

Men's Bible Study Godliness Review

Before we began the next section in our study let's do a major review starting with the impetus for this whole study in 1 Tim 4:7 and the command to "train yourself to godliness." We have learned in the past that the Greek word for "train" means "to control oneself by or thorough discipline—'to discipline oneself, to keep oneself disciplined" and that this Greek word (γυμνάζω), is where we get the word "gymnasium." The divine call is to discipline ourselves to "godliness" (εὐσέβειαν) which means "awesome respect accorded to God." Thus, godliness is really an internal attitude of God centeredness that always leads to external acts of Christ likeness!

Ultimately, we must never forget that "godliness" is always a sovereign, God given gift of the gospel and never simply the work of man's will power, passionate pursuit, or personal desires. Paul explains clearly in many different Scriptures that God saves man to make them holy (Eph 1:4), sanctify them (2 Thess 2:13), present them blameless (Col 1:21), train them to renounce ungodliness, live godly (Titus 2:11-14), transform them into the image of Christ (2 Cor 3:18), conform them into the character of Christ (Rom 8:28-29), and all of this is from God (1 Cor 1:30), who is sovereignly working in and through the believer's pursuit of holiness (Phil 2:12-13; Heb 12:14; 2 Pet 3:11)! One must never forget that the holiness we rightfully and passionately pursue (Rom 6:19) is ultimately God given (Jn 17:17) both positional (1 Cor 6:11; Heb 10:10; 1 Pet 2:9) being divinely declared by God at the moment of salvation (Eph 1:1; Phil 1:1; Col 1:1... "saints") and personally progressive (Phil 2:12-13; Eph 4:20-24; 1 Thess 4:3-8; Heb 10:14; 2 Pet 1:3-11) through the process of training ourselves to godliness (1 Tim 4:7) which God uses to bring about our sanctification (Eph 5:26; 1 Thess 5:23)! Actively pursuing holiness in submitting to Scripture by the sovereign and empowering grace of God is God's ultimate method for the believer's maturation.

Now, as we have been learning, one of the major perils in pursuing godliness is focusing solely on a list of attributes (Gal 5:22-23) apart from the person and work of Christ (Gal 5:24)! This happens when we think of training ourselves to godliness simply in terms of character traits like kindness, gentleness, meekness, joy, love, self-control and the list goes on. However, as we have been learning this perspective is incomplete at best and often misleading because it seeks to strengthen faith in Christ by adjusting the fruit of man. To say it another way, we often seek to work on the inner man by simply changing or readjusting the behaviors of the outer man. Sadly, this endeavor is not only unbiblical but ultimately unproductive in bringing real and lasting change that honors God (Col 2:23)! If you have any doubts about this danger of having acts that look like godliness while having a heart of wickedness, consider these examples (1 Sam 15:1-35; Isa 1:10-20; Mt 15:7-9; 2 Tim 3:5; Titus 1:16; Rev 3:1-22).

