

1 Timothy 4:7-10

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“But have nothing to do with worldly fables fit only for old women. On the other hand, discipline yourself for the purpose of godliness; for bodily discipline is only of little profit, but godliness is profitable for all things, since it holds promise for the present life and *also* for the *life* to come. It is a trustworthy statement deserving full acceptance. For it is for this we labor and strive, because we have fixed our hope on the living God, who is the Savior of all men, especially of believers.”

Introduction

We continue in our study of 1 Timothy 4. If you turn over to there, we'll review some of the things we began last week, and hopefully we'll finish up this particular portion. Remember last week we talked about in verse 7 about not having to do with worldly fables fit only for old women, but on the other hand discipline yourself for the purpose of godliness. And we said that there in verse 7 there were two particular commands. We already discussed this, so we'll just mention them in brief.

There was on the one hand to reject the mythologies, the fables, which are only fit for old women. That is no offense to women at all. In fact, the Greek term we said had already come into use to the point of being an idiom. So in other words, even in Paul's day, it was kind of like saying it's an urban legend. It's a wives tale. In fact our English term "wives tale" continues that same tradition was of classical Greek. And Paul even draws back to that. It's an idiom in the time of Paul, it's an idiom even to this day, and it is meant to offend nobody. When we say "it's an old wives tale," we don't want all the old wives to go "that's offensive to me!" That's why most modern translations don't even use that terminology. Most of your other translations, the NKJ or the ESV, will say something to the effect that they are just silly fables.

We shared some over all wives tales last week. I thought I'd share some more, because apparently the ones I shared weren't that good. So here are some better ones. I did a little extra research for you guys to encourage you with some new ones. Here's one. The idea that carrots improve your night vision – you've heard that before, right? That's not actually true. Carrots do contain vitamin A. In fact it's a half truth because carrots do contain vitamin A which helps maintain healthy vision, but they don't contain enough to make any significant difference. Curiously enough, this particular wives tale, or urban legend, was purposely begun in World War II by the British army. You know why they did it? Because they spread a rumor that their plane spotters were eating carrots and it gave them improved vision. They spread that lie to conceal the truth that they had invented a brand new issue that is used throughout the world for combat. It's called radar. The British were trying to downplay the idea of how they are able to see these planes from such great distances. We're eating carrots. Bugs Bunny is leading the charge.

Well there are other ones, like shaving or cutting your hair makes it grow thicker than before. There are a lot of Asian parents who will shave their kids bald. A lot of the ladies here were probably shaved bald as young children. That's a total wives tale. That is not true. But what will happen, in fact, is if you shave down your head, naturally your hair looks coarser because it's the thick middle part. Imagine this long hair that gets thinner and thinner. Well if you chop it right here and it grows out, of course it looks thicker. You just cut it down to the stub, or the middle.

Here's another one. Drinking coffee reduces body growth. Remember your parents used to say that? Don't drink coffee – it will stunt your growth! In fact, if anything, it will probably be the opposite. Coffee, and caffeine, is a stimulant. It would increase the things your body naturally does. Most likely it has no affect at all. It is one of those interesting things that were probably invented by some mom who said "I don't want you to drink coffee." "Why?" Because you'll be bouncing off the ceilings.

If you swallow chewing gum, it remains in your stomach for seven years. You've heard that, right? I thought that was true. I should have over four pounds of chewing gum in me. That would explain my obesity. It's completely fabricated. Not true at all. Chewing gum, like anything else, is excreted just like any other undigested piece of food or object. That's the beauty of if you have kids. If they swallow marbles, coins, or whatever, don't worry – it will all flush itself out. It all works itself out.

Here's a final one. If you go swimming less than an hour after you eat, you will get cramps. That's not true. I don't know why, but we still hang on to that. We believe it's true and we discourage our kids from swimming. There are better reasons to not swim after you eat. If you're a kid that just eats way too much and goes swimming, they might throw up, but they don't get cramps just because they just ate. That's a non-sequitur. It makes no sense.

These are half-truths. Urban legends. Wives tales. So what we looked at last week was that particular issue that we ought to focus and center upon the word of God. In fact, for the purpose of godliness and discipline, instead of falling back on these urban legends - these fabrications, the things that make us feel good. We talked about some of these silly ones. We also talked about some of the ones we found silly in some of the cultic practices: secret handshakes, secret chambers, and secret rituals. That stuff has been going on in other religions ever since there have been other religions. Ever since there has been pagan religions. And here Paul is saying to Timothy, young Timothy, major on those things that are true.

We asked an important question last week as it leads into this particular message. We asked last week, "Is it possible to be godly without truth?" And for a moment we thought to ourselves, "Almost yes," because there are good people and that they are disciplined to do good. They act good. They are decent individuals. I suppose they can. But the answer is absolutely no. Not by the standards of Scripture. Without truth, it is impossible to live a godly life. We will look at this today and finish up this portion in verses 8-10. But look at what verse 7 has led us to consider—the opposite of what Paul gives us—worldly fables. In other words, profane and silly mythologies are contrasted with the discipline of godliness. What are contrasted are not fables to truth, while that is a natural contrast in Scripture. What is contrasted there are fables, mythologies, all the silliness of superstition versus a discipline of godliness. And hopefully when we look at the rest of this portion of Scripture this morning, we'll get a sense of the importance of such discipline of godliness that it has a profit for all of us in this life and the life to come. Let's pray and ask that the Lord would instruct us in our time around the Scriptures this morning.

