grow stronger spiritually**

**Illus. Farmer and land** – “should have seen it when God had it to himself!”

Listen, if you don't know how to have a quiet time – ask someone! If you don't know how to lead your family – ask someone! This is the importance of small groups and discipleship relationships, and THIS is why the church is here!

**Illus. VBS – baptism** – talking with the parents – the child is not to be leading the way in the home spiritually! Dads, let's go...you raise the spiritual temperature in your home and just watch what happens to your family.

Now, fair warning, the Devil will NOT like it...he will throw the kitchen sink at you to prevent growth or discourage you in this, but this is what we've been called to!

Take some responsibility, step up and get after it. This leads to the “A” in TRAIN:

## **A – Action**

Recall one of the short working definitions of “godliness”. It's devotion in ACTION. Godliness at the end of the day can only be ascribed to someone who is godly in their actions!

We see someone that is holy...see someone that seeks after the Lord...see someone that let's their "yes be yes and their no be no" ...who keeps a commitment even when it costs. We see that person in action – they are living out their devotion to Christ in their daily life and we say, "that's a godly person".

What about you? Are you living out your devotion to Christ? Are you outwardly showing and revealing to the world who you serve inwardly? That's godliness.

I could give you so many verses to consider to go along with what we're talking about there. James said in (James 2:17) "faith without works is DEAD."

**1 John 3:18 – "Little children, let us not love in word or talk but in deed and in truth."**

Godliness is only godliness IF it's expressed in action. When I think about it, the people I would describe as godly are ALL people that had an intimate walk with Jesus that overflowed into how they lived their lives...how they treated others.

Godliness is an embodied righteousness. It's living out (ACTION) what we say we believe.

**Illus. John and Aaron arguing over pancakes** – "What would Jesus do?" – You be Jesus!  
Godliness is being Jesus.

## **I – Intentionality**

You've heard this before, right? That if you aim for nothing, you'll hit it every time?  
Spiritual growth...adding to your faith, godliness will involve you getting very intentional with how, where and who you spend your time with!

**1 Cor. 9:24-27 – "Do you not know that in a race all the runners run, but only one receives the prize? So run that you may obtain it. <sup>25</sup> Every athlete exercises self-control in all things. They do it to receive a perishable wreath, but we an imperishable. <sup>26</sup> So I do not run aimlessly; I do not box as one beating the air. <sup>27</sup> But I discipline my body and keep it under control, lest after preaching to others I myself should be disqualified."**

Look, I'm getting ready to go to England next week, and when Debbie comes over to join me, we will have a plan for the week...it will be detailed!

We won't go over there and just half-hazardly decide what we're going to do the day of – it doesn't work that way. We have to be intentional with our plans.

Well, if this is important to do for something as simple as travel and vacation, how much more important is it when it comes to living a godly life!

And listen...just a little motivation for being intentional as it relates to spiritually getting stronger and growing in godliness: our future blessing and reward depends on it!

**This is 2 Peter 1:11 – "For in this way there will be richly provided for you an entrance into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ."**

“Richly provided for” – I don’t know all that this entails, but as I’ve said before, you don’t hear, “Well done thy good and faithful servant” just for dying! Rewards in the kingdom are given based on the stewardship of our lives here on earth.

If we don’t get intentional now in how we live and steward all that God has given us (the blessing and the influence) we will forfeit some of the blessing that would have been ours in eternity.

What I’m trying to say is don’t live a half-hazard, *laisse-faire* kind of life! Get intentional about growing in godliness.

- Decide what books you are going to read to grow and develop this year (people you meet, books you read, places you travel)
- Set the alarm and get up and do your quiet time – have a place and a time and program and if you don’t know, I’ll be in the lobby after the service is over, come ask me! (my plan)
- Get an accountability partner to hold your feet to the fire as it relates to the spiritual disciplines. (half-marathon -?’s on accountability!)
- Set your giving plan – think about it...don’t wait to you feel like it, because you’ll never feel like it!
- Find a place of service and commit to it!