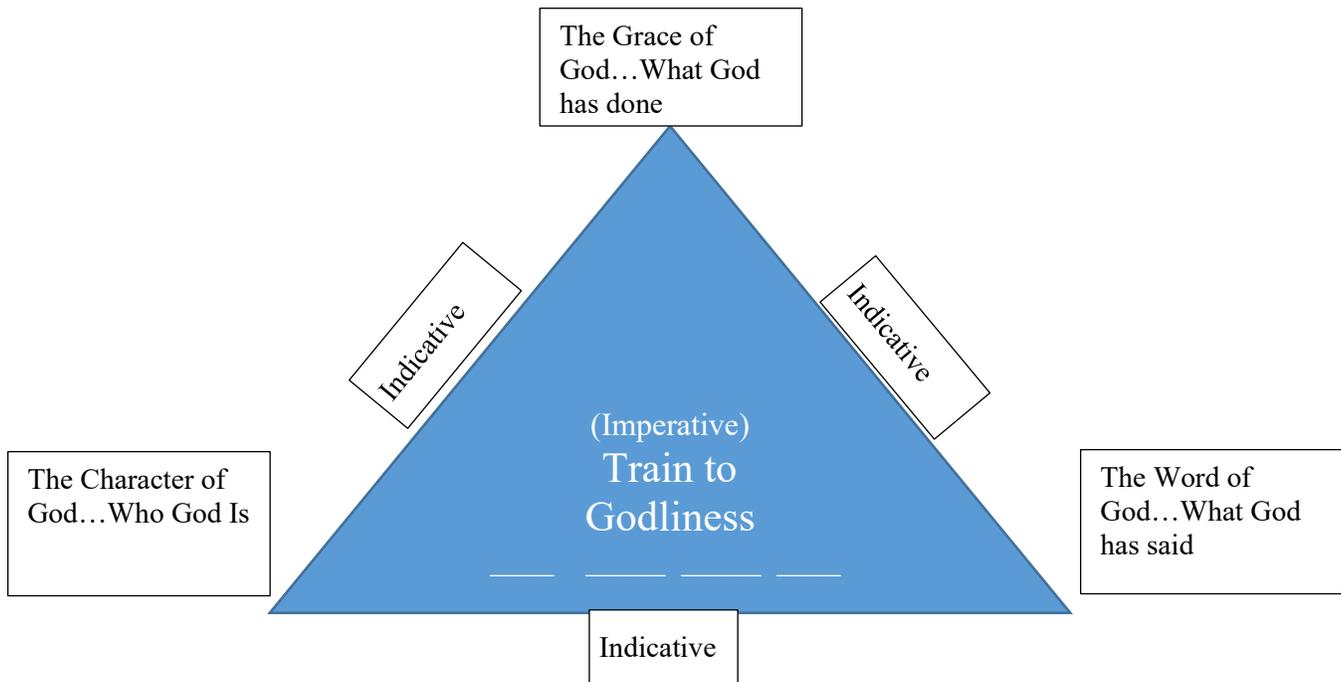
So, in this long and slow ☺ Men's Bible study we have learned that training ourselves to godliness must never begin with pursuing a list but that godliness always begins with (1) **what God has said through His Word** (Ps 1:1-6; 19:7-11; 119: 9, 11; Jn 17:17; 2 Tim 3:15-16; Titus 1:1; 1 Pet 1:22-23; 2 Pet 1:3-4)! It is always God's Word that saves (Rom 10:17), shapes (Heb 4:12), and sanctifies God's man (Jn 17:17; 1 Thess 4:1-8)! Therefore, it is a pernicious lie of the

devil to think that you will ever walk in holiness if you are never submitting your heart to the Scriptures (Js 1:19-25).

However, training ourselves to godliness is also driven by (2) **Who God is in His character** (Ex 20:18-21; Lev 11:44; Ps 76; 130:3-4; Prov 1:7; Ecc 12:12-13; Isa 6:1-7; Mt 5:48; 2 Cor 5:9-11; 2 Cor 7:1; Col 1:15-20; Heb 12:28-29; 1 Pet 1:15-16). We ultimately go to God's Word that we might hear from (2 Tim 3:15-16; Ps 19:7-11), know (2 Pet 1:16-21; Ps 119:12-16), and follow Him (Ps 86:11; 119:33-40). It is always God's character that drives the believers conduct!

Moreover, we are learning that training ourselves to godliness is also a result of (3) **what God has done, is doing and will do through Christ** (Rom 3:21-26; 5:1-11; 6:1-14; 8:18-39; Eph 2:1-10; Col 1:13-23; 2:9-15; 3:1-4; 1 Cor 1:30-31; 2 Cor 5:14-15; Titus 2:11-14; 3:4-7; Heb 12:1-2; 1 Pet 1:3-9; 2:22-25)! Remember, it is the divine indicatives of grace that motivate our submission to the divine imperatives for holiness (Col 1-2 feed Col 3-4 cf. Rom 12:1-2; 2 Cor 7:1)! Therefore, the cross of Christ (2 Cor 5:14-15) always drives my ongoing joy filled pursuit of Christ which brings great delight amidst the difficult duty of training myself to godliness (Phil 3:7-16)!