Heavenly Father,

We come before You and we humble ourselves. We ask that You would make the words of our hearts, the things we've already sung unto Your glory and Your praise, make them real to us, Lord. Help us not to be just lip service. To come just as head pieces, Lord, filled with straw, with emptiness – just speaking of things which we do not believe. Instead, Lord, give us the conviction of understanding what Your holy Word says. May Your Holy Spirit enlighten us, that we might appreciate the Word of God. That we might take in what You have inspired for our sanctification, for our growth, and for our hope. And when we look upon these words, may they encourage us, Lord, to a godliness that is indeed profitable, that is excellent and worthwhile. Help us to fixate Your hope only upon the Savior of all men.

We thank You for Your goodness, Lord. And we pray that we would appreciate it even with greater depth and ability because of what the Word of God would unfold to us this morning. We give You praise and ask that You, Yourself, would glorify Yourself.

*In Jesus' Name,
Amen.*

Spiritual Discipline for the Purpose of Godliness (v. 7)

"But have nothing to do with worldly fables fit only for old women. On the other hand, discipline yourself for the purpose of godliness"

So last week, we looked at the idea of the pursuit of godliness in terms of the discipline in the second part of verse 7, which says we are to **"discipline ourselves for the purpose of godliness."** We talked about that term, which is an interesting one. It's our word for "gymnasium." It comes from a root word that meant to "be naked," which we thought was weird, but it is because in the old Greek games, that is how they would compete. They would have no hindrances. They would just be wild in the wind. They would have no hindrance at all. That term for discipline, for training, becomes this command by Paul. We are to discipline ourselves for the purpose of godliness.

You may not recall, but we did mention at the beginning of last week's message that this idea of **"godliness"** or **eusebeia** (εὐσεβεία), occurs 15 times throughout the entire Greek New Testament. Of those 15 times, 13 of them are in the pastoral epistles (i.e. 1 Timothy, 2 Timothy and Titus). Thirteen out of fifteen times the term "godliness" appears only in the pastoral epistles and out of that 13, nine of them appear in just this first letter to Timothy. So is that a central theme here? Absolutely.

He is talking about the issue of godliness. Godliness, we said, was not just a show of religiosity. It's not just what you do religiously. As the Scriptures give us a sense of it, the way that Paul uses the idea of **eusebeia**, we see that it's this idea that you have become a pious person from the inside and it translates itself to the outside. From the inside to the out, you are indeed the genuine article. Contrasted to this godliness we are to discipline ourselves for is all the hypocrisy mentioned earlier in chapter 4, verse 2:

"...the hypocrisy of liars, seared in their own conscience, as with the branding iron, men who forbid marriage and advocate abstaining from foods which God has created to be gratefully shared in by those who believe and know the truth." (1 Timothy 4:2)

So clearly, the false teachers were into formalism. They were just legalists. We said that they were aesthetic. They were into denying earthly pleasure for the sake of trying to produce a spirituality within themselves. What do the Scriptures say about it? What does God say about it? In His inspired Word He says that is foolishness because everything created by God is good. He has determined it so. And we are to receive it and the only condition by which we are to receive all the good things that are pleasurable and good in this life – we are to do it with thankfulness. We are to do it with appreciation, with an understanding that God's goodness is real, palpable, and experiential. It's for us to experience in this life.

So in pointing these things out, Paul says to Timothy that he will become a good minister. So reject the false mythologies, the weird ways of thinking. But instead the opposite – he doesn't say put on truth, although he means put on truth, he says it in a very interesting and very practical way. He says, “**discipline yourself for the purpose of godliness.**”

If there are any in this room that for an instant believes that we can be “godly” on accident; that is ridiculous. We said that godliness is not unintentional. We just don't wake up one day and we're just more holy people. We are justified and cannot become more holy as far as our justification. We can't be more justified. But we can grow in sanctification. We can grow in holiness. But it doesn't happen overnight. It doesn't just happen because I feel like I want to do it today. It happens over a course of training. Like the best Olympic athletes, they train for years. For a good part of their entire life; not just for a few months. Can you imagine if I, right now, signed up for the Olympics? I'm going to do the 100 meter and I'm going to run and beat everybody. It's ridiculous! For one, I don't have that gift. I don't have that kind of speed. But even if I did, even if I was incredibly fast, it would take an incredible amount of discipline and training before I was ready for such a competition. In that same vein, Paul is saying “discipline yourself” for what purpose? So you can appear nicely? So you can be a decent person? No – but so you could be godly. Discipline yourself for the complete you in sanctification.