I’m calling you to think on these things...get intentional about how you are going to grow in godliness because it won’t just happen!

And listen to this...talking about getting intentional with growing in godliness, we also have to get intentional about renouncing ungodliness.

**Titus 2:11-13 – “For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation for all people,<sup>12</sup> training us to renounce ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright, and godly lives in the present age, <sup>13</sup> waiting for our blessed hope, the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ...”**

See, it’s God’s grace that trains us for godliness AND God’s grace that trains us to renounce ungodliness. God’s grace leads to freedom, but true freedom is being able to say “no” to the lusts of the flesh and putting off the old self!

This leads to the final letter in TRAIN.

## **N – Non-negotiables**

You want to be godly? It involves saying “yes” to things and it involves saying “no” to some things.

For a believer, you ought to have some non-negotiables in your life. If you are married, a non-negotiable would be to try and never be alone with someone of the opposite sex that is not your spouse...and if you are alone with them, it’s not for long!

If you have been addicted or abused alcohol in the past, a non-negotiable would be to have one drink – this isn't legalism, this is wisdom!

Remember, our study in Daniel from last year? He resolved (Daniel 1:8 – not to defile himself) ...he made a decision prior to having to make a decision that he wasn't going to do something that would have been against his conscious...against his God!

Christian, there should be some non-negotiables in your life after you come to Christ.

- You're not going to go to those places that could enable bad decisions that you'll ultimately regret...
- You're going to say "no" to whatever it is that causes your mind to wander where it shouldn't – it might not be a problem for anyone else, but it's a non-negotiable for you...
- A non-negotiable is time with Jesus in his Word, going to church, attending a life group – it's not up for debate...this is what we do!

This is what it means to train ourselves for godliness AND train ourselves to renounce ungodliness. It's not going to be easy, but tell me what in life is worth it that comes easy!

We have defined godliness...we've talked about what it means to develop godliness.

Now, I want us to close by giving some application to two places in our life we can demonstrate godliness. Because it's Father's Day, my application will be directed toward the men, although ladies it certainly applies to you as well.

## **1. Home**

Dads, the goal of being a father, is not giving your kids everything, you didn't have. The goal is for your kids to look at you one day and say I know what it means to be godly because I grew up in my dad's home.

- I saw him reading his Bible. I saw him selflessly loving my mom...
- I saw him say "no" to that promotion at work because it would have taken him away from the home more...
- I saw him give sacrificially when he didn't have a job...
- I saw him serve and give of his time...

"Dad, was a man that exhibited devotion in action...he was godly" and listen to me, Dads (and moms) – it's NEVER too late to start the journey toward godliness! Do it today!

? – Are you demonstrating godliness in the home?

The second area where we can demonstrate godliness and it really make a difference is:

## **2. Work**



This is where you will interact with people who don't have a relationship with Christ.

If they just watched your work ethic...heard you talk around the proverbial water cooler...could see your expense report...observed you when there was tension or a tough decision that had to be made, would they know or have any perception that you are different from someone who doesn't know Jesus?

In other words, do your actions at work demonstrate an authentic relationship with Christ? Godliness doesn't stay confined to the house or the church...it influences every area of your life and should be easily observed via your character and actions at work.

? – Are you demonstrating godliness in the workplace?

**Illus. Church envelope** – I close with this. (6<sup>th</sup> grade) If you were arrested for being a Christian, would they have enough evidence to convict you?

Let's ask it this way: If you were arrested for being godly, would there be enough evidence in your home or at your workplace to convict you?

I say we live our lives in such a way that if we were arrested for being godly, there would be enough evidence in our life that they'd throw the book at us!

Let's be stronger in godliness.

Will you pray with me?

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*Please Note: This document is not meant to be a published, cited, annotated research paper. It is simply a transcript of a spoken message, provided as a resource. Many commentaries, articles, and other sermon helps were likely studied and contributed to the forming of this message.*