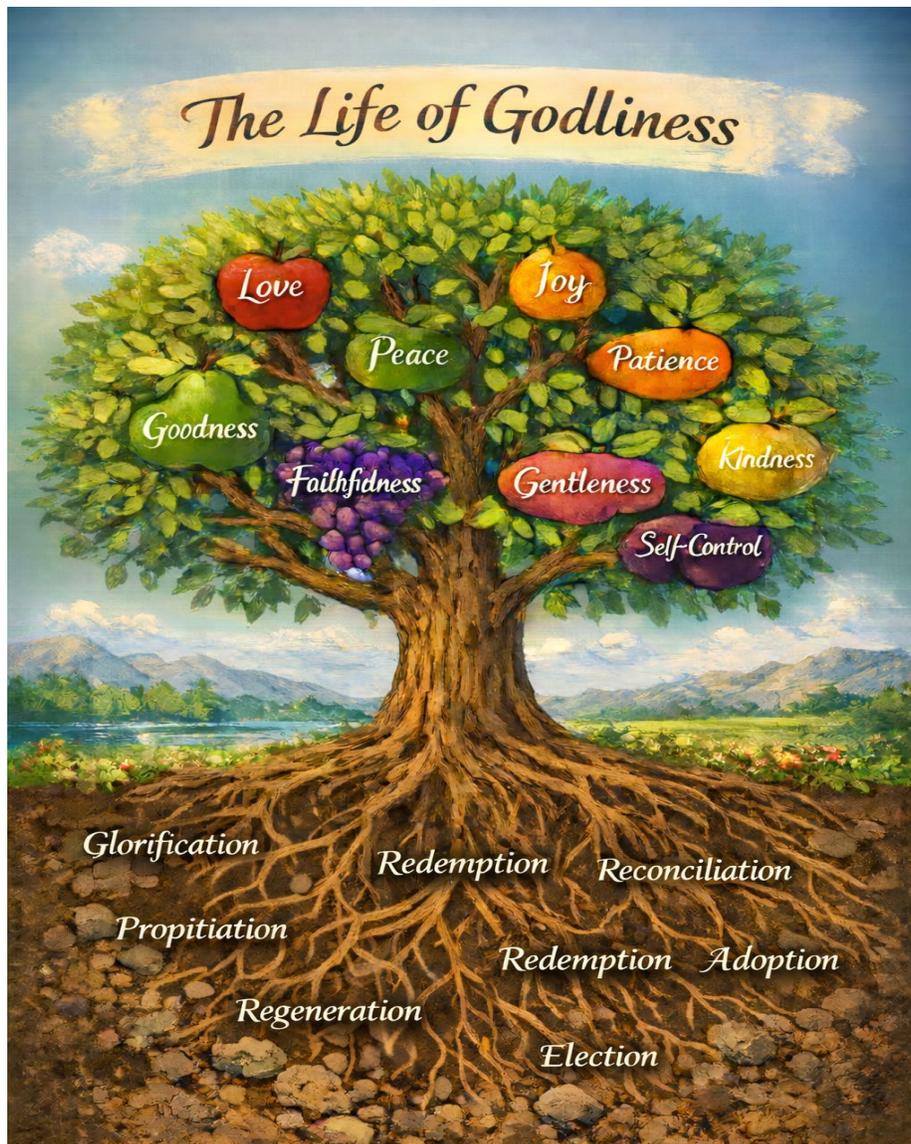
This whole framework (the triangle illustration of godliness below) helps us see how godliness is really a Trinitarian work in what God has said through His perfect Word (God the Spirit), who God is in His perfect character (God the Father), what God has done through His perfect sacrifice (God the Son)! Notice how before we ever consider what we must rightfully do, pursue holiness, we focus on the sovereign Word, sufficient Person, and saving work of God! This always protects us from going in the wrong direction, man centered "godliness", while actively propelling us in the right direction, God centered godliness!



Godliness is devotion in action!
Duty + Delight = Devotion

If all of that helps us understand where godliness comes from and what ultimately drives it than where do we look to learn how to actually “train ourselves to godliness”? If 1 Tim 4:7 is the command than how do I rightfully fulfill that command without falling prey to focusing on a list of attributes? 2 Peter 3:18 is a helpful corollary here as we always rightfully train ourselves to godliness by growing in the grace and knowledge of the Lord Christ! Growing in the grace of Christ is the fruit of focusing on what God has done, is doing and will do through the gospel!

Of course, one of the greatest ways to grow in Christ is by saturating your heart and life in God’s amazing grace given in salvation. These become the roots of your life in Christ (Col 2:6-7) being sovereignly planted and nurtured by God Himself through His Word as He grows us to fear and obey Him with joy (Phil 2:12-13). Therefore, before we consider the fruits of godliness (Gal 5:22-24), we must begin digging deep into the glorious roots of our salvation which include regeneration, justification, reconciliation, redemption, propitiation, adoption, election and glorification.