Verses 8-10 tell us what the motivation is for such discipline in godliness. And verse 8 gives us the first part of that. It tells us that spiritual training is beneficial in an absolute sense. It says “*for bodily discipline is only of little profit, but godliness is profitable for all things.*” Now, catch that parallel here – even in the Greek, these are identically paralleled ideas. Bodily training, the same word for gymnasium, is profitable for little. It literally says bodily training is for little. In contrast, “**godliness**” or *eusebeia* (εὐσεβεία), is profitable for much or for all. The contrast is the difference between what is decent and what is exceptional. What is relative and what is absolute. Is bodily training good for you? Absolutely yes. If you guys work out and take care of yourself – that's of course a good thing, it's beneficial. But that benefit is relative and small compared to that benefit that comes from the discipline of godliness, which is beneficial in a universal sense.

I think if people come and visit the church, and we've actually had visitors who have come and checked out the church for a while, and said that we've got a good church, and then they'll say in an offhand way, “it seems like a lot of your people are into working out. They are all fit and stuff.” And it's true – a lot of guys in our church are really fit. When people notice that everyone's in shape, I'll go “thank you, thank you very much!” Turns out, they usually don't mean me... But is that bad? Do we discourage that? No! But that should never be heightened to anything spiritual. What is much greater in spiritual benefit or it universal benefit is godliness. Bodily training: good. Godliness: incredibly good! That's the way we ought to understand it.

It's beneficial or profitable little for bodily training. Arnold Schwarzenegger: profitable little. But profitable in all things is godliness. He's not just going to leave us hanging with that. He's going to expand on this in the rest of verse 8 to give us an idea of why, in fact, it is so important. Why is spiritual training, or godliness, so beneficial?

Godliness is Profitable for All Things (v. 8-9)

“... for bodily discipline is only of little profit, but godliness is profitable for all things, since it holds promise for the present life and *also* for the *life* to come. It is a trustworthy statement deserving full acceptance.”

Look at the second part of verse 8. It says “since” – that's beautiful. We hear this phrase that bodily discipline is little profit, godliness is profitable for all things, so it's a difference between that which is relative and that which is absolute. And we ask ourselves, why? Well, here he goes. Because, “**since it holds promise for the present life and *also* for the *life* to come.**” That's a really interesting phrase that he says here. He says “**it holds promise for...life**” – for life presently and for life future. He makes this interesting distinction between the two. But first let's define our terms here. He says it is profitable because it holds promise for life. Whether it's future or present, both uses the term “**life**” – that great, New Testament Greek term **ζωή** (ζωή). That might actually be a good name for some of the daughters – if we're having any more daughters in the congregation. We still have some pregnant women. **ζωή** might be a good name – it's kind of cute. Kind of sounds like Chloe.

ζωή means “**life**.” Let me just give you a sampling of why this is a great word for life. I'll give you a sampling just from the Gospel of John. John uses life (**ζωή**) all over the place. Whenever you run across in the Gospel of John the term “eternal life;” it's eternal **ζωή**. It's this life, like in [John 3:16](#) – we get eternal life in the Son. [John 17:3](#) – “*and this is eternal ζωή, that they might know the You, only true God and Jesus Christ whom You have sent.*” It's the qualitative sense of life. It's not just biological living, not mere existence, but it's that abundance of life. Remember in John 6, Jesus says “*I am the bread of (ζωή) of life.*” In other words, I am the satiation of what you want your life to be. Not just getting up in the morning, going to work, coming home, eating something, watching TV and going bed, then repeating the process until the weekend when you could do something for yourself and then back on the road again until you retire and die. The world and the human life in a nutshell is an incredibly sad existence if it's separated from **ζωή**. We can live bios, biology, and live, exist, breathe and work. For anything, for a plant, etc., to say that it bears life scientifically, it just needs to breathe, eat, excrete, and reproduce. It's biological. We're talking about something deeper than biological living. We're talking about **ζωή**, the abundance of life.

Jesus said “*I am the bread of life*” in [John 6:35](#). Remember when Jesus talks to the disciples and asks if they are leaving him too. What does Peter say in [John 6:68](#)? I love those words. He says “*Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of (ζωή) of life.*” Is he's talking about if Jesus keeps talking, his heart will keep beating, and if Jesus stops talking, he'll fall down dead? No. He's

talking about that there's a sense of power, there's a sense of promise, there's a sense of genuine movement and of excellence and living. There's experience and abundance. In [John 10:10](#), Jesus says *"the thief comes to steal, kill and destroy; I came that they may have life (zōē) and have it abundantly."* In [John 11:25](#), Jesus says *"I am the resurrection and the life (zōē)."* Zōē is an important word.

So when Paul, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit says **"...bodily discipline is only of little profit, but godliness is profitable for all things, since it holds promise for the present life and also for the life to come..."** With that in itself, we can close the book and conclude that if godly discipline (i.e. godliness) and the desire for us to know the Word of God, to live the Word of God, to breathe in and breathe out the things of the living God, if that produces a sanctification, that sanctification produces abundance of life. I can die tomorrow and be satisfied with life and say that I have had my fill, Lord. Why? Because I have pursued godliness. Not because I'm healthy or strong. The idea is that we can live the genuine article. We can be better, greater, deeper, and more abundant in everything. What is beautiful about this is that you may think, sure I understand. It's a concept found in Scripture all over the place. We have all of that stuff when we go to heaven. Amen, we do. But we forget what Paul says here. He does NOT say that godliness is profitable for all things since it holds promise for the life to come. It says it holds promise for BOTH the present life and the life to come.

As Christians, we teeter on two extremes of almost everything theological. We can easily start to think all the promises of why we pursue godliness, why we meditate upon the Scriptures, why we pray, why we share the gospel, why we go about the process of delighting our God is so that we might, when we go into heaven, enjoy the good things that would be given to us. That's true, but that is only half-true. There's an element in which there is presently in this life benefit to us that comes only by way of godliness. We miss out on that if we think that godliness is just unintentional, that we will just wake up one day and it will just happen for us 30 to 40 years from today. We think that we will wake up as old men and old women and just one day realize that we're godly people. It happens because it is intentionally sought after. We are trained into godliness.

What are some of the elements of the promise of life presently? We would exhaust the Scriptures if we pursued them all. I'll give you some samplings. Even in the Old Testament, in [Psalm 1](#), the introduction to all the Psalms, it says:

"how blessed is the man who doesn't walk in the counsel of the wicked, nor stand in the path of sinners nor sit in the seat of scoffers! But his delight is in the law of the Lord, and in His law he meditates day and night. He will be like a tree firmly planted by streams of water which yields its fruit in its season. Its leaf does not wither and in whatever he does, he prospers!"

Is there any indication there that this is a promise for the life to come only? No. He is saying in this present life, the man that seeks after wisdom, who does not go after the way of the wicked, who stands and meditates upon the Law of the Lord, he benefits in this life in stability, he benefits in fruitfulness, he benefits in life and he benefits in prosperity. God blesses those who discipline themselves in the meditation of His word, to know Him more. There is a current and present blessing.

We know in [Ephesians 6:1-3](#), it says *"Children, obey your parents in Lord, for this is right... so it may be well with you so you may live long on the earth."* Very temporal blessing for those who would obey their parents. That was a key verse to me in the change of my attitude after I became a Christian in college, in terms of how I should relate to Mom and Dad. It wasn't appropriate now for me to treat them like I didn't like them. Because in fact I didn't like them at that point, but I realized that I had to establish a relationship with them at that point, because it says for children to obey your parents in the Lord for that is right. It comes with a temporal blessing. In the same book here, in [1 Timothy 2](#), it says:

"First of all, then, I urge that entreaties and prayers, petitions, thanksgivings, be made on behalf of all men, for kings and all who are in authority, in order that we may lead a tranquil and quiet life in all godliness and dignity."

In other words, we obey the Word of God in praying for the sanctification, for the salvation, even of our leaders, for God's wisdom for taking care of things like secular government. The purpose of that would be so that we might live God-fearing and tranquil lives.

In [1 Peter 3](#), remember, husbands to be careful how you live with your wives in an understanding way as with a weaker vessel since she is a woman. It says *"grant her honor as with a fellow heir of the grace of life, so that your prayers may not be hindered."* ([1 Peter 3:7](#)) In a negative sense, you need to be very careful about how you treat your wives, because there is a possibility that God will not bother to hear your prayers.

It goes on and on. There are so many different places. We can go to [Galatians 5:23](#), which talks about the fruit of the Spirit: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, gentleness, faithfulness and self control. These things are blessings that come from the pursuit of godly lifestyle: from the pursuit of knowing and understanding our God; from the desire to grow in intimacy with Him. They are given to us in this life.

There is also the promise, not just for this life, but for the life to come. We talked about the concept of heaven. I commended you, and I continue to commend to you in the reading of Randy Alcorn's book on heaven. It's an excellent way to exercise your mind in anticipation for that which all Christians are supposed to live in expectation for: the prospect of heaven. Think about it. We are going to be in the new heavens and the new earth, and life will be to such an extent that we will be without any sin or hindrance, experience everything to its ultimate.

We say of each other that a person has good taste. We might mean the things that they choose in terms of colors, or we might mean actual physical taste. We might sit together and eat at a restaurant, and we might all eat the same thing. Some of us may think it's good, some of us may think it's just ok. Well, when we get to heaven, we will sit around at the banquet feast of our God,

and when we enjoy the goodness of Him then, we will experience whatever in perfection we're supposed to taste. It won't just taste good, it will taste GOOD. It's like when your nose is stuffy, things just taste gray. Your favorite food will just taste like mush. But in heaven, the fullest of expression, the fullest of everything, the fullest of life.

I like what D.L. Moody said on his deathbed. He said, "soon you will read in the newspaper that I am dead. Don't believe it for a moment. I will be more alive than ever before." He had that right sense of what heaven will have for us. Heaven is not just weird, again I must encourage you – we will not just assimilate into some vague blissfulness, which is the color white and we just all blend in and we just disappear. That's foolishness. That's alienationism repackaged for Christian goodness. The idea of heaven is that we will physically be there. We will know each other. We will enjoy each other's company. There will be feasting, and not because we need to eat, but because it is God's goodness and, just as we read earlier, God has designed these things for us to enjoy. There will be laughter and joy and experience, and all that will be heightened to its extreme. To the very best.