Now, never forget that the roots of godliness are entirely and completely a gift of God's sovereign grace! Meaning an unmerited salvific work of grace that was unilaterally instigated and providentially accomplished by God alone. Thus, *regeneration* is the divine act of bringing life to the spiritually dead so that those who were once blind and deaf with hard hearts can now see and hear the Word with soft and submissive hearts (Dt 30:6; Jerm 31:31-34; Ezek 11:19-20; 36:22-27; 37:1-14; Jn 1:12-13; 3:1-8; 6:63; Eph 2:4-5; Titus 3:5; James 1:18; 1 Jn 2:29; 3:9; 4:7; 5:1, 4, 18; 2 Cor 5:17-18; 1Pet 1:3). That *election* is the divine act of God choosing specific people for salvation based solely on His own unmerited love, just pleasure and eternal purpose (Ex 19:4-6, 20:18-20; Deut 10:14-22; Rom 8:28-30; Eph 1:3-4; 1 Pet 1:15-21; 2:9-12; 2 Pet 2:10-11; Col 1:22; Dt 7:7-8; Ps 115:3; 135:6; Isa 46:8-10; Dan 4:34-35; Eph 1:11; Rom 9:9-13).

That *justification* is the divine act where God declares believing sinners instantaneously free from the eternal penalty of sin and positionally righteous by faith in the vicarious, finished and perfect life, death, and resurrection of Christ alone (Gen 15:6; Lev 16:15; Isa 53:5-6, 11; 61:10; Job 4:17; 15:14; Psalm 143:2; Jerm 23:6; Rom 1:17-18; 3:20-28; 1 Cor 1:30; Phil 3:9; Rom 4:6, 20-25; 5:1; 5:12-21; 8:28-30; 10:3-4; 2 Cor 5:21, 1 Pet 2:24; Gal 2:16; 3:21-26). That *reconciliation* is the divine act where God, as the ultimate agent, proactively brings together those who were once separated as enemies and He Himself now makes them friends (Gen 3:8, 22-24; Isa 59:2; Jn 3:18-20; Rom 1:18; Rom 3:10-18; Eph 2:3; 2:12; 5:6; Js 4:4; Rom 5:10-11; 8:7; 2 Cor 5:18-19; Eph 2:16; 4:18; Col 1:20-21; 1 Pet 3:18).

That *redemption* is the divine act where God, through the sacrificial death of His own Son, buys the believing sinner back from the slave market of sin as He takes them from the kingdom of darkness and places them into the kingdom of His dear Son (Lev 25:47-55; Job 19:25; Ps 19:14; Isa 44:6; 47:4; 59:20; Jer 50:34; Mt 20:28; Mk 10:45; 1 Tim 2:6; Gal 3:13; 4:4-5; 1 Cor 6:20; 1Pet 1:18-19; Acts 20:28; Rev 5:9; 14:3-4; Eph 1:7; 4:30; Col 1:14; Heb 9:15; Rom 6:18, 22-23; 8:23;). That *propitiation* is the divine act where God utterly appeases and satisfies His own holy wrath against sin through personally and fully judging it by the perfect and substitutionary sacrifice of His sinless Son (Ex 32:7-10; 34:6-7, 14; Numbers 16:41-50; 25:1-9; Nahum 1:2-3; Rom 3:25; Heb 2:17; 1 Jn 2:2; 4:10).

That *adoption* is the divine act where God makes the believing sinner more than a friend but a full member of His own family with all the subsequent rights and privileges as a child of God (Jn 1:12-13; Rom 8:15-17; Eph 1:5; Gal 4:4-7; 1 Jn 3:1-2; Rom 8:23; 1 Pet 1:4; Rev 21:7; Lk 11:13; 12:29-32). That *Glorification* is the final divine act of sovereign grace in the full application of salvation to the life of the repentant sinner. Glorification is the ultimate culmination, goal, and focus of salvation (Jn 17:22; 1 Cor 2:7; 2 Cor 3:18; Eph 1:3-4; 3:13; 2 Thess 13-15; Col 3:1-4, 10; Rom 3:23; 8:28-30; 1 Jn 3:1-3). This happens as God takes the believing sinner and utterly and finally transforms their unified physical body, heart, and mind into the perfect (glorified) holy image of Christ at the point of bodily resurrection (1 Cor 15:50-58; 1 Thess 4:16-17; Phil 3:20-21; Eph 5:27; Col 3:4). Thus, glory is always the goal in salvation meaning God's ultimate glory through the believer's final glorification by God's sovereign grace (Ps 79:9; Eph 1:3-14; Rom 11:33-36; 1 Cor 1:30-31; 10:31; 2 Tm 2:10)! These marvelous and undeserved works of sovereign grace become the divine anchors and providential pillars that provoke my proactive pursuit of holiness and guarantee its ultimate success!