Joni Eareckson Tada often talks about how she looks forward to heaven. Not so much that she would abandon her life here or abandon her ministry here, but she looks forward to heaven. She is quadriplegic from the neck down. She has not been able to move for years. When her husband takes off in the morning, she has to lie in bed until her friend shows up to wash her, to clean her, to get her dressed. So throughout her day there is always that waiting, because she cannot take care of herself. She looks forward to that day when she will be in the new Jerusalem jumping up and down, praising the Lord with arms raised. These are things we take for granted, but there are limitation on all of us. We may wish we were a little more able to this or that, or wish we understood certain things better. All of that will be fulfilled. All of our godly desires will be in its full expression there.

Randy Alcorn talks about a good friend when she discovered that she only had a short time to live. She said it changed her perspective and life radically. She says, "the most striking thing that's happened is that I find myself totally uninterested in all the conversations about material things. Things used to matter to me. But now I find my thoughts are never on possessions, but always on Christ and people. I consider it a privilege that I can live each day knowing that I will die soon. What a difference it makes." She took delight, she was thankful, that she knew her end was near. It kept her perspective right.

What we are promised is life – life that is blessed and abundant here, and life that is blessed and abundant there. Today and the true tomorrow are given genuine abundance of life and living. For what? For the training of godliness.

Let's be more precise here. You ask yourself, the Scriptures are very precise about the benefits of life that are given to us by way of godliness here. We change in our self control, our love, our ability to enjoy, our generosity – those things are natural. We grow in them because we grow in godliness. But what do we gain by living godly lives here, in heaven? The reference here is the concept of rewards. I think that is what he's trying to get at here. Turn to 1 Corinthians 3. Starting in verse 12, this is in the context of everyone saying "I'm of Apollos," and "I'm of Paul" and "I'm of Peter." Paul says they are all nuts! We're not factioned after certain individuals. If this guy plants, and this guy waters, what is the difference? There is only one foundation, Jesus Christ. Having said that in verse 12, he picks up with this thought.

"Now if any man builds upon the foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw, each man's work will become evident; for the day will show it because it is to be revealed with fire, and the fire itself will test the quality of each man's work. If any man's work which he has built on it remains, he will receive a reward. If any man's work is burned up, he will suffer loss; but he himself will be saved, yet so as through fire." (1 Corinthians 3:12-13)

This is what we would call theologically the "Bema Seat Judgment." We call it that because it is the judgment of works before our Lord. Now all of us as human beings, when we die, we will appear before the living God and will be judged. We will be judged whether or not we are dependent on our own righteousness, or upon Jesus Christ. Those are the only two options. We either say, "Lord, you know I deserve hell, but I believe in Jesus Christ, that He died for my sins and I did my best to live for His glory and His glory alone." And He will say, "come in and enter into your rest." Those that will say, "I was a decent person. I didn't do anything wrong. I wasn't like some of the other bad people. I was better than a lot of Christians." The Lord will say, "what did you think of My Son? Was He your lord? Was He your master? Was He your savior? Depart from Me, you who practice unlawfulness." That would be the "Great Judgment."

But this in 1 Corinthians 3, is not that Great Judgment. It is that judgment of good works amongst Christians only. Only Christians here. And it says that every man builds upon the foundation of Christ with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, or straw. They will be tested in Christ's good works judgment. They will be tested and will be burned up. What is remaining will allow us to receive, as it says in verse 14, all reward. It goes on to say if any man's work is burned up, he shall suffer loss. I don't know how to explain that. Everything that we have by way of revelation in the Scriptures about what heaven is like, there is no sense of sorrow, no sense of regret, no sadness. It says, in fact, that the Father in heaven itself will wipe away every tear. So how do I get my mind around this particular phrase, "if any man's work is burned up he shall suffer loss." He will suffer by way that he will not himself have regret, but his reward, his heavenly and eternal reward, is diminished. Whatever those rewards might be.

It goes on to say, *"but he himself will be saved, yet so as through fire."* What is this saying? We're only talking about Christians now, only people who will be saved. It is saying that some will receive a reward for the good work that they do in this life. For the good ambition that they have for the glory of Jesus Christ. They will receive a reward for that. And they will be rewarded in heaven for that. Some of us we will barely squeak our way in. Is our salvation certain? Absolutely. Is it absolutely secure? No question. Can any snatch us from the hand of Him who is God? Of course not. Are we saved genuinely? Absolutely. But as far as our rewards, it will be as yet through fire. It will be like there is singe. Smell of singed everything as we walk our way in, and we realize we do not receive any heavenly reward. Why? I invested so little in spiritual things. That is a deep shame. Will it diminish your joy and delight in the Lord? Of course not. We have to make sure you guys understand that.

This is what Wayne Grudem said in his *Systematic Theology* about this concept of rewards:

“Many passages likewise teach or imply degrees of reward for believers at the final judgment. But we must guard against misunderstanding here. Even though there will be degrees of reward in heaven, the joy of each person will be full and complete for eternity. If we ask how this can be when there are different degrees of reward, it simply shows that our perception of happiness is based on the assumption that happiness depends on what we possess, or the status or power that we have. In actuality, however, our true happiness consists of delighting in God and rejoicing in the status and recognition that He has given to us.”

So do not confuse and crosswire that. To be in heaven in it of itself will be the greatest delight. Full and complete delight. The nearness of our God is our good for eternity. Nevertheless, there is reward that is given to us if we pursue those things of godliness and godly ambition.

If we don't believe in the concept of rewards given to us in heaven for earthly good, then we start to diminish some of the things that Jesus Christ said as far as believers are concerned. He said that every careless word will be judged. He said that for teachers, the Scriptures say in James, are held to a stricter account. In James, it talks about how the rich should weep and howl. Who is the rich? We ought to point at each other. You ought to point to yourself. We are the richest of Christians in all of Christian history. There's a few, I imagine, that were richer than us – Job had a lot more stuff; Abraham had a lot more stuff; Solomon. But for the vast majority of us, even in the world presently, there are no Christians richer than American Christians. Guess what? The Scriptures say that you will be held to greater account. What you do with your money and your generosity, the Scriptures will hold you accountable for that. Not just the Scriptures, but the Living Word Himself will hold you account to such things. Don't diminish that, because we will be judged, not in any condemnation, but we will be judged for rewards. We will be granted rewards for the goodness in which we live.

I'm convinced that there will be in that day when we go in the presence of our God, and we walk into the new earth, we will look around and be enjoying and delighting in the Lord, and we will be surprised at some of the nearly anonymous Christians and their riches, their vastness of the responsibility. In their life, in this life, in the life present, they live with such a sense of abundance, such a sense of giving, such a sense at the glory of the Lord and they died for His glory. We will look upon them, and it won't even be of envy. We will be thankful for them. We will delight in them as our friend, brother, our sister. The beauty of it is that in that day, when there is no sin, there is no sense of ambition, no sense of wanting something that someone else has, no coveting. The beauty of having rewards, is that you will be able to dispense them freely. You will be capable of a deeper generosity in the new heavens and the new earth, because of what rewards you receive for the work that you do.

If any man's work is burned up, he will suffer loss. It is possible for us to go to heaven and have at least a tingling of regret. Not any kind of permanent regret, but some sense of we should've done more. I could've done more! What happened? If we take our eyes off that particular prize, and we are no longer motivated by these things that the Scriptures hold before us – godliness and the disciplines of godliness, the promise for this present life, and promise in very palpable ways for the life to come – if we forget about that, then our minds start to swirl around everything insignificant! We are more concerned with reading the paper than we are about the word of God. We are more concerned about being experts in some particular field than about being experts of what the Lord thinks about His own glory. There is foolishness in that. We become mindless and incapable of enjoying fully the goodness of God in this life as we live it, and we do not build upon the foundation of Christ and His delight for the life that is to come.

The decisions you make, the things you say or don't say, they all have an impact. Sometimes we white-wash that and think that if I'm a Christian, then I'm going to heaven, then there you go I can close the door, no big deal. I live whichever way I want. Foolishness! Godliness holds the promise of life – abundant life – not only for this life, but for the life to come. There is reward here and there is reward there. It is the way that God has designed the Christian life. Pursue it! Pursue it diligently. Enjoy the benefits here and know that there's benefit in the life to come.

What a beautiful statement that is. Such a beautiful statement that in verse 1 Timothy 4:9 it says that **“this is a trustworthy statement deserving full acceptance.”** This is now the third of those trustworthy statements that are mentioned already. Remember in 1 Timothy 1:15: *“It is a trustworthy statement deserving full acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners.”* What a beautiful statement that was. 1 Timothy 3:1 – of all the trustworthy statements, that was the second and weirdest one. *“If a man aspires to the office of overseer, it is a fine work he desires to do.”* You almost want to work on the thematic structure of 1 Timothy. If you want to say that it's a trustworthy statement that Jesus came into the world to save sinners, we can say amen! If we can say it's a trustworthy statement that godliness holds promise for this life and for the life to come, amen to that! But it's a trustworthy statement for a man to aspire to the office of overseer, it's a good thing, it almost feels second tier. The point is that it is NOT second tier. God cares about all of these things. About what we do in this life. Not just about our salvation, but about our spiritual leadership. He cares not just about spiritual leadership, but about our present reward and our future reward, the blessings He will pour into us. He cares about them all. So this, godliness is profitable for this life and the life to come, that is a trustworthy statement – you can bank your soul upon that statement.

Godliness is the Purpose of our Labor and Striving (v. 10a)

“For it is for this we labor and strive...”

Not only is spiritual discipline beneficial in an absolute sense, spiritual discipline of godliness is also worthwhile. Verse 10 says **“it is for this we labor and strive.”** It's worth it. It is worth it to labor and strive after this. The terms for **“labor and strive”** are good ones. The first term, *kopiao* (κοπιᾶω), means “physical labor,” to actually work and toil and sweat. The second term, *oneidezō*

(ὁνειδέζω), is used in a lot of different metaphors and it means “to struggle” and “to wrestle against.” If we keep it in this athletic metaphor of the gymnasium, Paul is saying that this is the reason why we struggle. This is reason why we wrestle. This is the reason why we keep fighting and don’t quit. He says because it is for this great statement that godliness has profit – in this life and the life to come. Not only profit for us, but profit for those that we might minister to. I’m thankful for the men who I listen to their sermons and read their books and I am in awe. I ought not to be in awe of them – they are just human beings. I ought to be in awe of God’s graciousness and what He has taught them and how well He has taught them and how thorough their convictions about some things are. They have a profitability not just for themselves, but for me. And hopefully we have profitability for one another. We labor and we strive. Why? Because of it is of good profit and good blessing in this life, and the life to come.

God is our Hope & Savior (v. 10b)

“... because we have fixed our hope on the living God, who is the Savior of all men, especially of believers.”

And he tells us further, we labor and strive after this discipline godliness because **“we have fixed our hope on the living God, who is the Savior of all men, especially of believers.”** Beautiful expression here. We have fixed our hope on the living God. We have already talked about the concept of hope, all the way from verse 1. This New Testament term for **“hope,”** Donald Guthrie once said, *elpizo* (ἐλπίζω), is something so different from the way the world had used it previously. In the New Testament and the Scriptures, hope is absolute and certain. We don’t talk about a vague hope. We don’t say “I hope I’ll be in heaven.” Of course not. We say “Our hope is in heaven. I’m just waiting until I get there. Our hope is in a living God who is gracious.” Period. Our hope is fixed. In fact, it is not the actual noun here. It’s a verbal form of the word “to hope.” It is given to us in the perfect tense. That’s why in our modern translations it says **“we have fixed our hope”** – all of that translates one word. It is trying to convey the idea of the perfect tense. We have settled our hope in the past, and we remain in that hope because our God is alive. We have fixed our hope on a living God. A really wonderful thing to be said.

A curious thing happens here. Paul, in a very subtle way, shifts from all these commands in verse 7. The two commands in verse 7 are in the second person singular. It is “Timothy, *you* need to reject these silly fables” and “*you* need to discipline yourself for the purpose of godliness.” We are supposed to hear that and understand that it is us too, but directed to Timothy. And then he brings it back to include all of us together. Paul says, “We have [all of us] fixed our hope on the living God.”

I am thankful that we believe in a living God, not a dead one. We don’t believe in something we or someone else has created. He is the real thing. We often mention, especially in the Old Testament prophets, how God makes fun of all the idols. He thinks it’s ridiculous, and we ought to think it’s ridiculous. Let me read you my favorite portion in Habakkuk about that ([Habakkuk 2:18-20](#)):

“What profit is the idol when its maker has carved it or an image, a teacher of falsehood? For its maker trusts in his own handiwork when he fashions speechless idols. Woe to him who says to a piece of wood, ‘Awake!’ To a mute stone, ‘Arise!’ And that is your teacher? Behold, it is overlaid with gold and silver, and there is no breath at all inside it. But the Lord is in His holy temple. Let all the earth be silent before Him.”

It is a beautiful statement. God is saying this is ridiculous! Woe to the guy who makes something that is a god and then bows down to it! How can that thing you carved with your hands be more powerful than you? There is hopelessness there.

Did I ever tell you guys the first time I went to Japan when we set up our Japan missions trip, and some of the guys there took me around, and we go visit some of the shrines. We go, and we see what they do. These ladies will be there and they will clap their hands. And then they will throw coins at this money box, this huge box that goes down and there are these bars, and the money clangs against the bars and the coins go down. Then they do this and say something, and then they walk away. What are they doing? The guys with me say that they are praying. They have to make the noise so they could get the attention of whoever is listening. They start to read off the placards that have some of the prayers. These prayers are like “please allow my father’s eyes to get better so he could go back to work,” or “pray that I would pass this exam so that I can go to this school and get a good job because my family is poor.” These are things they hope in. What are they praying to? Some god that someone has fabricated that they have to throw money at to get his attention? They have to clap their hands so that he would wake up. Hopelessness.

In [Habakkuk 2:20](#) it says that *“the Lord is in His holy temple.”* What does that mean? The Lord is alive, and you can find Him. He’s at His house. He is in His holy temple! The rest of it says, *“Let all the earth be silent before Him.”* Literally, the idea is that everyone else just shut up. Who has a right to speak against a living God? That same concept is here. Our hope is in a living God, and it goes on to say in 1 Timothy, **“who is the Savior of all men.”** What a blessed statement that is. Is there hope in anything else in this world? No. There is only one hope of genuine salvation, and that is God Himself. If any man could possibly be saved, if there is any possibility of salvation at all, where would that be found? Only in Jesus Christ, because God is the Savior of all men.

It goes on to say **“especially of believers.”** There is a whole bunch of theological issues about the limit or the universal nature of the atonement. Let’s suffice to say, let’s not get into all of that stuff, but just say this: God is the one savior of all people, and who can validate that best than genuine Christians. Did Jesus Christ die to save the entire world? Well, in 1 John 2, there seems to suggest that there is some benefit there. [1 John 2:2](#) – *“He Himself is the propitiation for our sins; and not for ours only, but also for those of the whole world.”* Does it mean that everyone’s sins are forgiven? Absolutely not. Does it mean that everyone is possible to be saved in a genuine sense? Absolutely not. Does it mean that there is some sense in which all men are culpable? That their guilty because they should have and could have, to some degree, bent their knee to Jesus Christ for salvation? Absolutely so. But who is saved? For whom did Christ die? Here and there, it’s very clear, believers. Those who trust whole-heartedly in Him and Him alone. For them, He has died. For them, He has rescued. God is the only hope of all people. He is the actual salvation of

believers only. He is the only hope of all people. He is the actual and fulfilled hope of only believers. That is what that phrase means.

Conclusion

We talked about urban legends and why we ought to avoid them. I gave you a bunch and there are probably endless more. We could talk about Proctor and Gamble and some of the other crazy things that have gone on that are not true, fabrications. But do you know what is much more insidious? Spiritual wives tales. Let me read you some of them:

- Some people believe that if there's a god, he didn't give me enough evidence to know about him so he can't hold me accountable. Well Romans 1:18-20 tells us that is not true. *"For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes, His eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly seen, being understood through what has been made, so that they are without excuse."* The world and all of creation bears the fingerprints of God.
- Another spiritual wives tale: Jesus is not the only way to heaven or God. There are good people in other religions. All of them will eventually find their way to God. Acts 4:12 says *"There is salvation in no one else; for there is no other name under heaven that has been given among men by which we must be saved."* Jesus Himself says in John 14:6 – *"I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father but through Me."*
- Another one: I go to church, I said a prayer once at a retreat, or maybe I walked down the aisle for an altar call when I was a kid...remember? I grew up in a good Baptist church. I walked that aisle like 30 times! I don't want to be left behind. I always go up to accept Christ again. That's all the insurance I need. Who cares how I live now. Matthew 7:20-23, Jesus says, *"So then, you will know them by their fruits. Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father who is in heaven will enter."* Who enters the kingdom of heaven according to Jesus? Not those who even call Him "Lord," but only those who obey. He goes on to say, *"Many will say to Me on that day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in Your name, and in Your name cast out demons, and in Your name perform many miracles?' And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from me, you who practice lawlessness.'"*
- One more spiritual wives tale: I am a good person and if I meet God when I die, He will accept me into heaven because I have done nothing deserving of hell. I'm a decent person. Romans 3 tell us otherwise. Romans 3:10-12 tells us, *"There is none righteous, not even one; there is none who understands, there is none who seeks for God; all have turned aside, together they have become useless there is none who does good, there is not even one."* Romans 6:23 says that *"the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord."* God is the savior of all men.

I don't care if you actually believe if you close the door at night in your room, and if you turn on the fan you're going to die. You can go on without a fan in your room for the rest of your life and that would not bother me. I don't care if you eat tons of carrots because you think it will increase your night vision. Great – go and do that. It is probably good for you anyway. I DO care if you are depending upon some odd experience that you had, if you are depending on church attendance, or if you think that generally you are a decent person and you have never confessed your sins and repented of unrighteousness and depended on Christ alone for salvation. Do not depend on spiritual wives tales. That is not one you can get wrong. We need to be right about that which is most important. Let's be right about who Jesus Christ is. Let's pray.

Heavenly Father,

We thank You that as we look at this portion of Scripture that we are enthralled with the notion that You are indeed the Savior of all men. Father we thank You that Jesus Christ died to save sinners, Lord. Sinners like us. Men and women who lived in their own idolatries, who believed that they were the center of the universe, who thought that what mattered most was what they wanted, what they pursued, and what we thought was most important.

Lord, instead give us that conviction to realize that there is only one thing that matters, and that is who Jesus Christ is to us, and whether or not we live for His glory. Help us, Lord. Sometimes we overly analyze everything to the point of nauseam. We can't even think our way out of a spiritual paper bag sometimes, Lord, because there is so much stuff to consider. Help us to reduce all that, and to simplify ourselves for a moment, and just ask ourselves if indeed we have depended upon You and You alone for salvation. If we indeed have, then certainly we will live for Your glory.

Teach us that secret of godliness, of disciplining ourselves because it is worth its while in this life and the life to come. Because we would delight in You. Father, is it genuine salvation if all we want is escape from hell? How can it be? Lord, all the Scriptures seem to exalt You and have a desire to exalt You more and to know you better. Help that to be our hearts, to know that we are truly of faith. Let us not wait until tomorrow. Let us know wait until the next week, Lord. But give us the conviction to walk in Your ways today. We give You praise. We want to honor You with our lives.

*In Jesus' Name,
Amen.*